

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

BLOGS III

Blogs about Spiritual Warfare and the Names of God and Jesus, prayer Principles for Spiritual Warfare, Samson, Spiritual Growth, SW in Church History & Steps to Deliverance

BLOG 279-388



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(India Outreach, Spiritual Warfare, Family Ministries, Counseling, World View)

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NAMES OF GOD BLOGS

BLOG 279: 'GOD' (Names of God 1)

Art Linkletter tells of the time he was a small boy drawing a picture. “What are you drawing?” he asked. “I’m drawing a picture of God,” the boy replied. “No one knows what God looks like,” Art said. To which the boy confidently responded, “They will when I get through.”

It is my desire that when this series on the names of God is completed you will know better what God looks like. Often ‘God’ is vague and impersonal to us, distant and not clearly understood. Jesus we can understand through His life on earth, even the Holy Spirit is a bit easier to comprehend for we sense how He works within us. But often our concept of God is quite lacking, and certainly not the personal love relationship it should be. There is no better way to get to know Him than through His names, for they reveal His character, His real inner essence.

The first and most common name for Him is simply ‘God.’ In the Old Testament Hebrew it is ‘El,’ the New Testament Greek equivalent is ‘Theos,’ and in Latin it is Deus. It is a term everyone uses in one way or another, but understanding the God of the Bible requires deeper insight into this name.

While the pagan gods around the Jews also used this name for their gods, it is clear the God of the Jews is far above them. That is why He is often called the “God of gods” (Deuteronomy 10:17; Psalm 136:2; Daniel 2:47; 11:36). He is the “living” God, compared to all others who are not alive (Joshua 3:10).

This name for God was so special to the Jews they often incorporated it in their names: SmauEL (asked of God), IsraEL (prince of God), BethEL (house of God), DaniEL (God is my judge), JoEL (Jehovah is God) and EzekiEL (God is strong). El is used at the start of many names as well: Eli (God is my God), ELiel (God is God), Elisha (God is savior) and ELiezer (God is my help). These names express the faith of parents who so identified their children. Look for them when you read the Bible.

El often has another form in the Old Testament = Elohim. In English we use ‘s’ to show something in the plural form, but in Hebrew they used ‘im.’ Elohim is used 2,700+ times for God in the Bible, literally meaning ‘Gods.’ Not only does this include the 3 members of the trinity (see Genesis 1:26), but in Hebrew it intensifies the meaning of the word. Thus Elohim is a plural of majesty, emphasizing God’s greatness. Genesis 1 uses this name 32 times for our creator God.

As **creator** God has formed a universe so vast we cannot comprehend it. It would take 1,300,000 earths to equal the size of our sun, yet our sun is one of the smaller stars in the sky. Antares is 90,000,000 times larger than our sun. If the distance between the earth and the sun, 93,000,000 miles, were scaled down to the thickness of a piece of paper, the closest star to us would be 71 feet away! Our galaxy would be 310 miles wide – it would take a 31,000,000 million mile stack of paper to represent the distance to the edge of the universe. Yet our galaxy is only one of billions. Truly “the heavens declare the glory of Elohim” as the Psalmist says (Psalm 19:1).

Not only is God’s greatness seen in the vastness of His creation, but also in the minutiae. One ounce of pure uranium holds 1 sextillion atoms. That means if you would back in 1 million atoms a second it would still take 32 billion years to get them all in – yet Elohim did it with a

single word. We could go on by looking at the intricacy of the human body, animals, nature – everything around us shows the greatness of Elohim (Psalm 139:14).

Elohim speaks of God as creator, and also as **sustainer** of all things He created. David puts his faith in Elohim to protect him from the attacks of others (Psalm 56:4). Solomon speaks of the respect and reverence that is due Elohim (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14). Daniel turns to Elohim when he and the Jews need protection (Daniel 9:19).

Foundational to our understanding of God is seeing Him as Elohim – creator and sustainer of all things. Not only does that show something of his awesome power, but it also reveals His heart. Why would such a marvelous God choose to create man, then come to earth to die for Him????? Why bother? Why descend to such a thing? Why go through such pain? Why put up with mankind and his sin and rebellion now? The answer could only be something as great as His power – and that is His love! There is no other reason. As great as His unlimited power, so is His unlimited love. And when both are focused on our behalf, what a winning combination that is!

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Have you recently thought God doesn't know or care about you, that He isn't able to help you or want to get involved with you? Rethink that in light of Elohim's great power and love. Think about Him as Elohim today. Address Him by that title when you talk to Him. Think about the implications of His great might as well as His great love for you.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Look at the name "God (Elohim) Almighty" in the first and last books of the Bible. What is the significance of using this particular name in these books? Read the verses and ask yourself what power of God was needed in each situation. For example, in Genesis 17:1 God is going to confirm His covenant that Abraham, although 99 and childless, will have descendants beyond number. God's might to create life from death is in focus here. Try some of the others and see what you come up with. Genesis 17:1; 28:3; and 48:3. Revelation 11:17; 16:7; 19:6, 15; and 21:22.

BLOG 280: 'ALL SUFFICIENT GOD' (Names of God 2)

A hard working man fell on rough times through no fault of his own and couldn't work or support his family. Soon all of their money was gone. A rich friend heard of him and send a large sum of money in an envelope with a note, "More to follow." A few days later another envelope came. For weeks and months the envelopes appeared when needed, until finally he was able to get working again. The "more to follow" comforted and sustained the family through their time of need.

God supplies our needs in a similar fashion. He provides what we need now with the promise of "More to come" when needed. The name "El Shaddai" reveals that aspect of His character. It first is revealed to Abraham in Genesis 17:1 when he was 99 and childless. God reaffirmed His promise that Abraham would have many descendants. God backs up His promise with this revelation of His Person – He is "El Shaddai" so He is sufficient to provide.

El Shaddai is often translated "God Almighty," and while this is true and accurate, there is a greater depth of meaning contained in "Shaddai." "Shad" refers to a nursing mother, so god is saying He is to His people what a nursing mother is to her baby: comfort, satisfaction, nourishment and provision of all their needs. Thus God is "All Sufficient."

God provides for us as a father provides for his children (Romans 8:32), as a mother for her offspring (Isaiah 49:15), as a gardener for his plants (Isaiah 27:3), a friend for those who depend on him (Proverbs 17:17), a keeper for his charge (Psalm 121:4-8), a banker for his funds (John 10:28+ and a shepherd for his sheep (John 10:11).

Abraham experiences God's sufficiency to provide descendants for him (Genesis 17:1). Isaac tells Jacob the same thing (Genesis 28:3). On and on the name is passed through the Old Testament. Of the 48 times it is used of God, 31 occur in the book of Job. Job recognizes that what has happened in his life is being used by God to mature him and prune him so he will be more like Jesus (Job 5:17). This principle of God disciplining (not punishing) His children so they mature is found throughout the Bible: Hebrews 12:10-11 and John 15:1-8 specifically. God allows trials into our lives to cause us to turn to Him so we can see He is sufficient for our every need. Paul discovered this through his thorn in the flesh (2 Corinthians 12:9). We should notice the same truth in our own lives as we look back at how God has worked in us to make us more like Him. Truly all things do work together for good (Romans 8:28) even if they aren't good themselves. We have His promise that He will not give us more than we can handle with His help (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Naomi, in the book of Ruth, is another example of El Shaddai providing for His own as they go through trials and difficulties. Having lost her husband and sons to death, Naomi returns home to Israel. She realizes they never should have left for they were out of God's will for their lives and that eventually ended in the difficulties she was currently facing. When she returns she confesses this to her friends but affirms God is sufficient to help her through it. Twice she refers to Him as El Shaddai, All Sufficient God (Ruth 1:19-21). God is sufficient when we face affliction to get us back to following God (like Naomi) or when we right with Him but He wants to stretch and mature us more (like Job).

No matter your situation, He is El Shaddai, All sufficient God. Like Paul, we can confidentially affirm that we can do all things through Him who gives us strength (Philippians 4:13). Whatever the future holds for you, El Shaddai will see you through.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Where do you see God working in your life to show you that He is El Shaddai to you? What trials are you facing in the present time? Are they to bring you back closer to God or are they to help you grow more in your faith as you again see His grace is sufficient? When has God uses trials and pain in your life to help you grow spiritually? What can you learn from those times to apply to your current situation?

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

El Olam, Everlasting God, shows God is in control of all. Read Genesis 21:33 and Isaiah 40:22-31. List some of the main things in your past that show God was really in control of it all. How did God show that He was still in control? What is He doing now in you life to show He is still in control? Pray and thank Him for this.

BLOG 281: 'EVERLASTING GOD' (Names of God 3)

An aircraft pilot was following a major highway and just casually observing the traveling cares below him. One particular car caught his attention. The driver was attempting to pass a large truck, but due to small hills and curves in the road he could never see far enough ahead to pass safely. Just as he pulled out, an oncoming vehicle would force him to retreat. The pilot, being able to see several miles down the highway, thought to himself, "If I could only talk to the driver and tell him when it is safe to pass!" But of course he couldn't.

We, on the other hand, have Someone who can see into our future and know what is coming and what is not coming. He knows when it's safe for us to move ahead and when we should patiently wait. He sees it all because He is Everlasting God – El Olam.

This name is first used in Genesis 21:33 when Abraham calls God "El Olam" because He is the one who knows the future. This assertion is soon tested for God calls upon Abraham to take his son and sacrifice Him to God. Isaac is Abraham's only means to have descendants, so God must know how it will all turn out if he takes Isaac's life. God did see the future and knew that Abraham indeed would have millions of descendants through Isaac.

Isaiah also used this name for God (Isaiah 40:28) referring to God being eternal in duration, not limited by time. The root idea of the name is that God sees the future as clearly as the past. Time means nothing to Him. He is above and beyond it, not limited by it.

God is El Olam to us as well. We don't know the future, but God does. And that is fine. We don't have to know the future for He does. He holds it in His hands. We don't have to know the future as long as we know the One who holds the future in His hands.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Think of a time in your life when it was clear that God knew what was going to happen before it happened. Perhaps it was guidance and direction He provided, or maybe it was protection. It could have been 'circumstances' that just seemed to work out or any number of things. But clearly it was God who knew the future using that knowledge to take care of you in the present. Thank Him for those times. Make note of them so that your faith is strengthened as you face future obstacles in life.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Read Psalm 46. Make a list of all the attributes of God listed in this Psalm: all the things God can and will do. Look carefully. Read between the lines. Ask God to show you truths about Him from this Psalm.

BLOG 282: 'MOST HIGH GOD' (Names of God 4)

On the evening of leaving for his Russian campaign, Napoleon detailed his schemes to a noble lady with such arrogant positiveness that she tried to check him by saying, "Sir, man proposes; but God disposes." "Madam, I propose and I dispose, too!" he haughtily replied. A few months later he lost the war, his crown and everything he had. God alone disposes!

It's always been that way, throughout all of history. God's power is greater than any power of man. "El Elyon," "Most High God," clearly shows this. "El" is the generic name for God, the creator and sustainer. "Elyon" is an intensified form of "El," showing the God of the Jews is greater than any other 'god.' 'El' is strong God, 'Elyon' is the superlative form, the strongest of the strong. It focuses on the great power of our creator God.

According to Einstein ($E=MC^2$) a birthday candle has enough pure energy to equal 20,000 tons of TNT or enough power of electricity to supply a town of 40,000 for a whole day. That power comes from God Himself, El Elyon. As much power as is in a birthday cake candle, it doesn't come anywhere near comparing to the sun. The sun uses up enough energy in 1 second to supply all the earth's energy needs for billions and billions of years. What power! But there is even more, for there are trillions of suns in the universe, most far larger than our son. How many is a trillion? If you would count as fast as possible (4 numbers a second) it would take you 1,000 years to reach 100 billion, and that is only a fraction of the way to trillions. That's El Elyon's awesome power! Imagine how great God's power must be if He can just speak and

call all these planets into being. His power is far greater or He wouldn't be able to form them and fill them with power.

Melchizedek calls God 'El Elyon' (Genesis 14:18, 19, 20, 22) when he meets Abraham after Abraham rescued Lot. It was through Most High God's power that Abraham was able to defeat the armies that had overthrown Sodom and Gomorrah. In response Abraham gave 10% of his riches to El Elyon through Melchizedek.

Other Gentiles, such as Balaam, referred to God by this title (Numbers 24:16). Moses (Deuteronomy 32:8) and Isaiah (Isaiah 14:12-14) also speak of El Elyon's power. Daniel calls Him by this name often (3:26; 4:2, 25, 34; 5:19,21; 7:18, 25, 27). David praises El Elyon for delivering him when he hid from Saul (Psalm 57:1-3). That same power is available to us as well – Jesus Himself says so (Luke 24:49). Next time you don't think you have enough power for the task required of you, turn to El Elyon, the One with enough power to do anything that is needed!

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Read Psalm 46 and thank God for His mighty power and protection. Martin Luther wrote "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" based on this Psalm. Write or pray your own psalm of praise to God for His mighty power in your behalf!

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

In Gen 1 God is represented as speaking (v. 3), then as seeing (v. 4). He walks in the garden in the cool of the day (3:8). Elsewhere we read of the human form of God (Numbers 12:8), of the feet of God (Ex 24:10), of the hand of God (Isa 50:11), of the heart of God (Hos 11:8). In addition to physical characteristics, emotional qualities appropriate to man are also ascribed to God. Thus He is jealous (Ex 20:5), angry (Ps 77:9), merciful (Jonah 4:2), mighty (Ps 147:5), gracious and loving (Ps 103:8). The Lord can resolve and He can also repent (1 Sam 15:11). He is a shepherd (Ps 23:1), a bridegroom (Isa 62:5), and a warrior (Ex 15:3). While anthropomorphisms are in general less frequent in the NT, they do occur. There is a reference to the finger of God in Luke 11:20. In Matt 19:10 the angels behold the face of God. In John 10:29 it is said that none can pluck the disciples out of the hand of God. In John 1:18 the only begotten Son is in the bosom of the Father. The ascended Christ is seated at God's right hand (Hebrews 1:3). In many verses (e.g., 2 Timothy 2:13; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Timothy 1:16; Ephesians 2:4; 1 John 3:1) we read of the faithfulness, wisdom, longsuffering, mercy, and love of God. God can also act as man acts. He speaks (Hebrews 1:1), sends (John 17:18), chooses (Ephesians 1:4), purposes (Ephesians 3:11), is wrathful (Rom 1:18), judges (Rom 2:2), reconciles (2 Corinthians 5:18), loves (John 3:16). He is described in human categories as father (Matt 6:9, etc.) or as king (Rev 4:2). (from International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, revised edition, Copyright © 1979 by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. All rights reserved.)

What human characteristic is attributed to God in each of these verses? Why? What is the significance? Matthew 18:10; Psalm 38:18; Psalm 32:8; Hebrews 1:13; Isaiah 5:9; James 5:4.

BLOG 283: 'THE GOD WHO SEES' (Names of God 5)

The Bible is full of obscure but interesting people. One was a woman names Hagar. She may be unknown to most of us but she wasn't to God. Abraham acquired Hagar as a slave when he was in Egypt and she served his wife, Sarah. When Sarah couldn't conceive she suggested Abraham follow a custom of the times and have a child by her servant Hagar for the child would legally be Sarah's anyway. The whole story is recorded in genesis 16:1-16.

When Hagar got pregnant she became very unsubmitive to Sarah, even haughty and rude. While there is not excuse for that behavior, we still have to feel sorry for a woman who had no rights, no property and no future. She didn't even own her own body but was just used to produce a baby for another. Anyway, Abraham told Sarah she could do anything she wanted to her so Sarah abused Hagar. Perhaps she might have even hoped she died. As a result, Hagar ran away to save her life.

While running God Himself, the angel of the Lord (Jesus before His birth) met her and reassured her she would be safe if she returned and she would have many descendants through her child. Recognizing she was speaking to God Himself, she called Him El Roi, The God Who Sees. The name of her son was to be Ishmael meaning "God hears." She was deeply moved that God saw her situation and knew what she was going through. Her Egyptian gods of stone and wood weren't even alive, but here was a God who cared so much about her that He sought her out, even though she was in the wrong in running away.

Recognizing that God "sees" means that He "knows" everything. Saying God sees or hears is a way of attributing human characteristics to God so we can better understand Him. These are called anthropomorphisms. Clearly sovereign God is omniscient and knows all. While this name for God is only used this one time in the Bible, this truth is repeated many times (Job 34:21; Psalm 33:18; 32:8; I Peter 3:12). God sees, He knows and He cares because He loves. That is why He watches us, not to catch us in sin but because we bring joy to His heart the way a parent loves watching their children at play. Hagar was impressed God saw and cared for her because she was disobedient and rebellious, she was a Gentile slave, unmarried and pregnant, a female without worth in her culture, just property to be disposed of. She was the exact opposite of the great Abraham, but God sought her out because He cared about her in her hopeless situation.

The Bible is full of hopeless cases where God saw and intervened: Jacob returning home, Joseph in prison, Moses at the Red Sea, the Jews in Egypt, Samson in prison, Hannah wanting a child, David hiding from Saul, Jonah in the fish, Daniel in the lions den and the Jews in Babylon are just some of them. The best part is that He sees us in our need as well. We may not think so, we may feel He doesn't care or isn't aware, but that is never the case. He doesn't do everything we want or bail us out of every difficult situation, but what good parent always does that for their child?

Of course, God sees us in our sin as well, for we can't hide that from God either (Proverbs 15:3). If there is something in our lives we want to hide then knowing He always sees us brings guilt, not comfort. But if we are seeking to live for Him it can be very comforting and encouraging. Even when others might not understand we know He does. When we are misunderstood or accused of wrong motives He knows the truth. When unfair things happen He is always aware. If we don't even know how to explain to Him what is happening, we can be confident He already knows the situation better than we do! He is El Roi, The God Who Sees.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

What difference should it make in your life today that God sees everything you do and knows all that is happening in your life? How can that help you better "pray without ceasing" throughout the day? Thank Him for seeing, knowing, caring and loving you so much He can't take His eyes off you!

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

The root meaning of the name "Adonai" is master, lord. It recognizes that the person so addressed has control over us and we are to obey and serve them in all ways. But just using this name doesn't mean we really do that. Read the 4 passages below in which Moses, Joshua, Saul and Isaiah called God 'Adonai.' Did they really mean He was their lord and master? Did

the rest of what they said line up with the name they used? What did they say or do to show or not show that He really was their lord and master? Exodus 4:10; Luke 6:46; John 5:13-15; 1 Samuel 15:22; Isaiah 6:8.

BLOG 284: 'Lord' (Names of God 6)

A hen and a pig approached a church and read the advertised sermon topic: "What can we do to help the poor?" Immediately the hen suggested they feed them bacon and eggs. The pig wasn't so sure, though. "For you it requires only a contribution, but for me it means total commitment!" That's how it is in our relationship with God as well. Some are willing to make a contribution, but only a few make a total commitment. The name we are looking at now implies total submission.

The name 'Lord,' (Adonai in the Hebrew Old Testament, Kurios in the Greek New Testament) literally means "lord, master, owner." It is similar to the word 'baal' which pagans used of their false gods, so God never used that of Himself. He used Adonai instead. This applied to others who were given the title 'lord' or 'master' – Abraham (Genesis 18:12; 19:2; 24), Pharaoh (Genesis 40:1), Joseph (Genesis 42:10), Boaz (Ruth 2:13), Saul (1 Samuel 16:16) and Eli (1 Samuel 1:15). The other 400+ times it is used of God.

'Lord' speaks of a relationship – servant/slave to master/owner. Each has a responsibility in this relationship. The master is to provide loving direction. The English word 'lord' comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word 'lafford,' meaning 'to sustain, to keep.' It was the term applied to the lord over an area in the feudal system in Europe. He dwelt in a castle and owned the land the serfs farmed. His duty was to protect, guide, lead and supply their needs. That is what God does for us as well.

The duty of the serfs, the servant/slave, is to submit and obey the master. When we call God 'lord' we are recognizing His sovereign rule over us and that we are to obey and serve Him in all things. Yet often that isn't the case. Moses called God 'Lord' but in the same breath refused to obey when God told him to return to lead the people out of Egypt (Exodus 4:13). Likewise Saul called God 'Lord' but kept back animals from the Amaleites when God told him to destroy them all (1 Samuel 15:22). Joshua, however, asked the Lord what he should do to conquer Jericho and then followed God's strange directions as told (Joshua 5:13-15). Isaiah, too, called God 'Lord' and immediately submitted to His leadership (Isaiah 6:1-9).

We, too, need to make sure we obey and serve Him for He truly is our Lord. We muse that name often in conversation, prayer, songs, and other ways. But we often just use it as another title when really it is a statement of commitment. It means we aren't just making a contribution, we are making a total commitment!

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Make a conscious effort to call God 'Lord' today. Use it each time you need His direction, guidance, provision or care. Also use it each time you need to trust and obey Him. Use it being aware of the implications of what it means to call Him Lord and Master and Owner.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

The differences between the 2 main names of God, "God" (Elohim) and "Lord" (YHWH) are obvious in these passages. God (Elohim) is a common title used by all nations while LORD (YHWH) is a proper name used only by Israel. Elohim speaks of the God of nature, creation and preservation. YHWH refers to His personal relationship with His people as redeemer and sustainer.

Exodus 3:13-14 Moses said to God (Elohim), "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God (Elohim) of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is His name?' Then what shall I tell them?" 14 God (Elohim) said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM (YHWH) has sent me to you.'"

Exodus 6:1-3 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my mighty hand he will let them go; because of my mighty hand he will drive them out of his country." 2 God also said to Moses, "I am the Lord (YHWH). 3 I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty (El Shaddai), but by my name the Lord (YHWH) I did not make myself known to them.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 hear, O Israel: The Lord (YHWH) our God (Elohim), the Lord (YHWH) is one. 5 Love the Lord (YHWH) your God (Elohim) with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Why did God use a new name when He was calling the Jews out of Egypt as a nation to follow Him? God appeared to Abraham as El Shaddai (God Almighty) but now a new aspect of His character is being revealed as He brings them out of Egypt. What new work of God is being revealed?

Can a person call Him 'God' but not 'LORD'? What is the difference? What does it take for someone to call Him 'LORD'? How can you tell if He really is LORD and not just God in someone's life? Is He God in your life? _____ When did He become God to you? Is He LORD in your life? _____ When did He become LORD to you?

BLOG 285: 'LORD' (Names of God 7)

To the Jews the name of God was very important because it described God Himself. It was not just a title but a character analysis. Many names are used because there are many aspects to God's personality. One name is far above all the others in importance and significance. All that God was to His people was wrapped up in that name. It was THE name of God.

Unfortunately today we don't know what the name really was. We know the 4 consonants the comprised it, Y H W H ('Tetragrammaton,' meaning 'four letters') but we don't know how it was pronounced. The Jews never said it because they didn't want to take a chance of using the name in vain (Exodus 20:7). In Hebrew only the consonants were written, the vowels were memorized and passed down orally. But this name was never passed on. How does one pronounce "YHWH"? Some use the vowels from Adonai ('lord') and pronounce it 'Jehovah' while others think 'Yahweh' is more accurate. What ever the original pronunciation, it is the significance of the name, what it shows us about God, that is still as true today as ever.

Understanding the difference between the three main names for God can help understand the Bible better as well. In Joshua 7:6-7, for example, He is called God (Elohim, creator and sustainer), Lord (Adonai, master) and LORD (YHWH, deliverer). Understanding the precise aspect of God each refers to brings new light to the passage.

YHWH points to God as holy (Exodus 15:11; Leviticus 11:44-45). It is YHWH who judges sin in Eden (Genesis 3), with the flood (Genesis 6) and with plagues against Egypt (Exodus). Because He is holy, He delivers those who turn to Him to have their sins replaced with His holiness (Isaiah 43:11). It was YHWH who made clothing for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), shut Noah safely in the ark (Genesis 7:16), and delivered the Jews from Egypt (Exodus 12-15).

YHWH is unique because it describes God's personal covenant relationship with each one of His people individually, not as a group. While God (El) and Lord (Adonai) are also used

of others and by those who aren't believers, YHWH is only ever used by God's people. It is so significant to the Jews that many of them named their children in honor of YHWH. Whenever you see a Jo starting a name (Joab, John, Joel, Joshua) or an ah at the end of a name (Elijah, Elisha, Azariah, Hananiah) then YHWH is included in their name for Jo and ah are abbreviations of YHWH in Hebrew.

While the name YHWH was used from Genesis 2 on, the real significance of God as their personal deliverer wasn't seen until the deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 6:1-3). God is the eternally existent one who is always available for His people. The Hebrew word YHWH is really the 'to be' verb in Hebrew (3rd person singular, "He is"). So in choosing this for His name God is saying "I am" – I always am, past present and future. There is never any need to use past or future tense for He always is. This is how He revealed Himself to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:13-14). The Jews clearly understood this, for when Jesus used this name for Himself they tried to stone Him for blasphemy (John 8:58).

In fact, the culmination of YHWH as the holy one who judges sin yet delivers those who turn to Him is seen most clearly in the work of Jesus on the cross. 'Jesus' means 'YHWH is salvation' and that's exactly what happened in the crucifixion and resurrection. YHWH, Jehovah, Yahweh, LORD, however you want to say it the meaning is the same. He is our deliverer.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

YHWH refers to God as the One who judges sin and delivers those who turn to Him for deliverance. He is judge or deliverer. To every person who ever lived He is one or the other. Pharaoh said "Who is YHWH? I don't know YHWH!" (Exodus 5:2). He didn't then know Him as deliverer, but He would soon know Him as judge. We all know Him either as our deliverer or as our judge. Which is He to you today?

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

The Bible mentions many things that God will provide. Look up the following verses and fill in the blanks to discover some of them:

Gen 22:8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide _____, my son." And the two of them went on together.

Genesis 45:11 I will provide for you there, because _____. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

Genesis 50:21 So then, don't be afraid. I will provide _____. And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

1 Chronicles 17:9 And I will provide _____ and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed.

Isaiah 61:3 and provide _____ in Zion — to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

Ezekiel 34:29 I will provide for them _____, and they will no longer be victims of famine in the land or bear the scorn of the nations.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide _____ so that you can stand up under it.

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us _____?

Philippians 4:19 And my God will meet _____ according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Psalms 34:8-10 Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. 9 Fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. 10 The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord _____ .

Psalms 84:11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no _____ does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

BLOG 286: 'JEHOVAH JIREH' (The Lord Will Provide) (Names of God 8)

When I was 19 I was drafted into the US Army. It was the start of the Viet Nam war and I soon got orders to go with my infantry unit. I was a new Christian and faced this crisis with much prayer. I was terrified of killing or being killed. Nothing I did could change my orders so I finally told God I'd go if He wanted me to. I submitted to His will. The next day my orders were surprisingly changed! God didn't want me to go, He just wanted me to be willing to go. The same was true of Abraham offering Isaac as a sacrifice (Genesis 22:1-19).

I can't imagine how hard it must have been for Abraham to take the son he waited so long for and loved so much on a long trip that would culminate with his death. What must have gone through his mind and heart! Yet he faithfully obeyed. Abraham believed that after he killed Isaac God would bring him back to life in order to fulfill the promises He had made to Abraham.(Hebrews 11:17-20). What an amazing account of Abraham's faith – and of Isaac's who was willing to let his father take his life.

Isaac asked his father what the sacrifice would be and all Abraham could say was that God would provide ('jireh'). Then after God provided the substitute ram caught in the thicket Abraham named the place 'Jehovah Jireh,' 'The Lord Will Provide.' And He always does. He provided skins for Adam and Eve, shelter for Noah, deliverance for the Jews in Egypt, a way through the Red Sea, food and drink in the desert and food for Elijah.

He not only provides our physical needs, though – He also provides our spiritual needs! His provision for us was His only son sacrificed on the same hill many years later. Like Isaac, He willingly carried His own wood up the hill and let His Father take His life. Whereas there was a substitute so Abraham didn't have to take Isaac's life, for Jesus there was no substitute for He Himself was the substitute for all of us! That's why, of all the names that could have been used for Him, John the Baptizer chooses "Lamb of God" as the way to first introduce Him to the world. Jesus was the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb, the substitute so the first born males wouldn't have to die in Egypt.

He is Jehovah Jireh, our provider. He provides everything we need. Everything. EVERYTHING. If He doesn't provide it then we don't need it.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

What has God provided for you? Try to make a list of all He has provided for you in your life. Include everything you can think of in the list, no matter how small and insignificant it may seem. Then choose the 3 most important provisions He has made for you and underline them. Use this to pray and thank Him for each and every one of them.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

The Bible mentions many things that God will provide. Look up the following verses and fill in the blanks to discover some of them:

Gen 22:8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide _____, my son." And the two of them went on together.

Genesis 45:11 I will provide for you there, because _____.
Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.'

Genesis 50:21 So then, don't be afraid. I will provide _____." And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

1 Chronicles 17:9 And I will provide _____ and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed.

Isaiah 61:3 and provide _____ in Zion — to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.

Ezekiel 34:29 I will provide for them _____, and they will no longer be victims of famine in the land or bear the scorn of the nations.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide _____ so that you can stand up under it.

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all — how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us _____?

Philippians 4:19 And my God will meet _____ according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Psalms 34:8-10 Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. 9 Fear the Lord, you his saints, for those who fear him lack nothing. 10 The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the Lord _____.

Psalms 84:11 For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor; no _____ does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

BLOG 287: JEHOVAH RAAH' (The Lord is My Shepherd) (Names of God 9)

The 23rd Psalm is still one of the very favorite Bible passages today. People turn to it in sickness and in times of need. It speaks to our hearts in a very special and comforting way.

The Lord is my shepherd, Jehovah Raah, The Lord the Shepherd, is His title here. Raah means to tend to, to be a companion. Thus it became used as the word for shepherd. Sheep are dependent on their shepherd, as we are on Jehovah.

I shall not be in want.

The first line of the psalm sums it all up: "I shall not want" or better yet "I shall not lack." While God doesn't meet all our desires He does promise to meet all our needs. No good parent meets all their child's desires but does what is best for the child. Our heavenly Shepherd does the same for us (Psalm 34:10; Philippians 4:19).

2 He makes me lie down in green pastures. Sheep are so very much like people. Or should I say people are like sheep: ignorant, helpless, vulnerable and totally dependent on their shepherd. While sheep recognize this fact, most people do not. Does that make sheep smarter than us? Perhaps so! Sheep have to be MADE to lie down. We, too, keep going way too long and live lives of stress and business until God does something to slow us down. At least the place He takes us to is a 'green pasture.' Soft spring grass brings nourishment to tired sheep, just as the Word of God nourishes our tired spirits. It's what we feed on. Sheep feed on grass to produce wool. We feed on God's Word to produce the fruit of the Spirit.

He leads me beside quiet waters, Shepherds lead sheep from the front, they don't drive them from the rear. When a sheep sees his need and develops trust in the shepherd he will follow. If he doesn't he will never find quiet waters on his own, for a sheep will not drink from fast moving water. When we follow our Shepherd He leads us to rest and peace.

3 He restores my soul. Neither a sheep nor a person can restore themselves. It must be done from without. The shepherd brings the sheep back and nurses them to health, as God does with us spiritually. If your soul needs restoring go to your Shepherd and He will restore you.

He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Sheep can't find their way safely and neither can we. He will guide us in right, holy paths of obedience as we follow Him.

4 Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, Valleys are dangerous places for sheep. Wild animals and thieves can trap them, so they need the shepherd's protection. Death is a scary place for us without our Shepherd. But since He has taken the sting of death (I Corinthians 15:55-56) it is only a shadow. Shadows can seem frightful, but there is no substance to them. We are safe from even the power of death with our Shepherd.

for You are with me; This is the reason we don't fear anything, even death.

Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. The rod and staff provided safety and protection, even sometimes discipline for the sheep if they continually strayed. We find comfort in the protection of our Shepherd, knowing He will do whatever is necessary to keep us close to Him, even if we stray from Him.

5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. He doesn't remove our enemies but gives us a victory celebration even when the battle rages. Circumstances may be difficult, but peace and rest within are available for those who trust in their Shepherd.

You anoint my head with oil; Oil brought healing and protection, as does the oil of God's Holy Spirit with which He anoints His people.

my cup overflows. Our blessings are more than we can contain, more than we can comprehend or understand, more than we can even realize.

6 Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, Literally the Psalmist says goodness and love will PURSUE us. The word pictures an animal tracking its prey, not letting it out of sight, going wherever it goes, always in close pursuit. That's how God pursues us to bless us!

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Not only are we blessed in this life, but we will be with Him for all eternity (John 14:1-14). Every need is provided. Truly we lack nothing.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

God lives as our Great Shepherd in the present (Psalm 23) because He died as our Good Shepherd in the past (Psalm 22, especially 1, 16, 18). One day He will return as our Chief Shepherd to take us to be with Him forever (Psalm 24). Take a few moments to make a list of all God's provisions and blessings for you, all that makes your cup overflow. Write them down, then thank God for each of them one by one.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

What happens to sheep without a shepherd according to:

1 Kings 22:17 _____

Isaiah 13:14 _____

Jeremiah 31:10 _____

Ezekiel 34:5, 8 _____

Zechariah 10:2 _____

Matthew 9:36 _____

John 10:12 _____
What does a shepherd do for his sheep:
Psalms 80:1 _____
Isaiah 40:11 _____
Ezekiel 34:12 _____
Ezekiel 34:16 _____
John 10:11 _____
John 10:14 _____

BLOG 288: 'JEHOVAH NISSI' (The Lord is My Banner) (Names of God 10)

When the Jews left Egypt God fought their battles for them. He spared the lives of the firstborn because of the blood of the Passover Lamb. He told them to be still and watch His deliverance at the Red Sea when the Jews escaped but the Egyptian army was drowned. He provided manna and water when they needed it. They were in bondage and couldn't do anything to free themselves so He purchased their freedom with innocent blood and sealed it with power.

The same is true of us. We can't do anything to secure our freedom from bondage to sin. The crucifixion and resurrection are His proofs of deliverance. He does it all. It is a free gift from His grace (Ephesians 2:8-9). However after we have salvation we are expected to live for Him and that is a battle. Sometimes new Christians think that after salvation all will be smooth and easy, but that is not the case. That is when the battle begins (Romans 7:15-29).

The Jews found the same thing true. God fought for them against Pharaoh who tried to kill them in Egypt, but when the Amalekites tried to kill them in the desert they had to fight their own battles – with His help of course. Exodus 17:8-16 tells the story.

The Amalekites were descendants of Esau, a picture of those born after the flesh with no spiritual perception or concern (Hebrews 12:16-17). They had no fear of or respect for God (Deuteronomy 25:17-18). It is no surprise they attacked God's people. After salvation the flesh attacks us – we are tempted to sin in thought or action (1 John 1:8-10). These usually hit us in our weak spots. The Amalekites attacked the Jews where they were weak, attacking the worn out ones who were in the rear and not keeping up. Christians who are weak or weary, who are not strong and healthy and part of a group of other strong and healthy Christians, are the most vulnerable to attack as well. Be aware of where you are weak for that is where sin will attack.

Instead of God fighting for the Jews, they had to start to learn to fight for themselves. Not all were able to, so Moses asked Joshua to choose those were strong and able. These would do the fighting. Before God fought for them, now He would fight through them. Of great significance is that Joshua was the leader, the one who directed the fighting. This is the first mention of Joshua in the Bible. Joshua in Hebrew is the same as Jesus in Greek. Both mean "Jehovah is salvation." Joshua, therefore, is a picture of Jesus. He leads us as we fight. We don't battle alone but we follow Him.

But there was another element beside the healthy Jews fighting behind Joshua/Jesus, and that was Moses praying on the hill (v. 10). Aaron, his brother, and Hur, his brother-in-law, held up his hands when they got tired. When his hands were lifted in prayer the Jews would prevail, but when his hands dropped and prayer stopped, Amalek would win. We need to battle sin and the flesh behind Jesus, but we also need to pray and keep on praying for victory. Often we start well but our prayers fade and so does our success.

Notice, too, that the victory wasn't instantaneous. There was a long battle and perseverance was necessary for them – and for us as well. In fact, the battle with the

Amalekites will continue until Jesus comes back and returns things to Garden of Eden conditions, and our battle with sin will continue as long as we are on this earth as well.

To commemorate the victory God called the place Jehovah Nissi, The Lord is My Banner. The word banner refers to something lifted up, something going before, something for them to follow to victory. That is exactly what God is for us. Life will be a battle, we must be ready for that. Victory over sin can come as we fight behind Jesus, pray, and follow Jehovah Nissi, our banner.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

What battles are you fighting now against the flesh, against your sin nature? Where are you most tempted to sin? If you don't know your weakness (where the enemy attacks) you won't be able to defend yourself and will be more vulnerable to defeat. List your weak areas. Make a plan for each one, what to do now to help to have victory when the attacks come (and they will).

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

The name "Jehovah Nissi" means "The Lord is My Banner." It is only used once in the Bible (Exodus 17:8-16) but 'Nissi' is a common word used 20 other times in the Old Testament. It is variously translated as pole, sign, banner, battle standard, sail and signal. Read an example of each below. Draw a picture of each object by the verse.

Numbers 21:8 The Lord said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." 9 So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

Numbers 26:10 The earth opened its mouth and swallowed them along with Korah, whose followers died when the fire devoured the 250 men. And they served as a warning sign.

Isaiah 13:2 Raise a banner on a bare hilltop, shout to them; beckon to them to enter the gates of the nobles. (see also Psalm 60:4; Isaiah 5:26; 11:10-12; 18:3;30:17; 49:22; 62:10;Jeremiah 50:2; 51:12, 27)

Isaiah 31:9 Their stronghold will fall because of terror; at sight of the battle standard their commanders will panic," declares the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, whose furnace is in Jerusalem. (see also Jeremiah 4:21)

Isaiah 33:23 Your rigging hangs loose: The mast is not held secure, the sail is not spread. Then an abundance of spoils will be divided and even the lame will carry off plunder. (see also Ezekiel 27:7)

Jeremiah 4:6 Raise the signal to go to Zion! Flee for safety without delay! For I am bringing disaster from the north, even terrible destruction."

Think of the various words used. What is similar about each of these? Take your time and think awhile. You should be able to come up with several similarities.

Then apply these to God. Exactly how is God to us like a 'NISSI'??? Give some specific examples of when He was this to you in your life.

BLOG 290: 'JEHOVAH ROPHE' (The Lord Who Heals) (Names of God 11)

"The Lord Who Heals:" what a glorious name! God gave it to Himself after leading the Jews out of Egypt (Exodus 15:26). The word translated "heal," 'rophe' in the Hebrew, has the

idea of “restore, make whole, repair.” It is used 65 times in the Old Testament, always with the idea of restoring something to its rightful state. It is used of restoring people (Psalm 6:2), bad water (2 Kings 2:22), salt water to fresh (Ezekiel 47:8), broken pottery (Jeremiah 51:8-9), the nation Israel (Hosea 6:1) or other nations (Jeremiah 51:8-9). While it often refers to physical healing, it usually has a larger meaning and includes healing of mind, soul and spirit as well.

God established a provision in His covenant with Israel in the Old Testament that He would use physical illness as a warning of spiritual illness. When the people were spiritually right with God He would heal their diseases, but if they turned from Him then He would allow the sicknesses to come to show them their need of Him (Deuteronomy 7:12-15; Jeremiah 30:15)). When David sinned by taking a census the consequence was a plague which killed many (1 Chronicles 21:10-14). God promised Israel abundant physical blessings if they would obey Him but afflictions if they disobeyed. A parent disciplines an unruly child but rewards an obedience one.

These miracles in the Old Testament weren't evenly spread through the whole time but came in the times of Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Jesus and the apostles, and the coming Tribulation. In each of these time periods there was a new challenge to God's people, so God sent a special messenger to speak to the people. In order for the people to know the messenger came from God, He validated their words by works of power. That is clearly seen in the ministry of Jesus (Matthew 9:6).

During the church age, when we live by grace and not law, when Israel has temporarily been set aside and the church, the Bride of Christ, is now God's means to reveal Himself to the church, God's covenant to heal His people when they obey Him is no longer in operation. We see people like Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25-27) and even Paul (thorn in the flesh, 2 Corinthians 12:7) not healed. Trophimus is left sick at Miletus (2 Timothy 4:20) and Timothy has stomach problems (1 Timothy 5:23). Miracles and healing were no longer necessary as a sign of God's power for the gospel had been active for many years and people could look at the changed lives of the men of God to see God's power at work.

God is still a God who heals. He doesn't give anyone the ability to heal but does it directly. There is no one who can heal everyone from everything, but God Himself is our great healer. He heals not just bodies, which will soon get sick again and die, better yet He heals souls which live forever with Him. Has He healed yours?

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Thank God for all He has healed/restored you from in life: physically, spiritually, emotionally, in all ways. Thank Him for all the illness and sickness you have not gotten. Thank Him for providing chemicals with healing powers and allowing men to discover those resources to bring health-giving medicines to us today. Thank Him especially for healing your soul.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Jehovah Rophe, the God who heals, is a common Old Testament theme. In the blank before each verse write who the verse refers to, who is being healed. You may have to look some of them up in the Bible and look at the verses before this one to see who it is talking about.

_____ Exodus 15:26 He said, "If you listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his eyes, if you pay attention to his commands and keep all his decrees, I will not bring on you any of the diseases I brought on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord, who heals you."

_____ Exodus 23:25 Worship the Lord your God, and his blessing will be on your food and water. I will take away sickness from among you,

_____ 2 Kings 20:5 "Go back and tell Hezekiah, the leader of my people, 'This is what the Lord, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now you will go up to the temple of the Lord.

_____ Job 5:18 For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal.

_____ Psalms 41:3-4 The Lord will sustain him on his sickbed and restore him from his bed of illness. I said, "O Lord, have mercy on me; heal me, for I have sinned against you."

_____ Psalms 103:3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases,

_____ Psalms 147:3 He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

_____ Isaiah 57:18 I have seen his ways, but I will heal him; I will guide him and restore comfort to him,

_____ Jeremiah 8:22 Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is there no healing for the wound of my people?

_____ Jeremiah 33:6 "Nevertheless, I will bring health and healing to it; I will heal my people and will let them enjoy abundant peace and security.

_____ Hosea 6:1 "Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds.

_____ James 5:11-16 Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. 14 Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

BLOG 291: 'JEHOVAH SHALOM' (The Lord is Peace) (Names of God 12)

Everyone is searching for peace today but few are finding it. Many use drugs or addictions to substitute, but real peace only comes from God Himself. In fact, the Hebrew word translated 'Shalom' means more than just peace. It has the idea of being well in every sense of the word. We often think of peace as absence of outer conflict, but real peace refers to a wholeness, completeness, wellness and soundness. Without God as the central focus in our lives something is missing so there can be no peace without Him!

This name of God is used by Gideon after He appeared to Gideon who was hiding in a hole threshing wheat. His fear was evident, certainly there was no peace in his life. But when he realized it was God Himself he was speaking to and who was offering him peace he built an altar and dedicated it to Jehovah Shalom, "The Lord is Peace" (Judges 6:22-24). *Judges 6:22 When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, "Ah, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD face to face!" 23 But the LORD said to him, "Peace! Do not be afraid. You are not going to die." 24 So Gideon built an altar to the LORD there and called it The LORD is Peace. To this day it stands in Ophrah of the Abiezrites.*

God makes peace with us today. Our sin has separated us from Him and made us enemies. Only He could make peace by removing the enmity by paying for our sins on the cross. Because of that we have peace **WITH** God (Romans 5:1; Ephesians 2:14; Luke 2:14). In

addition, we can also have the peace **OF** God as well. This is the peace His people can have in daily life, not because He changes circumstances but because His Spirit inside produces the fruit of peace when we are close to Him (Galatians 5:22-23; Philippians 4:6-7).

People would pay millions of dollars for peace, but it can only be found in God and is only for His children. It's available for you. Do you have His peace?

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Where do you need peace now? What are you afraid of (be honest, lift everything)? Every time you get scared ask Jehovah Shalom to give you His peace!

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

What do the following verses say about peace? Pray before starting and ask God to show the truth in His Word to you. Meditate on each one, don't rush as if this were a fill in the blank test. Listen to God's Spirit reveal His truth to you. Read between the lines. Put yourself in the place of the man who wrote it and of the people who read it, what did it mean to them? If Jesus were sitting beside you doing this study with you, what would He say it means? You may need to look at the context (verses before and after) to get a complete picture of the verse itself.

Judges 6:22-24

Romans 5:1

Ephesians 2:14

Colossians 1:20

Luke 2:14

Philippians 4:6-7

BLOG 292: 'JEHJOVAH QUADHOSH' (The Lord The Holy One) (Names of God 13)

We live in a day and age when the love of God is focused upon, not His holiness and separation from sin. While focusing on His love is great, sometimes we miss the needed balance that comes from remembering He is holy. To the Jews in the old testament He often revealed Himself as "Jehovah The Holy One" or "Jehovah the One Who Makes You Holy."

The first occurrence of this name is in Leviticus 20:8. In Genesis we see man's need of redemption for man sins and ends up in bondage in Egypt. God reveals Himself as Jeovah Jireh, the Lord Will Provide. Without God's provision man would never get out of bondage. Then in Exodus we see God as He provides for their deliverance by the Passover Lamb and through the Red Sea. He reveals Himself as Jehovah Rophe, the God who heals their life wounds, and Jehovah Nissi, the God who leads them to victory against Amalek (the flesh). Now in Leviticus God reveals Himself to His redeemed people as the Holy One Who requires holiness from His people.

The basic idea behind the Hebrew word translated 'holy' is that of separation, consecration. Thus the word can be translated "holy, dedicate, consecrate, sanctify, sanctuary, hallow and holy." It appears over 700 times in its various forms. But the primary idea is to be set apart or separated from something.

It is used of times and seasons: the Sabbath Day is set apart for God's use (Genesis 2:3) and so were the great feasts of Israel. It is used of places: Zion, Jerusalem, the altar, the tabernacle and the Temple are all 'holy' – 'set apart.' The land of Israel itself is called the 'Holy' Land. The priests were set apart for service to God. God Himself is set apart from sin and

anything below His perfection. So the idea behind 'holy' is not something that has attained perfection, but something that has been set apart from sinful or even just 'normal' everyday use and dedicated to God's service. The articles used in the tabernacle are a perfect example. Bowls and plates can't attain sinless perfection, but they can be (and were) set apart to God's service in the tabernacle. They were no longer to be used for common, everyday use, but strictly for God's service. They were 'set apart.'

God Himself is set apart from sin and from common usage. He has nothing to do with sin, He is apart from and far beyond sin and everything in His created world (Deuteronomy 4:35). He is holy, as Isaiah alone says more than 30 times. His holiness is seen in contrast to man's failure. His Spirit is called the 'Holy' Spirit because He is far above everything common and ordinary. When God became man, the One we call Jesus, He lived a holy life, a life set apart from sin and corruption, a life dedicated to God and His glory (Hebrews 4:15). Because of this He could pay for our sins on the cross so we can receive His holiness and be like Him. He is the one who sets us apart from sin and corruption, for hell and eternal punishment, He is our sanctifier (1 Corinthians 1:30; Hebrews 10:10, 14). We owe it all to Him!

Because He is holy He requires us to be holy as well. He knows we can't attain sinless perfection in this life (1 John 1:8-10) but we can set ourselves apart from sin and the distractions of this life to live for and serve Him. Jesus prays we will be "sanctified through truth" (John 17:17). He then continues "Your Word is truth." It's through learning and applying the Bible that we know God's perfect standard and make it part of our lives. While God sees us as perfect, as 'saints' through the blood of Jesus, it is up to us to live a life that is holy and set apart to Him. This begins with a mental decision and then becomes part of all we are (Romans 12:1-2). This way we can be holy and spotless when we die or when He returns for us (Ephesians 5:26-27). We don't do it in our own strength, but He makes it available to us. "Be holy for I am holy" Is His message to us (Leviticus 19:2, 20:7, 26; 1 Peter 1:16).

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

What is it that gives you the hardest time in being holy, being set apart from sin and the world and totally dedicated to God? Why is this such a difficulty for you? What can you do today to have victory over it? What does God's Word say about it and how to conquer it? Find some verses and write them down. Read them today whenever this issue comes up. Now pray and ask God for wisdom and insight, for strength and courage, and for conviction and power to become more holy like Him.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

While words have the same basic meaning no matter who uses them, sometimes a writer will focus on one aspect of a word more than other aspects. Jehovah Qadhosh, "Jehovah the Holy One," is used by Isaiah 30 times. The first use of a word often gives a hint of what following uses will focus on as well.

Why did Isaiah use "Holy One" in Isaiah 1:4? Why was He trying to emphasize this characteristic of God above all other names he could have used?

Look at the first 10 uses and write a short summary of why God is referred to as holy:

Isa 4:3

Isa 5:16

Isa 5:19

Isa 5:24

Isa 6:3

Isa 6:3

Isa 6:3

Isa 10:17

Isa 10:20

Isa 12:6

If you would like to look at the rest of the verses in Isaiah here they are:

Isa 17:7	Isa 29:19	Isa 29:23	Isa 30:11	Isa 30:12	Isa 30:15	Isa 31:1
Isa 37:23	Isa 40:25	Isa 41:14	Isa 41:16	Isa 41:20	Isa 43:3	Isa 43:14
Isa 43:15	Isa 45:11	Isa 47:4	Isa 48:17	Isa 49:7	Isa 49:7	Isa 54:5
Isa 55:5	Isa 57:15	Isa 57:15	Isa 58:13	Isa 60:9	Isa 60:14	

BLOG 293: 'JEHOVAH TSIDKENU' (The Lord is Our Righteousness) (Names of God 14)

The Jews were to be God's special people, but time after time they failed Him and lived in sin. Eventually God let the northern kingdom, Israel, go into captivity. The southern kingdom, Judah, followed not long after for they, too, turned from God's perfection and instead followed the pagan nations around them in their immoral and idolatrous worship. Finally God said He would judge them as well (2 Kings 23:26-27). Because He is righteous He cannot allow sin in His presence.

However He had promised numerous times that He would establish David's kingdom and throne forever (2 Samuel 7:16-17; 1 Kings 2:4). How could He judge sin yet keep this promise? The only way would be to have a time when the Jews returned to the land in righteousness and He again lived among them and ruled over them. Jeremiah taught about such a time. He lived during the fall of Judah and became known as the "Weeping Prophet" because of how seeing God's judgment broke his heart. Yet, through Him, God foretold a time when He would return and reign as righteous judge over a righteous people. From other Scripture we know this time will be the Kingdom Age (Millennium). In their worst hour, God reassures the people through Jeremiah the prophet, that Jehovah Our Righteousness will redeem Israel and live among His people (Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16).

The word translated 'righteous' is used many times in the Old Testament. The root idea is that of something stiff or straight. It really can't be translated by any one English word. It signifies God's dealing with men under the ideas of righteousness, justification and acquittal. It is variously translated as right, righteous, just, justify, declare innocent and many other ways (see the assignment below).

The Bible makes clear that we lack righteousness. Even our good acts, our 'righteous' acts humanly speaking, are to God as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6) and dung (Philippians 3:4-9). We can only imagine what our sin is like in His sight! Still, He takes our sin on Himself and in return gives us His righteousness. Psalm 49:7 says that God's Righteous servant (Jesus) would take our sins and give us righteousness instead. Jesus is the One who is Jehovah Tsidkenu, The Lord Our Righteousness, as well. It is through Him and Him alone that we can approach a righteous God. Because of Him we can be declared righteous and take part in His eternal Kingdom. It's too hard to really grasp the depths of all this means, but certainly something we can thank Him for nevertheless!

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Remember the time when you exchanged your sin for His righteousness? Review it in your mind, thanking and worshipping Him again as you do so.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

The name "The Lord our Righteousness" is only used twice in the Bible (Jeremiah 23:6; 33:16), but the word "righteousness" is used 98 other times. For each verse below write a another word which you could use instead of righteousness – the word which is underlined (a synonym).

Deuteronomy 1:16 And I charged your judges at that time: Hear the disputes between your brothers and judge fairly, whether the case is between brother Israelites or between one of them and an alien.

Deuteronomy 25:15 You must have accurate and honest weights and measures, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you. _____

Job 8:3 Does God pervert justice? Does the Almighty pervert what is right?

Job 35:2 "Do you think this is just? You say, 'I will be cleared by God.'

Psalms 18:20 The Lord has dealt with me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands he has rewarded me. _____

Psalms 89:14 Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you. _____

Psalms 119:75 I know, O Lord, that your laws are righteous, and in faithfulness you have afflicted me. _____

Proverbs 1:3 for acquiring a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair;

Ecclesiastes 7:15 In this meaningless life of mine I have seen both of these: a righteous man perishing in his righteousness, and a wicked man living long in his wickedness.

Hosea 10:12 Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers righteousness on you.

Now, from all these various words which come from the same Hebrew word for righteousness, write a short definition of what the word means:

BLOG 294: 'JEHJOVAH SHAMMAH' (The Lord is Present) (Names of God 15)

Despite a full slate of social activities, and all the socializing opportunities available on line, many people are lonely today. It is a growing problem among all age groups. Being lonely has nothing to do with being alone. One can be alone and not be lonely, or with a large group and experience extreme loneliness. Adam was lonely in Eden before sin entered.

The only one that can really remove loneliness is God. In fact, one of His names in the Old Testament is Jehovah Shammah, "Jehovah With Us" or "Jehovah is Present." It is used in the last verse of Ezekiel (48:35). The Jews have been taken into captivity but God is promising

them a future time in the land when everything will return to Garden of Eden conditions and God and man will again dwell together.

God has been present with His people in the past. He was with man in Eden, with Noah and his family in the ark, with Daniel in the lion's den and with his friends in the fiery furnace. In the New Testament He was present as Jesus. In Isaiah 7:14 it is prophesied "A virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel." This was fulfilled in Matthew 1:22-23. Notice the 'el' ending of Immanuel. It is 'God.' Immanuel means "God is with us." Jehovah Shammah means "Jehovah is with us." Different word but same meaning. Jesus was God present among man.

But what about today? God the father is always present (Philippians 45) for He is omnipresent. He protects us with His angels. Jesus promised He would be with us always, even to the end of the world (Matthew 28:20). Even more so, the Holy Spirit is present in each one of us (John 16:7). God's presence IN us is much better than if He were still alive on earth and living AMONG us. There is no way of being more present than living inside us!

In the past God was with man. In the present He is still with us. In the future it gets better yet, for He will be physically present with us forever (Acts 1:10-11; Revelation 22:20-21). When we die we immediately go to His presence and stay there forever (Luke 23:43). We don't have to die to be in His presence, though. At any moment Jesus could return and take us to heaven to be with Him forever (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). However it happens, we will be in God's presence forever.

Jehovah Shammah, The Lord is Present/With Us. He is always with us and always will be. He is before us (Isaiah 48:17), behind us (Isaiah 30:21), to the right of us (Psalm 16:8), to the left of us (Jon 23:9), above us (Psalm 36:7), underneath us (Deuteronomy 33:27) and within us (1 Corinthians 3:16). God is indeed present with us!

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

No other religion has a God who is present with them. The only other power in the universe that seeks to be present in people is Satan through his demons. So these are our options: be totally alone, have demons present in our lives, or have God present. There are no other options. Thank God that He wants to be present with us!

Another thought: while heaven is heaven because of God's presence, hell is hell because of the absence of God's presence. The difference between heaven and hell is God's presence. Think about all the difference God's presence makes! Thank Him for it.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

While the name "The Lord is Present" comes from Ezekiel 48:35, the concept is true throughout the Bible. Name some times in the Bible when God was present with His people? Think carefully and name as many times as you can, in the Old and New Testament.

List some times when you experienced His presence in your life in a very real way?

What difference would it make if God were not a God who was involved with His people, if He were distant and uninvolved?

BLOG 295: 'JEHOVAH SABAOTH' (The Lord of Hosts) (Names of God 16)

This is one of my personal favorite names for God, perhaps because of the power and awesomeness it conveys. My involvement in spiritual warfare makes me well aware of the

powers in the universe around us, but knowing God is much greater brings great peace and confidence. It will for you as well.

The name “Jehovah Sabaoth” became familiar when David used it of God in his battle against Goliath (1 Samuel 17:45). “Lord of Hosts” means “Lord of large groups.” A ‘host’ is a large group – angels, demons, Jews, Gentiles, whatever group it may be. God is sovereign over all of them. David recognized He was in control of Goliath and the Philistines, so Goliath and the Philistines could never defeat the Jews if they were following God.

The name is also used by Isaiah (Isaiah 37:16) when Assyria surrounded Jerusalem and was about to destroy Judas as they had Israel. The people turned to God in prayer and trust, and the Angel of Jehovah killed 185,000 of them in one night. “The Lord of Hosts” was sovereign over the Assyrians as well.

Note that it is the “Angel of Jehovah” who brought judgment on the enemies of His people. We saw before that He is the second person of the Trinity, the One we call “Jesus” in the New Testament. We think of Jesus as meek, mild, turning the other cheek, taking whatever was dished out to Him. Seeing Him bring that amount of judgment shows a different aspect of His character.

Which is the ‘real’ Jesus – the One bringing Judgment in the Old Testament or peace and reconciliation in the New Testament? The answer, of course, is both. His righteous indignation and judgment of sin is formidable and awe-inspiring. The only reason He let them abuse Him and crucify Him is for our sake. He could have ended it and destroyed His enemies with a word but let them have their way so that our sins could be paid for and we could have redemption. He didn’t have to let it happen, He chose to let it happen – for our sake! He was still the Lord of Hosts and could have destroyed the Jews and Romans without any problem, but He didn’t.

This name became popular among the later prophets when the Jews were being overrun by the nations around them. It reaffirmed that God was still in sovereign control over all the other nations. Jeremiah uses the name 80 times, Haggai 14 times, Zechariah 50 times and Malachi 25 times.

In looking forward to God’s final removal of evil and ultimate deliverance of His people, David again uses the name “Jehovah Sabaoth” in Psalm 24:10. We see the fulfillment of that prophecy in Revelation 19:11-16 when, 7 years after the rapture, Jesus returns with His angels and us to destroy all the hosts of the earth gathered against Him at Armageddon. In the next chapter He defeats the hosts of Satan and his demons as well. He is Jehovah Sabaoth, the Lord of Hosts.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Read Romans 8:31-39. Apply the name “Jehovah Sabaoth” to each phrase in this passage. What does this show about God? Which of these most apply to your current needs in life? Pray to Him as the Lord of Hosts and ask Him to bring you victory in all you face today.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

The name “Lord of Hosts” is often translated “Lord Almighty.” It refers to God’s greatness over all ‘hosts’ – large groups (people, angels or demons). Read 1 Samuel 17:1-46, the story of David and Goliath. The rewrite verses 45-47 in your own words. Be creative. Use terms you think David might have used were he alive today. Rewriting a passage is a great way to better understand the passage.

BLOG 296: ‘HUA’ (Unchangeable God) (Names of God 17)

We live in a world of change. Think of life in your grandparent's day and compare it to today and you'll see changes everywhere. More changes are taking place every day. Books are obsolete by the time they are published because of new discoveries. Even moral standards change, as is clearly evident in the world around us today. Internationally changes take place as well as nations rise and decline. In our individual lives changes are continually taking place. We grow older, children move away and marry, jobs change, health changes as we age. Everything changes. Only God does not change.

In Psalms 102:26-27 we read "They will perish, but You remain; they will all wear out like a garment. Like clothing you will change them and they will be discarded. But You remain the same, and your years will never end." "Hua" means "You remain the same." It is in the present tense. It is a key name for God, because all the other names won't mean a thing if not for this one. All He was in the past, or even present, goes for nothing if there is the slightest chance He will change in the future. But God choose to not change, and locked Himself into that promise. He is unchangeable.

That's why we can depend on Him, why we can count on His promises and know He will always be with us. He never changes. He doesn't go through mood changes. He is not capricious like the Greek gods or even like Allah. He is always good and holy and grace and mercy. He can't change, because He is perfect. So there is not way for Him to improve. Thus any change would be downward and away from perfection. We know that can't and won't happen. So He will never change in His love and dealings with us.

Those whom we have depended on, even those we have loved the most, always have times of change and when they let us down. Many assume one day God will tire of them, run out of patience or stop loving them. But God does not change. As He is now He always will be. He will be the same for all eternity.

This name not only applies to God the Father (Psalm 102:27) but also the Son, Jesus. Psalm 102:27 is quoted in Hebrews 1:12 and referred to Jesus. He, too, remains the same for all eternity. Forever! All things change but He will never. He is the one constant in a changing world!

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

In Matthew 24:35 Jesus says: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." His Word is more sure and dependable, and also more long lasting, than our whole universe. Meditate on that for a moment. What does that tell you about God's Word? Read some of your favorite passages and think of them still being true, even after the whole universe is gone. Take some time to thank and praise God for this truth.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

God is unchangeable. Psalm 102:27 says "You remain the same." This is the 3rd person singular used alone, "he is." Not "he was" or "he will be" but he always is. Therefore He never changes.

List some of the things in your life that have changed over the years.

What changes are still to come for you and the world around you?

Does thinking of the future and its changes scare you? Why or why not?

Why does God allow things to change? Why not always keep everything the same?

Can you think of anyone or anything that doesn't change?

What would be different if God changed as time went on as well as everything else?

What difference would it make if the Bible changed from time to time?

Write down several of your favorite Bible promises.

What difference does it make knowing they won't ever change?

BLOG 297: 'ABBA' (Father) (Names of God 18)

When God established families He patterned them after our relationship with Him. He used the father image to help show His love and care for us. Unfortunately many have had bad experiences with their father and often reflect that to God, but the truth is that He can make up for those things. He is the perfect Father we all need, even if we had a very good earthly father.

The Hebrew word for father, abba, literally means "daddy" and refers to God as our loving Father (Romans 8:15; Isaiah 63:16). *Romans 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."* *Isaiah 63:16 But you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us or Israel acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our Father, our Redeemer from of old is your name.*

He cares, He provides, He guides, He does what is best for us, He disciplines, He restores and He forgives. Like the father of the prodigal son, He is always waiting for us to return when we drift. We pray to "Our Father Who is in heaven." We enjoy His unconditional love and provision. He is the perfect Father we all need.

A somewhat similar family relationship we have with Him is as a husband to a wife. He is our perfect, loving, forgiving, faithful, providing and protecting husband. The story of Hosea and Gomer show God's unconditional love through Hosea's husband love for his unfaithful wife (Hosea 2:16). *Hosea 2:16 "In that day," declares the LORD, "you will call me 'my husband'; you will no longer call me 'my master.' ... 19 I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. 20 I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD. Isa 54:5 For your Maker is your husband-- the LORD Almighty is his name-- the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.*

In this day and age when family relationships are often lacking, we have One who can and will be a perfect father or husband to us, God Himself. He wants that kind of an intimate, personal relationship with Him. Do you have it? It's available if you want it.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Earthly fathers are imperfect and make mistakes, but our heavenly Father never does! Our heavenly Father always is with us and always understands. We all need a father to provide love, guidance and direction, someone who understands and cares. Go to your Abba Father as you would an earthly father and let Him meet your needs.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

'Father' is one of our most common names for God. In each of the verses below write who is calling God 'Father.' Also write why they are seeing Him as father at this particular time.

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father."

Who?

Why?

Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42 "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

Who?

Why?

Luke 11:2 He said to them, "When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come.

Who?

Why?

Luke 22:42 "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done."

Who?

Why?

John 20:17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

Who?

Why?

NAMES OF JESUS BLOGS

BLOG 298: 'JESUS' (Names of Jesus 1)

Have you ever wondered about names and what they mean? In some cultures a name is very significant and tells a lot about a person. That is true with names in the Bible. 'Abram' ('father of high places) had his name changed to 'Abraham' ('father of many nations') when God promised the Jewish nation would come from him. 'Sari' ('contentions') was changed to 'Sarah' ('princess, sweet gentle') when she let God change her. Names in the Bible are important because they reveal truths about the character of the person. This is true of God as well (Exodus 3:13) and explains why He has so many and varied names (Exodus 6:2-3).

Before Jesus was born God chose His name to be 'Jesus' (Luke 1:29-33; Matthew 1:20-25). 'Jesus' was a common name because it was the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name 'Joshua.' Many parents wanted their son to grow up to be a courageous leader for God like Joshua so it was a common name. Like Joshua, Jesus led those who follow Him to victory. The word 'Jesus/Joshua' basically means "Jehovah saves" and speaks of Him as our deliverer. That's why God chose that name for His son.

In addition to the Joshua who led the Jews into the land there was a high priest named 'Jeshua' which is another form of the same name (Ezra 3:1-9). He was a high priest following the Jews' return from captivity in Babylon. The high priest carried the guilt for the people's sins in a symbolic way, Jesus did it in a real way as our sin-bearer (Hebrews 4:14-16; 9:6-28).

The same name appears as 'Hosea' in English, which also means 'Jehovah saves.' Hosea is a perfect picture of God's love for us in that his wife left him for others but despite her unfaithfulness He paid the price to buy her back and restore her as his wife (book of Hosea). That, too, is a picture of Jesus who redeemed us, who bought us back from our sin (Galatians 3:10-14).

Jesus is the most common and familiar name used of God in human form in the Old Testament of the more than 300 names and titles, it is the most common, used about 550 times. It is truly a very significant name because it is a saving name (John 20:31). There is no other name we can call upon for salvation (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). We can't call upon Mohammed or Buddha to save us. We can't call upon our good works to earn our salvation (Ephesians 2:8-9). It is only the name 'Jesus' that brings salvation.

The name 'Jesus' is a satisfying name (John 14:1-14). How many people in the last 2,000 years have called upon that name to help them in a time of sorrow? Also it is a strengthening name (Acts 3:6, 16). Strength for healing, for daily life, for whatever we face comes through Jesus. That's because 'Jesus' is above all a supreme name (Philippians 2:9-10; Acts 16:18). Satan and demons must yield and submit to the name of Jesus.

Personally, I know it is a sweet name, the sweetest name ever (John 9:11). What thoughts and emotions come to you when you think of the name 'Jesus'? How many times have you used that name in worship or prayer? It is sweet to all God's people, that's why there have been thousands of songs written about that name. 'Jesus.' There isn't a better word in any language than 'Jesus.'

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

'Jesus' means 'deliverer, savior.' Make a list of as many things as you can think from which Jesus has delivered you. Pray and thank Him for each one individually.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

One of the best ways to get more out of a Bible passage you study is to put yourself in the place of the person who first read the passage, the ones it was written for. For example, Luke wrote Acts 16:16-18 to a man named Theophilus. He was a Christian living in Paul's time who wanted to know more about Jesus. What would he have thought about Paul casting out a demon in Jesus' name? If you were him and could have asked Luke questions about what he wrote, what would you have asked? I would have asked Paul why he didn't cast out the demon right away? What was he feeling when he was 'troubled' – sorrow for the girl, anger at Satan, frustrated at the interruptions or what? Did the girl know it was a demon speaking through her or was she surprised when Paul talked to her in this way? Did the demon ever try to return? Where did the demon go when he left her? What did Paul do to help you afterwards? We may not know the answer to these questions, but asking them helps the passage come alive and give us greater insight into what the Scripture says.

Before reading the next blog read Luke 9:18-27 and put yourself in the place of the person who read this – also written by Luke to Theophilus. What questions do you have about this passage? What would you have liked to ask Luke if he were there?

BLOG 299: 'CHRIST' (Names of Jesus 2)

My name is Jerry. But some people feel uncomfortable using that name so they call me 'Pastor.' I have gotten used to that designation and answer to it when addressed in that way. It has become almost like a second name for me. In reality, though, it isn't a name at all but a title. Common use turns it into a name. That is true of other titles like 'Doctor,' 'Coach' and 'Teacher.' It also applies to the title 'Christ,' for 'Christ' is the label which describes The God-man who was prophesied to come to earth to reconcile man and God by His death and resurrection. The fact that this title was applied to Jesus of Nazareth shows that Jesus the man was also the Christ/Messiah. Others recognized this about Him (Luke 9:18-27; John 1:40-42; 4:25-26).

What was so special about being the Christ? We must understand more about the name to grasp the full significance of it. 'Christ' is the Greek word for 'anointed (or smeared).' The Old Testament equivalent is 'Messiah,:' which also means 'anointed.' This was usually done with oil and was used as the initiation of a man as a priest (Exodus 29:29; Leviticus 4:3), a prophet (Isaiah 61:1) or a king (1 Samuel 10:1; 24:7; 1 Kings 19:16). When Christ was baptized by John the Holy Spirit anointed Him as a priest, prophet and king (Matthew 3:16-17). This was one of the hundreds of prophecies that He fulfilled showing He alone qualified to be the Christ. No other person could ever be all three for no mere human being could be both a king (tribe of Judah) and priest (tribe of Levi). Jesus was able to be both because He was a priest after the order of Melchizedek, an eternal priesthood, and not of Aaron's priesthood which lasted only for this life (Hebrews 1:6-10; 6:20; 7:1-17).

Jesus as priest. A priest was a go-between between God and man. He represented God to man but showing us what God was like and what He expected of us. He also represented man to God because, as a man, He knew by experience all that we go through. We benefit from His sacrifice and intercession (Hebrews 7:25). As the Messiah He showed man God's perfect standard, which man cannot meet. As the Messiah He also paid God's price for sin by His suffering on the cross so we could be reconciled to God. When Jesus left His carpenter's shop in Nazareth to present Himself to John as the Messiah He was volunteering to do all that was required of the Messiah and prophesied in the Old Testament (Isaiah 53 for example).

Jesus as prophet. A prophet warned of danger and guided the people in their future direction. Jesus does this through His teaching ministry. His words are recorded in the 4 gospels. He reveals them to us through His Spirit (John 14:26; 16:13). Having provided salvation as our priest, He now teaches us how to live as our prophet.

Jesus as king. Jesus came as King of the Jews on Palm Sunday, but most rejected Him because they wanted a military king to fight against Rome instead of a lamb to be slaughtered for sin. Pilate recognized who He was and put a sign on the cross proclaiming Him as the king of the Jews. Revelation 19 describes what it will be like when this King returns! A king is responsible to provide for and care for His people, and Jesus does that for us by giving us spiritual gifts (Ephesians 1:3; etc.). Paul lists many blessings from our King ("in Christ") throughout Ephesians.

In the Gospels He is referred to as "**Jesus Christ**" for the focus is on His humanity. The man Jesus of Nazareth is the God-man prophesied to be our Priest, Prophet and King! However in the epistles Paul refers to Him as "**Christ Jesus**" for after His resurrection and ascension the focus is on Jesus as the God-man who conquered sin. He is exalted and glorified God who had become the man Jesus of Nazareth. **Jesus** suffered in the past but **Christ** lives eternally at the right hand of God in heaven.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Christ as king has given you many great gifts. List as many as you can.

What gifts can you give Him? What is the main gift He wants from you?

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Lets continue to dig deeper into a passage by asking questions. Read Romans 10:9-13. If you were in the church at Rome and this was read to you, what questions would you have for Paul the next time he visited? Think of as many as you can and write them down.

BLOG 300: LORD (Names of Jesus 3)

What comes to mind when you think of the word 'lord'? Often it has to do with something from the feudal system, and that is pretty much what the word means in the Bible. Master, owner and authority figure are pretty close synonyms. In the feudal system a lord protected, guided and cared for his people who, in turn, were loyal and obedient to him. That's the way it is with us and Jesus today.

Lord often used as a title (name) of Jesus and is the second most common designation used for Him. It occurs 150 times in the Gospels, 100 more as 'Lord Jesus,' and over 500 times in the rest of the New Testament. Basically it refers to Jesus as Master, in effect as God who sovereignly rules over the affairs of men. Some times it is used of men who are in a position of authority (Genesis 24:12, 18, 21) but they, too, are under the authority of Jesus Who is 'Lord of all lords' (Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

Lord is often used in conjunction with another term to describe Jesus. Paul says He is "Lord of all" (Romans 10:12; Acts 10:36). Isaiah calls Him "Lord God" (Isaiah 40:10). Stephen referred to Him as "Lord Jesus" when he was dying (Acts 7:59). He is 'Lord' because He is Stephen's Master, the one Stephen serves in life and as he is dying. 'Jesus' refers to the man from Nazareth who lived on this earth, died and came back to life. 'Lord' is mentioned first because Stephen lived after Jesus' earthly life and Jesus is now proved to all as God and Lord. Conversely, the angels told shepherds that "Christ the Lord" was born (Luke 2:11) because His work as the Messiah who came to pay for sin was in focus. It was the "Lord," God Himself, who would be the Messiah/Christ.

So now we have 3 names/titles: "Jesus" is His human name referring to Him as Savior, Deliverer (Matthew 1:21). It is the New Testament (Greek) equivalent of the Old Testament (Hebrew) name Joshua. "Christ" ("Messiah" in the Old Testament) refers to Him as the Anointed One, the Priest, Prophet and King who was to be both God and man. "Lord" refers to Him as our Master, Owner for He is deity. He is God (Lord) and man (Jesus) in one person (Christ). Just as blue (sky, death) and red (blood, humanity) mix to make purple (royal kingly color) so the Lord Jesus Christ is 100% God, 100% man and thus God and man in one.

Whenever you come across a combination of these names always note which comes first for that is what the author is emphasizing. "Lord Jesus Christ" for example emphasizes His death and is commonly used in the Epistles (after His death and resurrection). "Jesus Christ the Lord" focuses on the man Jesus who came from Nazareth and who was God. This is more commonly used in the Gospels, before His death and resurrection. Whichever is first is emphasized. Every word in the Bible is inspired, even the order of the words. Nothing is insignificant.

How does this apply to you? Can you call Him "Jesus"? Is He your Savior and deliverer, the one who paid for your sins on the cross? Have you accepted this free gift by faith? Only a small portion of mankind can call Him "Jesus." But only a minor portion of those who can call Him "Jesus" can then also call Him "Lord." Calling Him "Lord" means recognizing He is your master, your owner, the one with sovereign control over your life, the one you promise to obey and faithfully live for. Can you call Him "Lord"? Calling Him "Jesus" is of no cost to us, He paid the whole cost. But calling Him "Lord" is very costly to us for we commit to giving up everything for Him. What about you? Can you call Him "Jesus"? Can you call Him "Lord"?

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Take a moment to pray and thank Him for His role as "Jesus" your savior and deliverer. Then refer to Him as "Lord," committing yourself to Him as your owner and master. Thank Him for His protection, guidance and care. Promise your loyalty and service to the one who is your Lord.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Some times it is hard to tell which Person of the Trinity a name refers to. For example, In Revelation 19:6 the title "Lord God Omnipotent" is used. Does it refer to the Father or Son? The verse doesn't make it clear, but the context does. Look at the verses before and after the verse in question to determine the context. This One is called "God" (verses 5 and 1). We read that He is seated on the throne (verse 4). Just whom does John picture on the throne in Revelation? Chapters 4 and 5 in Revelation have already detailed this scene. The One on the throne has a scroll that no one is able to open until the Lamb of God comes and stands before the throne to take and open this scroll (5:6-7). That is clearly a picture of Jesus (verse 12). So it must be the First Person of the Trinity on the throne, God the Father.

By knowing the context many of the questions you have asked can be answered and more insight gained into a passage. Let the Bible interpret itself in this way. Read Judges 6:22. Gideon says He is God. Look in the context, the verses before and after, and write down all the proofs you can find that this Angel of the Lord is God. Also write down questions you would like to ask the author of this passage.

BLOG 301: ANGEL OF THE LORD (Names of Jesus 4)

As He was waling on the road to Emmaus on the day He resurrected, Jesus came upon 2 disciples who were sad and confused over their Messiah's death. While walking with them He went back through the Old Testament and explained to them all the things it had to say about Him (Luke 24:13-35). That night back in Jerusalem He gave this same talk to all His disciples gathered in the upper room (Luke 24:45). What a lesson that must have been!

Too often we relegate Jesus to the New Testament miss all the Old Testament has to say about Him. There are hundreds of prophecies (456 the rabbi's say) and many, many types as well. These are pictures of Him, like Joshua being a picture of Jesus as deliver, Melchizedek a picture of Jesus as eternal king and priest in one, Joseph a picture of one rejected by his brothers despite no recorded sin in his life, Passover and the innocent blood of a lamb to cover sin and hundreds more. But what we often overlook is Jesus' appearances in the Old Testament.

Now understand that He wasn't called 'Jesus' until He took up our humanity at His birth, but He always existed as the Second Person of the Trinity (John 1:1, 15; 8:58). He was with the Father before creation (John 17:5, 24) and took part in creation itself (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-17). He even walked and talked with Adam and Eve in Eden (Genesis 3:8-24). The Bible tells us that no man has seen God (the Father) at any time (John 1:18) and the Holy Spirit is unseen with no visible form. Therefore every appearance of God to man is the Second Person of the Trinity, before His birth, when He was on earth as the man Jesus, and when He returns at the end of the Tribulation to rule and reign on earth (Revelation 19-22). Not only did this same Person walk and talk with Adam and Eve, He killed the animals whose skins were used to cover their shame and guilt. In doing this He knew that it was just a picture of what He Himself would do to cover sin when He came to earth.

It was this same Second Person of the Trinity, this 'Jesus' before His birth, who spoke with Noah, then closed the door of the ark and joined them inside. He rescued Hagar when she fled Abraham (Genesis 16:7-14) and appeared to Abraham to reaffirm the covenant (Genesis 17:1-27). He came to Abraham to assure Him He would have a son the next year (Genesis 18:1-15) and then later told about the coming destruction of Sodom (Genesis 18:16-19:22). He stopped Abraham from sacrificing Isaac and provided a substitute instead (Genesis 22:10-11). In fact, this was done in the same place where He Himself would die on the cross as the final substitute for all our sins.

He also spoke to Jacob in a dream (Genesis 31:11-13) and wrestled with Jacob (Genesis 32:24-32). He appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:1-14). He brought the plagues on the Egyptians and led the Jews out of Egypt in the cloud of fire. He gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai and appeared many, many times to speak with Moses (Exodus 33:11).

He blocked the way of Balaam's donkey (Numbers 22:21-35), gave Joshua instructions as to how to conquer Jericho (Joshua 5:13 – 6:2) and appeared to Gideon (Judges 6:11-23 and Samson's father (Judges 13:1-7). He appeared to many of the prophets like Ezekiel (1:1-28) and Zechariah (1:12; 12:8). He was in the fiery furnace with Daniel's three friends (Daniel 3:25) and killed 185,000 Assyrians in a single night when they surrounded Jerusalem (II Kings 19:35; Isaiah 37:36). In fact, when He came it was to bring judgment on sin. That is true in Old Testament where He brought judgment in the form of the flood, to Sodom and Gomorrah, in Egypt, on the Canaanites through Joshua, on the Assyrian army and many others. In the future He will return to earth to bring judgment at the end of the tribulation. When He was born as Jesus and grew up as a man, that was to bring judgment on sin as well. Only instead of the judgment being poured out on guilty mankind He took it Himself on the cross to spare us results of His judgment (Romans 8:1). Coming as the meek and mild Jesus, full of grace and mercy, is only possible because He became our substitute.

Every time God appears to man in the Bible it is the Second Person of the Trinity. In New Testament He is called Jesus. In the Old He is referred to as 'God', 'Lord' or more commonly 'The Angel of the LORD.' 'Angel' is Hebrew word which means 'messenger.' Jesus was God's messenger. 'LORD' is the special covenant name God used with His people. It was composed of 4 consonants, Y, H, W, H. In honor and respect the Jews never pronounced this name so no one knows what the vowels were, but 'Jehovah' and 'Yahweh' or the most common suggestions. Basically it means "I AM," referring to God's eternal existence, The First and Last, the Alpha and Omega. When Jesus used this name for Himself (John 8:58) the Jews understand He was claiming to be the One Who appeared to man in the Old Testament and tried to stone Him for blasphemy (John 8:59f).

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Think through the Old Testament, even go back and reread it. Each time God appears to man think of Him as 'Jesus' before His birth. Your understanding and appreciation for Him will grow greatly, as well as your love and trust. It is very moving to see how many times God has reached out to man, and to us as well. It is humbling to realizing that the only reason He didn't come to bring judgment to us as well is because He volunteered to take that judgment Himself. He stepped in front of us to take the bullet of eternal condemnation for us. What a wonderful God we serve!

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Read Matthew 8:22-32. Write down questions you would have asked Matthew were you there when he was writing or reading this passage. Look at the context, what happened before and after this passage, to get additional insight to what it is all about. Then see if you can discover the significance of calling Jesus 'Son of God' after this event? Why that name? Why did it become so common? See what you can discover.

BLOG 302: SON OF GOD, SON OF MAN (Names of Jesus 5)

Son. The word brings many emotions and meanings with it. What does it mean to be a 'son'? To the Jews 'son' mean the person was of the same nature and essence as the father. It described a close intimacy, an equality. Jesus, the **Son of God**, possessed the same attributes as God (John 5:21). He performed the same works (Matthew 9:2-6; John 5:24-29) and claimed

equal honor with the Father (John 5:23; 14:1). The title “Son of God” referred to Jesus as total deity.

This name, used 50 times in the Bible, was first used by John the Baptizer (John 1:34). He was so convinced Jesus was God that he was willing to die for that truth. Jesus Himself used this title to refer to Himself as God (disciples (see John 3:13,16; 5:17-31; 6:62; 8:58; 10:30; 14:1,11; Rom 1:3-4; 9:5; Col 2:9; Titus 2:13). Before His birth one of His appearances to man was in the furnace with Daniel’s 3 friends. There he is called a “son of God” (Daniel 3:25). Had he claimed to be the ‘Christ’ (Messiah) the people would have taken that to be presenting Himself as the general who came to lead an army of Jews to bring deliverance from Roman bondage. By using ‘Son of God’ instead there was no mistake that He was claiming to be God. In fact, He was ultimately crucified as a blasphemer for this claim (John 19:7).

This name was used by Gabriel in describing the child she would have (Luke 1:34-35) and by God Himself when Jesus was baptized (Matthew 3:17). Jesus called Himself Son of God (John 10:36), as did the disciples (Matthew 14:33) and even the demons (Matthew 8:29). The centurion at his crucifixion recognized He was God’s Son (God Himself, Matthew 27:54). The resurrection proved Him to indeed be God (Hebrews 1:2; Romans 1:4; Revelation 2:18).

While Son of God affirms Jesus as God, Son of Man identifies Him as a human being, a descendant of Adam. By becoming a man He identified Himself with all humanity. Before His birth He is seen at God’s throne in heaven and is identified as a “son of man” (Daniel 7:13-14). This refers to when He will return in glory as the Son of Man (Matthew 24:30; John 1:51).

This term is used 85 times in the Gospels, and always by Jesus for Himself (Matthew 8:20; Mark 2:10; 10:33; John 3:13; etc.). He wanted to make it clear that He came to be part of the human race, to identify with us in our need. Being recognized as the Son of God brought glory to Him, but being known as the Son of Man who came as our representative to pay for our guilt and shame brings us eternal life!

Jesus is also called Son of Man by Stephen who said he “saw the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56). This so-called blasphemy motivated the Jews to kill Stephen. When we get to heaven we will see Jesus as God but also as the Son of Man (Revelation 1:13; 14:14) because He left everything to be one of us.

We can summarize by saying that the Son of God left heaven to come to earth and become the Son of Man. Because He did that we, who are sons of man (human beings) can one day be sons of God (believers, brothers and sisters of Jesus Himself, Galatians 3:26; Romans 8:14). He was naturally the Son of God like we are naturally sons of men because we follow in Adam’s race. But in order for us to be a son (child) of God and spend eternity with Him He would have to humble Himself to be a lowly human being like us. As the Son of God we recognize and worship His deity. As the Son of Man we recognize He Who became one of us, Who knows all we go through because He went through it, and Who loved us so much He took our place and as a human went through our eternal punishment. Because the Son of God became the Son of Man we sons of men can become sons of God!

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Spend some time thinking about the last sentence above. Praise and thank God for its truth. Think about all the privileges and blessings you have because you are a son (or daughter) of God. How many can you name?

Being the son of royalty has its privileges, but also its obligations. As a child of God, what responsibilities do you have to Him? What does He expect of you in return? How well are you fulfilling the duties that come with your sonship?

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Read 2 Timothy 1:8-12. Continue to think of what questions you might have for Paul. Make sure you look at the context, the verses before and after it, to better understand what it is saying. Write down a list of all the different names used for Jesus in this passage. What is the significance of each particular name? Try to figure out why each particular name was used where it was used? Why that name and not another name instead? This can be a richly rewarding time of study and worship.

BLOG 303: REDEEMER, SAVIOR (Names of Jesus 6)

When Jesus first appeared to John the Baptizer to be baptized, marking the start of His public ministry, John immediately knew Who He was. The name He called Him says it all: “Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29, 36). In fact, John called Jesus this twice. He, along with those who heard him, would have immediately connected this title with the Passover lamb (Exodus 12) whose blood applied to doorposts covered the sins those inside and saved the firstborn from death. From then on the yearly festival of Passover commemorated and taught the truth that innocent blood redeems guilty sinners.

This trust was further expanded upon by the law of the kinsman redeemer (Leviticus 25:25-34). The book of Ruth clearly illustrates. Naomi’s debt could be covered and land redeemed by one who was a near relative like Boaz (Ruth 2:1,3,20; 3:12) who was free himself, had the required price (2:1) and was willing to pay the redemption price (2:8; 3:11). This beautifully pictures our redeemer, Jesus, who became our ‘kinsman’ by becoming a human being like us (Philippians 2:5-8). He, too, was free from debt to sin Himself (Hebrews 4:15), was able to pay the price for our sins (1 Peter 1:18-19) and who was willing to pay that price on the cross for us (John 10:18).

As our **Redeemer** Jesus paid the price to buy back that which was already His by creation but which had turned from Him into sin and needed redemption. Hosea did the same when he bought back his wife Gomer from slavery after she ran away from him. This is a common term that many have applied to Jesus, including Job (19:25), Isaiah (44:6, 24; 59:20; 41:14; 43:14; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16), Jeremiah (50:34), David (Psalms 19:14; 78:35), and Anna (Luke 2:38).

Closely related to the title Redeemer is **Savior**. This comes from the same root word as the name ‘Jesus.’ “You will give Him the name Jesus because He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Jesus buys us back from sin (Redeemer) and He also saves us from that which would destroy us (Savior). When people shouted ‘Hosannah’ to Jesus they were literally saying, ‘Please save us’ (Psalm 118:25).

This is one of David’s favorite names for Jesus (2 Samuel 22:3, 47; 1 Chronicles 16:35; Psalm 18:46; 24:5; 25:5; 27:9; 38:22; 42:5, 11; 43:5; 65:5; 69:19; 79:9; 85:4; 98:26). It was also used by Isaiah (43:3), Mary His own mother (Luke 1:47), angels (Luke 2:11), those who heard about Him from the woman at the well in Samaria (John 4:42), John (1 John 4:14), Paul (2 Timothy 1:10; Titus 1:4; 2:13), Peter (2 Peter 3:18) and His earthly brother Jude (Jude 25).

Each of these called Him their Savior, each but the angels. The angels never knew Him as Savior or Redeemer. They could call Him ‘The Savior’ but not “My Savior” or “My Redeemer.” Only we regenerated human beings can call Him that, and then only after we have accepted His free gift of salvation by which we are bought back from sin (Redeemer) and delivered from that which would bring eternal destruction (Savior). Only we can claim Him as our Kinsman-Redeemer, the one who paid the eternal price for our sin so we can be reunited with Him for all eternity.

What about you? Can you call Him your Redeemer, your Savior?

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Use these names as you pray. Call Him “my Redeemer,” “my Savior.” Say them slowly, savor the significance and implications of being able to call Him that. Use that as the foundation for a time of praise and worship right now. And throughout the day use these names for Him whenever you think of Him or talk to Him. What an honor and privilege to call Him MY Redeemer, MY Savior!

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

We’ve seen the many Bible people who have called Jesus their Savior or Redeemer. Each verse takes on fresh meaning when we see it through the eyes of those who said this. Job had no books of the Bible and wasn’t a Jew, but somehow he knew his Redeemer lives. Throughout the Old Testament those under the law realized the law didn’t save, only God did. Mary called her own baby her Savior, showing her recognition of Who He was and of her need for Him. The angels couldn’t call Him Savior, but Jesus’ younger earthly brother, who grew up in the same house as Him and knew Him as well as anyone recognized this about Him. Seeing the name through the eyes of the writer of the passage adds fresh significance to it. That is true of each passage you read. Knowing something about the person who wrote the passage helps give insight and understanding to the meaning. As you study your Bible always ask yourself who wrote this passage and seek to see the words through his grid: who he was, when he lived, what was going on in his life and what his personal relationship to God was like.

Do this with John 1:1-14. Ask questions as any who were hearing it then would, look at the context, but pay particular attention to the person who wrote it. What significance does this have for what is said? Then note down the names he uses for Jesus and think about why that particular name or title was chosen at that very spot.

BLOG 304: WORD & LIGHT (Names of Jesus 7)

The disciple was perhaps Jesus’ closest friend on earth. Because they were probably distant relatives John had watched his older cousin for years, and when he followed Him he was chosen not only to be a disciple but one of the inner 3. He knew Jesus as well or better than anyone in his day. After Matthew, Mark and Luke had written their synoptic Gospels focusing on Jesus’ earthly life, John wrote his bringing Jesus’ deity to the forefront. This was needed for heresies and false teachings were undermining the belief in Jesus as fully God. John wrote to correct that. He opens his book with a 14 verse short biography and summary of the whole Gospel. What is significant are the names he used for Jesus: “Word” and “Light.” These are very key since they set the foundation and direction for all John will write. Just what do they mean?

A word is a medium of manifestation. Words convey subjective unseen concepts, and Jesus as the **Word** revealed aspects of God’s character and being that are essential to our understanding of Him. These include traits like compassion, initiation, mercy and grace, holiness, forgiveness, sovereignty and power. Thoughts must be clothed in words to understand and remember them. That’s why babies can’t remember anything until they can attach word labels to the experience. We can’t really understand God without looking at the person and life of Jesus.

A word is also a means of communication. They are necessary to transmit information to others. That is how I am able to express my thoughts to you in this blog. If not for words, we couldn’t convey known truth from one generation to the next. We would each have to learn

everything from nothing by trial and error. Jesus communicates what God is like and teaches about God by His words and works.

Finally, words reveal the speaker's intellectual caliber and moral character. We form opinions about others by the words that come out of their mouths. Jesus, the Word of God, exemplifies the intellectual and moral character of God (John 1:18) and shows us how truly wonderful He is!

So Jesus as the Word reveals God to us because He is God in human flesh. But John uses another name for Him as well. He calls Him **Light** (John 1:4-9). Jesus called Himself the Light (John 8:12; 9:1-7). This, too, is a very significant name for there are many similarities between Jesus and light. Life cannot exist without light. Light is needed for everything to grow and for health as well. Light removed darkness, gives joy, reveals things as they are and provides guidance and direction for us. Darkness must flee from light, light never flees from darkness. All of these, and more, are true of Jesus as the Light of the world.

Physical light is a picture of the spiritual light He provides for all. In eternity He will also be the physical light. His Shekinah glory will light up the New Jerusalem and the whole universe (Revelation 21:34-24; 22:5). John also calls Him the Bright and Morning Star (Revelation 22:16), the first light in the darkness, signifying that the full light is on its way. Now Jesus is the Light for all who follow Him (Psalm 27:1).

Therefore these two names, Word and Light, clearly show that the man Jesus is totally God and therefore able to reveal God to us. He is 'God with skin on.' However Jesus also said that we are the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:14) and that we are to communicate God's words to men (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). As God reveals Himself to us and we become more like Him we exemplify His character and nature to others. As we walk in the light then His light reflects from us to others who are attracted to the light. Make sure your light is showing clearly, not dull, not flickering from time to time. And make sure your words and works are godly so others are attracted to Jesus through you!

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Think of some specific ways that Jesus reveals God to you? What do you know and appreciate about God because you see it exemplified in Jesus' earthly life? What traits and characteristics of God as revealed in Jesus mean the most to you personally? Which is He trying to reveal to you now, in this stage in your life?

Also think about Jesus as your light. What would your life be like without His light? Think of specific times He has guided you when you need guidance, brought joy when discouraged, given hope when things seemed hopeless, and revealed danger so it could be avoided? Thank Him for these.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

We've seen the importance of seeing a passage through the eyes of the original recipients and coming up with questions they might have asked when they hear it. We've talked about looking at the whole context to discover the meaning of a passage and that we must view the passage through the personality and perspective of the author. Now we'll see how to use other similar passages to bring insight and meaning to our study. Next we'll look at the name Mediator, which is mentioned half a dozen times in the New Testament. No one passage says it all, but together these form a complete picture of the significance of calling Jesus 'Mediator.' Look at each passage and write a summary of what it says about a Mediator, then summarize what they all say together. The passages are Galatians 3:19, 20; I Timothy 2:5; and Hebrews 8:6; 9:15 and 12:24.

BLOG 305: MEDIATOR (Names of Jesus 8)

We are all familiar with the work of a mediator: he (or she) brings differing parties together. It could be countries, workers and a union, players and owners in basketball or football, or friends who aren't getting along. A mediator is a middle man who is trusted by both sides and represents equally each side, seeking for a fair and equitable compromise solution to the situation. When 2 parties are divided, often the only way there can be reconciliation is through a mediator.

So when the Bible calls Jesus 'Mediator' (Galatians 3:19, 20; I Timothy 2:5; and Hebrews 8:6; 9:15 and 12:24) it pictures Him as the One who represents both God and man – the only One who can. But there is a difference between Jesus and other mediators today. For one thing, usually both sides must move to a central position, each must give up some of what it wants to accommodate the other. But with us and God there can be no movement from perfect holiness on God's part. He can't and won't lower His standard of what is sin. And on the side of man, there is nothing we can do to change and move toward Him. We have nothing to offer, we are hopelessly stuck in our negative position. So how is a mediator going to reconcile the two? Jesus did that by becoming man like us so He could represent us. By then paying for our sins on the cross He made it possible for us to meet God's perfect standard of holiness, not on our own but because of what He did for us. He went between us and God and became the Mediator of this new covenant.

In the Old Testament the covenant was law, which only condemned man and showed how far short we fell. The covenant Jesus mediated, the bargain He secured for us, was by grace. There is nothing we can do to earn or deserve it, nor to keep it. It is freely given. That's the only way it could be – our Mediator did it all, we do nothing but receive it.

The only way this could have been avoided was to create us in such a way as we would have never sinned and so never need a mediator. But if God has created us without a free will we would be robots, unable to ever freely choose to love and follow God. Free will brings the option to sin, which man has chosen, thus the gap. As a result our Mediator has interceded for us and has provided the best package any mediator ever produced – being a child of God in this life and living with Him forever throughout all eternity (instead of eternity in hell) just for freely accepting His gift of grace! There's never been a mediator like Him. We were helpless on our own. We needed a mediator who could pull off a miracle – and we got One! We got the best Mediator with the best deal ever!

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

What does it mean to you personally that Jesus is your Mediator? Have you accepted that free grace gift? What are you doing to show your love and appreciation for what He did for you? Think for a moment about how much He must have loved you to do that for you – before you could even do anything for Him. He knows every rotten thought and deed, yet loves you so much He died for you. What a plan! What a Mediator!

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Let's continue with looking at parallel passages to gain light on the subject we are studying. Seldom does one verse contain everything that is to be said about a subject, so taking into account other verses' contribution to the subject is important. Next we'll look at Jesus as our High Priest. Look at these verses from Hebrews about Jesus as our High Priest and write down a short summary of what each says about Him. Then write a summary paragraph combining all you have learned. These are the verses: Hebrews 2:17; 4:14-15; 5:6 (same thing is said in 5:10; 6:20 and 7:17); 7:1, 26; 9:7; 10:11-12.

BLOG 306: HIGH PRIEST (Names of Jesus 9)

If we would have grown up in Jewish culture at the time of Jesus we would have understood the significance of calling Him our 'High Priest (Hebrews 2:17; 4:14-15; 7:26; 9:7; 10:11-12, 19-22),' but since we haven't we miss the rich meaning behind this term. As 'Christ' ('Messiah') He is prophet, priest and king. The name "High Priest" specifically refers to the priestly role of Jesus.

To the Jews the priest was the go-between of God and man. He represented God to man and man to God. This is a perfect picture of Jesus. An understanding of the priesthood and tabernacle adds much to our understanding, but that is beyond the scope of this blog (see "The Tabernacle" by Jerry Schroyer for more details).

When Jesus died one of the accompanying phenomenon in nature was the tearing of the veil in the temple, from top to bottom (Matthew 27:46-52). This was humanly impossible. The veil protected man from god's presence because for a sinful human being to be in God's holy presence brought instant death. However when Jesus paid for sin on the cross then the way between man and God was open, sin was paid for, and we can come into God's presence any time we want in prayer or fellowship (Hebrews 10:19-22). Under the law only one man, the High Priest, carrying the blood of the innocent animal shed on Yom Kippur, could enter the Holy of Holies where God's presence was, and that could be done only once a year (Hebrews 9:7). Because of the work of our High Priest we can come into His presence any time, any where. That is the significance of praying "in Jesus' name." His name, authority, allow entrance to any one any time!

'High Priest' is a name for Jesus that refers to this special privilege we have. As our High Priest Jesus represented us because He was human, but the innocent blood He presented to God to cover sin was His own shed on the cross. He didn't bring a sacrifice, He was the sacrifice (Hebrews 10:11-12).

However the priesthood in Israel had limits. A man was a priest temporarily, only as long as he lived on earth. And a priest had to be from the tribe of Levi. So how could Jesus, who is from the tribe of Judah, still be our priest now? It is because He is also a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:1, 17; Psalm 110:4). Melchizedek came to Abraham after his victory in securing Lot's release (Genesis 14:17-20). He was a man just as Jesus also was (Hebrews 7:4; 1 Timothy 2:5). He was a king and a priest, as was Jesus (Genesis 14:18; Zechariah 6:12-13; Matthew 2:2). Melchizedek was the King of Righteousness, also picturing Jesus (Isaiah 11:5) and the King of Peace, also prefiguring Jesus ("Salem' means 'peace' Isaiah 11:6-9; Psalm 76:2). There is no record of a beginning or end for Melchizedek, so the writer of Hebrews says that in that way, too, he is a picture of Jesus who is eternal (Hebrews 7:1). Therefore this priesthood is far superior to the Jewish priesthood for it encompasses more and continues even through today.

Thus we have a High Priest who paid the ultimate sacrifice for sin and, as our go-between with God, opened the way for us to enter His presence any time. He continues to do that for us today. He still represents God to us for His earthly life showed us what God is like. He still represents us to God for it is His sacrifice on the cross which continues even now to be the payment for sin so we can enter God's presence now and for eternity.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Every time you pray think of this title for Jesus, 'High Priest.' Think of the significance of it and the privilege we have of talking to God any time any where.

Read Hebrews 2:17 and 4:14-15. What difference does it make to you personally that Jesus has gone through everything you go through and knows by experience what you face? How should this affect your prayers, your worship and your obedience?

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Understanding Scripture from the viewpoint of the writer and reader is important, as can be seen by the necessity of understanding the role of a High Priest in Jewish culture. Remembering what we have learned about that, asking questions and looking at the context of a passage, read John 17:18-26 and list all the specific requests Jesus makes concerning us in this prayer. There are many things He is praying about for us right for now. List as many as you can. Then glean what you can learn about praying for others from His example. What should you be praying about for others?

BLOG 307: ADVOCATE, INTERCESSOR (Names of Jesus 10)

When I was in the Army I saw a sign for someone called a Judge Advocate. I didn't know what that was but soon learned it was a lawyer – someone who is an advocate for those in need. For someone with a legal problem, they were very important. The Bible says Jesus is our Advocate (1 John 2:1), someone we need when we have a legal (sin) issue with God.

Satan accuses God's people to Him, pointing out sin and inferring things to get us under God's judgment. That is what he did with Job (Jon 1:6) and Peter (Luke 22:31-32). Any time we do anything wrong Satan runs and tattles to God, reminding God that His holiness demands He judge sin and punish us. He calls for the death sentence, which is what sin demands (Romans 6:23; 3:23). But our defense attorney, Jesus our Advocate, steps in and defends us by showing that the debt of sin was paid for by His work on the cross. He doesn't deny, explain away or excuse our sin – He shows when and how He paid for it so there is no punishment for us.

Several years ago in Cincinnati a lawyer was appointed by the court to defend a man accused of burglary. However when he started pursuing the case he realized he would have to ask that he be excused from it for the robbery that was committed was against his own office. Our sin is against God's holiness, so for He Himself, as Jesus, to be the one to defend us is extraordinary. He should be accusing us for what we made Him suffer, but instead He pays for our sins and then defends us! What a marvelous Savior!

A similar title is that of Intercessor (Romans 8:27, 34; Hebrew 7:25; 9:24). An Advocate defends us against accusations of sinful actions but an Intercessor helps us overcome Satan's temptations and life's difficulties. Right now, this very moment, Jesus is praying for us in heaven. To see an example of what He prays for read John 17:18-26.

Suppose you were sitting in your home tonight, worried about a problem facing you, and you hear voices coming from the next room. Quietly you open the door and peek inside. There you see Jesus kneeling praying for the very situation you are facing. How would that make you feel? The truth is that He is praying for you now – what a comfort and encouragement that is!

When you feel alone, deserted or facing life by yourself, remember that Jesus is with you. He defends you when you sin and prays for you to succeed as you seek to follow His will.

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Pray and thank God for being your Advocate and Intercessor. Pray for yourself, remembering Jesus is also praying for you. Think of what He might pray for and pray for the same things for yourself.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

Read Revelation 22:12-13. What 3 pairs of names does Jesus call Himself here? How are they similar? How are they different? If you were the original recipient of John's book called Revelation, what questions might you have about what he wrote here? What does the context (verses before and after this verse) tell us that adds insight to the meaning of these names? What do these verses add to the information about these names (Revelation 1:8; 21:6)?

BLOG 308: ALPHA & OMEGA (Names of Jesus 11)

One of the few names Jesus gave to Himself after the Resurrection is Alpha and Omega. He used this of Himself several times in Revelation (1:8; 21:6; 22:13) showing His sovereign control over everything. Alpha and Omega, the first letters of the Greek alphabet like A to Z would be in English, are all inclusive. They refer not only to the start and end of all things, but also to everything in-between.

While using this title for Himself Jesus also says He is the First and Last, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 22:13). The first and Last is a name for God in Isaiah as well (41:4; 44:6; 48:12). Beginning and End is also used in Revelation 21:6. Clearly these terms refers to all things ever.

From our perspective of living in time and space we see all things from that view, but these terms aren't just talking about the beginning of time to the end of time, they refer to something far beyond that. First, they refer to that which was before God even created time, eternity past, and go through eternity future after time will be ended. God only created time to be part of our experienced. It will only exist for several thousand years. Eternity is not time without end, it is an existence where there is no such thing as time so there can be no end to time – something beyond the ability of our limited brain power to understand but something that is no problem for God.

Also, these terms refer to more than all things being encompassed under Jesus' control. 'Beginning' (arche in Greek) actually has the idea of origin or source. Jesus is not just the starting point, He is the origin, the source of all things. He wasn't just there, He was the creator or it. 'End' (telos in Greek) refers to the consummation, the goal of all things. "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things" Paul writes (Romans 116).

Jesus chooses this new name to add to the long list of names and titles used of Himself because it's important for us to always remember that He is the source and culmination of everything. He started it all, He controls it all, and He will bring it all to the conclusion He wants. It is all under His control! That means everything that happens today, in the world and in our lives, is under His total control. We may not know what the future holds, but we know who holds the future. And that's good enough!

APPLICATION ASSIGNMENT

Think about all the things in your life that are not under your control, that are out of control and that you would like to change but can't. Now take each of them and write Alpha and Omega over them, Jesus knew about them, planned them, and will use them for the goal He wants to accomplish. Thank Him for this and ask Him to help your faith in Him grow through these things.

BIBLE STUDY ASSIGNMENT

We've used various methods to get more out of Bible study in this series. Go back through your notes and list some of the methods we've used. Keep a list of them in your Bible so you can use the appropriate ones when you do your own Bible study. Choose a portion of

the Bible and use what you've learned as you read and study it. May God richly bless you and help you grow through the study of His Word!

PRAYER PRINCIPLES FOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE

BLOG 309: PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE PRAYING 1

Following are some principles for spiritual warfare praying. This is the first of four blogs on this. If you have observations or principles you have learned please share them with me jerry@schmoyer.net

These are principles to help you with your spiritual warfare praying. Is it OK for someone to tell you how to pray? The disciples asked Jesus to teach them to pray and He did (Luke 11:1-2). He never taught His disciples to preach but did teach them to pray!

Prayer is the key to all spiritual warfare work. Prayer is not preliminary to the battle, it IS the battle. As Ab Lincoln said, "If I had 8 hours to chop down a tree I'd spend the first 6 sharpening the ax."

Make sure there is no unconfessed sin in your life (1 John 1:9), especially bitterness or any form of unforgiveness (Ephesians 4:26). Be sensitive to any sin God shows you as you pray. If anything needs to be made right, so as soon as you can. Fill yourself instead with God's Word and meditate on it.

We are at war (Ephesians 6:12). Spiritual warfare is hard for it is war, a battle to the end. Victory doesn't come from defending ourselves, only when we take the sword of the Spirit and go on the offensive (Ephesians 6:17). Be aggressive and bold in your prayer. Attack where Satan's forces are working. We have God's power (Acts 1:8; John 14:12; Luke 9:1; 10:9) and authority (Matthew 8:18-20; Luke 9:1, 10; 10:17-19). In Jesus' name we have nothing to fear (Luke 10:17). But everything must be done in His name/power/authority. "In Jesus' name" is not a phrase we use lightly, it has all the power in the universe behind it.

Sometimes spiritual warfare prayer is not about fighting a battle, but about keeping ready so the enemy knows you are praying and will focus on anything he does as soon as you are aware of it. Spiritual warfare prayer isn't just for times of battle, but for every day. Stand your watch, be ready.

Make notes of how these principles can apply to your own prayer life. Integrate what God is showing you into your own daily prayer time.

BLOG 310: PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE PRAYING 2

Following are some principles for spiritual warfare praying. This is the second of four blogs on this. If you have observations or principles you have learned please share them with me jerry@schmoyer.net

Educate yourself about spiritual warfare so you know how to better fight the enemy.

If you see sin or problem areas in the life of the person for whom you are praying, you can pray against the demonic force behind it by calling the demon by the name of the sin/problem: anger, lust, greed, fear, pride, self-centeredness, depression, etc. Pray directly against the demon doing it, for the symptom will be his name (Matthew 12:29; 16:18-19).

Do not be surprised if you are attacked with the same things with which the person you are praying for is struggling: depression, confusion, impatience, anxiety, etc. Rebuke it as it tries to work against you. Rebuke it in the other person as well. One reason God allows this is to help you know what the person is experiencing and how to pray against it. You may also be hit with headaches, distraction, etc., or even chills or coldness. This is all from the enemy. Rebuke it and persevere in prayer.

Praying for someone's deliverance is solemn, serious business. Unless they fill the void with God's Holy Spirit many stronger demons will come fill that space (Matthew 12:45; Luke 11:26).

You can't force deliverance on anyone. God respects a person's free will. So pray they will clearly see the issues involved and the freedom God offers. Pray for God's mercy for a temporary restraining of all demonic activity against the person so their free will is truly free to see the situation as it is and decide what they want. And don't assume they won't choose to go back to their sin!

We pray from our secure position of being one in Christ (Ephesians 1). He is our Father (Romans 8:15) and friend (John 15:15-16). He lives within us (John 14:7). We have nothing to fear!

Make notes of how these principles can apply to your own prayer life. Integrate what God is showing you into your own daily prayer time.

BLOG 311: PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE PRAYING 3

Following are some principles for spiritual warfare praying. This is the third of four blogs on this. If you have observations or principles you have learned please share them with me jerry@schmoyer.net

Do your best, even if you are unsure or inexperienced. Like any parent, God just wants us to do our best. He'll do the rest. The Holy Spirit takes our poor prayer efforts and turns them into what they should be (Romans 8:26-27). And remember, whatever you do, no matter how poorly you think it is done, is better than doing nothing!

Quote or read Scripture as much as possible. Jesus quoted the Word to defeat Satan when tempted (Matthew 4:1-10) and Paul says the Word is our sword, our only offensive weapon (Ephesians 2:17). God's Word is what demons must listen to, not our human words. Victory comes through His Word (Psalm 119:9-11). Quote or read 1 John 4:4; 1:6-7; Hebrews 2:14-15; Colossians 2:15; Revelation 2:11; 12:7-9; 20:1-7.

Make praise an important part of spiritual warfare praying. There is power in praise (Nehemiah 8:10, 2 Chronicles 20:22; Psalm 22:3; Acts 16:25-26). This comes through reading the Bible, especially the Psalms, and also through singing hymns and Christian songs. They hate hearing "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" and songs like it.

Pray for a hedge of protection (wall, garrison, fortress, stockade – however you want to picture it) around yourself, your family and loved ones and your property and possessions when you start. Pray for this for the person you are praying for as well – while you are praying and afterwards. Forbid any forces to seek revenge or retribution against you or the person you are interceding for (John 1:10-11; 3:23; Psalm 34:7-8; 106:23; 1 Samuel 5:5; 2 Kings 6:8-18).

Because Satan is limited to being in one place at a time, it is very unlikely you will ever deal with him. Commands made to him are understood by God and demons to apply to the demons are currently battling. It is more accurate to address them to demons or evil spirits, instead of Satan.

Like with all prayer, it is not always God's will to grant your request right away, or even in the future. Jesus said some demons are more difficult to defeat and take more faith and power to dislodge (Matthew 9:14-29) so long term perseverance is needed (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). David prayed and fasted for 3 weeks before God's messenger angel broke through (Daniel 10:13). Somehow God uses the prayers of the saints to strengthen angels in their battles for us.

Make notes of how these principles can apply to your own prayer life. Integrate what God is showing you into your own daily prayer time.

BLOG 312: PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE PRAYING 4

Following are some principles for spiritual warfare praying. This is the fourth of four blogs on this. If you have observations or principles you have learned please share them with me jerry@schmoyer.net

If God does not bring deliverance, even when the person you are praying for seeks it and follows God to the best of their ability, God will use the oppression to bring forth spiritual growth in the person to have Himself glorified. He will provide grace to endure the attacks, as with Paul (2 Corinthian 12:7-10).

Spiritual warfare praying is, like all prayer, talking to God – but with the added dimension of being aware demons are listening as well. Our prayer is always addressed to God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. But while praying to Him we can use our God-given authority to rebuke, take back access, silence or cast our demons. We don't have to ask God to do that, He has given us the authority to do it, o within our prayer to Him can be commands to the demons as well.

Prayer can be out loud or silent, depending on the circumstances and how you feel God is leading you. Demons can out thoughts into our minds so they can probably also know our thoughts, at least to some extent. Sinful thoughts give them access so they are aware of those thoughts. Righteous thoughts, commitments to God, praise and commands against them are also things they are aware of. God seems to allow them direct access to these, and He personally conveys them to the demons in such a way as to make sure they obey. Angels are greatly involved in this process as well.

Always pray in faith, never fear (James 1:5-8; Mark 11:23-24; Proverbs 18:21; Ephesians 6:16; Revelation 12:11). Keep your thoughts always and only on Jesus, never the enemy. Praying out loud can be a good way to focus your thoughts and proclaim your faith to God, angels and demons listening in.

You can pray to put the sins of the one in bondage under the blood of Jesus so they are better able to their own need to confess these sins themselves. This is temporary, any only by God's mercy when He chooses to do so for as long as He chooses to do so. It does not remove their accountability for those sins in this life or the next, but wakens the demons' control over them so they can better see the sin for what it is. Most issues you pray against will be from generational sin in the family line, and you can pray to have that broken. But when the individual participates in those sins by their own free will, then that also becomes another opening to be dealt with as well. Putting the sin under the blood of Jesus for them can temporarily weaken its hold so they can repent and turn from it. (Matthew 16:19; 12:29). Be sensitive to God's leading in praying for this.

Make notes of how these principles can apply to your own prayer life. Integrate what God is showing you into your own daily prayer time.

SAMSON & MALE SEXUALITY

BLOG 313: ROOTS OF SEXUAL COMPULSION (SAMSON 1)

We live in a world that turns everything backwards from the way God wants it to be. couples live together before getting married. Women get pregnant then decide if they want a baby. Lust precedes love. Youth is valued over the wisdom and experience of age. External things are worshipped and internal qualities and values denigrated. Self control, gentleness, submission and kindness are seen as weaknesses while assertiveness, self-centeredness and rudeness is valued. We admire physical strength, even worship it, but moral strength is neglected, mocked and ridiculed. What a time to live! What an immature age it is. Yet unfortunately there have been other times like this in history. Samson lived in one such time.

In a time of national weakness and turning from their spiritual roots, God sent an angel to a family in Israel to tell them that He was sending a deliverer to turn them from bondage to victory and from serving self and sin to serving God (Judges 13:1-23). Unfortunately the deliverer himself ended up in bondage, too -- and that is our story, the story of a man named Samson. Samson was a man strong physically but weak morally. Instead of learning from his conquest, we must learn from his defeat. Still, many lessons are there to be learned for Samson was a man very much like men today and he lived in a time very much like today.

SAMSON'S YOUTH Samson grew up 'different' from other boys his age. For one thing, he was the only child of parents who had not been able to have children (thus we can assume they were older - Judges 13:3). In addition, he was raised by different standards, Nazarite standards of special devotion and consecration (13:7, 13-14). Even his appearance would have been different from other boys his age for his hair was never to be cut. He seems to have been spoiled, indulged, used to getting his own way (14:2, 3b). Even though they asked God how to raise him (13:8), it doesn't seem they taught him control. Self-control and discipline weren't built into him, perhaps because his shy, fearful (13:22) parents gave in to his wants knowing he was special. Add to that a special physical ability and strength (IF he had it even to some degree then) and we see that Samson didn't have a typical childhood.

Reading between the lines seems to allow us to say Samson was sheltered, shy and self-conscious. He obviously had a problem with responding in anger and revenge. He seems to have had lots of time on his hands without work or friends to occupy him. That doesn't mean that all who grow up that way will have sexual addictions, however. He had choices to make, some were good and others were very bad.

He did develop a personal relationship with God and accepted His gift of salvation, for we read that God's Spirit started to "stir" him to free his people from Philistine oppression when he was a youth (13:25). He would have gone through bar mitzvah at about 13 years of age. I'm sure he was sincere in his faith, but a combination of personality traits and upbringing set him up for a severe test when he reached manhood. (CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

PRAY: Ask God to help you make good choices in your life. If you are making choices that are not what God would have you make confess them and ask Him to help you do what you know is right.

BLOG 314: SAMSON'S DECISION TO MARRY (SAMSON 2)

Samson grew up in a good Jewish town, sheltered from the awful sinfulness of the pagan Philistines who lived nearby. There was no boundary between Israel and Palestine in that area, cities of each were interspersed throughout the region. Pious Jews kept strictly to themselves,

though. As a Nazarite Samson grew up in a culture where women were very modest, quiet and withdrawn. There was very little contact between unmarried men and women. Perhaps plans had even been made for Samson to wed a local village girl. Then everything changed.

For some reason (and we have no idea what it was) Samson went to a nearby Philistine town named Timnah (14:1). Why he went to his mortal enemies no one knows. Why was he attracted to that which God was stirring in him to destroy? Why have anything to do with that which was under God's judgment?

In a very influential time in life, when he as a male was quite open and susceptible, Samson was hit with pagan sensuality in a very ripe form. Tall, blond, brazen Philistines girls would come up to him and openly flirt. Their extreme immodesty and gross immorality probably both attracted and repelled young Samson. Perhaps his elderly parents had not properly prepared him for such things. Anyway, Samson found he had a real weakness of the flesh for sexual things, a weakness that he would never learn to control and which would eventually kill him. Instead of turning and fleeing, as Joseph did from Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:12) and we are told to do when his with temptation (I Corinthians 10:13), he gave in.

Immediately he wanted to marry a girl from there (14:2; 3b). He mistook lust for love. He didn't know her well as a person (as later developments will show) but was just taken by her outer appearance. Satan used one of his favorite temptations on Samson at a vulnerable time in life and he fell fast and hard -- as have many men since. This wrong start led to a life of misery and defeat because of lack of sexual control. What a sad story, but how common today.

THE PROBLEM OF LUST TODAY It's not hard for men today to identify with Samson. A 1993 Promise Keepers survey of 1,500 men showed that 51% struggle with masturbation; 51% fantasize about having sex with women other than their wife; 15% have been unfaithful to their wife and 33% regularly look at sexually oriented material (videos, magazines, etc.). Things today are sexually oriented.

It seems like life has few mysteries left. Science has an answer for everything. Man had turned from God and the supernatural, putting himself in its place. Still, something in man cries for a little transcendence. Sex seems to provide that. Its the only thing we can't analyze under a microscope, can't figure out, can't bring under our power. There is almost something magical and mystical about its power. No wonder we even call our female models "goddesses". This shows man thirsting for something greater than himself, something above and beyond everything else in life. This is a spiritual yearning that only God can fill, but man is trying to fill it with sex instead. When we fixate so much on naked bodies we are just showing a need to go even deeper, to lay out our souls naked before God. Our preoccupation with sex, which in many has become a compulsion, shows a deeper longing for something real and meaningful in life. Sex has become Satan's substitute for God, an idol many now worship. But idols never satisfy, and we know what God says about idolatry.

In a day and age when addictions and compulsions seem to be abounding, we must recognize that sex is one of the leading bondages. Evangelists, church leaders, pastors and Christian men by the score are being defeated and destroyed by this. Even worse, most men deny the power that sexual compulsions have over them. "I can stop any time I want" is the lie they believe. They are heading down a greased sliding board, gaining speed and momentum, promising themselves they can and will stop. Even after they crash in flames at the bottom, they fail to see the real problem. Samson didn't. (CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

PRAY: Where does your strongest sexual temptation come from? How can you prevent as much of it as possible? What are you doing to have victory over it?

BLOG 315: SEXUAL ADDICTION & COMPULSION TODAY (SAMSON 3)

In our first 2 blogs we have looked at the life of Samson and what led to his sexual addiction. Our purpose is to learn so we can prevent the same from happening to us today.

Have you ever thought you needed help for your sexual thoughts or behavior? Do you ever feel that sex is controlling your thoughts or actions? Have you been fighting a losing battle to limit your sexual thoughts or actions which you know are wrong? Are you starting to feel helpless and doubt if you will ever change? Do you seem to fall into the same pattern of sin, always feeling guilt, remorse and depression afterwards? Do you promise that will be the last time, only to find yourself in it again? Do you fear the hurt and damage your sexual sin can cause the ones you love, but find yourself unable to stop and stay stopped? If these questions prick your conscious then you need to admit that, like Samson, something too powerful has a hold of you.

COMMON TRAITS IN ALL ADDICTIONS & COMPULSIONS There are some traits all compulsions & addictions have in common, be it gambling, drinking, drugs, sex or whatever. These include:

1. Using this to escape the root problem instead of working it through. They deaden the pain of rejection, loneliness, insecurity or anxiety. They mask the pain and provide a quick escape but never get to the cause of the pain.

2. The compulsion progresses, getting stronger instead of staying the same or weakening. It takes greater levels or amounts of the stimulation to produce gratification. Tolerance to lower levels is built, like the alcoholic who can drink a lot without getting drunk.

3. Withdrawal symptoms occur when the 'drug' is unavailable. Healthy, normal relationships with others suffer. One's relationship with God becomes virtually nonexistent. Shame and guilt result, separating man from God. There is no joy, just misery in life. The only 'hope' seems to be in locating the next 'fix.'

4. Thoughts become so obsessive the person finds themselves doing things they didn't want to do and promised they would never do again. The same pattern of seeking the 'drug,' obtaining it and using it follows like a ritual.

THE COMPULSION OF SELF-STIMULATION Usually for men this starts with self-stimulation. Studies show that 62% of married men do this. Often it is justified, explained away as normal and all right. But it is sin. The wrong thoughts that accompany it are sinful (Matthew 5:28). It makes sex an end in itself (one's own physical joy) instead of a means to an end (show love to mate). Our bodies don't belong to us to use for ourselves, but to our mates to use for their pleasure (I Cor. 7:4). Plus, anything not of faith is sin. Finally, it's inconceivable to think of Jesus doing or approving this.

CAUSES OF ADDICTIONS & COMPULSIONS The cause starts in childhood, especially in abusive or dysfunctional families. When a person is unable to have real intimacy with another, to really give one's self without reservation, to overcome feelings of rejection or failure, sexual compulsions often compensate. Sex becomes a way of escaping pain and substituting reality with a fantasy world. Society conditions us to this, for everywhere around us we see lust replacing love and substituting for real closeness. Satan works with this, too. His demons magnify openings we give him and keep working on them, putting thoughts and desires into a person's mind. Often this follows family lines, going from grandfather to father to son.

(CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

PRAY: If you see any of these traits or patterns in yourself pray and confess them, asking God to give you victory over them. Plan what steps need to be taken to have victory in them. If you see any of these in others pray for them as well.

BLOG 316: THE SOLUTION TO SEXUAL ADDICTION & COMPULSION (SAMSON 4)

We have been looking at Samson's life and how it ended in his sexual addiction. We've talked about how that can affect us today as well. Fortunately there is an answer. The solution is in Jesus, and Jesus only.

1. Remember, sex itself is not sinful. There is nothing wrong with nudity (Genesis 2:22-25) or sex in marriage (Heb. 13:4; Song of Sol. 7:1-11). Any and all sex outside of married love is wrong, though (Ex 20:14; Dt 5:10; Lev 20:10) but that doesn't mean sex is innately wrong or sinful. It's like money, its our attitude to it and use of it that makes it right or wrong.

2. Also, sex starts in the mind. Mental lust leads to adultery (James 1:13-16), and in fact IS adultery already (Matthew 5:27-28). It's not the tempting thought or the unexpected sight that is sin, but what we do with it. Sin starts in the mind, so does victory over sin. It starts there, so it must stop there. What a person does with the first thoughts determines the whole direction of the sin pattern. That is the place for the whole 'ritual' to be broken. You can't stop half way down a greased sliding board, you have to stop before going down it. The first rung of the ladder is our thought life -- that's where it must stop!

3. Take a stand for purity in thought and actions with Jesus' help. Make sure you think only of what is noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable (Phil 4:8). Flee the desire to entertain sinful thoughts (I Corinthians 10:13) or commit sinful actions (Genesis 39:12-13). Resist (James 4:7) by running to Jesus in prayer. Use the Bible, memorize verses, sing Christian songs, call a friend to pray for you -- do whatever is necessary when sinful thoughts hit.

4. Get to the root cause. Work through childhood pain which keeps you from intimacy. Ask God to show you what you need to realize and remember. It doesn't have to be a childhood of overt abuse, any kind of rejection hurts! Forgive those in the past who have hurt you. Confess your bitterness and hate and ask God to remove it. Pray for God to heal you, forgive you and restore you from the results of past hurt. Learn to develop true intimacy with your mate and God. Allow others to get to know the real you and make an effort to get to know them better. Ask God for wisdom so you will see how your compulsion substitutes for real intimacy and so you can clearly see the difference between lust and love. Renew your mind by memorizing Scriptures such as Psalm 25:3-4; 101:2-3; 103:8-14; 119:9-11; Matthew 4:4; 18:3-11; John 17:19; Ephesians 6:10-16; Hebrews 2:12; I John 3:8; 4:4 and others.

5. When you do fail and sin, confess the sin and accept God's forgiveness. Confess (I John 1:9) it when you entertain wrong thoughts, do wrong things, put your pleasure before your mate's or withhold pleasure from your mate. Admit it as sin. Don't blame, excuse, justify, punish yourself, etc. Then make sure you forgive yourself by accepting God's forgiveness (Psalm 103:8-14).

6. It is very helpful to become accountable to a Godly person. The 12-step programs success is based on two things: admitting one has a problem they can't beat alone and allowing themselves to be accountable to others for help in overcoming their addiction. This is successfully used by many Christian 12-step groups who deal with sexual addictions, too. Find a mature Christian of the same sex to hold you accountable by asking you the tough questions regularly and praying with you. Your mate can't do this, you won't be honest because you don't want to hurt them. Find someone you can talk to, who will accept and love you no matter what. This is an important part of the healing process and of learning true intimacy with another person. Professional counseling is often necessary and very helpful.

This whole area of sexual compulsions and addictions is relatively new but just starting. There will be much more of it as we continue in the 'last days' (II Timothy 3:1-7). For the sake of

those around us, for the sake of those in our family, for our own sake this is something we as Christians must stop ignoring and pretending doesn't defeat fellow believers. We must be as open about and supportive of those fighting this sin as we are of any other sin. Satan is using it almost unhindered to defeat many of God's people. We must be aware of it and of God's solution to sin -- the blood of Jesus! (CONTINUED NEXT WEEK)

PRAY: Commit yourself to purity in thought and action. Confess anything unclean that hasn't been confessed. Commit to a plan for victory, including an accountability partner.

BLOG 317: THE ISSUE OF HOMOSEXUALITY (SAMSON 5)

Several years ago God clearly led us to start a Bible study in a nearby location. After much prayer and seeking God's help we started. As we were to begin the first session a young man walked in and immediately asked if God could save someone who was gay. He was obviously speaking of himself, and also obviously under God's strong conviction. Just a couple of minutes later he gave his heart to Jesus right there in the middle of the whole group. For awhile he was full of excitement and grew spiritually, but it wasn't long until he started to withdraw and then broke all contact. He was back in his previous lifestyle. I don't know what happened to him. I wish I could have done more. Homosexuality is a strong force.

What are the causes of homosexuality? Demonizing is usually involved, either as a cause or a result. But some say it is normal. Does God make some people that like the same sex and others that like the opposite sex, like He makes some who like chocolate and others who like vanilla? Bible-centered information about this is now available. I'll try to summarize what I've learned.

CAUSE OF HOMOSEXUALITY

We saw previously that Samson was deeply influenced by his parents. He was an only child of older parents who indulged him. This clearly impacted his whole life. His parents didn't even do more than voice a mild concern when he wanted to marry a Gentile unbeliever whom he barely knew (Judges 14:1-6). Evidently he had a weak father.

Often when a child has a disappointing relationship with their same-sex parent they seek to have that need met through a sexual relationship with a person of the same sex. If a child doesn't feel loved and secure, if they feel rejected, then often turn to a substitute to meet those needs. Statistics show that a high percentage of homosexuals come from an abusive family. When a female is sexually abused by a male she may so hate males that she totally rejects them and turns to females for sexual love instead. A boy who is sexually abused also feels the shame and guilt, but the pleasure that also comes (the physical climax) confuses him. Without a mature male showing him love in godly ways, he may find himself drawn to this since it is the only 'love' he has known. Satan's demons take an experience like that and put thoughts, ideas and desires in his mind and opportunities in his path. This is especially true in a culture that has turned from God (Romans 1:24-26).

To make matters worse, the substitute love and acceptance gives temporary relief. Many find that an easier path than having to face the pain and hurt from the past and work them through. Also, the anger that masks the pain is often taken out on parents and the world in general by their turning against society and being homosexual.

Of course this doesn't happen to all children who feel rejection from their same-sex parent. All current statistics show that only about 1% of the male population is exclusively gay. There aren't nearly the numbers they claim.

We must remember that we all have a free will and, while some sins may be more easily overcome, there is no excuse to remain in any sin. The Bible does clearly call homosexuality a sin (Rom 1:26-27; Lev 18:22-23; 20:13-16; Dt 23:17, 27:21; Gen 19:5-8; Judges 19:22; etc.). If God says it is wrong, He must also provide a way out for those caught in its trap.

CURE FOR HOMOSEXUALITY

Much of what was said in the previous article about sexual addiction applies here.

First, it must be **confessed as sin**. There can be no excuse or justification, no blame or self-pity. It must be confessed (I John 1:9 - admit it is sin) and the person's desire must be to not remain in that sin but we willing, with God's help, to never commit it again. Also, God's forgiveness must be accepted (Psalm 103:8-14). Accepting God's forgiveness and forgiving ones self can be the hardest part!

Second, the person must **depend on God's strength** to overcome the sin and change. Spiritual warfare praying when tempted, close contact with a prayer partner, regular fellowship with other Christians, meaningful daily devotions, memorization of Scripture -- all of these are important factors. One must depend moment by moment on the power of the Holy Spirit to bring victory.

Third, **understand the causes** from the past that opened one up to the sin. Forgive the person(s) involved. Turn to your Father-God ("Abba") and ask Him to heal you from that and meet your unmet needs.

Finally, **learn right relationships** to the same and opposite sexes. Reach out and open yourself up, trusting God and others to show acceptance and love. It takes time, but learn to rightly relate to others.

OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD HOMOSEXUALS

As with all in sin, we are to love and reclaim the person while rejecting the sin. While that is easier to say than to do, we must remember that sin is sin. No sin is worse than any other. Jesus paid for every sin. God forgives and forgets, so must we. We are not to judge or condemn but to love. While humbly warning about the consequences of the sin of homosexuality (in this world and the next), we must show love and acceptance to the person themselves. More rejection is NOT what they need. God can and does forgive any sin. They are no worse than us and need the love of God as much as we do!

Ask God to help you have the right attitude to these people so that you can show God's love to them. Then pray for opportunities to practice that and be sensitive to chances to reach out in love with the GOOD news of Jesus.

PRAY: Ask God to help you see those with different sexual orientation as Jesus sees them – as human beings worthy of love and compassion. Pray for them as you would have others pray for you, with love and respect.

(If I can answer questions or offer personal counsel, or if you would like a free copy of my Spiritual Warfare Handbook, email me at Jerry@ChristianTrainingOrganization.org or download it from <http://sw.christiantrainingonline.org/>. My next book, Spiritual Warfare in the Bible, which is a more advanced treatment of spiritual warfare, is also available for free.)

BLOG 318: UNDERSTANDING MANIPULATIVE WOMEN – 1 (SAMSON 6)

A recent "Sally Forth" cartoon starts with daughter Hillary saying to her mother: "I assume you let Dad play poker tonight instead of going out to dinner with you." Sally replies, "It's not a

matter of LETTING, Hilary. We discussed it like adults. I recognized it was important to him to play, and he came to recognize that I was displaying remarkable understanding.” Next Hilary says, “So not you can extort whatever you want from him?” “That sounds so ugly,” Sally replies. “Let’s just say I’m in an advantageous bargaining position.”

We’ve all been in positions where the other person was in an ‘advantageous bargaining position’ over us. It makes us feel, well, MANIPULATED. No one likes being manipulated, but we all seem to be able to do it to others. Manipulation is a dishonest, sneaky way of getting control. Love, faith and trust are replaced by power, control and pressure. Manipulation can and will destroy relationships and marriages. That happened to Samson’s marriage.

THE MARRIAGE Samson wanted to marry an unbelieving Gentile woman in direct disobedience to God’s clear command. Still, he was head over heels in lust and no rational arguments could change his mind. On his way to the wedding (Judges 14:8) he passed by where he had earlier killed a lion that had attacked him (14:4-7). Knowing that, as a Nazarite, he wasn’t allowed to touch a dead body, he touched it anyway in getting honey from a bee hive that had developed within the carcass. He knew it was wrong (14:9) but did it anyway. Giving in to small lusts always precedes giving in to larger lusts, and Samson shows an inability to deny his fleshly lust for food. Indulging the fleshly lust for food (too much, too sweet, etc.) often preceded indulging the fleshly lust for sex. Thus fasting can really help overcome sexual lusts, for if one can learn to have victory over this basic desire of the flesh, then that self-control can be applied to the lust for sex. Try fasting to defeat sexual temptation, it works!

When he arrived at his wedding feast, Samson threw a customary drinking bash (v 10). There is no reason to assume he abstained from alcohol at his own wedding. This broke the second part of his vow, that to not drink fruit of the grape. After breaking the first vow, breaking the second was easier. The first sin opens the door and makes it easier to sin again.

At this wedding celebration thirty Philistine men were assigned to Samson as his companions there. Why not Jewish men? Well, godly Jews wouldn’t have anything to with a pagan love feast. More than that, though, it doesn’t seem Samson had male friends, Jewish or Gentile. He seems to be the kind of man who is comfortable among women but not men. That probably started because of his relationship to his more capable mother who had the predominate role in his childhood. She was the one who told him he was doing all right and made him feel like a man. He bonded with her, not his weaker, more distant father. Thus he wasn’t able to relate to men and grew up with a need for female approval. More about that later.

THE MANIPULATION During the wedding celebration, which lasted several days, Samson gave the Philistines a riddle with a wager of 30 sets of fine clothes (v. 12-14). Another lust is seen here: gambling. He wants something for nothing. One lust always opens the way for others. His weakness of character is also revealed in that it is evident Samson needs to be the center of attention, impress others, and feel superior and in control of others.

When they can’t get the answer and don’t want to pay up, the Philistines put pressure on Samson’s new wife to get the answer for them (v. 15). Instead of honestly telling her husband of the threat and doing the mature thing, calling off the bet, she uses manipulation to get Samson to tell her the answer so she can pass it on (16a). She uses typical female tools: guilt, tears, “If you really loved me...” Only children (like Samson) and extroverts (also like Samson) are more susceptible to pressure like this because of their need to be liked, but Samson holds out for a full seven days (16b-17).

PRAY: Ask God to show you any way in which you manipulate others. Confess that as sin and ask Him to help you have healthy relationships. Ask God to take back any access this sin has given to Satan’s forces.

BLOG 319: UNDERSTANDING MANIPULATIVE WOMEN – 2 (SAMSON 7)

In the previous blog we started looking at Samson's marriage. His bride was clearly very manipulative and used that to control Samson. Obviously their relationship was selfish, immature, and lacking the basics to make a marriage. She manipulates him (16a), he withholds from her (16b), she is disloyal to him (18) and he puts his parents before her (17, see Genesis 2:24). They are each just using each other. Finally she wears him down, though. While as a general rule men may be stronger than women physically, women develop tools to more than compensate. As little girls learning to control stronger boys their age they soon learn to manipulate. Often they see this exemplified in their mothers and other women. They soon discover that, while they can't out-muscle a man, they can out-emotion a man, and that is what happens.

Rejection, criticism, disapproval, guilt, tears and other weapons become the arsenal of the ungodly woman, and sometimes godly women, too. Men need to feel like they are pleasing their women, like they are providing in an approved way, and like their women are proud of them. A man's ego and basic needs are built on these. It's even stronger when a man needs a woman's approval to feel good about himself as a man. Thus any perceived rejection or criticism can be devastating.

Most men rally have a hard time with a woman who is angry at them. Not only does it bring back bad memories of their mother who would reject them when she got angry at them, men would rather avoid than face strong emotion. Therefore many men will give in to keep the peace, do most anything to avoid their wife's anger. They learn this survival technique growing up with their mothers, and they see their father's doing this same thing for the same reason.

To avoid this men fall back to a more passive role, 'read' their wives to see how to respond and what to do, and then say or do the safe thing. This undermines a good relationship, though. Women, if they realize it or not, need a man who is strong enough to take control in a gentle loving way, even (especially) when they are out of control. God leads the family through the man, not the woman, for a woman's emotional nature can be easily misled as Eve was by Satan (I Tim 2:12-15). Man is to lead.

Another way this passive role fails is in the sexual relationship of a husband and wife. For women sex is a romantic expression of their relationship. She needs the man to be the aggressor to be assured he loves and wants her. That is why she needs to hear "I love you" so often. For a woman sex breaks down walls and they need that. For men the emotional closeness of sex can be a threat, a danger of failure. Thus men tend to let women take the lead. This is really compounded when that mother-son gets carried over by the wife and husband. How can there be a mother-son pattern during the day and then that mother become a passionate lover at night? It is up to the man to take loving leadership and break those patterns by not being manipulated but taking the lead as God requires. Man must find his needs met in God, not by another woman, even his wife. To the extent a man is dependent on his wife, to that degree he won't be free to carry out his God-given role as leader.

THE MURDER Anyway, back to Samson. Finally Samson gave in to her nagging to keep the peace (v 17b). The result was that their relationship, such as it was, was destroyed (20). Control, manipulation, giving in to keep the peace, these all destroy relationships. When the men told him the answer to his riddle (18) Samson knew she had been disloyal and cared more about herself than him. In childish, immature anger Samson storms out of the marriage, kills 30 Philistines to get their clothes and pay off his debt, and moved back home (19).

Watch out for manipulation. It destroys. Learn to recognize it and with God's peace and power resist it. Find approval in God alone. There is no such thing as an advantageous

bargaining position among married people who love each other and are committed to serving each other first.

PRAY: Pray for them as you would have others pray for you, with love and respect.

BLOG 320: UNDERSTANDING MALE SEXUALITY (SAMSON 8)

Suppose you were traveling in another country and walking around some evening. As you walked you came to a building where people were lined up to enter so you got in line. They seemed excited as they seated themselves facing a stage. Everyone applauded and cheered as a man walked out with a large tray covered with a towel. Wild music started to play and lights flashed on and off. Slowly the man would lift one corner of the towel and then another, allowing the audience to catch a glimpse of what was under it. The people cheered louder and louder. Suddenly the towel was totally removed and everyone went wild as the lights dimmed. What you saw before all went dark was a nice, fresh pork shop! What would you think? Was there something wrong with their appetite? Suppose as you left you noticed a magazine stand with pictures of pork chops on the cover and inside. Pork chops were used to sell cars, mufflers, clothing -- anything and everything. TV programs and movies were rated as to how much pork chop was shown. Jokes and general conversation often focused on pork chops. People carry them around to entice the opposite sex. What would you think of a culture like that? Have you caught my analogy yet? That is the way our country is about sex!

"It's different," you say. "Pork chop lust is weird, but sexual preoccupation is just a normal and natural thing." Unfortunately that's true of the time and place we live. Seeing it as normal is the result of growing up in 20th century western civilization. Sexual addiction is becoming more and more common and studies show that 70% of Christian men struggle with sexual sin of one kind or another. Something must be done. By looking at Samson's life we can learn valuable lessons about this very defeating temptation.

SAMSON'S SEXUAL ADDICTION

We pick up the story of Samson some time after he left his wife in rage and hurt. After awhile his desire for her became stronger than his male ego so he returned to her (Judges 15:1). It seems lust is motivating him, not love. He is thinking of his needs, not hers. He isn't interested in a relationship, just sexual gratification.

HOW TO SURVIVE AN AFFAIR To his surprise, though, Samson finds out she now has another husband and he is unwelcome (v. 2). What is one to do when they discover that their mate has been unfaithful? Revenge and bitterness is no option for the Christian. The hurt and pain must be taken to Jesus. It can't be stuffed down inside nor let loose on the offending person. We must forgive as Jesus forgave us. We can't forget, but we can give up any thoughts of revenge and handle our pain with Jesus' help. Good counseling and the support of a few godly friends is important, too. Pray for healing for both of you, ask God to remove the thought of what happened and treat the other person as a restored person, as you'd need to be treated were it you. That's what should be done, but that's not what Samson did.

Instead he let his hurt turn to anger. His wounded male ego exploded on innocent animals and people (v. 3-5). In childish immaturity he catches 300 foxes, ties them together, and sets them on fire to run through dry grain fields, thus destroying many Philistine crops. That just brought revenge on him, and his ex wife and family were burned to death (v. 6). Samson then killed many Philistines (v. 8). He ended up killing a thousand Philistines (v. 9-17) with God's strength, but then ended up whining like a spoiled child when he was thirsty from it all and couldn't find any immediate source of drink (v. 18). God patiently provided (v. 19-20).

PRAY: Would those who know you say you have a problem with anger? Confess it as sin and ask God to forgive you. Ask God to take back any access this sin has given to Satan's forces. Then pray to forgive others that have hurt you, one by one.

BLOG 321: THE ADDICTION CYCLE (SAMSON 9)

We have seen Samson marry a very manipulative woman, but leave her on their wedding day. Later he return, probably more out of sexual needs than real love for here. He finds her married to someone else. His revenge ended up in the death of his wife and her new husband. But it doesn't seem Samson has learned anything from this relationship.

THE ADDICTION CYCLE Awhile later Samson repeated the same pattern, going to the Philistines for sexual gratification. This time it was to a prostitute (16:1-3), a practice that would ultimately cost him his life. Understand that not everyone who struggles with sexual sin is an addict, but just like with alcohol or smoking or drugs, when a person isn't able to stop on their own they are addicted. Samson showed signs of a sexual addiction.

First there is a **PREOCCUPATION WITH SEXUAL THOUGHTS**. Thoughts start running through the mind, bringing a mild rush of adrenaline (James 1:13-14). The adrenaline rush gets addictive, as does the escape from reality the thoughts bring. We assume acting on our thoughts will be the solution to our problems. This is where the cycle must stop. If we don't bring our thoughts captive (II Corinthians 10:5) at this point it will be much harder later in the cycle.

The **RITUALIZATION** stage of the cycle is when one starts acting on their thoughts. This usually takes a similar pattern each time. For Samson it was going to Gaza, a Philistine town where prostitutes were readily available. For men today it may include surfing the net late at night, hanging around a certain magazine stand or book store, going to a video store when the wife is away, walking past a certain secretaries desk or many other things. Thoughts of sin are conceived (James 1:15a) and grow.

ACTING OUT usually follows the ritualization pattern. The sin is committed, in action or in mind. Then comes the **GUILT & SHAME**. As James says, sin gives birth to death (1:15b-16). Instead of life we get death. Instead of joy there is sorrow. Short-lived pleasure is replaced by a long time of pain. Emptiness fills us. We end up feeling trashed afterwards. We promise we'll never do it again. But before long the cycle is repeated.

This addiction cycle must stop at the very start -- what we do with the first thought (Matt. 5:28).

THE APPEAL OF A NAKED FEMALE Samson gave in when he saw a good-looking woman (Judges 15:1). Why do naked women look so good to men? Remember the first time you saw a naked woman? How did that affect you? Why is it such a big thing for a man to see a naked woman? Evolutionists say it is a natural way to keep the human race going, but the Bible says God made things that way (Gen 2:22-25; Proverbs 30:18-19). Naked animals are no big deal, and (until our recently very polluted days) women aren't affected by naked men like men are by women.

I think God made it that way to reward man for his extra load as leader and so he'd be drawn to his wife to touch her (which a woman needs). Nakedness stands for intimacy. For a woman to show a man her naked body shows she trusts and needs him, she is responding to his masculinity (that's the reason pornography is so appealing - but nudity in that way is a big lie). God wants men to enjoy their wife's body (I Corinthians 7:4-5; Song of Sol 4:5-5:1; 7:1-8). Men have a hard time with emotional and spiritual intimacy, and often use physical intimacy as a substitute.

This would be fine if only ones naked wife was attractive, but other women are still appealing to men. We still have a sin nature and a free will choice to obey God or sin. It's built into men today from little on up to 'check out' each woman as to her sex appeal. It becomes a habit, a bad pattern, and Satan's forces keep putting such thoughts in a man's mind to get the addiction cycle started. Also, we all have a thing about 'forbidden fruit' that makes other women sometimes seem more appealing. We know our wife's imperfections and want to see only perfection, so are tempted to view pictures of other women. How would we feel if our wives compared our bodies or sexual abilities to other men?

Appreciating a naked women is natural and God-given, but it must only be ones own wife. To so look at or think of any other women in that way is adultery (Matthew 5:28). That's what led Samson to sin, and King David as well (II Samuel 11). Joseph knew himself well enough that he knew he had to run from the sight of a naked woman not his wife (Genesis 39). God always provides that escape (I Corinthians 10:13) but we must take it. That's the only place to stop the addiction cycle.

PRAY: If God is convicting you of an addiction to anything (sex, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, gambling coffee, etc.) confess it as sin and ask God to forgive you and remove it. Ask God to take back any access this sin has given to Satan's forces.

BLOG 322: TO HAVE VICTORY OVER SEXUAL SIN – 1 (SAMSON 10)

In 1985 hard core video rentals amounted to \$75 million. In 1992 that figure rose to \$490 million. By 1996 it was \$8 billion, an amount larger than the revenue from all of Hollywood's movies as well as all rock and country western concerts. More money today is spent on strip clubs than Broadway, off-Broadway, theaters, opera, ballet, jazz and classical performances together. Some studies say that as many as 70% of all men, including Christian men, are caught in some form of sexual sin. There is an open availability of sexual images and activities. There are X-rated TV channels in motel rooms, cable TV brings pornography into the average American home. Anything can be easily found by anyone on the Internet. Respectable video stores and magazine and book stores carry that which a generation ago would have been unthinkable. What's the solution for hooked Christian men ?

Unfortunately the church isn't attacking the problem. Men are ashamed to admit this sin and ask for prayer. They don't share with each other or go for counseling. It's each one for himself, assuming he alone struggles with this monster. However there is a solution. There is help. There is a way out. His name is Jesus.

1. SEX ITSELF IS NOT SINFUL Just like money (I Tim 6:10), sex itself is not sinful. It is our attitude to it and use of it, the place it plays in our life. It, too, is a God-given gift to serve us, but nothing for us to serve. Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed, for sin hadn't entered (Genesis 2:22-25). Godly sex in marriage is pure and good (Hebrews 13:4; Song of Solomon 7:1-11) and God watches and approves of a husband-wife sexual relationship (Song of Solomon 5:1). Sex not with one's mate is what is sinful (Ex 20:14; Dt 5:18; Lev 20:10; Proverbs 6:20-28).

2. SIN STARTS IN THE MIND Sexual thoughts of anyone other than one's wife are wrong and forbidden. Entertaining them leads to adultery (James 1:13-16) and in fact is itself adultery (Mt 5:27-28). Once one starts down a greased sliding board stopping is almost impossible. Sexual sin must be defeated when the first thought enters (II Corinthians 10:5). Knowing when they usually hit helps, too. It may be after a fight with ones wife, completing a successful business deal, feeling alone, when anxiety strikes, etc. Knowing what triggers the thought pattern is very helpful.

3. SIN MUST BE ADMITTED TO AND CONFESSED Unlike Adam and Eve who blamed others for their sin, we must acknowledge and confess it (I John 1:9). We must accept the responsibility, not make excuses or blame others, not justify it explain it away. Ask God to clearly show you your sin (Psalm 139:23-24). Confession should include taking back any access the sin has given to Satan's forces in ones life. Then comes the hard part -- accepting God's forgiveness (Psalm 103) and forgiving ourselves.

4. DEVELOP A CLOSE, SOLID RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD Without the wisdom and power of God's Spirit we cannot understand and defeat sin. Only a intimate relationship with God can meet our needs so we don't have the same pull to meet them with a substitute like sexual sin. Jesus was tempted in all ways we are and overcame by depending on God (Hebrews 4:15).

5. ADMIT YOU CAN'T OVERCOME SIN ON YOUR OWN As in all 12-Step programs, one must admit his own inability to conquer his thoughts or actions by his own strength. How can the flesh subdue the flesh (Romans 7:18-19)? If we think we can we are stronger than Samson, godlier than David, purer than Joseph and wiser than Solomon.

PRAY: Ask God to show you which of these steps will help you to have victory. Write down specific steps in how you can apply these things to your life.

BLOG 323: TO HAVE VICTORY OVER SEXUAL SIN – 2 (SAMSON 11)

This blog is a continuation of the previous one about how to have victory over sexual sin.

6. BE WILLING TO PAY THE PRICE TO GET AND STAY FREE It's not easy to get free from sexual sin, and to honest it usually is just the shame that it brings that we regret, not the sin itself. We don't have a real disgust for the sin itself, it continues to have great appeal. The sin does, to some extent, meet some legitimate needs (but in an illegitimate way). It is a great mental escape, a momentary high from the adrenaline that the anticipation brings and the pleasure of the act itself. There is also the thrill of the chase, the appeal of the forbidden fruit, and the challenge of the hunt. It's only natural to take the path of least resistance, and breaking a pattern of sexual sin is not that! One usually stops only when the pain of continuing is greater than the pain of stopping. It takes a strong commitment to be willing to pay the price to get free! Getting into the sinful pattern/addiction happened over time, and so does getting free. You must be willing to endure emotional pain or anxiety instead of escaping or deadening it with sex. You must be willing to do without intimacy instead of substituting for it with sex. You must live with unmet needs, unmasked pain, boredom, and intense cravings for your sexual substitute. Freedom comes, but only when one is willing to pay the price (Matthew 5:29-30).

7. BELIEVE YOU CAN HAVE VICTORY IN GOD Many men stay defeated because they don't believe they can ever have victory over their sin. In their own strength they can't. God doesn't remove our lust but He gives us power to overcome it. We are a new creation (Rom 6:1-7) and have a power greater than sin within us to help us (Romans 6:8-14) if we let him. That is our free will choice. In order to have victory, though, often demonic footholds must be broken. They can come from sexual sins our fathers or grandfathers committed (Exodus 20:5), or from sexual unions we formed in the past (I Corinthians 6:16). In either case those openings must be put under the blood of Jesus.

8. TAKE A STAND FOR PURITY IN YOUR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS Starting in our mind we must make sure all our thoughts are pure (Phil 4:8-9). We must commit ourselves to keep these things out (Job 31:1). We can't just remove what is wrong, we must replace it with what is right. Pure thoughts must replace impure. Listen to Christian music or tapes of the Bible. Memorize scripture verses (Ps. 25:3-4; 101:2-3; 119:9-11; Mt. 4:4; 18:3-11; Jn. 17:19; Eph.

6:10-16; Heb. 2:12; I Jn. 3:8; 4:4). In order to really purify our thoughts it is often necessary to get to the root cause and work through the childhood pain which keeps us from real intimacy so we need the false intimacy that sexual sin seems to provide. Ask God to show you what you need to remember. Get insight into how that affects you today. Forgive those in the past who have hurt you. Pray for god to heal, forgive and restore.

9. LEARN TO DEVELOP TRUE INTIMACY WITH YOUR WIFE By developing true intimacy the need for the false substitute will lessen. This takes total openness and honesty, being vulnerable to hurt and rejection. Accept your wife as she is and ask for God's love for her. Pray that your sexual needs would be met with her (Proverbs 5:15-19). Enjoy her body as God intended it (see article 4 in this series). Spend lots of good time with her, relating and loving her as God wants you to do. Learn from her how to be intimate emotionally and spiritually.

10. BECOME ACCOUNTABLE TO A GODLY MAN While we have all kinds of blocks against this, finding a godly man to support, encourage and hold us accountable is very important (James 5:16). Our fear of exposure and rejection, male pride and ego which tells us we don't need any help and ignorance of intimacy combine to keep us from reaching out to someone else. Our mate can't do this. She won't ask the tough questions and we won't always be honest. If I can help anyone in this area please contact me and I'll gladly do what I can.

There is freedom from sexual sin, despite what the enemy might be telling you! It isn't easy, but it is available. Putting it off won't make it any easier. Resources are available (God, the Bible, others), but it is up to each one to be willing to pay the price. Are you now willing? If not, what will it take?

PRAY: Ask God to show you which of these steps will help you to have victory. Write down specific steps in how you can apply these things to your life.

BLOG 324: SAMSON & DELILAH (SAMSON 12)

Years ago there was a movie in which some shipwrecked men were left drifting aimlessly on the ocean in a lifeboat. As the days past under the hot sun their food and fresh water gave out and they grew deliriously thirsty. One night, while others were asleep, one man ignored all previous warnings and gulped down some salt water. He quickly died. You see, ocean water contains seven times more salt than the human body can safely ingest. When a person drinks it he dehydrates because the kidneys demand extra water to flush the overload of salt. The more salt water someone drinks, the thirstier he gets. He actually dies of thirst.

Lust works the same way. Many men thirst desperately for something that looks like what we want. We don't realize, however, that it is precisely the opposite of what we really need. In fact, it can kill us. It killed Samson.

SAMSON & DELILAH Unable or unwilling to stay away, Samson continued to hang around the loose Philistine women of the area. He "fell in love" with (Judges 16:4) Delilah. Actually, they were both using each other for their own needs, which can hardly be called real 'love.' He used her for sex, but never trusted her. She used him for power and financial gain. Each were thinking only of themselves. Despite knowing she was trying to get his secret and destroy him, he continued to play with danger and keep going back to her, getting closer and closer to telling her the secret of his strength. (Judges 16:5-15). Five times she betrayed him, five times he lied to her, but the sex continued. Finally, in pride and self-confidence, and to stop her nagging, he told her his secret (v. 16-17). When slept after sex his hair was cut, breaking the third Nazarite vow (no juice from grapes and no touching a dead animal) and taking his strength so he was easily overpowered and arrested (v. 18-21). He was blinded and forced to push a beam in a circle all day, grinding grain for the Philistines as oxen did. What a sorry way for a prophet of

God, a judge of God's people, to end his life. His was literally and physically blinded by lust until he hit bottom. What a picture this is of reaping what you sow. First sin blinds (II Peter 1:9), then it binds (II Peter 2:19) and finally it grinds (II Peter 2:22). This did cause Samson to take a good, honest look at his life and where he had gotten himself.

SAMSON & DEATH God used that time in Samson's life to work. When his strength was gone he had to turn to God for strength and help. He hit bottom, with no place to look but up. Satan, who had inflamed his lust for so many years, now trashed him. He felt the full weight of his sin and guilt. It was obvious his life had been wasted. Something started happening in Samson during this time. God used his suffering to begin to mature him, and for the first time we see him praying, asking God for help and putting God's will before his own (v. 28). His faith grew (Heb. 11:32). When taken to be mocked by the nation, God returned Samson's strength one final time, allowing him to kill many Philistines (v. 22-31). Unfortunately the Jews didn't repent and follow up on this opportunity for deliverance, but all clearly saw God as the sovereign and just ruler of nations and people.

Samson's life was, in effect, wasted. He had no control over lust and sex. Satan used that to defeat David, Lot, Solomon and many others. He successfully destroys many Christian men today the same way. Unless we are all very careful watchful and alert, he will get us, too.

What lessons can you learn from Samson's life to help you live in victory over sin?

BLOG 325: GUARDRAILS AGAINST SEXUAL SIN (SAMSON 13)

Just as dangerous roads have guardrails to protect drivers from plunging over the edge, so God has provided guardrails for Christian men to be able to safely navigate the curves and dangerous portions of life. These can keep us from plunging into sexual destruction.

1. A Strong Relationship With The Father is the first guardrail (Proverbs 5:1-2). A solid spiritual relationship with God is the surest protection against destruction. Invite God to examine your thoughts (Phil 4:8-9). Take captive any thoughts that aren't pure (II Corinthians 10:5) before they grow. Study and memorize Bible verses to help with the battle over lust (I Thessalonians 4:3-8; Job 31:1; Proverbs 6:27; Mk 9:42-47; Ephesians 5:3-7; II Tim 2:22; II Corinthians 10:5; Psalm 139:23-24).

2. An Extreme Caution With Other Women is the next safeguard. Do whatever is necessary to keep yourself from being tempted in action or thought (Matt 5:29-30). Don't even allow yourself to look at another woman and lust (Job 31:1). Be careful, too, of any relationship with a woman where you enjoy and look forward to her company. Sexual relationships start as good friendships, but any male-female relationship that isn't totally brother-sister in all aspects can easily lead to sin.

3. A Wide-open Relationship With Our Brothers is another guardrail. We all need someone who loves us enough to challenge us to total purity (James 5:16). We need accountability, encouragement and prayer support which can only come from a close brother in the Lord who understands and cares.

4. A fulfilling Relationship With Our Wife is the final essential ingredient (Proverbs 5:15-19). If your relationship with your wife isn't what you'd like, it's up to you as the man to change that. Be the husband you need to be no matter how she responds. Pray and fast for her to be the wife you need. Pray daily for God to give you a love for her like you had in the past. Treat her as if you have that love, and God will quickly put it in your heart. Learn to develop a close intimacy with her. The grass always looks greener, but never is.

Billy Graham says “There must be firm control of the sex impulse. This God-given instinct has been dragged through the gutter by modern thinking, and we have made a cheap toy out of the most sacred gifts God has ever given to man. Our procreative powers need to be dedicated to Christ.”

Be careful when the world, the flesh or the devil try feeding you some salt water. It may seem initially invigorating and refreshing, but it leads to death. Control your thirst for sexual things. Drink of the water God has provided (Proverbs 5:15-19) and don't even think about any other. Make that commitment now. Job says “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl” (31:1). Let's all make and keep that same commitment ourselves. Let's not wait until it is too late, like Samson. Lets do it NOW.

Which of the above guardrails do you have in place?

Which are missing, or in need or repair? What must you do NOW to establish those guardrails?

BLOG 326: JOHN NEWTON & VICTORY OVER SEXUAL SIN - 1

John Newton was a tremendous man of God, greatly used by Him to spread His message of grace and salvation. John's life wasn't always that way, though. He himself is a prime example of God's grace. He's best known for writing the hymn “Amazing Grace.” John, however, had much trouble with sexual temptation and sin. It was only by God's grace that he was delivered. That grace is available for us today, too.

JOHN'S EARLY LIFE John was born July 24, 1725, in London, England. He had a godly mother who taught him the Bible and prayed for him. In fact, she wanted him to be trained as a preacher, but she was sickly and died when he was 7. His father was away a lot for he was a sea captain. He remarried and started taking John to sea with him when John was 11. John quickly fell into gross sin. Several times he tried to reform his life but failed.

Although he spent much time at sea, his heart wasn't in being a seaman for he had a girl, Polly, whom he wanted to marry and spend time with. Irresponsibility and carelessness caused him to end up on a British Naval vessel fighting France. He worked his way up to being an officer but lost it when he went AWOL to see Polly. He was flogged and put on a ship going on a 5-year tour of duty. John was sure Polly would be married by the time he returned. He was such a detriment to the ship that they traded him to a slave ship for another sailor.

SEXUAL BONDAGE BEGINS At 19 years of age John had free access to any slave woman he wanted. He went wild! “I rejoiced that I now might be as abandoned as I pleased, without any restraint. I not only sinned with a high hand myself but made it my study to tempt and seduce others upon every occasion.” As a sailor he was so bad that the slave ship wanted to trade him back to the British Navy and John didn't want that. As soon as he could, he left the ship to manage a slave warehouse in Africa.

As manager of the slave warehouse, John had unlimited access to the women there. However he became so sick he almost died and ended up in slavery himself. He had a terrible master who caused him much suffering, but before too long was traded to a new owner who liked him. Again he was able to constantly sleep with African women. He was so engrossed in his sinful life style that he didn't want to leave Africa. It was only the thought of Polly that pulled him home.

SALVATION BY GRACE Again John was unwelcome on the ship that took him home because of his filthy language, awful morals, drunkenness, and anti-Christian attacks. He constantly mocked the gospel and Jesus. He had a reputation as one of the most vulgar and blasphemous of men, worse than most of the pirates he associated with. Then it all changed.

On March 21, 1748, at 22 years of age, John turned his life over to Jesus. The day before he had been reading Thomas A Kempis's Imitation of Christ and read "Life is short and uncertain. Today a man is vigorous and tomorrow he is cut down, withered and gone." He came under deep conviction. That same night a terrible storm hit the ship and it seemed they would sink. The ship was severely damaged and only barely managed to stay afloat. John found himself calling out to God for mercy -- if such a sinner as he could find mercy! Only Bible verses about judgment came to mind, but he humbled himself and found God's mercy. "I see no reason why the Lord singled me out for mercy, unless it was to show, by one astonishing instance, that with Him 'nothing is impossible.'"

(The story of John Newton and his victory over sexual sin will continue in the next blog.)

BLOG 327: JOHN NEWTON & VICTORY OVER SEXUAL SIN - 2

(The story of John Newton and his victory over sexual sin is continued from the previous blog.)

SEXUAL STRUGGLES CONTINUE John apologized to his father and stepped up his courtship of Polly. His whole life changed and he reveled in his new-found forgiveness and peace. Spiritually he was on fire and grew as a Christian. He got a job as first mate of a slave ship, though, and a few weeks after sailing found he was as bad as ever before. He stopped reading his Bible and praying and had no Christian fellowship. He was unable to resist the sexual temptations and sunk right into sexual sin again. "I was almost as bad as before. The enemy prepared a train of temptations and I became his easy prey. For about a month, he lulled me asleep in a course of evil, of which a few months before I could not have supposed myself any longer capable." Although he tried resisting, he was helpless to have any victory. "I was fast bound in chains; I had little desire and no power to free myself." He had first choice of the women on the slave ship. Today we would say he was addicted to sex. "If I attempted to struggle, it was in vain." How many men can identify with that bondage and misery!

GOD'S GRACE BRINGS DELIVERANCE Again John got so sick he almost died. He had no hope of mercy or forgiveness. He realized he could not change and was helpless in his sin. He stopped making promises or commitments about "next time" and "never again." He threw himself upon God's mercy, a broken and totally defeated man. "I made no more resolves, but cast myself upon the Lord to do with me as He should please." With that came forgiveness, and peace returned. In fact, he never sunk to those same depths again. "Though I have often grieved His Spirit and foolishly wandered from him since (when, alas, shall I be more wise?), His powerful grace has preserved me from such black declensions as this I have last recorded."

Eventually he got out of the slave trade entirely and entered the ministry. God used him in a small town to faithfully spread His message. As John's own testimony spread, so did his influence. Many found hope and deliverance through John's message of grace.

LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF JOHN NEWTON What lessons can we learn from John? First and foremost, victory over any sin only comes by God's grace. Sometimes He removes the temptation at salvation, but often it just seems to get worse. Dormant for periods of time, it again and again raises its ugly head to bring sin, guilt and misery. It was only when John realized that he couldn't defeat it, no matter how hard he tried, that he was able to see God's victory in his life. There is no program, no strategy, no magic formula to bring victory -- it is only by God's grace. Any pride in ourselves or our ability to change (Prov. 16:18). God did discipline him when he sinned to get his attention: twice he was so sick he almost died. By his own admission, a fine wife to honor and be worthy of was also a help to keep him from slipping back into sexual sin. On a later voyage he wrote to Polly: "I was once no less eager after their pleasures than they (the crew members) are now. But you have so refined my taste since, that nothing short of yourself can thoroughly please me." That should be our prayer, too.

It's all by grace, nothing we can do or deserve. Falling on God's mercy is our only recourse. Promises of change, punishing ourselves for past failures, trying our hardest, all these fail for the flesh (sin nature) cannot control the flesh. Only the Spirit can control the flesh, and only when we 100% come to the end of our rope and throw ourselves upon His mercy. Have you done that, or are you still struggling on your own? Learn from John Newton. It's only by God's grace and mercy that victory comes. That's no excuse to sin, but it does give us hope no matter how bad things are. It also shows us our total need of Him -- which is something we all, like John Newton, need to learn.

What lessons is God teaching you from the life of John Newton?

BLOG 328: KING DAVID & VICTORY OVER SEXUAL SIN - 1

Sin can ruin your life. No one ever plans for that to happen, still that is always the result unless God in His mercy intervenes. Sin is a free will choice. The consequences are inevitable. God's principle still stands: reap what you sow (Gal. 6:8). It usually always starts small and seems 'innocent,' but the results are disastrous. Warning signals are ignored and destruction is inevitable. That happened to the *Titanic* and it will happen to us, too. Examples of this are myriad. Although he is often used as an example of this, there are still many lessons we can learn from David.

DAVID'S WEAKNESS FOR WOMEN God had clearly said that His kings were to only have one wife (Deut. 17:17). When David disobeyed that, the end result was inevitable. That passage also said the king wasn't to build up a large army and depend on his own military might but to trust in God (Deut. 17:14-16) and David was able to obey this part and trust in God. If only he would have obeyed and trusted in the second area, too. As big a temptation as trusting in pride and power are for men today, lust is even a bigger one.

David's first wife was Michal, the daughter Saul gave him for killing Goliath. When Saul turned against David he took her back and married her to another man. David then married Ahinoam, Abigail, Maacah, Haggith, Ablital, Egal and Bathsheba. He later got Michal back as a wife, too. In addition to these eight wives David had at least ten concubines. By his wives David had twenty-one sons and one daughter. David had a very large, messed-up family and suffered many negative consequences of his actions.

A lust for women was the crack in David's armor, and he passed this on to his son Solomon who had 700 wives and 300 concubines. They turned his heart from God (I Kings 11:3). That is what God's warning in Deut. 17 said would happen. Solomon broke the first prohibition, too, for he built up the army and started putting his faith in it instead of God.

POLYGAMY TODAY Do you have a weakness for women? Be honest with yourself. Most men, even good Christian men, are susceptible to lust and sexual sin. What about you? How many wives do you have? Many Christian men have more than one wife. They have the women they are married to. Then they have a second wife: sexual fantasies. A third wife may be pornography. From there it gets even worse. We might not see them as other wives, but that's what they are. They steal our affections and sexual desires, leaving our first wife short-changed or her due. They substitute. They steal our hearts. They take our time and money. They alienate our affection. They are 'other wives.'

David couldn't buy a pornographic magazine or watch cable TV or a video. He married another wife. That was his centerfold. Today we don't have to marry another woman, we can seemingly get them 'free' in a magazine or on TV. You can even download another wife off the Internet! Men, just how many 'other wives' do you really have?

And remember, these wives have children, too. Their names are “shame,” “guilt,” “defeat,” and “misery.” They can even be “poverty,” “divorce,” “disease,” and “death.” Who needs wives and children like these? Who needs to take away from the woman God provided? (The story of King David and his victory over sexual sin will continue in the next blog.)

BLOG 329: KING DAVID & VICTORY OVER SEXUAL SIN - 2

(The story of King David and his victory over sexual sin is continued from the previous blog.)

DAVID DIDN'T EXPECT TO PAY All David wanted was some entertainment to fill a dull, boring evening (when he should have been at work for God leading God's army). Instead he ended up in deception, murder and adultery. Before long his family was split over this and by the next generation the direct results were a split in the nation. David, his family and the entire nation all went downhill from there. That wasn't David's plan when he saw Bathsheba from the roof! David thought he could have some fun without any serious consequences. He played with fire and got badly burnt. David never thought that, just because he let that first lustful thought grow into an action, he'd have such a steep price to pay. Satan never whispers that part of things into our heart. He talks only of the present, never of the future. But the present is fleeting and the future always comes.

This sin with Bathsheba was the first domino in a row that included the death of his infant son, his oldest son Amnon raping his daughter Tamar, Absalom killing Amnon to avenge the rape, Absalom's almost-successful attempt to overthrow David's kingdom, and Absalom's death. What a price to pay for letting an innocent lustful thought grow to where it became an action! By the way, when is the best time to stop a lustful thought? When is the best time to stop a fire that has started in your house?

Other consequences continued. Ahithopel, David's close friend and trusted advisor for decades, sided with Absalom in his rebellion (which is why it was almost successful). Why would he do this? Bathsheba was his granddaughter. See how sin works?

Remember, this wasn't a one-time slip David made. He's been stretching and burning his conscience for years. If he hadn't given into his lust when he took his second and then third wife, he would have better been able to resist that first impulse to sin with Bathsheba. A man who gives into his lust when young has a much harder time controlling it when older.

It may be that David never did get over his 'thing' for women, even after paying this bitter price. When he was old and his circulation was bad, a young virgin was brought in to sleep with him and keep him warm (I Kings 1:1-4). Granted, nothing sexual happened, but why not one of the women he already had? Why a new one, a young one, a virgin? More than likely he was just repeating his life-long pattern. When David had a need, he compromised and looked for some new sensual stimulation to meet that need. Is that what you do?

WHAT ABOUT YOU? What more can I say? The story speaks for itself. Sin can ruin your life. No one ever plans for that to happen, still that is the way sin works. The only antidote is the blood of Jesus: accepting God's free gift of salvation, coming back for cleansing each time one sins, and depending on God's strength for victory over all sin. First, though, the sin must be admitted. Unless we admit to ourselves that we have a problem we will never strive for a solution. Admit your helplessness to have victory over sexual sin, be it a thought pattern or action. It's no different than any other sin. Victory is available in Jesus. For some it means a mental choice to stop lust before it grows in the mind, for others it may be a change in daily patterns (where you go, what you watch, etc.), for others it still means getting counsel or finding a friend to hold one accountable. Whatever it is for you -- do it! Sin can ruin your life!

What lessons is God teaching you from the life of King David?

BLOG 330: JOSEPH & VICTORY OVER SEXUAL SIN - 1

The Lewis and Clark expedition had a great impact on this nation as well as on many individual lives. One such man was John Colter. He traveled west as part of Lewis and Clark's party, but didn't return with them because he wanted to stay and explore more of the fabulous land he had been exposed to. He was the first white man to witness the geysers of Yellowstone and many other wonders of the west. For many years he survived despite constant danger. Then one day he was surrounded and captured by some Blackfeet Indians. Instead of killing him on the spot they decided to make a game of it. They stripped him naked, gave him a 300 yard head start, and then started chasing him. The ground was rough rock and prickly cactus, and soon his feet were cut and bleeding. He ran for his life, though. Blood streamed from his nose and mouth from the exertion but he couldn't slow down. He'd be dead if he did. One Indian almost caught up with him, but he was able to turn, surprise the Indian, and kill him first. After running six miles he found a river. He hid for hours in icy cold water under a raft while the Indians searched for him. Under cover of dark he went upstream, exhausted, half-frozen and nearly delirious from exposure and loss of blood. He knew of a trading post 150 miles away and headed in that direction. Seven days later he walked, naked, bleeding and hungry into the Bighorn compound. In that moment he became a living legend. Stripped of everything and against the worst odds imaginable, John Colter outran pursuing Blackfeet for 156 miles.

RUN! What an example he is to us of running for our lives, our spiritual lives. Oh that we would put that much effort into running from temptation and sin! If we see the deadly danger behind temptation and sin we would turn and run for our lives. That is the only appropriate response to that which would pollute our soul and kill our holiness.

JOSEPH THE RUNNER Joseph in the Old Testament is a perfect example of this. I won't go into the whole story of his life because you can read it for yourself in the Bible starting in Genesis 37. Joseph was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers and became a slave in a very well-to-do household. God blessed all he did and before long he was put in charge of the entire household. Since his master was often gone, he was in the top position. His master was a fine man, but the master's wife was an immoral woman. She tried to do everything she could to seduce Joseph (Genesis 39:7-20). When nothing worked and he fled from her physical attack, she accused him of rape and his master threw him into prison! What a reward for virtue.

Instead of quickly passing over the temptation Joseph faced, let's see what we can learn from it. Joseph was young, probably good looking and well built, and good at whatever he did. Thus Potiphar's wife was challenged by him. It must have been her own ego that made her want him. She was trying to use him for her emotional pride and physical pleasure. It isn't hard to see Satan behind this. He doesn't know all God knows, but it wouldn't have been too hard to piece together some of the clues (brothers and father to one day bow down to Joseph, etc.) and see that God has something special for Joseph in the future. It was obvious Joseph was a man God was using and would use even more in the future. Therefore Satan hit as soon as he could. He didn't play around, he went for the kill right from the start. He used one of his first stringers (Potiphar's immoral and self-centered wife) who no doubt was very beautiful and appealing (why would Satan use ugly bait?). She was always there, always inviting, always displaying her wares, always available. Joseph was like any normal young man with normal desires and hormones. It must have been a real temptation!

(The story of Joseph and his victory over sexual sin will continue in the next blog.)

BLOG 331: JOSEPH & VICTORY OVER SEXUAL SIN - 2

(The story of King David and his victory over sexual sin is continued from the previous blog.)

WHY DID JOSEPH RUN? Why would Joseph resist? If she was willing and he was naturally curious, and no one would find out -- why not? That's the way it is seen today. If no one gets hurt, so what? No doubt her husband knew of her ways and chose to overlook them and pretend the gossip he heard wasn't true. If it wasn't Joseph it would be someone else. Joseph's resistance had nothing to do with his loyalty for his master. He had a great loyalty to consider: his loyalty to God (Genesis 39:9). He considered this a "great evil" and "sin against God." Each man must choose his own moral standards. What we are when no one is looking is what we really are. No one was looking at Joseph, no one would know, no one but God. That was enough. Joseph lived his life knowing God was always watching. Do you?

That's why Joseph ran. He ran from her, but I think he also ran from himself. Inside he knew if he didn't move fast he'd be lost! It wasn't that she was about to physically overcome and force him, it was that he found himself very tempted and attracted. What scared him was how easy it would have been to give in! Does that ever scare you? It should. Joseph ran from himself more than he ran from her. God didn't remove the source of temptation, but God did leave an open door for him to run through. Today, too, God always gives us a "way of escape" (I Cor. 10:13) for us to run through. RUN -- not walk. If we don't run we won't make it.

LESSONS IN RUNNING TODAY John Colter ran for his life. He was trapped and was a goner if he didn't put distance between him and his enemies. He had nothing but his free will, and he used that to escape the danger. Why aren't we as serious about escaping sexual temptation and sin? Is it because we really don't see it as the evil danger it is? Is it because we are intrigued and, while we don't want to get caught and destroyed, we want to hang around a bit and 'enjoy' the temptation or sin a little longer. An Indian with a spear is an obvious danger, a friendly smile from a girl in a short shirt doesn't seem as dangerous. Believe me, it is. You don't have to believe me, down inside you know that yourself. Act on what you know. Don't flirt with destruction. Satan uses the same traps and bait today as he did with Joseph.

Leave your coat and run, as Joseph did. Cancel your cable. Throw away your video store card. Drive home a different way. Avoid going past that secretary. Go the opposite of that book store at lunch. Completely cut off that 'innocent' flirtatious relationship. Fire that seductive employee. Quit your job if necessary and get another.

Sin always has a price, and that is especially true of sexual sin. It makes no difference if it's an action or 'just' a thought. Sin is sin. Sin always costs, and it costs more than anyone wanted to pay. That is especially true of sexual sin. Ask David. Ask Samson.

Remember John Colton. Remember Joseph. We have two choices: run or sin. It's your choice. Make the right one!

What lessons is God teaching you from the life of Joseph?

ARE YOU GROWING SPIRITUALLY?

BLOG 332: ARE YOU GROWING SPIRITUALLY? HERE'S HOW TO TELL - 1

The standard we use to judge the success of a company or business today is the bottom line, the numbers that show how much profit they made. Unfortunately we carry that standard over to the church as well. Many feel that the more people who attend a church and the larger the church budget the greater the church. That is not how God evaluates churches though.

I have been pastoring the same small church for over 30 years. There were several times in the early years when I wanted to quit, when I thought we weren't successful because we continued to stay small. God taught me that the way He evaluates the health of a church has nothing to do with the number of people who attend or how much money it has. After all, we don't know the size of a single church in the Bible. We do know if they are healthy and growing spiritually, but we don't know their size because to God that isn't important.

What does God expect from a healthy church? How can we tell if a church is healthy and growing? How can we tell if we as individuals are healthy and growing? We are commanded to grow (2 Peter 3:18), but just what does that mean? How can we measure our growth?

When my children were young we measured their growth every 6 months. We would mark on a chart how tall they were and we could see how much they had grown since the last time. We don't have that kind of measuring stick to tell if we or our church is growing, but we do have some standards in God's Word which can help us measure growth. I want to give you 10 of them. See how you are doing compared to them, and see how your church is doing as well.

1. Do you yearn more and more for heaven, think about it, etc.?

Philippians 1:21-24 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Titus 2:11-13 For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men ... while we wait for the blessed hope — the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ,

As you grow spiritually, you will think more about heaven and look forward to it more and more. When we are new Christians heaven is a nice but vague place, but the closer we get to God the more we look forward to being in heaven with Him.

As we become more like Jesus this world and the things of it are less important. The sin and suffering become more and more distasteful to us. We think often of heaven and being in perfection with God for all eternity?

The things of this earth fade but our heavenly home becomes more and more real.

Do you yearn more for heaven than you used to? That is a sign you are growing spiritually.

BLOG 333: ARE YOU GROWING SPIRITUALLY? HERE'S HOW TO TELL - 2

We have been looking at ways to measure our spiritual growth. Last time we talked about yearning more and more for heaven as a sign we are growing spiritually. We'll look at 2 more signs this blog:

2. Are you becoming more loving in how you treat others?

Matthew 22:36-40 "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" 37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

1 John 4:20-21 *If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. 21 And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.*

Do you find you re becoming kinder to people, more patient and compassionate that you were? Are you more sensitive to the needs and hurts of others? Does your heart ache for the trials and difficulties others face?

Do you find you are genuinely interested in others? That you are more willing to do what you can to help those in need?

As we become more like Jesus we love others as He loves – totally and unconditionally. That's how He loves us. Its only natural that as we grow to become more like Him we find ourselves loving people more like He does.

Are you becoming more loving in how you feel about and how you treat others? That is another sign that you are growing spiritually.

3. Are you more aware of God's work in your life?

Philippians 3:10 *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

Galatians 2:20 *I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

As we grow we will recognize God's hand in our life more and more. At first we see the big things He does, but as we grow closer to Him we start noticing that everything that happens is because of Him.

Do you give Him credit for the little things as well as the big things in your life? Are you more aware that He is in control of all that happens, the difficulties a well as the good things? Are you less willing to give yourself credit for what you accomplish and quicker to give God credit?

As we grow we become more aware of how much we need God. He doesn't need us to do His work, He can get along fine without us. We could do nothing without Him, though. If God withheld His grace and help from your life, what would it be like? What could you accomplish for Him on your own, without His help?

Are you becoming more and more aware of God working in all areas of you life? That is a sign of spiritual growth.

BLOG 334: ARE YOU GROWING SPIRITUALLY? HERE'S HOW TO TELL - 3

We have been looking at ways to measure our spiritual growth. We talked about yearning more and more for heaven, being more forgiving of others and becoming more aware of God's work in our lives as signs we are growing spiritually. We'll look at 2 more signs this blog:

4. Does God's Word have a greater place in your life than it used to?

1 Peter 2:2-3 *Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

Psalms 119:9-11 *How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. 11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.*

Hebrews 4:12 *For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

Do you find the Bible is more important to you? Do you appreciate it and turn to it more than before? Do you remember God's promises and think of them during the day? Do you have an increasing number of favorite Scriptures you turn to in difficult times?

Is the time you spend reading the Bible more and more precious to you? Are the truths you read in the Bible having a greater influence in all areas of your life? Do you find your life changing to conform to what God says in His Word?

As we grow so does our appetite. That is true of children, and its also true of Christians. All growing things need a source of food, and the Bible is the food source for our soul.

Do you find your love of the Bible growing? Is it more influential in your life than it used to be? If so, that is a sign of spiritual growth.

5. Is your worship more God-centered and frequent than it used to be?

Job 1:20-21 *Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised."*

Psalms 100 *Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. 2 Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. 3 Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. 4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. 5 For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations*

Do you find yourself worshipping more than you used to? Does praise to God naturally come to your mind throughout the day? Do you feel closer to God than you used to when you worship?

When we are new Christians we enjoy worship because it makes us feel good. Praising God is great and very enjoyable for us. But the purpose of worship isn't so that we feel good. It's so that God feels good! Worship is all about God, not all about us! As we grow our worship focuses more and more on Who and what God is. We worship when walking outside, sitting at home or laying in bed. Worship becomes a part of our every day life. It isn't just something we do when singing on a Sunday morning.

Do you find yourself thinking of God and His greatness more than you used to? Does worship naturally flow from you throughout the day when you think of He love for you or all He has given you? Do you feel more closely connected to God when you worship than you used to? This is a good sign you are growing spiritually.

BLOG 335: ARE YOU GROWING SPIRITUALLY? HERE'S HOW TO TELL - 4

We have been looking at ways to measure our spiritual growth. We talked about yearning more and more for heaven, being more forgiving of others, becoming more aware of God's work in our lives, growing in our appreciation of the Bible and having our worship become more God-centered as signs we are growing spiritually. We'll look at 2 more signs this blog:

6. Are you more sensitive to sin than you used to be?

Romans 12:1-2 *Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God — this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer 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.*

Romans 7:14-19 *We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.*

As young Christians we are aware of things that are sin, things we shouldn't think or do. But as we grow closer to God we begin to see sin in more and more areas of our life. We start recognizing that our selfish motives and prideful attitudes are sin. We become more and more aware of how far we fall short of God's perfection. Instead of becoming more and more like Jesus we feel less and less like Him.

When Paul was a new Christian he wrote that he was the least of all apostles. Later he wrote that he was the least of all Christians. Toward the end of his life he wrote he was the least of all people. Do you see the progression? As he grew he became more and more aware of his own sin and failure.

Are you more sensitive to sin in your life than you were? Are you more aware of when you sin and more bothered by it? Are you less apt to give yourself credit for things you do? Do you thank God more and more for His grace in your life? Are you more appreciative of His free forgiveness than you used to be?

Becoming more sensitive to sin in your life is a sign you are growing spiritually.

7. Are you quicker to forgive others who hurt you?

Matthew 6:14-15 *For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.*

Mark 11:25 *And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."*

Colossians 3:13 *Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

Do you find that you are quicker to forgive people than you were a few years ago? Are you less likely to argue or seek revenge against those who hurt you? Do you forgive people as soon as they hurt you and not wait for them to apologize first? Do you forgive them as soon as the offense takes place?

Jesus is our perfect example of forgiveness. He forgives us immediately and totally, even before we ask Him for forgiveness. As we become more like Him we will find ourselves being quicker to forgive others. They may hurt us on purpose or accidentally, but our first response is getting to be to quickly forgive them.

Do you find yourself quicker to forgive than you were in the past? That is a good sign that spiritual growth is taking place.

BLOG 336: ARE YOU GROWING SPIRITUALLY? HERE'S HOW TO TELL - 5

We have been looking at ways to measure our spiritual growth. We talked about yearning more and more for heaven, being more forgiving of others, becoming more aware of God's work in our lives, growing in our appreciation of the Bible, having our worship become more God-centered, being more sensitive to sin and becoming quicker to forgive others as signs we are growing spiritually. We'll look at 2 more signs this blog:

8. Are you becoming more aware of how great and powerful God is?

Psalms 19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Isaiah 64:8 Yet, O Lord, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

2 Corinthians 12:10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Philippians 4:13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Is God 'growing' in your life? We know God doesn't grow, He doesn't get bigger. He is as big as He can possibly be and He has always been that way. But when we grow in our faith we become more and more aware of what a wonderful, awesome, all-powerful God He is! As we see evidence of His sovereign control day after day our concept of Him gets larger and larger.

Does God seem greater to you now than He did in the past? Are you continually seeing more and more ways He controls everything? When God gets bigger in your life your faith and trust in Him grow as well. We have big faith in a big God, but only small faith in a small God. Is your faith and trust in God growing as well? That shows that God is becoming greater and greater in your life.

If you are more aware than you used to be of how great God is, you are growing spiritually.

9. Is your prayer life becoming more personal and stronger?

James 5:16 The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Jeremiah 29:12-13 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. 13 You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

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

Do you find yourself talking to God more than you used to? Is prayer more natural, something you do throughout the day without even realizing it at times? Does talking to God about things come naturally to you, something that automatically happens? Are your first thoughts about asking God for wisdom or talking to Him about the problem you are facing?

Do you find yourself talking to God about all kinds of things, not just asking Him to do things for you? Is your prayer more centered on God Himself instead of what you want Him to do for you? Do you feel more comfortable praying than you did in the past?

When a relationship grows people learn to communicate better. Do you find your prayer life becoming more personal and stronger? If so, you are growing spiritually.

BLOG 337: ARE YOU GROWING SPIRITUALLY? HERE'S HOW TO TELL - 6

Today we conclude our series on how to tell if we are growing spiritually. We talked about yearning more and more for heaven, being more forgiving of others, becoming more aware of God's work in our lives, growing in our appreciation of the Bible, having our worship become more God-centered, being more sensitive to sin, becoming quicker to forgive others, becoming more aware of how great God is and our prayer life becoming stronger and more personal as signs we are growing spiritually. We'll look at the 10th sign this blog.

10. Do you find yourself better able to recognize His voice when He speaks to you?

John 14:26 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 10:4, 16, 27 When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. ... I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. ... My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

Acts 9:11-15 The Lord told Peter, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.

Do you find yourself more interested in listening to God, in wanting to hear from Him, instead of just being interested in telling Him what you want Him to do for you? Do you recognize that what God has to say to you is much more important than what you have to say to Him?

Are you better able to recognize when God is speaking to you? Can you better tell His voice from your own thoughts and from Satan's counterfeits? Do you have a stronger and stronger desire to want to hear from Him and listen to what He says?

Do you give God credit for the thoughts and ideas, the wisdom and guidance, the conviction and comfort He speaks to you each day?

If you are better able to recognize when God speaks to you then you are growing spiritually.

These 10 standards can help you see how and where you are growing. Look at each one carefully, pray about where you are at and if you are growing in this area. If you find one where you haven't been growing as you should than you can focus on that so you can grow in that area.

Remember, it is God who brings about the growth in us as we allow His Spirit to work in us (John 15:1-8) and produce His fruit in our lives (Galatians 5:22-26). Just as a parent oversees the maturing of his child, so our heavenly Father oversees our growth. His promise is that He will work in us as long as we are on this earth so that we continue to grow more and more like Jesus (Philippians 1:6). What a blessing and what a privilege that is. God expects us to grow, but He doesn't expect us to do it on our own. He will bring that about as we follow Him.

SW CHURCH HISTORY

BLOG 338: SPIRITUAL WARFARE 100-500 AD

I've written much about spiritual warfare in the life of Jesus and the book of Acts. I've also written about spiritual warfare today. But what about the 2,000 years in-between? What lessons can we learn from those who have gone before us? This is the first blog in a series about spiritual warfare in church history.

Spiritual warfare had a **very important role** in the lives of the early Christians in the first few centuries of the church. Writings that have been preserved from those times speak of believers and unbelievers being demonized (Ignatius, Barnabus, Hermas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Menciux Felix, Hippolytus, Origen, etc.). Deliverance came in response to prayers in Jesus' name. The power of casting out demons was long regarded in the early church as a direct gift still bestowed by the Holy Spirit, apart from any human ordinance. Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Origen and others speak of deliverance as being practiced by laymen, even by soldiers, and women, by means of prayer and invocation of the name of Jesus. Striving to live a life pleasing to God was important to grow in faith and remain free from demonic oppression.

Demonizing was common throughout the Roman Empire and, although many means were tried to bring freedom, few were successful. It soon became evident that Christians had power others did not. God used this to help them gain a hearing and spread their message through the known world.

Justin Martyr (AD 110-165) used this fact when he wrote a formal defense of Christianity to the Roman Senate in AD 150, defending the Christians and petitioning for the awful persecution to stop. He wrote "for numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world, and in your city, many of our Christian men exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, have healed and do heal, rendering helpless and driving the possessing devils out of the men, though they could not be cured by all the other exorcists, and those who used incantations and drugs." The only technique mentioned by him is the use of the invocation of the name of Jesus. For the next two centuries following Justin, every Christian writer wrote about the reality of demonizing and of the common practice of Christian deliverance ('exorcism' as they called it) in their days.

Victory over demonizing is not a complicated process of ritual, special words by 'gifted' persons, emotional church meetings, etc. It is the power of Jesus in each of His children that is greater than Satan's power and which can bring freedom to the oppressed. Of course the access the demons claim must be broken and any open doors closed, but that, too, is done by Jesus' power.

BLOG 339: THE TRUTH HURTS!

The last blog was the first in a series about spiritual warfare in church history. I've always enjoyed studying history. History is nothing but true stories about real people with great lessons for us today. There is much we can learn from others and their experience.

For example, one early church writer, **Minucius Felix** (? - AD 210) wrote that demons suffer pain when subjected to the words and prayers of Christians. The words of truth tormented and burned them. This concept could only have come from the spirits themselves, and was destined to lead to significant developments in the Middle Ages. During that time people who were thought to be demonized lived lives of denial causing themselves pain hoping the pain would drive the demons out. That is not a very successful method and certainly nothing we see Jesus or the disciples doing.

However it is true that touching a person who is demonized, even in tenderness, can bring terrible pain to the demon who is indwelling them. Therefore laying on hands, quoting

Scripture and playing praise music all can contribute to a more speedy victory over that which oppresses at the same time making any demons who are involved with them very uncomfortable. It weakens their hold and makes it easier to remove them.

Christian music is a good way to have victory over demonic oppression (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Not only does it reset our mind and thoughts with God's truth, but demons hate hearing Jesus praised and avoid places where that is happening. Playing music that lifts up Jesus when you are attacked is a good way to help win the battle. It is also a profitable practice at night for those who have thoughts and dreams that aren't from God. Letting Christian music play quietly in your room can help with that. If a certain part of your home or property seems to be especially under attack leave some music playing there all day and night. Leaving a light on can have the same affect for demons love darkness and hate the light.

Just as good, maybe even better than Christian music is the Bible being read. We can do it ourselves or play a recording of someone reading the Bible. That has even more power and authority over demonic powers. Quoting Scripture is our best weapon against Satan's attacks against us as well. Paul says our only offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). Psalm 119:9-11 tell us that it's through God's Word that we have victory. When thoughts or temptations you don't want come into your mind, use Scripture to have victory. There is power in God's Word that is lacking in our own words (Hebrews 4:12). Reminding demons of God's truth shows them they must submit to it, and helps us put our faith in Him and not give in to the lie behind the temptation. It allows our mind to explain reality to our emotions. Always have some verses that speak to your situation memorized or written down where you can reference them at any time. Use them as soon as you sense opposition coming against your thoughts.

BLOG 340: A SMALL ERROR IS STILL ERROR

As the early church continued to grow and expand despite (or perhaps because of) persecution, Satan was developing another approach that would ultimately prove more successful in slowing the growth and strength of the church – **false teachings**. Many of Paul's writings, especially the letters written towards the end of his ministry, warn against this as it had already started in his day. Slowly but surely, though, teachings from other religions found their way into Christianity. Over the centuries these caused a large segment of the church to develop into what became the Roman Catholic Church of the Middle Ages. This brought in rituals and new teachings about spiritual warfare as well.

Before long church practices that were a means to an end became an end in themselves. The water used for baptism was thought to be invested with special properties instead of just being a way of showing the new birth had occurred. This water then became used in rituals used to bring about deliverance. To become holy water the water itself as well as some salt that was added were both put through a formal ritual of spiritual deliverance to purify them. Then the resulting salted 'holy' water was thought to have power over demonizing.

Today, too, we must be careful of putting faith in objects, rituals, written prayers and things of that nature. When a person is in misery and is desiring deliverance, they are open to trying anything and everything. But it is only faith in God that brings deliverance. It is only by prayer depending on Jesus that we can be free. Nothing we do, no rituals or procedures can add to that!

Sometimes we think that the harder or longer we pray the more apt God is to hear and answer. Or perhaps if many people pray there is more power. That is not so. It is important to pray hard and long, and have others pray, but we can't put our faith in that, only in Jesus.

Demons can lure us into marathon sessions of prayer and deliverance that exhaust all who are involved. If God leads us to persevere in this way we must, but still we must always remember it is not our perseverance but only God's power that ever brings deliverance.

Another thing to watch for is thinking that deliverance must be done in public, in front of a large crowd. If that is how God wants that is fine, but Jesus and the disciples never held large group meetings to do deliverance. They just dealt with people when and where they met them.

Keep your eyes always and only on Jesus for He and He alone brings victory and freedom!!!

BLOG 345: JESUS DOESN'T NEED OUR HELP

We have been looking at spiritual warfare in the first 300 years of the church. There are many lessons we can learn from how others found victory over Satan and his forces. Spiritual warfare continued to be a theme in the writings and teachings of the church leaders 200-350 AD (Clement of Alexandria, Cyprian, Lactantius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, John Cassian, etc.). Eventually it was believed that **all non-Christians were demonized** and therefore had to be exorcised before being baptized and joining the church. The established church then said a new convert had to go through a three year period of preparation called 'catechism' during which they met several times a week for prayer, fasting, spiritual deliverance and instruction.

As the **pre-baptismal spiritual deliverances** were performed, various rituals were also performed simultaneously, such as the signing of the cross, which was also believed to have exorcistic properties. Later, exorcised salt and oil were used too. And since the church by this time had come to believe that unclean spirits lived in water, the baptismal waters themselves had to be exorcised.

Since it was believed that demons entered a person in order to enjoy the lusts of sensual pleasure, the opposite kind of treatment was required to drive them out. Hence, in order to be free from demons, the most useful help was **abstinence, fasting, and suffering of affliction**. They felt the physical sufferings the person experienced would also bring pain to the demons and cause them to want to leave. This developed into extreme forms of self-torture in the name of spirituality and characterized much of the church during the Middle Ages.

Some felt if even this pain wasn't enough, then prayer was called for. "But inasmuch as some, being of a more malignant kind, remain by the body that is undergoing punishment, though they are punished with it, therefore it is needful to have recourse to God by prayers and petitions" (Pseudo-Clementine Literature - A.D. 200-250).

Satan uses the same tactics today which he used thousands of years ago. He tries to get u to put our faith in other things, rituals, people or programs other than Jesus. Deliverance only comes by the name of Jesus. Keep your eyes on Him only. Go to Him alone. He does gift and train others to help but it is always and only Jesus who delivers.

One of Satan's more devious tricks is to get u to think that if we punish ourselves, suffer or do without we somehow have a better change of victory. There certainly is a place for fasting and self-denial, but it never adds to what only Jesus can do. Punishing ourselves does nothing put play into Satan's hands (Romans 8:1). True repentance is focused on God and our sin, not in out doing (or not doing) something to better deserve His mercy. Mercy is just that – undeserved favor from God.

BLOG 346: USE YOUR WORDS

For the first few centuries, the church felt all believers could have victory over demons by Jesus' power in prayer. But before long some church leaders started feeling that the ability to command demons to be gone was a special gift only given to some believers. Some still believed **every believer had authority to pray** for this in Jesus' name, though. But by the middle of the third century (about AD 250) the order of Exorcist had been added to the Roman church. Now the ability to cast out demons was no longer viewed as a gift bestowed by God but rather as an appointment made by the church. The church, they felt, had the authority to give the ability to remove demonizing to whomever it chose. They felt only those with this bestowal could have authority over demons. That is not what Jesus said, though.

Sometimes today feel their freedom depends on going to a deliverance minister, and it has to be the person who ministers in a way they think is most effective. They may think that only that gifted person can bring deliverance and depend on them more than they should. While there are those God has gifted and uses, it is always and only by Jesus' power that deliverance comes. It may be through another, or it may be by any believer who uses the power and authority God gives each of us. Don't feel you must depend on others, God gives YOU all you need in Him!

In Jesus we have both **power** (δυναμις *dunamis* - Luke 9:1; 24:49; Acts 1:8; 4:33; 6:8; Ephesians 1:18-23; Hebrews 2:14-15) and **authority** (εξουσια *exousia* - Luke 10:1,17-20; Matthew 10:1,8; Mark 3:15; 6:7; I John 4:4). Power comes from the Holy Spirit within (Acts 1:8), authority comes from our relationship as a child of Jesus (John 1:12). A policeman has both authority (badge) and power (gun or club). Both come from a source outside himself, as do ours (Colossians 12:9-10). Satan also has power (Luke 10:19; I Corinthians 15:24; I Peter 3:22) and authority (Luke 4:6; Acts 26:10; I Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12). Demons have these, also (Revelation 9:3,10,19; Colossians 1:16; 2:10; I Peter 3:22). God's power and authority is superior to that which Satan & the demons have. Men without Jesus do not have power or authority anywhere near to Satan and his demons, though.

In all areas it is **Jesus' strength**, not ours, that gives us victory (Philippians 4:13). God promises to give us power (II Timothy 1:7; II Thessalonians 3:2-3). God is faithful to keep His promise to strengthen us (Numbers 23:19; Philippians 1:4-6; Hebrews 10:22-23). Our part is to use His strength. We are to fight, but in His strength. We must put on the armor God provides and stand in His strength (Ephesians 6:10-18). We are promised what when we resist Satan in God's strength that Satan will flee (James 4:7; I Peter 5:8-9). Victory is assured when we fight in His might (I Corinthians 15:57; II Corinthians 2:14; I John 5:5). French Painter Emile Ranouf, in a painting called "A Helping Hand," depicted an old man dressed in fisherman's garb, seated in boat with little girl beside him. Both have hands on an oar. He is looking down fondly and admiringly at her. Apparently he has told her that she may assist him in rowing the boat, and she feels she is doing a great share of the task. It is easy to see it is his strong, muscular arm doing the work. That's how it is with us and Jesus! It's all by His grace! So don't hesitate to pray for yourself or for others – but always in Jesus' name.

BLOG 347: POWER IN THE NAME OF JESUS

Hilarion (AD 291-371), an early church leader, was famous throughout the Mediterranean world for his faith and power to work miracles of healing and spiritual deliverance. He gives one case in which a young Christian woman became possessed. A youth of Gaza fell in love with her, but she would have nothing to do with him. So he went off to Memphis to learn the arts of a magician. At the end of a year's instruction, he returned and buried an engraved plate and magical formulas beneath the woman's house. Thereupon the

maid began to show signs of insanity, to throw away the covering of her head, tear her hair, gnash her teeth, and loudly call the youth by name. When the maid was brought to Hilarion, the spirit within her began to talk and howl. He asked how it dared to enter into the body of one who belonged to God. The demon claimed to have done so to preserve the virginity of the girl, an idea which seemed a bit outrageous to Hilarion. He then put the girl through the process of “purgation” (spiritual deliverance), and when she was well, he rebuked her for having permitted the spirit to enter into her “by her conduct.” Thus he assumed that she was in some way responsible for the spirit’s entrance.

Hilarion also believed that it was possible for a spirit to make a Christian sick, and this included the “saints,” himself as well. Furthermore, he held another common belief of that day, that it was possible for the saints (particularly the ascetic hermits who lived in the deserts) to be physically attacked and beaten by evil spirits. He claimed that such had happened to him several times.

One of Hilarion’s exorcistic techniques was demonstrated in another case. A prominent and wealthy man of Aira (by the Red Sea) who was demonized was brought to him, bound with iron. When the man saw Hilarion, he broke free, grabbed him, and held him mid-air. Hilarion nevertheless cured him by praying for the man’s release. In yet another case, an officer of the Emperor Constantius came to Hilarion because he was possessed. From a very early age he had compulsions to groan, howl, and gnash his teeth. The spirit spoke perfectly in foreign languages which the man did not understand. Hilarion cured him with a simple command in the name of Jesus. That is the same authority and power we have.

BLOG 348: CONFESSION IS GOOD FOR THE SOUL

We have been looking at spiritual warfare in the church after the book of acts and have covered the first 500 years. Before talking about the Middle Ages (500-1300 AD), let us summarize what we have learned from the church fathers. As to the question of whether or not a Christian could have an unclean spirit, the vast majority of early church leaders and believers felt that it could be so. Instead of being something all believers could do, “exorcism” (spiritual deliverance) became an office granted by the Church. Gradually rituals replaced prayers for deliverance in Jesus name. Essentially what happened during the first five centuries is that deliverance from demonizing slowly moved away from its original New Testament forms, setting the stage for the developments of the latter Middle Ages and the Renaissance periods.

Pope Gregory I (Gregory the Great, AD 540-604) tells us of a priest who became possessed as he attempted to cast a spirit out of a woman. He points out the man was doing the deliverance in his own strength and not in Jesus’ power. Pope Gregory notes another case in which a cleric became possessed: “One day two brethren were sent to buy something for the needs of the convent. One was younger and seemed cleverer; the other was older and should have supervised the first. As they went on their way he who should have looked after the younger man committed a larceny, unwittingly, with the money which had been given to them. As soon as they had returned to the convent and on the very threshold of the house of piety, he who had committed the theft fell to the earth, seized by an evil spirit, and suffered great torments. When the evil spirit had left him he was questioned by all the monks who had hastened to the spot; he was asked if he had not misappropriated the money received. He denied it and was tormented a second time. When the evil spirit had again left him he was again questioned but again denied and was once more given over to torment. He denied eight times and eight times was tormented. At the eighth falsehood he confessed the sum of money which he had stolen. He did penance, prostrated himself, admitted his sin and the evil spirit returned no more as soon as he had accomplished the expiation.”

Confession of sin is essential to deliverance (I John 1:9; Psalm 66:18; 51:1). To confess means to agree with God that the issue at hand is sin (not a mistake, someone else's fault, etc.) . Use the lists on page 15-17 to help in this. After you confess your sin make sure you accept God's forgiveness (Daniel 9:9,19; Psalm 130:4; 86:5; 78:30; 99:8; 103:3; Amos 7:2). Only God can forgive sin (Mark 2:7; 11:25; Luke 23:24; 5:24; Matthew 6:14; Colossians 3:13). God doesn't overlook sin, he forgives because it was paid for with the blood of Jesus on the cross (Hebrews 9:22; Ephesians 4:32; 1:7; I Peter 2:24; 3:18; Luke 24:46-47; Colossians 1:14; John 19:30). This forgiveness is available to all (Isaiah 53:6; Colossians 2:13; Romans 8:1). When you confess/admit your sin God forgives it. This means He blots it out (Isaiah 43:25; 1:18; 44:22; Acts 3:19; Colossians 2:14; Psalm 32), casts it behind His back (a place He can't see it - Isaiah 38:17; Jeremiah 31:34), forgets it (Hebrews 8:12; 10:17; Isaiah 43:25; Jeremiah 31:34), makes it disappear where it will never be found (Jeremiah 50:20), has it vanish like the morning mist at noon (Isaiah 44:22; John 20:31; Matthew 27:51), and casts it into the deepest part of the sea (Micah 7:19) which will then be gone forever (Revelation 21:1). Make sure there is no unconfessed sin in your life now. If so, admit it to God.

BLOG 349: 'CHRISTIAN TALISMANS'?

When we study spiritual warfare in the middle ages we find there are references to a "**Book of Exorcisms**" used by the church in the fifth century. Unfortunately there is no trace of what it contained. However, there is a record of a formula being used by the beginning of the eighth century: "I come against you, most unclean damned spirit; you are grown old in evil, the substance of crimes, the origin of sin; you delight in deceits, sacrileges, defilements, slaughter. Invoking the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we rebuke you and adjure you through his majesty and power, passion and resurrection, advent and judgment, that in whatever part of the members you are hiding, you manifest yourself by your own confession, and that, shaken by spiritual flames and invisible torments, you flee from the vessel that you believe yourself in possession of, leaving it purged for the Lord after having been your dwelling-place. ... Depart, depart, wherever you are, and seek no more to enter bodies dedicated to God. May they be forbidden to you forever, in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit, and in the glory of the Lord's passion, by whose blood they are saved, whose advent they await, whose judgment they confess."

Using written prayers for deliverance can help a person know what and how to pray, but one should never put faith in the prayer or words of the prayer, as if something magical or mystical was attached to them. Repetition of words without meaning them from the heart is empty and is what Jesus condemned the religious leaders for doing. Written prayers can be used, but only as a sample and without any faith being put in the prayer itself.

In the first part of the Middle Ages the **possessed were generally treated well**. The techniques of spiritual deliverance of the first five centuries included breathing into a person, readings and word formulas, holy water, signing of the cross, salt, oil, bodily hardships, etc. In time other methods were introduced. These included the use of sanctified ointments, the spittle of the priests, sacred relics, visits to shrines, and concoctions (as, for instance, a mixture of lupin, henbane, bishopswort, garlic, ale, and holy water). Eventually the relics began to be used as tools of deliverance from demonizing with the spirits providing the expected reactions (complaints, aversion, despair, etc.). These, along with the shrines, could be considered as a form of Christian talismans. This practice originated from the suggestion of the spirits themselves and not from the influence of some ancient civilization, as the literature of Babylon. However, this use of concoctions sounds very much like a throwback to the practice of sorcery.

Sorcery and witchcraft put great emphasis on objects which are seen to have special powers. New Age today attributes powers to such things such as amulets or certain beads,

stones or jewelry. Even as Christians we can do the same thing with the physical book we call the Bible or a symbol like a cross. These are fine for what they contain (Bible) and stand for (cross), but making the physical object a focus of faith or trust is wrong. Our focus needs to only be on Jesus Himself. He is the only one who has had victory over Satan and we only have it in Him.

BLOG 350: WHICH WITCH IS WHICH

As we have been following the development of spiritual warfare from the book of Acts on we have seen the tendency to take the focus on Jesus' power as given to all who follow Him and putting it on special people, rituals or objects. Some of these spiritual superstitions started losing their power as civilization moved out of the dark ages and into a time of awakening (1300-1500 AD). Many changes in and out of the church started taking root. However, the mere rebirth of the naturalistic approach did not signal the end of spiritual warfare, which actually continued to be the prevailing school of thought concerning man's maladies for several centuries to come. Indeed, the greatest excesses in the area of spiritual warfare were yet to come.

Prior to the fifteenth century there were two types of demonizing recognized: willing and unwilling. The former referred to the practice of witchcraft, as the participants willingly subjected themselves to temporary demonizing. The latter referred to cases in which the subjects were unwillingly demonized, which was thought to be some sort of divine punishment for sins. However, in the course of time this distinction was dropped so that all cases of demonizing were regarded as being willing, the consequence of practicing witchcraft. All subjects of demonizing were now regarded as witches.

By the **latter part of the fifteenth century**, Europe had sustained several natural disasters, such as storms, floods, and pestilences (the Black Plague, etc.). In reaction, society seized upon the idea that it was witches who had caused these disasters. Before long, witches were also accused of causing the personal problems of individuals. Therefore, to purge the world of this civil menace, Pope Innocent VIII passed legislation in 1484 A.D. to eradicate witchcraft. This launched the witch hunts which soon became the joint effort of Catholics, Protestants, and secularists. These hunts were to last about two centuries. It has been estimated that several hundred thousand people perished in these hunts, many of whom were first tortured. While there must have been some true demonic activity involved in all this witchcraft, most of what happened was an overreaction which took many innocent lives.

This is an example of how far man can drift from the truth when he doesn't stay rooted in God's Word as the one and only infallible authority for us today. When current philosophies and man's ideas and opinions are allowed to overrule the Bible you know error will come. God's Word is not just history or something from the past. It is still God's true guideline for us today. It is His command to be learned and obeyed.

BLOG 351: WHEN DELIVERANCE DOESN'T COME...

We can learn much about spiritual warfare from those who have gone before us. We see it isn't something new today, it is something all God's people have had to face from the beginning. Here is **a case from the sixteenth century**: "The latter (a girl) was possessed by the demon who often threw her to the ground as if she had the falling sickness. Soon the demon began to speak with her mouth and said things inhuman and marvelous which may not be repeated The girl had always shown herself patient, she had often prayed to God. But when she had called upon the name of Jesus to deliver her, the evil spirit manifested himself

anew, he had taken possession of her eyes which he made start out of her head, had twisted her tongue and pulled it more than eight inches out of her mouth, and turned her face towards her back with an expression so pitiful that it would have melted a stone. All the priests of the place and from round about came and spoke to her, but the devil replied to them with a contempt which exceeded all bounds, and when he was questioned about Jesus he made a reply of such derision that it cannot be set down.“

What about when deliverance is slow or not at all? Remember sometimes God has a greater purpose than casting out every demon as soon as we pray. Sometimes there is delay. Even Jesus had times when He had to persevere for awhile (Luke 8:31 Greek). Usually deliverance is a process. It's like peeling the layers off an onion. As new sin is revealed and removed, more ground is taken back from Satan's forces. This gradual process allows the person to better fill the ground which has been reclaimed with God's Holy Spirit and gives him time to grow spiritually (Psalm 59:11; 119:50,67,71) before the next 'layer' is removed.

That's why the Jews under Joshua only conquered the Promised Land bit by bit instead of all at once. If they would have driven out all the Canaanites immediately then lions and other wild animals would have increased and done harm to the people. In addition, there is a learning process involved that can be used to help others (II Corinthians 1:3-4).

Other times complete deliverance never comes. Paul's thorn in the flesh is an example (II Corinthians 12:7). Paul testifies God then provides the grace needed to withstand. God wants us to learn to depend on Him (Psalm 119:59,92). Of course if the opening is allowed to continue then the demonizing will continue, too (Psalm 94:12-16; 81:11-14).

BLOG 352: WHAT DIRECTION IS THE USA HEADING?

Epidemics of demonizing have broken out in various times and places throughout the world. The Renaissance period had more than its fair share of them. These outbreaks might involve only a handful of people or entire masses, spreading through towns, cities, and even regions. Some were among unbelievers, others among believers. One example of what happened in the middle ages is found in a 1916 East African outbreak. That form of demonizing is called the “mpepo sickness” and effected only women. In the mpepo state the women were found speaking in unlearned languages, such as English or Swaheli, and in deep bass voices. They also exhibited compulsions for food and pepper, and for bright clothing. When requested, a demonizing spirit would relate its life story using “the most filthy language;” then the subject would fall into a rage, and then into convulsions. When the drums were played the possessed would dance in a “wild and terrifying manner” until exhausted. An outbreak of this type could spread throughout entire regions. Christian natives were not only immune but could cure some of the possessed by their “words,” by prayer, and by having the subjects lead a “sober” lifestyle.

We in the USA can learn a lesson from this. Because of our ‘Christian’ heritage and culture, even to today, Satan’s work in the country is far more subtle and underground. Few even recognize that he exists. He works behind the scenes and in more “socially acceptable” ways. Yet his bondage is just as great and in many ways he is more dangerous here because he does work unrecognized. It’s harder to deal with a sneaky, sly, hypocritical child who pretends on thing but really is another way than it is with an in-your-face rebellious child; at least I certainly think so. That’s the difference between demonizing in the USA and in third world countries. Any disease that isn’t recognized is more dangerous than one whose symptoms are clear and obvious.

Paul says we should not be unaware of Satan’s ways and traps (2 Corinthians 2:5-11). In this country most Christians don’t recognize Satan’s tactics and work; many don’t even

believe he exists. There is no way they are prepared to fight against him. At least in India they know he exists and what he can do. They may not know how to fight either, but they know they need to learn and want to learn. In that they are ahead of many in this country.

The most sobering observation I made is that in this country Satan's power is slowly growing as we turn further from Jesus while in India his power is slowly fading as millions are coming to salvation every year. While demons are losing ground little by little in some third world countries that are turning to Jesus, they are gain it little by little in America. No one can deny the direction our country is going. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

BLOG 353: MOVING FAST IN THE WRONG DIRECTION

The further the church got from the New Testament times, the further it also got from New Testament truth. As they turned from God's Word as the only authority and replaced it with church decisions and decrees they got further and further into error. Instead of breaking Satan's power they played right into it and gave him more!

Between 1300 and 1500 AD the world witnessed the **spread of sadistic techniques of spiritual deliverance**, such as torture and execution, which were formerly applied to individuals who were demonized, but now were applied to large numbers of mostly normal people in the general populace. Beyond this it appears that Medieval methods continued to be used, although a few new methods were introduced. The use of drugs to move the bowels and thus produce deliverance essentially epitomizes the depths of degeneration to which Christian deliverance fell during this period.

When man turns from God's Word as the only authority and source of truth he turns to superstitions, rituals and external actions instead. These have no power to deliver; in fact they open the door even more to demons because of the fear behind them and because of the rejection of Jesus as our protector and deliverer. Follow only God's Word. Do only what He leads through His Word. There are no 'magic' rituals, special words or prayers or even group activities that replace His power. Deliverance can come in the midst of a highly emotional church service, but it can come just as quickly in a quiet moment of private prayer. Externals don't assure deliverance, praying in God's will to Jesus is the only way.

BLOG 354: MARTIN LUTHER AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Martin Luther (AD 1483 – 1546) believed that lunacy, idiocy, and insanity were caused by the "possession of devils". He also believed that dumbness, deafness, lameness, pestilence, fever, and other serious illnesses were also caused by these spirits. Once Luther's students asked him specifically if Christians were subject to witchcraft. It was asked: "Can good Christians and God-fearing people also undergo witchcraft?" Luther replied: "Yes, for our bodies are always exposed to the attacks of Satan. The maladies I suffer are not natural, but devil's spells." However, he tempered this belief with the idea that such could not happen without divine permission, and cited the case of Job.

When Luther related his belief that Christians were not exempt from the attacks of the enemy, he spoke from personal experience. As intimated above, he himself was often severely attacked emotionally, spiritually and physically. He also suffered from severe bouts of depression. "He [the devil] vexes me often so powerfully, and assaults me so fiercely with heavy and melancholy thoughts, that I forget my loving Lord and Savior Christ Jesus, or at least behold Him far otherwise than He is to be beheld."

Luther wrote: “We cannot expel demons with certain ceremonies and words, as Jesus Christ, the prophets, and the apostles did. All we can do is, in the name of Jesus Christ, to pray the Lord God, of his infinite mercy, to deliver the possessed persons. And if our prayer is offered up in full faith, we are assured by Christ himself (John 16:23), that it will be efficacious, and overcome all the devil’s resistance. I might mention many instances of this. But we cannot of ourselves expel the evil spirits, nor must we even attempt it.”

One clergyman, Andrew Ebert of Frankfurt, wrote to Luther in 1536, asking how to exorcise a girl who had long been mentally ill. For a while, she appeared to be getting better, but then suddenly got worse. She was seen chewing up and swallowing coins, and also spoke a dialect of German she had not previously known. A Catholic priest came to town and tried to cast out the spirit using herbs, holy water, and ritual commands, but failed. Luther wrote back advising prayer for the girl, but warned against using rituals and commands, since the spirits laugh at and scorn the use of these methods. He also warned of being deceived by trickery and fraud, claiming to have run into many such cases. So he advised an inspection of the coins that were supposedly being eaten.

That’s good common sense – something we all should use especially with spiritual warfare. Actually it’s not just our sense speaking to us but God’s Holy Spirit within. Learn to listen to Him and follow what He says. Trust that what you think or feel after praying and reading the Bible is His speaking to you – of course it must line up with His Word. Getting advice from a mature believer is good as well.

BLOG 355: JOHN CALVIN AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Another great reformer was John Calvin. In view of the great quantity of literature he produced, he spent little time on the subject of demonology. He was even silent about witchcraft, even though the witch trials were proceeding in his day. He apparently accepted most of the popular beliefs concerning demonology, as the belief in the existence of possession, and of the physical power of the devil (but only towards those who had given themselves over to him). Once he took part in an investigation of the disappearance of a man who had given himself over to Satan, and accepted the testimony of witnesses who claimed to have seen the man being carried over two high walls by invisible powers. He also accepted the common Protestant belief that the Catholics were under the power of the devil.

Among his labors, he sought to defend the belief in the existence of good and evil spirits which the secularists were trying to deny.

But what did Calvin believe as far as Christians being affected by an unclean spirit? On this point he was specific. His strong focus on God’s sovereignty led him to believe that believers could be oppressed but never possessed. Remember, though, that the Bible never differentiates between these. It refers to a person as being ‘demonized’ – influenced by a demon. The Bible never says if the demon works from within or without. The cause for both is the same and so is the cure. Thus it isn’t necessary, or possible, to differentiate between the two.

The Calvinists never did use either the baptismal exorcisms or the renunciation, believing that these were unscriptural practices. Nor did they use exorcism of any kind, agreeing with Luther that this was valid only in the early church. Obviously, if the Calvinists did not believe that any of their members could be possessed, they would have no need of exorcism. So there is no further information to be added concerning this matter.

Ignoring or denying the work of demons in Christians plays into the hands of the enemy. We never want to give Satan too much credit or in any way empower him by fear, but going to

the other extreme and not being aware of his work against us is also wrong (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

BLOG 356: JOHN WESLEY AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE (1)

We have been looking at spiritual warfare in the church through the centuries since Jesus was on earth. The further from the time of Jesus it was, the further from God's Word man moved. Superstition, rituals and many strange and harmful practices became the common way to deliver a person from demons. During the reformation period (1500-1700 AD) the new Protestant church went back to the Bible looking for answers about how to have victory over Satan.

Those outside the church were following the new emphasis of the Enlightenment period (1700-1800 AD). The Enlightenment was a movement of the eighteenth century in which reason was further exalted as the solution to all man's problems. It was also marked by skepticism of anything that the mind of man could not understand. This belief has grown and spread until it finds far-reaching acceptance even today. But God had His own movement during the Enlightenment period, springing from the Church of England through the ministries of the Wesley's, which came to be known as the Methodist movement. This revival was marked by spontaneous demonstrations of the power of God.

John Wesley (AD 1703 – 1791) lived at a time when the laws against witchcraft were being repealed. In 1768 he publicly opposed such changes, stating that to give up the prosecution of witchcraft was like giving up the Bible. During the powerful revival meetings of the Wesley's, miracles of healings and of spiritual deliverance occurred spontaneously. Thus John Wesley held that the age of miracles had not entirely come to an end. He debated this issue with literary opponents, challenging them to prove either by scripture or by reason that such an age was over.

Wesley had enemies who opposed him and his movement, most of whom were Catholics. But as it happened, several of these became demonized as they spoke out against him. This is an example of God allowing a person to be demonized as a judgment of God. They opened the door by rejecting God's truth and attacking God's people. When it came to the casting out of spirits, Wesley agreed with Luther in using only prayer, avoiding rituals and ritualized commands.

In a letter in November, 1762, John Wesley speaks of this policy: "The short of the case is this. Two young women were tormented of the devil in an uncommon manner. Several serious persons desired my brother and me to pray with them. We, with many others did; and they were delivered. But where meantime were 'the exorcisms in form, according to the Roman fashion'? I never used them; I never saw them; I know nothing about them." That is good advice for us to follow as well – stay away from anyone or anything that is not focused in Jesus and grounded in His Word.

BLOG 357: JOHN WESLEY AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE (2)

Wesley believed that sickness and misfortune could be caused by evil spirits. He attributed nearly all accidents as well as calamities of nature to the devil. The only difference between his view and that of Luther's is that his does not seem to attribute all sickness and misfortune to the enemy, but mixes in with it the element of natural occurrence. He believed Christians could be possessed as well. Of course, this could only happen by "divine permission." Epilepsy was often the result of demonizing. He gives several cases of such

disease, where the afflicted person believed that he or she was possessed by an evil spirit, and who were partially or completely cured by spiritual deliverance.

There is often a strong relationship between **spiritual deliverance and physical healing**. Often physical problems are also gone when the demons leave. That is because the demons were causing the physical problems. Examples of these in the Bible include: crippled limbs (Luke 13:11), Paul's thorn in the flesh (eye disease? - II Corinthians 12:7), muteness (sometimes dumbness, too - Matthew 9:32-33; 12:22; Mark 9:17-18,24-25), blindness (Matthew 12:22), seizures (Mark 1:26; 9:17-18,20,22,25; Matthew 17:15,18; Luke 9:39), deafness (Mark 9:17-18,20,25), sores (skin cancer?) (Job 2:7), boils and other painful afflictions (Psalm 78:49 - the plagues in Egypt were demon-caused), and physical torments of all kinds (Revelation 9:5,10). The Bible states that Satan can cause illness (Job 2:7-8), even death (Job 1:19). Physical healing can be a result of deliverance. If any of the demons were causing physical problems those problems will be resolved when the demons are removed.

It must be noted that **not all illness is demonic** in origin. Jesus healed physical ills that weren't demonic (Matthew 4:23-24; 8:16-17 fulfilled Isaiah 53:4; Mark 1:34; Acts 10:34; etc.). The Bible clearly talks about illnesses that are not demonic: severe pain (Matthew 4:24), seizures (Matthew 4:24), paralysis (Matthew 4:24; Acts 8:7), leprosy (Matthew 10:8), blindness (Luke 7:21), crippled limbs (Acts 8:7) and many other various diseases (Matthew 4:24). The fact that some physical ailments are on both lists (like seizures) shows that many ailments may have demonic or natural causes. They could be from one source or the other.

Jesus often cast out demons and cured illness at the same time. Jesus said he would do this (Luke 13:32). He did this at the start of His ministry (Matthew 4:23-24; 8:16; Mark 1:34; Luke 4:41), around Tyre and Sidon (Mark 3:10-12; Luke 6:18-19), and in the middle of His ministry (Luke 7:21). Many female followers of Jesus were cured of both (Luke 8:2).

BLOG 358: JOHN WESLEY AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE (3)

It is clear from several cases of Wesley's writings that he believed that Christians were subject to the attacks of the enemy and that they could even have unclean spirits within them. Here is one. "A ten year old Christian girl, named Elizabeth Booth, experienced pain in the chest for three days. Every successive day thereafter she experienced some kind of fit or spell, such as a fit of rage, or a fit of violent laughter, or a spell of being 'stretched out and stiff as a carcass.' These spells usually lasted about an hour, and then ended as abruptly as they began. In the intervals she would be 'in great heaviness of soul,' and would pray and plead for God's mercy. If her faith increased, so did her fits. Often she would go into one of these fits right in the middle of her 'rejoicing and praising [of] God.' A couple of months later she grew worse, often trying to throw herself out a window or into a fire. She was especially enraged against both the Bible and Wesley, and often told of his whereabouts, even though he was not present. But still in the intervals, she would break out into 'vehement prayer.' Then the spirit began to speak through her. She also started having visions, as of heaven, of hell, or of the future. But three months later all the symptoms disappeared spontaneously and did not return."

How could something like this happen? Often the door demons use to attack a person is ancestral sin. When one person opens themselves up to demonic influence, that person's descendants are also at risk of demonizing. When a demon has access to a person, he also claims right to all that person has, including their children. The Bible says God "punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 20:4-5; Deuteronomy 5:8-9; Exodus 34:6-7). The Bible says that children are affected by their parents sins (Ezekiel 18:2) and this is one of the ways. In fact, this is one of the most common reasons

people are demonized. This is especially true of first born males, for Satan seeks to claim them just as God does (Exodus 34:20).

Generational bondage is often discerned by the sin patterns that repeat from generation to generation. It is not uncommon to observe generations of abuse, addiction, hatred, superstition and fear, pride, control and manipulation, rejection, sexual sins and perversions, aberrant religious beliefs, witchcraft, and rebellion etc. Generational bondage can be broken by personally repenting of and confessing the sins of past generations. Claim the blood of Christ as stronger than your blood line and put that access under the blood of Jesus (Romans 5:15). Claim that you are a "new creation, old things have passed away, all things have become new" (II Corinthians 5:17). Ask God to turn curses into blessing (Deut. 23:5).

In the case of the woman John Wesley talked about it could be that the demon(s) lost their access through the person's prayer and commitment to God. God honored her prayers and heart's desire and close that door to them. Praise God for His power over Satan's forces!

BLOG 359: SCIENCE VERSUS SPIRITUALITY

As we know, the attributing of all human ailments to Satan and demons did not retain its position of prominence in the West. Eventually, the tide changed, with spiritual warfare losing popularity, and the naturalistic interpretation coming in. But this whole process took three or four centuries. The change which started in the 16th century was complete by the 19th century.

The Catholic Church had been sustaining harsh criticism from the Protestants and the secularists for many of its practices. This led to a movement in the church known as the Counter-Reformation. One thing it produced was the Roman Ritual (1614) which was a manual of authorized church "exorcism". Besides being a guide for priests as to how to perform "exorcism", the Ritual was also a guide to determine whether a state of demonizing existed. For instance, to be classed as possessed, a subject had to be able to speak in unlearned languages and display clairvoyant and other ESP powers.

Another product of the Counter-Reformation was that several local, diocesan, and provincial synods forbade the use of "exorcism" without the express permission of the local bishop (as the Church of England had done). These latest developments greatly reduced the use of spiritual deliverance in the Catholic Church. However, the Jesuits of England continued to practice deliverance without much change (as did their counter-parts, the Puritans of England).

Spiritual warfare becomes the minority view in the 18th and 19th centuries. As a result of prominent voices speaking out against spiritual warfare and of various churches moving against or limiting the use of spiritual deliverance, and of the great advances in the naturalistic sciences, spiritual warfare gradually lost ground and became the minority view. The tide had now changed from supernaturalism to secularism.

It continues to be the same way today. Everything is seen through the eyes of science – what can be visually seen and proven. Anything supernatural is denied. That's not the way it is in the east and third world countries where superstition and belief in the supernatural (evil powers) are strong. But it certainly is the predominant view in the west, especially in North America and Europe.

BLOG 360: EXORCISM IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

In the last and current century exorcism in the **Roman Catholic Church** has continued in the previous centuries. Today, with proper authorization, “exorcism” may be practiced for Roman Catholic Church members, non-Catholics, and those who have been excommunicated. Also, the tradition of “baptismal exorcism” has been retained, but the exorcism of salt and water was discontinued in 1969. So we see that the Catholic Church has not only maintained its traditional practice of exorcism, but also its belief that a Christian can have an unclean spirit.

Today the Church’s exorcism continues to be governed by the Roman Ritual even though it was formulated in 1614. The exorcism itself is about seven pages long, consisting of prayers, scripture readings, responses, ritual commands, mini-sermons, signings of the cross, and the use of holy water. If in its recitation, progress is being made, priests are encouraged to continue repeating the ceremony for as long as it takes to cast out the spirit, for several hours or more, if necessary. Just as exorcism has become rare in the Catholic Church, so has the exorcist.

However, Catholic exorcism of the possessed has become more theory than reality, simply because nowadays demonizing is rarely recognized. Demonizing is not recognized unless the subject speaks in unlearned languages and displays clairvoyant or other ESP powers. Modern Catholics admit that according to this definition few if any of the New Testament cases of demonizing would have been recognized as such. So the Church awaits the formation of a more practical definition. As a result, all disturbed people are sent to the psychiatrists, not the exorcists.

The **Eastern Orthodox Church** (comprised of the Greek Orthodox, the Russian Orthodox, and the Orthodox churches of the other Eastern European countries) is, of course, very similar to the Roman Catholic Church in most forms, including the practice of deliverance of those who are demonized. Thus it still believes in the reality of demonizing and in the practice of spiritual deliverance of baptismal candidates. It has its own manual of authorized spiritual deliverance contained in the *Assemani*. This manual contains twenty-one forms of “exorcism” for various occasions. However, the Church differs from the Catholics in that it has retained the office of the exorcist.

Knowing and using God's Word, the sword of the Spirit, is key for victory (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 77:12; I Chronicles 28:9; Matthew 22:37-38; I Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 4:8). That's how Jesus defeated Satan (Matthew 4:1-11). Satan tries to plant doubts about God's word in man's mind. This is how he got to Eve. She misquoted God's Word to Satan and when he added to God's Word (making God seem like He was keeping something good from her) she didn't pick it up. Satan was undermining God's Word, and he won! We must be skillful in the use of our sword to win. Below are some verses to memorize and use.

When Jesus was tempted He quoted Scripture to have victory over Satan's temptations. Paul says our only offensive weapon is the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. Psalm 119:9,11 tell us that it's through God's Word that we have victory. When you have these thoughts and attacks use Scripture to have victory. Ask God to give you some verses that will help against these things, write them down and memorize them. Say them over and over when these thoughts attack you. That is the only way to victory, and God guarantees it will work!

BLOG 361: EXORCISM IN EVANGELICAL CHURCHES

Jesus' promise that Satan and his forces cannot destroy the church are what I base my church ministry on (Matthew 16:18). **Churches have demonic forces assigned to defeat and destroy them.** As in other cases, there is a ruling spirit (strong man) with other demons under him whose sole purpose it is to undermine a church's ministry (unless that church is

already going the way Satan wants it to go). Each church as a whole should be aware of Satan's work against it so they can pray specifically against that. Pray for your church and its community, binding up the powers of any demons assigned to work against it.

Churches are to **discipline** sinning members so they will see the need to repent and also so they will not mislead others. Churches, too, can have openings to demonizing and often it is through those in the Body who are willingly allowing themselves to be demonized and/or are allowing known sin in their lives. This must be put under the blood of Jesus. Discipline means removing them from fellowship in the local church and putting them instead in Satan's kingdom, the world. There they are under his influence (Matthew 18:15-18). In effect it is putting the person in a place to follow their sin without restrictions. This way they will clearly see the consequences of their choice and repent (I Corinthians 5:5 talks about this).

The local Body can be very **helpful in deliverance** from demonizing, too. God puts Christians in a local body to help each other in many ways, and spiritual warfare is certainly one such way. He gives spiritual gifts to some that are quite helpful in spiritual warfare. The purpose of all spiritual gifts is to serve others. God gives a person gifts to use for others in the Body, not for him or herself. Some gifts which are particularly useful in spiritual warfare are:

WISDOM: the special ability to know the mind of God in such a way as to receive insight into how certain knowledge may be best applied to specific needs arising in the Body of Christ. I Corinthians 12:8

DISCERNING OF SPIRITS: the special ability God gives which enables some to know with certainty and assurance whether certain behavior supposed to be of God is in reality divine, human, or Satanic. Acts 5:1-10; 8:23

INTERCESSION: the special ability to pray for extended of time on a regular basis and see frequent and specific answers to prayers to a degree much greater than that which is expected of the average Christian. I Timothy 2:1-2; Colossians 1:9-12; 4:12-13; Acts 12:12; James 5:14-16; Luke 22:41-44

EXORCISM: the special ability to command demons to leave people and have them respond and by Gone. Acts 16:16-19

BEWARE: Satan can counterfeit these gifts and even do miracles today. Make sure you know the source (II Thessalonians 2:8; Matthew 24:24 ; Revelation 13:13-14; 19:20; Acts 13:8). Demons can speak through people, a kind of demonic 'gift of tongues' (Isaiah 8:19; 29:4; Isaiah 24:8) and they can perform miracles (Matthew 7:22-23). Don't be impressed by something supernatural unless you know the source of the power, for Satan is a GREAT counterfeiter!

BLOG 362: EXORCISM IN LIBERAL CHURCHES

In most Protestant churches of modern times spiritual deliverance is not practiced. Not only do most deny the existence of spiritual warfare, but many also deny the existence of demons and some even the existence of Satan himself. When it comes to the treatment of disturbed people, most Protestants churches send them to psychiatrists, as do the Catholics. Thus all mental illness is interpreted psychologically.

However, there are a few Protestant churches or groups which have retained the spiritual interpretation of mental illness. One is the Anglican Church (the Church of England), whose beliefs concerning spiritual warfare (and most other topics) are very similar to the Catholics. Besides this church, there are local churches within charismatic or Pentecostal denominations which have rediscovered the Biblical beliefs and practices about spiritual

warfare and spiritual deliverance. More and more non-charismatic evangelical churches are working in the area of deliverance, but they are still a small percentage.

Thus in the twentieth century we could say that Christian spiritual warfare and deliverance still exist, but just barely. There are many encouraging signs, though, that more and more evangelical Christians and churches are learning what the Bible teaches about spiritual warfare.

The twenty-first century will see an upsurge in intensity and frequency with which spiritual warfare is practiced. This will be greatly needed, for the attacks of the enemy are becoming greater in number and strength as well. It will get much worse before it gets better. As the return of Jesus gets closer so warfare will increase. We must be trained, equipped and prepared.

The rest of this story has yet to be written, but the end is quite clear as we see in the book of Revelation. God wins (He already has)!

STEPS TO DELIVERANCE

BLOG 363: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 1. APOSTLES' EXAMPLES

When one is surrounded the best thing to do is to attack. That is what God wants us to do, too, when seemingly surrounded by Satan's forces. We are to FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE of the apostles. They did what they did following Jesus' example and in His power (Matthew 10:1,8; Mark 3:15; 6:7; Luke 9:1). We, too, are given power over the enemy (Luke 10:19; Matthew 10:1; Zechariah 3:15). We have the authority and power to bind demons and loose oppressed believers (Matthew 16:18-19). This must all be done in the power of Jesus' name (Matthew 8:22; Luke 9:49) for that is the only thing demons will obey. Always refer to His full name: "The Lord Jesus Christ." We, however, must be a clean vessel for Him to fill and use for deliverance (Revelation 12:10-11).

Before anything can be said about how to bring about deliverance, there must be no doubt about whose power is in deliverance. It cannot be done in our own strength, we do not have any power to remove demonizing (Mark 9:14-18). In fact, we can cause more damage than good doing this in our strength and not Jesus' (Acts 19:13-20). Even Michael let God rebuke Satan and wouldn't do it himself (Jude 9). We must be strong in the power God gives us. Not our own. We can only be strong in Jesus' strength and power (Ephesians 6:10-18). We are strong "IN" Jesus (Ephesians 6:10-18), not just "from" Jesus. Strength only comes from a close personal relationship and dependence on Him. This is because Jesus has defeated Satan (Eph. 1:20-22; Philippians 2:9-11; Col. 2:15; Heb. 2:14; I John 3:8; Luke 4:18).

Carefully read Acts 16:16-18 several times and write down lessons we can learn from Paul's example.

Ask God to show you any fear you have of Satan or demons. Confess it as sin and put your faith totally and only in Jesus. They use fear to undermine and defeat anything you try to do to defeat them.

BLOG 364: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 2. USE YOUR POWER & AUTHORITY

In Jesus we have both **power** (δυναμις dunamis - Luke 9:1; 24:49; Acts 1:8; 4:33; 6:8 Ephesians 1:18-23; Hebrews 2:14-15) and **authority** (εξουσια exousia - Luke 10:1,17-20; Matthew 10:1,8; Mark 3:15; 6:7; I John 4:4). Power comes from the Holy Spirit within (Acts 1:8), authority comes from our relationship as a child of Jesus (John 1:12). A policeman has both authority (badge) and power (gun or club). Both come from a source outside himself, as do ours (Colossians 12:9-10). Satan also has power (Luke 10:19; I Corinthians 15:24; I Peter 3:22) and authority (Luke 4:6; Acts 26:10; I Corinthians 15:24; Ephesians 1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 6:12). Demons have these, also (Revelation 9:3,10,19; Colossians 1:16; 2:10; I Peter 3:22). God's power and authority is superior to that which Satan & the demons have. Men without Jesus do not have power or authority anywhere near to Satan and his demons, though.

In all areas it is **Jesus' strength**, not ours, that gives us victory (Philippians 4:13). God promises to give us power (II Timothy 1:7; II Thessalonians 3:2-3). God is faithful to keep His promise to strengthen us (Numbers 23:19; Philippians 1:4-6; Hebrews 10:22-23). Our part is to use His strength. We are to fight, but in His strength. We must put on the armor God provides and stand in His strength (Ephesians 6:10-18). We are promised what when we resist Satan in God's strength that Satan will flee (James 4:7; I Peter 5:8-9). Victory is assured when we fight in His might (I Corinthians 15:57; II Corinthians 2:14; I John 5:5). French Painter Emile Ranouf, in a painting called "A Helping Hand," depicted an old man dressed in fisherman's garb, seated in boat with little girl beside him. Both have hands on an oar. He is looking down fondly and admiringly at her. Apparently he has told her that she may assist him in rowing the boat, and she feels she is doing a great share of the task. It is easy to see it is his strong, muscular arm doing the work. That's how it is with us and Jesus! It's all by His grace!

Therefore we need not fear Satan or his forces (Joshua 1:9; 10:8; 23:9-11; Leviticus 26:8; Exodus 14:13; I Samuel 17:45-47; II Samuel 22:33-35,40-41). They must have God's approval for all they do (Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; Luke 4:35). God protects His people (Luke 10:19; II Thessalonians 3:3; Revelation 9:4; I Samuel 18:10-11; 19:9-10). Nothing can get us away from God (Romans 8:38; John 10:29). When we ask, God will put a hedge around us or those we are praying for (Job 1:10; 3:23; Isaiah 5:5). God's power is greater than Satan's (Exodus 7:12; 8:18; I John 4:4).

Read some of the verses above and write down what it means to you to have Jesus' power and authority.

Memorize several so you have them in your head and heart and can use them when needed.

BLOG 365: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 3. PRAY FOR PROTECTION

First PRAY FOR GOD'S PROTECTION around us, our families and our properties as we begin (Job 1:10; 3:23; Isaiah 5:5). Ask for protection from the enemy's interference, that all things would be done decently and in order that angels would be present to minister and protect, that the demons would not hide or interfere and that the Holy Spirit would lead and guide in all that will happen. Claim your authority and power over the place, time and people involved. Forbid anything to interfere, distract or embarrass as the session continues. Ask God to take their power and authority away, as Jesus did when He rebuked the demons (Matthew 17:18; Luke 9:42). Seeing God's power over Satan's forces today brings glory to God (Psalm 149:6-9). God promises victory, saying we will see Satan crushed under our feet (Romans 16:20). The very gates of hell cannot prevail against God's work on earth today (Matthew 16:18-19).

Blessed Heavenly Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I desire to walk in the Spirit today. I know that only as You manifest the life of Jesus Christ in me will I be able to have victory of sin and selfishness in my life. I pray Your Spirit may produce Your fruit within my whole being. Give me a greater love and devotion for You in all I say, think and do.
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Forgive me for the many times I have grieved You by my sin and disobedience. Show me my sins so that I can confess and remove them. Give me a greater desire to pray, read Your Word and become more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fill me with Your presence and control me by faith. Fill me with Your power and authority that I may live in victory over the attacks of the world, the flesh and Satan. Reveal Your will to me. Show me anything You would have me do to become more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

I pray you would put a hedge of protection around us, our families and our property. In Jesus' name we forbid any of Satan's forces to anything to confuse, distract, hide or in any way work against the good work God will be doing this day. Fill us with your presence and wisdom. In James you promise abundant wisdom to those who ask and we are asking for your wisdom, guidance and leadership in what will take place.

We commit all this to you for your honor and glory. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

BLOG 357: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 4. TOTAL SURRENDER

Before anything positive can happen the person must be WILLING TO SUBMIT THEIR WHOLE LIVES TO GOD (Romans 12:1-2) and be willing to deal with any sin in their lives (1 John 1:9). There can be no known sin they are holding onto, no immorality or pride. They must be committed to daily Bible reading and prayer as well as regular attendance at a Bible-believing church. If they are not willing to obey and submit to God they won't find deliverance. Ask them to pray confessing any sin that is still in their life and to reaffirm their total submission to Jesus and their willingness to deal with whatever He shows must be dealt with. It is not in response to our faith that God delivers, but faith in Him is of the utmost importance. It's not that if we have enough faith good things will happen and if we fall short they won't. God's deliverance isn't determined by nor limited to our faith. Still, faith in God to be able to deliver and trust in Him to bring to light what is necessary are primary ingredients for God to work.

Read Psalm 139::23-24 and ask God to show you any areas of your life that aren't submitted to Him.

Read 1 John 1:9 and ask God to show you any sin in your life. Confess any sin that hasn't been confessed.

BLOG 3358:STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 5. GATHER INFORMATION

Now it is time to START GATHERING INFORMATION. Before a doctor writes a prescription or gives treatment he first gathers all the facts he can. He will then know by the symptoms and patterns what to prescribe and how to proceed. The same is true in spiritual warfare. These are some of the questions I ask those I am counseling. Other questions might arise depending on their answers.

Can you briefly tell me what some of your earliest memories are? (this can shed light into childhood events, trauma, etc., that may have contributed to the demonizing)

When did your problems and difficulties begin happening? (going back to the start is very helpful in understanding why they began. If they've always been there then generational spirits can be assumed)

Do you know of any event that may have caused the first one? (this can show an opening that needs to be taken back or a sin that needs to be confessed)

How long have you been a Christian? (make sure they understand what it means to be a believer and really have trusted Jesus. Seeing when they became a Christian in relationship to when the demonizing started is helpful as well.)

Does anyone else in your family or any ancestors have/had the same things happening to them? (this shows generational demonizing)

Where are your parents spiritually? (this can show if it is generational as well as how the person was influenced)

Are you married? Where is your mate at spiritually? (through the sexual union and through soul bonding demons can claim access to the other person)

Have you ever been sexually involved with anyone outside of marriage? (through the sexual union and through soul bonding demons can claim access to the other person)

Is there any sin you are allowing to remain in your life? (God will convict them of this. If they aren't honest not much good will proceed from here.)

Have you experienced any trauma in life? (abuse, car accidents, extreme fear can break down a person's defenses and take control of their lives out of their hands, thus creating an opening for the demonic.)

Do you have a church you attend? (the Bible commands we are to not forsake the assembling of ourselves. If this command is being broken it is sin and disobedience and must be changed for God to work in their lives. Only in very extreme, rare circumstances is it all right to not be attending a church.)

What denomination is it? (this can tell you something about their beliefs and practices.)

Were you ever involved in occult or demonic activities? (many people have used Ouija boards of something similar in the past and this is a definite opening to demonizing.)

Do you speak or pray in tongues? (I and many others in spiritual warfare have found that a false tongue, really a demon, is present and entered through one asking for a spirit of tongues)

Did anyone ever lay hands on you to receive the gift of tongues, healing or any other reason? (when someone lays hands on another and prays for them, anything demonic he or she may be open to can be transferred to the person they are praying for)

Write the answers to the questions that apply to you (above). The answers will help show openings, patterns or anything to pray about or deal with.

BLOG 359: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 6. LIST THE SYMPTOMS

At this point I may ask them to fill out the LIST OF SYMPTOMS of demonizing and or the list of sins that lead to demonizing (page 32-33, 37-38) if I feel more detailed information is needed. I may have them fill those papers in before we meet or at the very start. I will use these papers and notes I have taken as I've asked them the questions to guide my praying. Don't rush this stage, the final product will only be as good as your gathering of this information has been. Like a doctor, the results depend on this part of the process.

I. COMPULSIVE THOUGHTS

- _____ Extremely low self image (feel unworthy, unclean, no good, etc.) Luke 8:2
- _____ Constant confusion in thinking (especially about spiritual things), restlessness
- _____ Inability to believe spiritual truths which you hear or read
- _____ Mocking and blasphemous thoughts (esp. when hearing spiritual truths)
- _____ Perceptual distortions (thinking others are angry at you when they are not)
- _____ Repetitious dreams or nightmares (sexual, horror-filled, fearful, etc.)
- _____ Violent thoughts or actions (of suicide, rape, murder, self-abuse, cutting, etc.)

II. COMPULSIVE FEELINGS

- _____ Hatred and bitterness toward others for no justifiable reason
- _____ Tremendous hostility, fear, restlessness when challenged about demonizing
- _____ Deep depression and despondence (frequent and long)

- _____ Irrational fears, panic, and phobias (Rom. 8:15 Luke 9:39)
- _____ Irrational anger or rage (Mt. 8:28)
- _____ Irrational guilt and extreme self-condemnation, not forgiving self

III. COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR

- _____ Desire to do right but inability to carry it out
- _____ Sudden personality & attitude changes (like, and then hate someone)
- _____ Strong aversion to Scripture reading & prayer
- _____ Lying compulsively, then often wondering why (Acts 5:3)
- _____ Stealing compulsively, if you need the thing or not
- _____ Drinking or using drugs (prescription or not) compulsively, if you really desire to or not
- _____ Eating compulsively (or reverse, bulimia or anorexia nervosa)
- _____ Sexual sins that are compulsive (especially perversions) Matthew 15:5 Luke 8:27
- _____ Irrational, inappropriate laughter
- _____ Irrational violence (compulsion to hurt self or someone else) Mt. 17:15; Mk. 5:5; Lk 9:39
- _____ Sudden speaking of a language not previously known
- _____ Reactions to the name and blood of Jesus (uncomfortable, move away, etc.)
- _____ Uncontrollable cutting and mocking tongue and language
- _____ Vulgar language and actions (Luke. 4:33-34)
- _____ Uncontrollable greed, which drives you on (Acts 5:3)

IV. CONSCIOUSNESS PROBLEMS

- _____ Loss of time (little or a lot, not knowing how you got someplace what you did)
- _____ Extreme sleepiness around spiritual things (Bible study, prayer, etc.)
- _____ Demonstration of extraordinary abilities (ESP, telekinesis, out of body, disassociating)
- _____ Voices heard in the mind (mock, intimidate, accuse, threaten, bargaining)
- _____ A voice speaking from you refers to you in the third person ("he" "she")
- _____ Supernatural experiences (haunting, movement or disappearance of objects, etc.)

V. ABNORMAL MEDICAL PROBLEMS

- _____ Seizures (Mk. 1:26 Mk. 7:24-30 Mk. 17:15) (may or may not be demonic)
- _____ Pain without justifiable explanation, problem doctors can't cure
- _____ Physical ailments alleviated by a spiritual command (epileptic seizure, asthma attack, headache, nausea, etc., which stops when commanded in Jesus' name to be gone)
- _____ Sudden interference with bodily functions (buzzing in ears, irritability to speak or hear, increased hypersensitivity in hearing or touch, sudden chills, etc.)

List the symptoms that apply to you. Underline the ones that are the most predominate, the strongest in your life.

BLOG 360: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 7. CONFESS ALL SIN

Don't forget to CONFESS SIN that has been identified (1 John 1:9). The person themselves must be the one to pray and confess the sin. You can't do it for them. Demons are like rats attracted to garbage, so get rid of the garbage to get rid of the rats.

Dear heavenly Father, You have told us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts (Romans 13:14). I acknowledge that I have given in to fleshly lusts which wage war against my soul (I Peter 2:11). I thank You that in Christ my sins are forgiven, but I have transgressed Your holy law and given the enemy an opportunity to wage war in my members (Ephesians 4:27; James 4:1; I Peter 5:8). I come before Your presence to acknowledge these sins and to seek Your cleansing (I John 1:9) that I may be freed from the bondage of sin (Galatians 5:1). I now ask You to reveal to my mind the ways that I have transgressed Your moral law and grieved the Holy Spirit. ... (Then confess each sin that comes to mind one by one.) I now confess these sins to You and claim through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ my forgiveness and cleansing. I cancel all ground that evil spirits have gained through my willful involvement in sin. I ask this in the wonderful name of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen."

If there are any of these that haven't been confessed, do so now. For all of them, renounce them and take back any access you have given to demons through them..

BLOG 361: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 8. FORGIVE OTHERS

It is of the utmost importance to make sure that FORGIVENESS OF OTHERS who have hurt them in the past or present, including parents, ex-mates, etc., is dealt with at this time. Ask if there is anyone they hold anything against, anyone they are bitter towards or don't like to see prosper. You will sense this as they have answered the previous questions but now forgiveness must take place for deliverance to continue. Unforgiven gives demons a solid stronghold from which to work (Ephesians 4:26).

As to forgiveness, what is forgiveness? Forgiveness is not forgetting or letting someone off the hook. Forgiveness is choosing to not desire revenge, to not want to see the other hurt for the hurt they have caused us. When we hurt we want to hurt back, or see the other hurt for the hurt that caused us. This desire for justice is normal but forgiveness means we don't expect justice, we will take our hurt and deal with it instead of turning it into anger at another. Remember, anger is a secondary emotion coming from hurt. To forgive means giving up any right you might have to see the other suffer for what they did to you. You can't forget, but whenever the hurt or anger come back, you make that choice again to give up any right to see them suffer. That's how God forgives us - He gives up any right to see us pay for our sin against Him. Therefore when we forgive we are being like Him and when we don't we aren't. If you have trouble forgiving just tell God you are willing but struggling. As God heals the pain you will better be able to forgive.

PRAYER TO FORGIVE OTHERS

Thank You, Jesus, for dying that I might be forgiven. By an act of my will I now choose to express the desire of my heart and forgive those who have hurt me. (name the people) I release each and every one of these people into the freedom of my forgiveness. In Jesus' name. Amen
Father, I confess that, as a result of being hurt, I have allowed myself to hold anger, resentment and bitterness in my heart against (name). I acknowledge this as sin, and I now repent and turn from this behavior. I ask that You will forgive me and cleanse me. I take back any access this sin has given to any of Satan's demons. In Jesus' name. Amen

When you feel ready to proceed first EXPLAIN WHAT WILL BE HAPPENING so they know what to expect. People have all kinds of strange ideas of what 'exorcism' is. While this is not exorcism (demons forced out by a religious ritual) but deliverance (free will consent and taking back of access by the person demonized) many may not know the difference. Tell them

you will pray and take back access the demons have claimed as well as commanding them to be gone. I explain it like opening a door and allowing someone to enter a room, then realize you shouldn't have done that. You need to close the door so no one else enters, but you also need to command those who already have entered to leave. Confessing the sin and taking back the access closes the door. Rebuking and commanding them to be gone cleans the room. Both steps must be taken, in that order. Remind them there is nothing to fear (Luke 10:17-21) and that fear is one of Satan's biggest tools against them. Tell them to be sensitive to anything God is telling them in their mind or heart. If He brings up sins to confess ask them to interrupt the process so the sin can be dealt with at that time. If God says it needs to be removed then it must be removed to proceed.

Ask God to show you anyone whom you haven't forgiven and make sure you forgive them now.

BLOG 362: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 9. START AT THE BEGINNING

As you pray for them start with the **OLDEST PROBLEMS AND ACCESSES FIRST**. Put any claim they make under the blood of Jesus, forbid them to do any more work against the person, and send them immediately and permanently to where ever Jesus wants them to go. Usually starting with **generational** spirits first is a good idea. Make sure there aren't any of them working and then go from there.

Here is a sample prayer you can use to get started:

"Gracious Father over all, I acknowledge before you the sins of my parents and ancestors. I know that they have sinned because all men and women are sinners. And so, I openly confess the sins of my parents and ancestors. I know I cannot do what only they could have done in attaining forgiveness of their sins, but I am sorry for their sins against you and I ask that you cover their sins with the blood of Jesus and not hold their consequences against me or my descendants. I claim the finished work of Jesus Christ, Who bore all my sin upon Himself. In faith I accept that work on the basis of your holy Word. I reclaim any consent given to Satan's forces by my parents' sin. Dear Jesus, please set me free from all evil influences coming from my parents and ancestors in the name of Jesus. I know I am a new creation in Christ. Old things have gone and all things have become new. I here and now reject and disown all the sins of my ancestors. As one who has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, I cancel out all demonic working that has been passed on to me from my ancestors. As one who has been crucified and raised with Christ and who sits with him in heavenly places, I reject any and every way in which Satan may claim ownership of me. I declare myself and my descendants to be eternally and completely signed over and committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. I now command every evil spirit and every enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ that is in or around me to flee my presence and never to return. I now ask You, heavenly Father, to fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I submit my body as an instrument of righteousness, a living sacrifice, that I may glorify You in my body. All this I do in the name & authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

Next pray about **childhood** events and experiences: trauma, rejection, etc. Put them under the blood of Jesus, take back any access demons claim through them and send them to where Jesus would have them go.

Then deal with sins and openings that have come since childhood. Take your time and be thorough. There is no hurry and no rush.

This is an important step so spend time thinking about this. Ask God to give you wisdom and insight

BLOG 363: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 10. THE MAIN RULER

As you proceed be sensitive as to who the MAIN RULER (strong man) is. Sometimes it is best to attack him first for he holds the other demons there. Other times he is too entrenched and must be weakened by first casting out the lesser demons, the ones creating the symptoms of sin and difficulties in the person's life. Ask for wisdom and be sensitive as to how God would lead you in this important step.

Usually it is best to BIND THE MAIN RULER FIRST (Matthew 12:29), then in Jesus name bind up any and all demons involved (Matthew 16:18-19). Demons never work alone. Search out the "root" spirits (the rulers) and pray against them. Quite often this will be a demon named 'Death' for that is Satan's ultimate plan against all of us. Other powerful rulers may be 'Fear,' 'Pride' or similar works. Each name describes the work of the demon. You can know their name by seeing what they do in the person's life. Remember, behind every demonic problem lies a flesh problem. By identifying the flesh problem that is at the root of everything the identity of the main ruler can be discovered. However that flesh problem must be completely confessed and renounced. Get rid of the garbage and you'll get rid of the rats!

You can WEAKEN THEIR STRUCTURE by breaking up their organization, for they do feed off each other. Break off her children and claim them in the name of Jesus. Take back any access through blood line, name, etc., and set them free. You can separate the power structure in her from that in their mate, parent, or whomever you sense is involved. Just bind the demons into those people and forbid them to bind together or help each other in any way. They are often the same demons who share the person but limiting them to one person helps. Divide and conquer. Forbid any other spirits to come take their place or help from without. Satan's tactic is to isolate us, cut us off from other Christians and God, and then when we are weak work against us. The same strategy works against him, too.

Also continue to be sensitive as you proceed to sins that the counselee needs to confess. If God pricks your thoughts go along with this and make sure you stop to deal with any sins that come up. Sins of attitude must be dealt with as well: fear, unforgiven, guilt, pride, revenge, jealousy, etc.

Ask God to give you wisdom and insight into the ruler and other demons working against you. Weaken their control by making sure there is no unconfessed sin and by praying against any sin the ruler(s) might be inciting you to commit.

BLOG 364: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 11. COMMAND TO BE GONE!

How can you know if the force against you is demonic or not? We are commanded to "TEST THE SPIRITS" to see their source (I John 4:1). Challenge them with the deity (I John 4:11), Lordship (I Corinthians 12:3) and blood of Jesus (I John 5:6-7). Be sensitive to the response in the other person or in your own spirit. Angels do not indwell people, nor do they communicate through people as demons do. Remember that demons always lie and deceive, they may even claim to be God or the Holy Spirit. Be sensitive to thoughts put in your mind or the mind of the one you are counseling. If God supplies someone with the gift of discernment as part of their spiritual gift mix (or if you have that yourself) that can be very helpful (Acts 13:9-10; I Corinthians 12:10).

Remember the things covered earlier: we are safe in Jesus and aren't to run from the enemy. We are to use our power and authority. Make sure all opening are confessed and access taken back.

COMMAND THE DEMONS TO BE GONE in Jesus name (Matthew 10:1; Luke 9:49; 10:17; Mark 8:22). Do it in faith in Jesus (Matthew 17:18-27; John 5:4), not fear (Joshua 1:9;

10:8; 23:9-11; Leviticus 26:8; Exodus 14:13; I Samuel 17:45-47; II Samuel 22:33-35,40-41). Be in an attitude of prayer (communication with and sensitive to God - Mark 9:29). Don't be proud, stay humble and submissive to Christ (Luke 10:10; II Peter 2:11; Acts 19:12-16). When cast out commit the demons to Jesus' authority in where He would have them go, that He would carry out His sentence against them (Psalm 149:6-9; Romans 16:20; Job 30:3-8). Remember the "house" must be filled with God's Holy Spirit when the demons are removed or things could be worse than before (Matthew 12:43-45).

Use the authority and power we talked about earlier and command any and all demons working against you to be gone in Jesus' name. Quote as much scripture as possible for that is where our authority and power come from.

BLOG 365: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 12. TO HELP BRING DELIVERANCE...

Sometimes God may lead you to LAY HANDS ON the person you are praying for, and on occasion Jesus Himself did this (Luke 4:29; 13:11-23; Matthew 8:15) as did the early church (I Corinthians 1:14f; 12:4; II Corinthians 1:21f; James 5:13-16). Be sensitive to God's leading in this area and do whichever it is He leads you to do. One way is not better than the other. Being obedient to what God would have you do is the determining factor.

QUOTE SCRIPTURE as much as possible (Matthew 4:1-10). God's word is more powerful than and words we may use (Hebrews 4:12) and carry much more weight with Satan's forces. Our authority is God's Word (I Jn. 2:14). Our sword of the Word is our only offensive weapon. Make sure you encourage the person to quote Scripture every time they are attacked and to keep doing it until the temptation/attack leaves. It's our only way of victory.

Playing CHRISTIAN MUSIC during deliverance or at other times in your home is often very helpful for demons don't like to hear Jesus praised (I Samuel 16:23). There is power in praise (Psalm 22:3), so use praise in your warfare praying. You can praise God in prayer or in song during deliverance or afterwards. Use this whenever attacked.

Write down some of the verses that mean the most to you, especially ones that relate to spiritual warfare. Carry them with you and memorize them. This is very important and very helpful..

BLOG 366: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 13. DON'T TALK TO DEMONS

DO NOT CONVERSE WITH DEMONS, either by having them give messages to a person's mind or to speak verbally through a person's vocal cords. The object in deliverance is not to get in contact with demons but to remove them. Communication with them makes you a medium and God's words forbids that (Deuteronomy 18:9-13). There are good reasons to not communicate with them. Neither Jesus (Mark 1:25) nor Paul would (Acts 16:17). They are liars and deceivers (John 8:44) and you can't believe what they say. God wants you only to be in touch with Him (Deuteronomy 4:24). Through the Holy Spirit we have access to all truth and power (John 8:31-32; I Corinthians 12:7-11). By communicating with them you give them recognition, allow them to stall, make things much harder on all people involved, and open yourself up to pride. Besides, they are total liars and deceivers so nothing positive will come from it.

Spend time talking and listening to God and He alone. Have nothing to do with communicating with demons. Talk to God now, and listen to what He would say to you..

BLOG 367: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 14. DELIVERANCE DIFFICULTIES

What about WHEN DELIVERANCE IS SLOW OR NOT AT ALL? Remember sometimes God has a greater purpose than casting out every demon as soon as we pray. Sometimes there is delay. Jesus even had times when He had to persevere for awhile (Luke 8:31 Greek). Usually deliverance is a process. Its like peeling the layers off an onion. As new sin is revealed and removed, more ground is taken back from Satan's forces. This gradual process allows the person to better fill the ground which has been reclaimed with God's Holy Spirit and gives him time to grow spiritually (Psalm 59:11; 119:50,67,71) before the next 'layer' is removed. That's why the Jews under Joshua only conquered the Promised Land bit by bit instead of all at once. If they would have driven out the Canaanites immediately then lions would have come in and harmed them. There is a learning process involved that can be used to help others, too (II Corinthians 1:3-4). Other times complete deliverance never comes. Paul's thorn in the flesh is an example (II Corinthians 12:7). Paul testifies God then provides the grace needed to withstand. God wants us to learn to depend on Him (Psalm 119:59,92). Of course if the opening is allowed to continue then the demonizing will continue, too (Psalm 94:12-16; 81:11-14).

When you start sensing that as much as will take place has taken place you can begin CHANGING THE DIRECTION you are going. Ask the counselee if he has had any thoughts of impressions that he should share. Deal with whatever these may be. Ask if there is anything they would like to talk about or pray about.

PRAY AGAIN FOR WISDOM, asking God if there is anything else to be dealt with at this time and for His continued leading and guidance. Ask God what else needs to be done. Some times there is lots of spiritual growth and maturity needed. Other times it is consequences of sin that need to be faced. Faith gets tested. Quite often there are other demons or rulers (which are demons, but the leaders) that will need to be dealt with later.

If these apply to you then ask God for wisdom as to what steps to take next.

BLOG 368: STEPS TO DELIVERANCE: 15. BRINGING IT TO A CLOSE

MAKE SURE THEY UNDERSTAND what has happened and what to expect in the next few hours and days. Doubt, unbelief, guilt are quite common tactics of the enemy. Encourage them to stay faithful, pray, read the Bible, memorize and use verses when attacked and write down any questions they might have. If they don't fill the vacated spaces in their lives then the demons will return in even greater number (Luke 11:24-26; Matthew 12:43-45).

ENCOURAGE THEM TO CALL for prayer whenever needed. That very act on their part can be humbling and work against their pride, thus it can be very freeing. If demons know they will be calling for prayer help they will be more hesitant to attack than if they know the person will try dealing with them alone.

Remind them that this is a PROCESS, not a once-and-done procedure. It's not that clear cut and dried. Remember Paul's thorn in the flesh? Ultimately God has the final say, not the demons. Remember Job? So when demons remain after we think they should be gone the first thing we must do is ask God what He is trying to teach us, what He wants to show us. He uses it all for our growth. Do we need to learn perseverance? Patience? Dig deeper for a root sin? Humble ourselves more? Trust? Are we an example to others (as Job was)? The ultimate answer to the questions you are asking lie in God's will, not in a demon's power.

Close with a PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING and praise for what God has done. Ask God to continue the good work He has started in the person. Pray for their protection and growth. Ask for their memories to be healed and the parts that have been emptied to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Forbid any demons to return or others to do the same work. Ask God to bless them and use them for His honor and glory.

Spend a good deal of time in praise and thanksgiving to God for Who He is and what He does.

SPIRITUAL WARFARE BLOGS 2018

BLOG 369: POWER-PACKED CRUMBS

We can never underestimate the importance of faith in our Christian life. It affects our prayer life, our victory over sin, our worship and our trust when going through difficult times. It is key to our spiritual warfare as well. I think of the Canaanite woman who came to Jesus because her daughter was demonized (Matthew 15:21-28). Jesus told her that His ministry was for the children of Israel, they were the ones who were fed at God's table of blessing. She picked up on the word picture and pointed out that sometimes crumbs fell from that table and the dogs were allowed to feed on them (Matthew 15:27). She is recognizing that she is an undeserving unworthy 'dog' but will be satisfied with even a crumb of His mercy. Her faith was such that she realized that even just a crumb from Jesus would free her daughter from demonic possession. Jesus honored that faith and freed her daughter. I like that. It takes just a crumb of Jesus' power to cast out demons. If we believe that by faith we will have His crumbs seen in our lives as well.

Faith isn't a condition to meet to earn/deserve God's work in our life. It isn't something we must produce to enable Him to do what we want Him to do. Faith is trusting that He is always able to do what we want, but it is also trusting Him to do what He knows is best even when that means NOT doing what we want. Faith is trusting Him to do what He knows is best for His glory and our growth. Faith that leaves the choice to Him will never be disappointed. Faith that believes even a crumb from Him will be all we need won't be disappointed. (June 25, 2018 Douyelstown, PA)

Matthew 15: 27-28 “Yes it is, Lord,” she said. “Even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their master’s table.” Then Jesus said to her, “Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted.” And her daughter was healed at that moment.

How is your faith? Do you look for great, supernatural and highly emotional responses from God? or are you content with crumbs from His table knowing they are great enough to who whatever He knows is best for you? Where do you need some crumbs applied to your life right now?

BLOG 370: BUT IT FEELS SO RIGHT!

Feelings and emotions are a fine, important and necessary. They are icing on the cake of life. They add color and enjoyment to life. God created them for this purpose. But He didn't create them to be the source of our decision-making. Our feelings should dependent on our rational thoughts, not the other way around. When our feelings get ahead of our mental reasoning trouble comes.

For example: you know in your mind that you are an OK person, yet your fearful emotions cause you to feel insecure and self-conscious around others. When feelings aren't founded on the truth of God's Word stored in our mind they go wrong. The truth is that you are a fine person, but your emotions reject that truth and try to do the 'thinking' themselves.

I often advise people that they need to let their mind explain reality to their emotions. When we feel our emotions are correct instead of our mind we err. That's how Satan and his demons deceive us with their lies. They come through the channel of our feelings

and emotions because we are more open to error there. Unless we keep our emotions in line with truth through our mind we will be deceived. We must fill our mind with God's Word, then make sure our feelings line up with that truth (Romans 12:1-2).

Knowing and using God's Word, the sword of the Spirit, is key for victory (Joshua 1:8; Psalm 77:12; I Chronicles 28:9; Matthew 22:37-38; I Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 4:8). Psalm 119:9,11 tell us that it's through God's Word that we have victory. That's how Jesus defeated Satan (Matthew 4:1-11). Satan tries to plant doubts about God's truth in our minds. This is how he Eve and Adam into sin. Eve misquoted God's Word to Satan and when he added to God's Word (making God seem like He was keeping something good from her) she didn't pick it up. She felt that God was holding back something good from her which she wanted. Satan was undermining God's Word, and he won! We must be skillful in the use of our sword to win.

When you have feelings or thoughts contrary to God's Word you must use Scripture to have victory. Ask God to give you some verses that will help against the things you struggle with most often, write them down and memorize them. Say them over and over when these thoughts attack you. That is the only way to victory, and God guarantees it will work! (July 2, 2018 Doylestown, PA)

Romans 12:1-2 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. 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.

Are you someone who lets their emotions decide how to face the challenges of life? Which emotions are most apt to lead you from God's truth? What must you do to have victory over them?

What are some Bible verses that you can use to show reality to your emotions?

BLOG 371: BACK TO THE BASICS

Suppose you've been struggling against demonic influence for some time. You've confessed, renounced, repented, forgiven and apologized as necessary. But still the battle continues at a furious pace. What to do now? Don't panic, fear or look for some quick short-cut to victory.

What should you do? Whenever a sports team is struggling they go back to the basics. When a business is foundering they need to make sure they are following good basic using good basic business principles. The same is true in living the Christian life. When we are struggling and don't seem to be having victory we need to go back to the basics the basics. These are some of the basics:

1 Spend time with Jesus every day, preferably in the morning when you first wake up. Read your Bible. Read a whole Bible book, don't just jump around reading a few verses here and there every day. Ask God to teach you about Himself as you read. Then spend some time in prayer. Confess any sin you are aware of in your life which you haven't confessed before. Confession means agreeing with God that it is sin. Spend some time praising Him for Who and what He is and thanking Him for all He has done for you. Then pray for the needs of others and finally for your own needs.

2. Make sure there is no sin in your life. We all sin and continue to sin, that's why we confess it. But if there are any sins that are ongoing, you must do every thing in your power to have victory over them. Sin breaks our fellowship with God and opens us to attack by the

enemy. Ask God to give you the strength to overcome these things. They may be hard at first for they can be long-time habits and the enemy doesn't want you to stop them, but they are important to stop. Commit to stopping. If you do fail confess it and start over again. This includes thoughts, attitudes, things you should be doing but aren't, good you do out of self-centered motives, unforgiveness, anger, jealousy and others.

3. Make sure you go to a church that preaches the Bible and that you attend regularly. It is important to worship and fellowship with other Christians. Make sure you do this as often as you can. If you work Sunday mornings try to change your schedule or go other times during the week when you can. This is a great way of growing and gaining strength from others.

Start working on these 3 each day and you'll build a solid foundation with God. Consistent faithfulness weakens the work of the flesh and demons so you can begin to have victory again. It took you a long time to get into this place you are in and it will take some time to grow out of it as well. If God just quickly removed everything and made your life perfect you would soon be tempted to get back into some of those things, or something else. That's why it's important to grow spiritually and get stronger so that as these things fade you stay close to Him.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-3 Christian brothers, we ask you, because of the Lord Jesus, to keep on living in a way that will please God. I have already told you how to grow in the Christian life. The Lord Jesus gave us the right and the power to tell you what to do. God wants you to be holy. You must keep away from sin.

No matter how long you have been a Christian, it's always beneficial to keep going back to the basics. That's where the 'game' is won or lost. It's easy to slip in one or more areas. How are you doing in the things mentioned above? What improvements can you make?

BLOG 372: WATCH WHERE YOU ARE WALKING!

One problem I notice in some people I counsel about spiritual warfare is that they become preoccupied with the enemy and their battle with him. It's all they think about. Now I know we must be alert to enemy attacks and work against us, but it is Jesus we must think about and be preoccupied with. If the enemy can get us so focused on our battles with him that we lose sight of Jesus then he wins. Satan and demons want to be worshiped, they want to be recognized and dreaded. When we fear them we give them what they want, it is like worship for we give our main recognition of power in our life to them and not to God. Unfortunately we often give them more credit than they are due.

I will give you this advice, though. Do you remember when Peter walked on water? He kept his eyes on Jesus and did fine. But then he looked at the waves around him and started sinking. So he called to Jesus and looked to Jesus again and Jesus restored him. The storm didn't stop, the water was still there, but He looked to Jesus and was safe. That is what we must do as well. Don't focus on the problems or attacks but look at Jesus. Spend time reading the Bible and thinking about what you read. The book of Philippians is a good book to read to help keep your eyes on Jesus. So is John. Look for promises He makes to you and keep your eyes on Him.

Matthew 14:29-31 Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?"

Ask God to show you if you are giving too much attention and focus to Satan and demons. Do you fear them and what they can do, or do you trust in Jesus? Ask God to help you have a healthy balance in these things.

BLOG 373: SUMMARY OF DEMONIC OPENINGS

We know that Satan and demons attack anyone and everyone, but why does it seem some are more demonically oppressed than others? What is it that opens the door to demonic oppression or possession?

The most common avenue to demonic entrance is through a family line. One person opens themselves to demonic influence and the demons claim them and all they have, including their children. Then the same traits and influences pass on to the children and their children. Occult and Satanic involvement by certain activities, drugs, some rock music, Ouija boards, etc. is another way the door is often open. Cult involvement in the family, especially Masons, opens one up to demonic activity as well. The Bible says that when 2 people have sex the two become one flesh and that allows demons who have access to one person to claim the other person as well. Strong soul ties between two people, one of whom is open to demonizing, can have the same effect. Abuse of any kind or any form of trauma, especially when young, opens one to demonic involvement. Close friendship or partnership with someone open to the demonic can cause an opening as well. Being unwanted when in the womb or young, any strong rejection, is a definite opening. These are some of the main avenues demons use to gain entrance and attack people.

Ephesians 4:26-27 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

If any of these are or have been present in your life and you haven't closed the door to them, please do so know why confessing the sin, taking back any access it may have given to demons and commanding them to be gone in Jesus' name.

BLOG 374: HOW TO PRAY FOR THOSE IN BONDAGE

Praying for others is important. Praying for those in demonic oppression is even more important. We can't pray for God to deliver them, because God respects their free will and never forces anyone in any direction. However often they are confused, blinded and buried in darkness so they can't clearly see the issues in their true perspective. We can and should pray that God will temporarily restrain any demons from exerting any influence on them so they have an open perspective of the choices they are making and their impact. That way, too, they can have an opportunity to repent and turn from those sins while can lead to freedom from demonic activity in their lives.

If the person hasn't confessed the opening themselves that still blocks their relationship with God, but by interceding for them we can slow down or stop (at least temporarily) the demonic impact so the person can be free from that influence and be better able to turn to God for themselves. Now if they continue in the sin they keep opening the door. All you can do is keep trying to close it by asking God for mercy in their lives so they can make a free-will decision to follow God or not.

So if you have a friend or loved one that seems to be in bondage to sin, intercede for them and ask God to have mercy by binding up what is working against them so they can have a time of openness to clearly see the issues and make their own free will choice. This won't bring them total, final freedom because that is up to them and God won't force freedom on them if they don't want it. But it will give them an opportunity to clearly decide. This is the best you

can do for others in sin, but it is something you can do. So ask god to show you whom He wants you to pray for in this way and then faithfully persevere until they repent or God allows you to stop.

Ephesians 6:18 - Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;

Philippians 4:6 - Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Is there someone God want you to pray for in this way? If so make sure you faithfully for any demons working against them to be bound and for them to clearly see the truth so they can make their own free will choice. That doesn't mean they will turn to God - some prefer their sin and don't want to humble themselves. But you will have done all you can for them.

BLOG 375: CLOSE THOSE GENERATIONAL DOORS!

Parents have a great effect on their children. This happens in two ways. One is by example and influence. Children learn sins from their parent's example and that gives opening to demonizing. The second way is when demons who have access to a parent claim access to the child, too. When a demon has access to a person, he also claims right to all that person has, including their children. The Bible says God "punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation" (Exodus 20:4-5; Deuteronomy 5:8-9; Exodus 34:6-7). The Bible says that children are affected by their parents sins (Ezekiel 18;2) and this is one of the ways. In fact, this is one of the most common reasons people are demonized.

This is especially true of first born males, for Satan seeks to claim them just as God does (Exodus 34:20). If you notice some of the same problems in your life as in your siblings, parents, aunts, uncles, or grandparents, it could very well be ancestral demonizing. The same demons have access to those in the family and do the same work in various members (not all members, that would be too obvious). They claim the blood line and use that as access.

Generational bondage is often discerned by the sin patterns that repeat from generation to generation. It is not uncommon to observe generations of abuse, addiction, hatred, superstition and fear, pride, control and manipulation, rejection, sexual sins and perversions, aberrant religious beliefs, witchcraft, and rebellion etc. If you see some patterns in the symptoms or characteristics of demonizing in others in your family that could show ancestral access. That is why so often a boy who hates his father for beating his mother grows up to beat his own wife, or a child of an alcoholic becomes an alcoholic also.

Generational bondage can be broken by personally repenting of and confessing the sins of past generations. Claim the blood of Christ as stronger than your blood line and put that access under the blood of Jesus (Romans 5:15). Claim that you are a "new creation, old things have passed away, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Ask God to turn curses into blessing (Deuteronomy 23:5). Read the Bible verses I referred to as part of your prayer. Following is a sample prayer. There is nothing

"Dear Father, I acknowledge before you the sins of my parents and ancestors. I know that they have sinned because all men and women are sinners. And so, I openly confess the sins of my parents and ancestors. I am sorry for their sins against you and I ask that you not hold their consequences against me or my descendants. I claim the finished work of Jesus Christ, Who bore all my sin upon Himself. I take back any openings given to Satan's forces by my ancestors' sin.

"Dear Jesus, please set me free from all evil influences coming from my parents and ancestors in the name of Jesus. I know I am a new creation in Christ. Old things have gone and all things have become new. I here and now reject and disown all the sins of my ancestors. As one who has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, I cancel out all demonic working that has been passed on to me from my ancestors. As one who has been crucified and raised with Christ and who sits with Him in heavenly places, I reject any and every way in which Satan may claim access to my family or me. I declare myself to be eternally and completely committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name I now command every demon that is working against me to flee my presence and my family and never to return.

'I now ask You, heavenly Father, to fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I submit my body as an instrument of righteousness, a living sacrifice, that I may glorify You in my life. All this I do in the name & authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen."

Deuteronomy 5:9 I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God. I punish the children, the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren for the sins of their fathers who hate Me.

Do you struggle with sin patterns or issue which your parents or grandparents also struggled with? Do you see patterns in your children that could come from you or your mate? If any of these are true, use the prayer above.

BLOG 376: WHY DOES GOD ALLOW SUFFERING?

One of Satan's best arguments to turn people against God is the issue of suffering. If God is good, how could He allow suffering? If there is a God at all, how could He allow suffering?

The question as to why some have so little has no clear answer. Why does God allow people to suffer and struggle? How can a God of love allow so much evil to continue? God doesn't defend Himself or explain what He allows. He gives us a free will choice and as a result sin and the resulting evil are the natural consequences or turning from Him. Still, innocent people suffer.

The implication is that either God isn't in control of everything or He isn't good. Either way He loses. No wonder this tool is so effective for Satan and his forces. How can we answer it?

We can't try to evaluate God's person and character by these things for He has proven His character and love by leaving heaven, becoming a man, living on earth, then going to cross to take on the punishment for every sin we would ever commit. That proves His love for us beyond a shadow of a doubt. He definitely is good. If it weren't for the cross we would all deserve eternity in hell from this moment on. So anything less than hell from now on is His grace and mercy. Why He seems to show more to some than others is not up to us to judge. God isn't accountable to us. We cannot stand in judgment of Him until we know all the facts as He knows them and see everything as well or better than He sees it. So we trust in His character as revealed by His works in our life. We focus on the known, not the unknown.

Many things seem unfair to little children but they must trust their parents. Getting an injection from a doctor or having a pretty shiny knife taken away may seem to a child that a parent doesn't love them but a child doesn't have the perspective to truly view what is happening. We don't have God's perspective on life either. We fall back on the fact that He is in sovereign control of everything and that that all He does is out of love for us. More than that we cannot know.

Romans 8:35-39 *Who can keep us away from the love of Christ? Can trouble or problems? Can suffering wrong from others or having no food? Can it be because of no clothes or because of danger or war? 36 The Holy Writings say, "Because of belonging to Jesus, we are in danger of being killed all day long. We are thought of as sheep that are ready to be killed." 37 But we have power over all these things through Jesus Who loves us so much. 38 For I know that nothing can keep us from the love of God. Death cannot! Life cannot! Angels cannot! Leaders cannot! Any other power cannot! Hard things now or in the future cannot! 39 The world above or the world below cannot! Any other living thing cannot keep us away from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

What do you say when people ask how a loving god can allow innocent people to suffer? When are you most apt to doubt God's love and goodness? What have you learned from this blog that can help you better trust Him when you don't understand?

BLOG 377: WHEN IT SEEMS DELIVERANCE FAILS

God can and will set you free from oppression and demonizing when you follow His guidelines. The problem is that we are in a hurry and God is never in a hurry. We are just concerned about the end result, but God is more concerned about what happens along the way. We are interested in the product but God is interested in the whole process.

Deliverance is a process He uses to teach us things about Himself and ourselves. He wants us to persevere in faithfulness to Him throughout for that helps us learn to depend on Him and trust Him. It's also part of the way He works to make us more like Jesus.

I know God is greater than anything we face and will give the victory. I know the victory comes gradually, as we learn to fight and take back ground that was given to the enemy. When the Jews entered the Promised Land under Joshua, God gave them victory, but one battle at a time, one generation at a time. He didn't give all the land to them at once. He wanted them to learn to fight, to keep trusting Him, to develop patience and perseverance. What was true of them physically is true of us spiritually. So don't give up. Persevere. It may be hard to see progress but remember - there is improvement. Look back at your life and you'll see improvement in the past to the present.

You certainly wouldn't want to go back! Progress is slow but steady, like the story of the tortoise and the hare. Also be encouraged because when things get hard it's obvious the enemy is throwing everything at you he can. That means this is as bad as it gets, this is all he can do. If he could do more he would. While this is bad, knowing it is as bad as it gets and that it will gradually but certainly get better helps. It takes time. God is interested in the process you are going through as you grow, not just the final product. You do the same thing with your children as you help them grow and mature. He wants you to learn trust, perseverance and faithfulness. You need to learn to use your sword, the Word of God. You must learn to hear His voice and follow Him.

Keep faithfully pursuing the Lord in whatever you are going through. Ask others to pray for you. Remember to focus on Jesus, not your problems or the demonic. Praise and worship Him. Memorize Scripture to quote when tempted/attacked. That is VERY important!

Romans 12:12 *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.*

Galatians 6:9 *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.*

How are you at persevering? On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate yourself? How would God rate you? What can you do to improve your rating? Start doing it today!

BLOG 378: VICTORY OVER PORNOGRAPHY ADDICTION

The use of pornography has gotten to be of epidemic proportions in the world today, even among Christians. It is a sin that is extremely easy to get into but very, very difficult to break free from. What if you, or someone you know, is struggling to be free? What should be done?

First, here is a prayer you can pray to help have victory over the spiritual part. You don't have to use these exact words. This just gives you a general idea of what to include in prayer.

"Father, I confess that at various times in my life I have been powerless against the continuing attacks of the enemy on my sexuality. I have chosen to sin in various ways and ask You to forgive me for the following: (specifically confess each and every sin). I agree with Your verdict on my sin, that it is deserving of death. I renounce these sins in Jesus' name. I ask You to cleanse my memories, heal the hurts and forgive me. In Jesus' name I take back any access I have given to Satan's forces through my sin. In Jesus' name. Amen"

Often the source of demonizing comes from ancestors who were open to pornography. This is called generational sin. When a demon claims access to one person he then claims their descendants as well. Generational bondage can be broken by personally repenting of and confessing the sins of past generations. Claim the blood of Christ as stronger than your blood line and put that access under the blood of Jesus (Romans 5:15). Claim that you are a "new creation, old things have passed away, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Ask God to turn curses into blessing (Deut. 23:5).

Of course a good spiritual life (connecting with God in devotions each morning, reading your Bible, etc.) is a must. So is getting involved in a Bible believing and teaching church. Fellowship with other Christians is a must. Finding a godly person of your same sex and asking them to mentor you and hold you accountable is essential. Seldom does anyone get free from this sin alone!

One other thing to have victory. You have to do all you can to not be in a position to be tempted. Probably online porn is what gets most people, men and women, for its so easily available. All my boys and I have Covenant Eyes on our computers. It monitors where we go and sends a report to whoever we choose to be our accountability partner. It doesn't prevent us from accessing anything we shouldn't, but knowing our accountability partner will find out at the end of the week is a major deterrent. You can find this at covenanteyes.com. There are other sources available to get porn, too, so you have to make plans to stay out of those stores, away from cable TV alone, or whatever it is.

Now, when you first get tempted, when the first thought pops into your mind, you must get victory over it. That only happens by quoting scripture. Jesus had victory over Satan by quoting scripture and that is our sword of the Spirit. Here are some passages you can use. Start quoting or reading them when tempted and don't stop until well beyond the temptation.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation ; the old has gone, the new has come!

Psalms 51:10-12 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Romans 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God -- this is your spiritual act of worship.

James 4:6-8 *God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you.*

1 Peter 5:8-9 *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith.*

Job 31:1 *"I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl.*

Matthew 5:27-28 *"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

If you, or someone you know, struggles with pornography pry for them. You can adapt the prayer above to them or use it for yourself.

BLOG 379: MAKING SURE OF YOUR SALVATION

Just as there are physical principles that govern the physical universe, so there are spiritual principles that govern our relationship with God. The first and most basic principle is that God loves us and has a wonderful plan for our lives (John 3:16), but when sin entered the world it separated man from our holy God (Romans 2:23). Being a just and righteous God, sin cannot be overlooked but must be paid for and since there is no way we can pay for our own sins God Himself, in His great love, became the payment for our sins. That first Christmas celebrates the fact that He voluntarily left heaven to come to earth as a human being.

Although we celebrate Jesus' birth on Christmas, we know that He wasn't born just to give us a holiday where we remember Him as a baby – He was born to die in order to pay the price for our sins. We worship Jesus as a baby, but the story doesn't end there. He Jesus grew up and went through all the things we go through in life.

He was rejected and crucified, but while dying on the cross He suffered the eternal punishment of every sin we would ever commit. In other words, He went through our hell so we wouldn't have to (Romans 5:8). Because He was man He could represent us and take our place. Because He was God He could endure punishment way beyond anything we could ever experience. At the end of the crucifixion Jesus said "It is finished" and His spirit returned to heaven. His body went into a grave but 3 days later came back to life, proving forever that sin and death had been conquered.

He is in Heaven today! There He has made a place for us if we will only accept the gift and the joy that He has offered us. Salvation is freely available to every person (Ephesians 2:8-9), but it is a gift we must voluntarily receive by recognizing our need and asking Him to forgive us and live in us (John 1:12). He Himself then lives within us and gives us new meaning and ability in life. If you haven't received this wonderful free gift do so now by asking God for His gift of salvation.

While there are no special or magical words to use, here is the idea of a prayer to pray to accept God's free gift of salvation. It's not saying the words but meaning them that make the difference.

Here is a sample prayer you can use: "Dear Jesus, I recognize my need of you. I know I sin and am guilty in your sight. Thank you for leaving heaven to come to earth and die on the cross for my sins. I know you took my eternal condemnation on Yourself on the cross and paid for it all. Please forgive sin and fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I freely accept your gift of salvation. I want to live for you and only you. I put you first in my life and want to serve You. I reject any

other forces or powers and forbid any them to have any influence on me. Dear Jesus, fill me and use me. Thank you for hearing and answering me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

If you prayed this prayer for the first time I encourage you to find someone who can help you grow in the basics of the Christian faith and also start attending a bible believing and teaching church. If i can help you in any way please let me know. Jerry@Schmoyer.net

BLOG 380: THE DANGER OF ANGER & UNFORGIVENESS

One of the leading causes of demonizing is unconfessed anger. Anger includes any form of unforgiveness, bitterness, hate, jealousy, gossip, criticism, etc. Paul says these can "give the devil a foothold" (Ephesians 4:26-27). He tells the Corinthians that if they don't forgive each other Satan will use that to "outwit" them (12 Corinthians 2:10-11). Jesus Himself said that those who don't forgive others will be turned over to tormenting demons to bring them to repentance (Matthew 18:34). This includes anger toward others, parents self or God. There can be no removing demons which claim this access to work against you until all your anger is truly confessed and put under the blood of Jesus. This is one of the first things that usually comes up when we counsel people and pray for their deliverance. Do NOT take this lightly!

Satan organizes his demons in the same manner God has angels organized - in a military-like structure. These are similar to generals, colonels, majors, lieutenants, sergeants, corporals, privates, etc. (Ephesians 6:12). Usually a "strong man" (or ruler) is assigned to a task, and he has lesser demons under his command to help in the work (Matthew 12:25-29; Daniel 10:2-6, 12-14). The names of these demons usually refer to their work ("Fear," "Anger," "Lust," "Pride," "Deception," etc.).

Remember that sinful anger comes from mishandling hurt and pain. Instead of feeling it as hurt we turn it into anger. Demons are behind and use anger, too. They made Saul angry at David, so much so that he tried to kill him (1 Samuel 18:10-11; 19:9-10). Paul shows the close connection between anger and demonizing (Ephesians 4:27).

Willfully allowing anger to remain is like asking Satan's forces to fill you with hate and bitterness. It is a prayer, a curse on the one you hate. It is taking God's work in your hands, for revenge belongs only to God (Romans 12:19). Often the name of the demon who answers this 'prayer' to Satan is "Anger," for that is the work he does in those he influences. Unchecked this leads to wrath and rage. That is not something God's children should ever have!

Below is a prayer you can use in connection with this.

"Dear heavenly Father, I thank You for the riches of Your kindness, forbearance, and patience, knowing that Your kindness has led me to repentance (Romans 2:4). I confess that I have not extended that same patience and kindness toward others who have offended me, but instead I have harbored bitterness and resentment. I pray that during this time of self-examination You would bring to mind only those people that I have not forgiven in order that I may do so (Matthew 18:35). I also pray that if I have offended others you would bring to mind only those people from whom I need to seek forgiveness and the extent to which I need to seek it (Matthew 5:23-24). I ask this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

James 1:20 "The anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God."

One of the best ways to get rid of unforgiveness is to make a list of all the people who have hurt you and a short summary of what they did. Then take this before God and one by one ask God to help you forgive them.

BLOG 381: NOTHING TO FEAR BUT FEAR ITSELF

Fear is one of Satan's biggest weapons. Demons are often behind and use fear (Romans 8:15). If it takes the form of insecurity, anxiety, worry, preoccupation with problems, or whatever, it is still fear. Demons put fear of David into Saul (1 Samuel 18:10-15) and put fear and terror into Eliaphaz by gliding by his face (Job 4:15). Anything not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23). God does not give us fear (2 Timothy 1:7; Romans 8:15), so if you experience fear realize it is not from God but from Satan. This doesn't mean it is always through demonizing, for you can be attacked with fear without being demonized.

Fear takes root when we choose to focus on circumstances instead of God. Peter walking on water is a good example. When his eyes were on Jesus his faith was strong, but when he looked at the waves they grew in his mind to be greater than Jesus' power and he started sinking. He did the right thing, though, and put his eyes back on Jesus.

Dream with me for a minute. Suppose as a young child you had a father who loved you more than anything and constantly showed it. He was always there for you, always showing his love, enjoying you and laughing with you. Whatever you needed he was there to help and supply. How would that make you feel? What difference would it have made in your life? There is something down deep inside all of us that would love to have someone we could trust, someone to take care of us, someone to always be there no matter what. Then we wouldn't need to be in control so we wouldn't fear. Control is a poor but often seemingly necessary substitute for love and trust. It may have been necessary in your past but isn't necessary any more!

Trust is the antidote to fear. How can we understand trust, what it means and how it works? I think understanding how a family should work is the best answer. God established a family relationship to answer all those questions. He is the Father, we are the children. Do your children trust you? What do they have to do? What do you expect of them? It's exactly the same. Jesus says we are to be like little children in order to learn faith and trust. Let your children teach you. Put yourself in their position - with a Perfect Father.

Deuteronomy 31:8 "He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged."

Isaiah 43:1 "Don't fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine."

Do you struggle with fear? Would those who know you say you struggle with fear? Would God say you struggle with fear? If so, what do you need to do to have victory over your fear?

BLOG 382: GOD UTILIZES THE ENEMY - 1

(Thirty plus years ago God put Don Rogers in my life. He trained and mentored me in spiritual ministry. When he was no longer able to minister, I had the privilege taking over his "Spiritual Warfare Ministries". He had written many articles about spiritual warfare. I have edited and added to his work for this blog.)

Why does God permit Satan and evil spirits to continue their work? In His sovereignty, God chose to give both the angels and mankind free wills to make choices. Both angels and mankind fell when they chose their own will instead of God's will. God knew the risks of entrusting freedom to His creatures, but He also knew that relationships and love could only exist through the freedom of the will. Love is a choice.

Unfortunately, freedom allowed sin to enter the picture and produce suffering and death. Sin also gives Satan an opportunity in peoples' lives. Sin allows Satan to rule for the time being

upon the earth. But sin and Satan cannot stop God's will from being accomplished. In fact, the Lord can take anything and use it to accomplish His purposes (Romans 8:28). We see in the scriptures how the Lord uses sin and its consequences to demonstrate to mankind their need to have God in their lives. He uses our enemy to get our attention as well. Satan may think that he is working out his own agenda, but he and his hosts accomplish God's purposes in spite of their lies and rebellion.

The scriptures give us a number of instances where God permits an evil spirit to work in a person's life. We are going to examine three ways God uses their activity. Let us examine the first reason:

1. God uses evil spirits to administer CHASTISEMENT. God chastises those who are sinning, that they might recognize their sin and turn their lives over to Him (John 15:1; Hebrews 12:4-12; Proverbs 3:11-12). Of course Satan is seeking a different outcome.

A. King Saul – 1 Samuel – chapters 13-31 Saul was a very secular person who relied upon his own understanding and abilities, rather than God. God reprimanded him through the prophet Samuel on different occasions, because of his disobedience. First, he was informed that his kingdom would not endure, because God had sought out a man after His own heart (13:14). Next, he was told the Lord had rejected him as king over Israel (15:26). Then when the Lord had David anointed and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him in power, the Lord removed His Spirit from King Saul and permitted an evil spirit to torment him (16:14)

I believe the Lord was still trying to salvage the man, by getting his attention through the work of the evil spirit. He suffered depression, but still leaned on his own understanding and abilities. Often, when we are in mental, emotional or physical pain, we turn to God for help. But Saul did not seek the Lord. Instead his life began to plummet. He became a very angry man, exhibited jealousy and fear because of David (18:18-19). The evil spirit was evidently exerting his influence in Saul's life. He made repeated attempts to kill David.

Finally, when the Philistines had gathered their forces to fight against Israel, King Saul was overcome with fear and terror. He decided to inquire of the Lord for guidance, but the Lord did not answer him. So, Saul asked his attendants to find him a medium that he might inquire of Samuel. King Saul did not get the answer sought. Instead, the Lord caused the prophet Samuel to be manifested to the medium in a vision. Samuel told Saul that he had become the Lord's enemy. The Lord was going to hand both Israel and Saul over to the Philistines and both he and his sons would be with the Lord the following day. Shortly thereafter, when the Philistines fought Israel, Saul's three sons were killed and Saul was critically wounded. Saul commanded his armor bearer to kill him with his sword. Thus, Saul and his sons died on the same day.

If King Saul had responded differently to the chastisement that the Lord had permitted, his life and the lives of his sons might have been much different. Instead of turning to the Lord about his feelings towards David, he sought to eliminate his challenger on his terms. By trying to destroy God's chosen one, he was actually fighting against God and making himself God's enemy. Even the chastisement of the Lord did not bring about a change of heart in this man.

B. Parable of the Unmerciful Servant – Matt 18:21-35 This parable was given by Jesus in response to the question, "*Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me?*" The Lord responded with a story about a servant who owed the king ten thousand talents. As the servant was unable to pay what he owed, his master ordered that he and his wife and children, along with all they possessed, be sold to repay the debt. The servant fell on his knees before the king and begged for his patience, so that he might have time to pay him back. His master surprised him by canceling his debt and letting them go.

But the story did not end there. The forgiven servant found one of his fellow servants who owed him money and began grabbing him and choking him. He demanded to be paid what was

owed him. His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, *"Be patient with me and I will pay you back."* But the forgiven servant would not forgive him but had the man thrown into prison until he would pay the debt. Other servants witnessed what happened and reported it to the master.

The master called the servant in and reprimanded him. *"You wicked servant, I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?"* Then we are told, "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the "tormentors," till he should pay all that was due unto him." (KJV)

The point I am trying to make is that we must remember this is a parable which is designed to convey a spiritual lesson to the listeners about the consequences of unforgiveness. I think the King James Version is a good translation that conveys the Lord's intent here. The Lord often turns sinners over to the enemy and permits him to torment them. It is through suffering the consequences of sin that a sinner repents and asks for mercy.

Look at Ephesians 4:26-31, where Paul says, *"Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."* (26,27) The context suggests to me that the various sins listed in the passage could give the devil a foothold if practiced in a person's life. The sins mentioned are: stealing, unwholesome talk, bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander and malice, to mention a few. Unforgiveness is certainly implied.

If you are struggling with difficulties, make sure God isn't using them to get your attention to bring you closer to Him. Even if there is no sin in your life, He still uses obstacles to stretch our faith and bring growth (John 15:1; Hebrews 12:4-12; Proverbs 3:11-12).

BLOG 383: GOD UTILIZES THE ENEMY - 2

(Thirty plus years ago God put Don Rogers in my life. He trained and mentored me in spiritual ministry. When he was no longer able to minister, I had the privilege taking over his "Spiritual Warfare Ministries". He had written many articles about spiritual warfare. I have edited and added to his work for this blog.)

In the last blog we saw that sometimes God uses evil spirits to administer chastisement on those who need discipline (John 15:1; Hebrews 12:4-12; Proverbs 3:11-12). If there is no response to that, then He may turn the chastisement to judgment. Demons are used for that as well:

2. God Uses Evil Spirits To Dispense JUDGMENT. They are permitted to work in the lives of those who have brought condemnation upon themselves.

A. Abimelech – Judges 9:23 – He was the son of Gideon's concubine. When Gideon died, he had an opportunity to ascend to power and rule Israel. He convinced the men of Shechem to support him in getting rid of 70 brothers. Only Jothan, the youngest brother survived. Jothan later pronounced what could be called a prophetic curse upon Abimelech and the town of Shechem. After Abimelech had reigned three years, God permitted an evil spirit to start stirring up hatred between Abimelech and the people of Shechem. A man named Gaal convinced the people that they should not serve Abimelech. So, Abimelech attacked the city of Shechem and eventually killed the people and destroyed the city and its tower. Then Abimelech went to the city of Thebez and encamped against it. Many of the people of that city also fled to their tower for safety. As Abimelech approached the tower to burn it, as he had done in Shechem, a woman dropped a millstone down upon his head and crushed his skull. Rather than have it said he was killed by a woman, he had his armor bearer kill him with a sword.

"Thus God repaid the wickedness of Abimelech, which he had done to his father by killing his seventy brothers. And all the evil of the men of Shechem God returned on their heads, and on them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal." (Judg 9:56-57)

B. King Ahab – 1 Kings 22:22-23 – He was a wicked king of Israel. Ahab asked Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah to go with him and fight at Ramoth Gilead to free the city from Syria's control. Jehoshaphat asked Ahab to inquire of the Lord, to seek His will. Ahab called together 400 prophets and asked them if he should fight for Ramoth Gilead. All the prophets responded, *"Go up, for the Lord will deliver it into the hand of the king."* Jehoshaphat was not satisfied with the 400 prophets. He said, *"Is there not still a prophet of the Lord here, that we may inquire of Him?"* Micaiah was summoned and he told the king, *"I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd."* King Ahab was not happy with his response, because it was not what he wanted to hear.

Then Micaiah, the prophet, spoke and said what the Lord had shown him in a vision. He saw the Lord sitting on his throne asking the question, *"Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?"* There were a few responses, then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, and said, *"I will persuade him."* The Lord said to him, *"In what way?"* so the spirit said, *"I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets."* And the Lord said, *"You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so."*

The king had Micaiah put in prison and proceed to go to battle against the king of Syria. Even though he was disguised, a random arrow struck the king between his armor and he bled to death in his chariot on the battlefield. So, King Ahab was brought to judgment because God permitted an evil spirit to work in the circumstance. *"They washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria (where the prostitutes bathed), and the dogs licked up his blood, as the word of the Lord had declared."* (1 Kings 22:38)

God never changes. He certainly could be doing the same thing today in people groups, countries and even individuals who turn from His truth. Ask for wisdom when praying for someone who is rejecting and rebelling against God. You can't pray for God to bless them if God is allowing this to bring them back to Himself!

BLOG 384: GOD UTILIZES THE ENEMY - 3

(Thirty plus years ago God put Don Rogers in my life. He trained and mentored me in spiritual ministry. When he was no longer able to minister, I had the privilege taking over his "Spiritual Warfare Ministries". He had written many articles about spiritual warfare. I have edited and added to his work for this blog.)

In the last 2 blogs we have seen that God sometimes uses evil spirits to bring chastisement or discipline on those not following the Lord. He even uses them to test and strengthen the faith of those who are living in obedience (John 15:1).

3. God uses evil spirits to TEST the believer's faith and obedience.

A. Job – The Book of Job – Job was blameless, upright, feared God and shunned evil (1:1). He was the greatest man among all the people of the East (1:3). He offered up sacrifices to the Lord each morning in case any of his children had sinned against God (1:5). There was no one on earth like him (1:8).

It was the Lord who pointed out His righteous servant to Satan. What followed were a series of losses that would challenge Job's faith and obedience. First, he lost his family and possessions. Then his health was taken from him. Then he had to endure the judgmental attitudes of his friends. Job maintained that what he was suffering was not caused by sin. He did

question why the Lord was allowing all this to happen to him. But he professed in Job 13:15, *"Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him."* Job was tested by Satan, humbled, sifted, and in the end had a greater appreciation of the greatness of God through his trials. The Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before. The Lord gave him seven sons and three daughters. His daughters were the most beautiful in the land. Job lived a hundred and forty years and saw his children and their children to the fourth generation.

B. The apostle Paul – 2 Corinthians 12:1-10 – Paul had a wonderful heavenly vision which was so real that he was not sure whether actually caught up, physically, to heaven or not. Following his heavenly vision, the Lord permitted an angelic messenger of Satan to give Paul a "thorn in the flesh," to torment him. Scholars have speculated as to the nature of the physical infirmity. Many think it was a problem with his eyes. In any case, Paul went to the Lord three times in prayer to seek release from his torment, but the Lord told him, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness"* (12:8).

Paul admitted that one of the reasons he had the "thorn in the flesh" was to keep him from becoming conceited or yielding to pride. Out of this experience he learned to boast in his weakness rather than his abilities, so that Christ's power could rest on him (12:9). He had learned to delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when he was weak, he was strong and the Lord received the glory.

Believers have often had questions as to why the Lord tolerates Satan's activities. Why does he permit Satan to continue to operate after Christ's victory on the cross? Why is he allowed to touch believers?

C. The prophet Habakkuk also had questions of this nature. He cried out to the Lord and complained.

1. *"Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted."* (1:3-4) The Lord answered him and said he was raising up a new force on the world scene, the ruthless and violent Chaldeans to sweep across the earth and conquer. (1:5-9)

2. *"Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?"* (1:13) He couldn't understand why the Lord would use a people more wicked than His people to judge them. The Lord answered again and said, wicked men trust themselves alone [as these Chaldeans do], and fail; but the righteous man trusts in Me, and lives! (2:4) Then the Lord listed the five woes of those who trust in themselves, in plunder, in unjust gain, in bloodshed, in wicked pleasures or in idols. In other words, their judgment awaited them.

3. Habakkuk praised the Lord for answering his questions. He realized that evil will not triumph forever. He could see that God was in control and could be trusted to vindicate those who are faithful to Him. Habakkuk would wait on the Lord to fulfill His will not matter what trials had to be endured. He declared he would rejoice in the Lord, his Savior. He acknowledged the Sovereign Lord as his strength. (Chapter 3)

When you go through difficulties in life, or as you pray for others facing obstacles and pain, remember that God allows it to help us grow more like Him. See them as an opportunity to trust Him. Stay faithful and allow them to cause you to draw closer to the One Who promises to never leave you or forsake you.

BLOG 385: GOD UTILIZES THE ENEMY - 4

(Thirty plus years ago God put Don Rogers in my life. He trained and mentored me in spiritual ministry. When he was no longer able to minister, I had the privilege taking over his "Spiritual Warfare Ministries". He had written many articles about spiritual warfare. I have edited and added to his work for this blog.)

In the first 3 blogs in this series we have seen that God uses evil spirits to bring chastisement and judgment on those who disobey God. He also uses them to bring testing and stretching to those who do follow Him. We'll close this series with 3 more ways God uses evil spirits for His good.

4. God uses evil spirits to bring HUMILITY and DEPENDENCE ON GOD

Paul 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 Paul's own testimony: *"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassing great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me."* Could God be allowing trials and tribulations in your life to cause you to humble yourself and depend on Him more fully? As you pray for others, pray they would respond in submission and trust. Don't just pray the trials would be removed but pray God would use them for His purpose.

5. God uses evil spirits to demonstrate GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

An angel sent to **Daniel** to bring an answer to his prayer had to fight a demonic prince over Persia. He got the assistance of Michael, the archangel, to get through (Daniel 10:2)

When the army of the King of Aram surrounded Dothan in order to capture **Elisha**, the prophet, the Lord provided a heavenly army to protect Elisha. When the enemy army came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the Lord, *"Strike these people with blindness."* They were made blind and Elisha told them they were in the wrong place and led them to Samaria (2 Kings 8)

Look at what you have gone through in life, even what you are facing now. Can you see God's sovereign hand in it, using it for His glory and your growth? Thank Him for it!

6. God uses evil spirits to train His people to use His AUTHORITY and POWER

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings." (1 Peter 5:8-9)

"I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy, nothing will harm you." (Luke 10:19)

I (Jerry) have written numerous times about how God gives us His power and authority to have victory in Jesus' name as we battle Satan's forces (Luke 9:1; 10:17-19; 1 John 2:14; James 4:7; Ephesians 6:10-20; Acts 8:7). Read these verses and ask God to help you apply them to your life. If I can help write to me jerry@ChristianTrainingOrganization.org

BLOG 386: CAN BELIEVERS BE DEMONIZED?

When we come to God for salvation our sins are gone and we will spend eternity with God, but that doesn't mean we can't still be afflicted by demons. The Bible makes no distinction between believers and unbelievers as far as demonizing is concerned. In fact, the Bible refers to many believers who were demonized: Paul's thorn in the flesh was a demon (2 Corinthians 12:7), King Saul was a believer (1 Samuel 11:6) and was obviously demonized (1 Samuel 16:14-23), David was motivated by Satan to take a census of the people (1 Chronicles 21:1ff; 2 Samuel 24:1ff), Ananias and Saphira were believers (Acts 4:32-35) but allowed Satan to "fill" them (Acts 5:3), and Peter was Satan's spokesman in tempting Jesus to not go to the cross (Matthew 16:23). Paul warns believers to not give Satan a "foothold" in their life (Ephesians

4:26-27), showing such a thing is possible. Jesus Himself called deliverance "the children's bread" (Matthew 15:22-28), meaning it was for His children. A Christian can receive "another spirit" (2 Corinthians 11:2-4) and there are examples of believers being demonized (Luke 13:10-16; 1 Cor. 5:4, 5). Christians are warned to guard against this (1 Peter 5:8-9; Ephesians 6:10-18).

A believer belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan cannot own him as he did before salvation (1 John 4:4), but he can still attack the person. As long as we are in this body we still have a sin nature, a capacity to sin just the same as we did before salvation. Salvation creates a new spiritual nature within us. But the old capacity to sin still remains in us. It is in this area, this sin nature, this capacity to sin, that demons work. Our new nature is greater but doesn't take away our free will choice to still function in our sin nature. Paul's struggle as recorded in Romans 7 describes this well.

A Christian has every right and resource to be free from this demonizing, however. Another person can trespass on property that you own, but you have every right and resource to put him off your property. You just need to learn how to do it. There are many resources on my web site for Spiritual Warfare: ChristianTrainingOnline.org If you have any questions please contact me at jerry@ChristianTrainingOrganization.org

BLOG 387: DO ALL BELIEVERS NEED DELIVERANCE?

A question I am sometimes asked is if all believers need deliverance. I don't think everyone needs deliverance, but I do believe a lot more need it than are getting it. When my a friend of mine became a believer she immediately lost all desire to smoke again, but another friend has been struggling with this his whole life. Sometimes God has mercy on a person when they are born again and removes all demonic influence, or at least keeps it from affecting them. Others, totally unaware of demonizing and deliverance, faithfully live for the Lord, worship Him, resist temptation and seek to live a holy life. Sometimes God honors this and removes demonic influence. Other times His plan is for them to learn about deliverance and how to fight for their freedom. Then, too, some believers have grown up in Christian homes surrounded by people who have prayed for them against these things and they may not be in need of deliverance. However in most Christians there is a battle and victory is needed (Romans 7, end of chapter).

God could deliver everyone at the moment of salvation but He doesn't because He allows everyone to have a free will. Also, He uses our battles as a special tool to work in our lives. Sometimes God allows demonizing so the person will see His need of Jesus, turn to Him, learn about His power and how to have victory, and then help others to victory. Children grow and learn by their struggles and so do Christians. Paul was demonized but God didn't remove it. Instead he used it for His glory and Paul's growth (2 Corinthians 12:1-10).

God doesn't always deliver even though He could because He has a greater plan in it. He is always able to deliver but not always willing (Daniel 3:17). I think this is true in physical healing as well - we see that in Paul's thorn in the flesh and in God allowing Job to attack Satan.

Many who need deliverance either deny it or are afraid of anything having to do with Satan or demons. God gradually allows things to get worse until they yield and turn to God. If a person isn't serious about paying the price of obedience and faithfulness to be free and stay free they won't find freedom. If I try force deliverance on such a one and they don't fill themselves with God's Spirit and presence, seven times as many demons will come back (Matthew 12:45; Luke 11:26). God respect our free will and won't force anyone to do anything they don't want to

do, but He will allow things to get to the point where the person will want to turn to Him for freedom.

What about you? Do you fear anything having to do with Satan or demons? That gives them power over you and an opening to work against you. God is greater than Satan or his forces (1 John 4:4). Faithfully live for Him and follow His leading in all things and you will grow in victory. If you have any questions about this feel free to write me at jerry@ChristianTrainingOrganization.org

BLOG 388: TEACHING SPIRITUAL WARFARE IN INDIA

God has been preparing and training me for a ministry in spiritual warfare since when I was a young man. It's nothing I ever expected or thought I would be involved in, but 30 years ago I found myself immersed in it. Since then I've been learning and serving in any way I can. It's become a large part of my ministry (<https://www.christiantrainingonline.org/our-ministries/spiritual-warfare/>). In my early years I developed a "Spiritual Warfare Handbook" which I used to educate those wanting to know more about this subject. I have updated and improved it several times over the years. It's still my basic tool in helping others understand spiritual warfare and find freedom from Satan and his forces. It's also been printed in book form for the pastors in India. We have given thousands of books to pastors and Christians in India. I have added a book that goes deeper in the subject while tracing the theme of spiritual warfare from Genesis to Revelation called "Spiritual Warfare in the Bible."

I teach about spiritual warfare at each and every conference in India, both for new pastors and for those conferences which are for returning pastors. It is always the last session for that I the best attended, and I want to have it fresh in their minds when they leave. I teach about it using Mark 5:1-20. After teaching the basics I apply it to them by closing in a prayer for deliverance and freedom. I do this as a group to teach them how to pray for themselves and for others, and because it gives me an opportunity to pray for them to have victory of demons that work against them. It is a very moving time as we sense God's presence, power and freedom.

There are many, many comments afterwards about how they appreciate this session and book. Satan and demons are very real and open in their manifestations in India, but they didn't know Christians had this power and authority in Jesus. They are very glad to understand these truths. Reports often come back about how this has helped them in their ministries and churches. I know Satan would stop these conferences for many reasons, but especially because of our teaching on this subject, but God's is greater and His Word brings victory! Spiritual warfare isn't just an important tool for pastors in India, it is crucial for all God's people to understand it and be able to use it when necessary.

2 Corinthians 2:5-11 For we are not ignorant of Satan's devices.

Luke 10:17-19 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you."

Are you educated enough in spiritual warfare to know when you are being attacked, and what to do about to have victory? Do you have security in Jesus and not fear in demons? Learn more about spiritual warfare if need be. (see my web site ChristianTrainingOrganization.org)

(For a **free copy of this book** go to ChristianTrainingOrganization.org, then to India and click on "Download Books." There is also "Spiritual Warfare in the Bible" where I trace what the Bible says from beginning to end. To **listen to an audio recording, watch a video recording or read the manuscript** of the session click on "Conference Sessions.")

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