



**MATURITY**





## SESSION ONE: ONE GOD

There is only one God. This doctrine is central to the Bible message, for both the Old Testament and the New Testament teach it plainly and emphatically. Despite the simplicity of this message and the clarity with which the Bible presents, many who believe in the existence of God have not understood it. Even within Christianity many people, including theologians, have not comprehended this beautiful and essential message. The first verse of the Bible introduces God as the Creator of the universe. The Bible does not try to prove that God exists; it assumes His existence as fundamental. Creation itself bears witness that there is an intelligent, omnipotent, loving Creator (Romans 1:20). As we will discuss, the Bible teaches that there is one God. He is a personal being, not an abstract substance that contains a plurality of persons. The Bible further teaches that Jesus Christ is the one God manifested in the flesh. In Jesus dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. The purpose of this lesson is to affirm and explain the biblical doctrine of the Oneness of God.

Why is this subject of vital importance? Understanding the Oneness of God is the foundation of our relationship with the Lord. In Mark 12:28-31 the scribes asked Jesus what is the greatest commandment. *“And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all? (29) And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: (30) And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first*

*commandment. (31) And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.”*

As referenced above by Jesus, the classic expression of the belief in one God is found in Deuteronomy 6:4: *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.”* In Deuteronomy 6:5-7, God followed the announcement of the preceding verse with a command that requires total belief in and love for Him as the one and only God: *“And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.”* Notice the importance that God attaches to the belief in one God. He commands that these verses be placed in the heart (verse 6), taught to the children throughout the day (verse 7), bound on the hand and forehead (verse 8), and written on the posts and gates of houses (verse 9).

## THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

There can be only one of three explanations for the existence of the universe: (1) it has always existed (eternal universe); (2) it came into existence by its own power (self-created universe); or (3) God created it. Accepting any of these requires a faith that transcends scientific proof. It is more plausible to believe in an intelligent, eternal, omnipotent Creator than in the eternity or self-creative ability of nonrational matter.

The orderliness and design of the universe requires the existence of the Designer. The incredible complexity of even the simplest forms of life shows that life did not begin by accident or blind chance. The moral nature of humanity reveals that we are more than intelligent animals; we were created in the image of a rational, spiritual, moral Being. Every human child develops a conscience, and every human society has a sense of morality (Romans 2:15).

How could the finite human mind even conceive of an infinite and perfect God unless God imparted that concept? Every society in history has expressed belief in a Supreme Being, and anthropological studies show that the most fundamental religious concept is not belief in many gods but belief in a supreme God. The testimony of the Scriptures and confirmation of personal experience assure us that God indeed lives and communicates with humanity. Ultimately, we accept the truth of His existence by faith (Hebrews 11:6).

## THE NATURE OF GOD

“*God is Spirit*” (John 4:24). He is not made of flesh, blood, bones, or physical matter. He is invisible to the human eye unless He chooses to reveal Himself in some way (John 1:18). God has individuality, rationality, and personality. He is self-existent, eternal, and unchanging. He is omnipresent (everywhere present), omniscient (all knowing and all wise), and omnipotent (all powerful). (See Psalm 139.)

God’s moral nature includes holiness, justice and righteousness, mercy and grace, love, faithfulness, truth, and goodness. He is absolutely perfect in every way. 1 John 4:8 says, “*God is love*”; no other religion identifies God so totally with love.

## THE ONENESS OF GOD

God is absolutely and indivisibly one. “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one!*” (Deuteronomy 6:4). He is the First and the Last; there is no God beside Him; He created everything alone and by Himself; and He is the only Savior (Isaiah 44:6, 8, 24; 45:21-23). Many other passages emphasize God’s oneness. (See Isaiah 42:8; 43:10-11; 46:6-9; Mark 12:28-30; Galatians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:5; James 2:19.) Consequently, there are no distinctions in God’s eternal being; the Godhead does not consist of plural centers of consciousness. All names and titles of the Deity refer to one and the same being.

God has revealed Himself as Father, in the Son, and as the Holy Spirit. These roles are necessary to God’s plan of redemption for fallen humanity. In order to save us, God provided a sinless man to die in our place—the Son, in whose name we receive salvation (John 20:31). In foreordaining the plan of salvation and begetting the Son, God is the Father. In working to transform and empower us, applying salvation to us individually, God is the Holy Spirit. In sum, these titles describe God’s redemptive works but do not indicate three eternal persons, just as the Incarnation does not indicate that God had eternally preexistent flesh.

The title Father describes God as father of all creation and more specifically of His people (Deuteronomy 32:6; Malachi 2:10). In the New Testament, God is the Father of Son. The title of Son refers to God coming in the flesh, for the child Jesus was begotten miraculously by God’s Spirit and

thus was actually the Son of God (Luke 1:35). The title of Holy Spirit describes God's fundamental character, as holiness is the basis of His moral attributes while spirituality is the basis of His nonmoral attributes. The Holy Spirit is not a different person from the Father (Matthew 1:18-20; 10:20) but is God working in the world and in human lives (Genesis 1:2; Acts 1:5-8). In short, "Father" refers to the one God in family relationship to humans; "Son" refers to the one God incarnate; and "Spirit" refers to the one God in action. As an analogy, one human can have three significant relationships, functions, or titles—such as parent, child and counselor—and yet be one person with a unique name. The Bible nowhere speaks of God as a "trinity" or as "three persons" but often calls Him "the Holy One."

The terms "Father" and "Son" in the New Testament serve to emphasize the true humanity of Jesus, not to make distinctions within God's being. The title of Father reminds us of God's transcendence, while the title of Son focuses on the Incarnation. Any attempt to identify two divine persons tends toward belief in two gods or else subordination of one person to the other. Defining the Son as a second divine person would result in two Sons—an eternal, divine Son who could not die and a temporal, human Son who did die. The Bible describes God as Father and Spirit before the Incarnation but as Son only in the Incarnation. While Jesus walked on earth as God incarnate, the Spirit of God continued to be transcendent and omnipresent.

The title of Word relates to God's self-expression or self-revelation. The Word is God Himself (John 1:1), particularly His thought, mind, and plan. In the person of Jesus Christ, "*the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*" (John 1:14). God revealed Himself in Christ.

## THE DEITY OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ is both God and man. He is the one God incarnate. "*For in him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*" (Colossians 2:9). "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself*" (2 Corinthians 5:19). "*God was manifest in the flesh*" (1 Timothy 3:16). Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, our God and Savior, and express image of God's own person (substance). (See 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:15; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:3; 2 Peter 1:1.) When the New Testament writers called Jesus God, they confessed Jesus to be God in the Old Testament

sense. Jesus accepted Thomas' confession of Him as "*my Lord and my God*" (John 20:28-29). He is not the incarnation of one person of a trinity but the incarnation of all the character, quality, and personality of the one God. As to His eternal deity, there can be no subordination of Jesus to anyone else, whether in essence or position.

Belief in Christ's deity is essential to salvation. Jesus said, "*If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins,*" making reference to God's name of I Am (John 8:24, 58). Only if Jesus is truly God does He have power to save from sin, for only God is the Savior and only He can forgive sin (Isaiah 43:25; 45:21-22; Mark 2:7).

All names and titles of the Deity properly apply to Jesus. He is the one God and the one Lord (John 20:28; Acts 9:5). He is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. (See Exodus 3:6, 14 with John 8:56-58, Isaiah 45:23 with Philippians 2:10-11.) He is not only a Child and a Son but also the Mighty God and the Everlasting Father (Isaiah 9:6).

Jesus is the incarnation of the Father. Jesus said, "*I and the Father are one*" (John 1:30). "*The Father is in Me, and I in Him*" (John 10:38). "*He who has seen me has seen the Father...The Father who dwells in me does the works*" (John 14:9-10).

Jesus is the Son of God. The term "Son" refers to Christ's human identity (as in "the Son died"), and it acknowledges the union of deity and humanity in Christ (as in the "the Son will return to earth in glory"), but it is never used apart from God's incarnation. It never refers to deity alone. The terms "God the Son" and "eternal Son" are nonbiblical. The role of the Son began when Jesus was conceived miraculously in the womb of a virgin by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 1:5).

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit that was in Jesus Christ (Galatians 4:6; Philippians 1:19). "*The Lord is the Spirit*" (2 Corinthians 3:17). The Holy Spirit does not come as another person but comes in another form (in spirit instead of flesh) and another relationship ("in you" instead of "with you"); the Holy Spirit is actually Jesus coming to dwell in human lives (John 14:16-18). By the Holy Spirit, Jesus fulfills His promise to dwell in our midst when we gather in His name (Matthew 18:20). Thus, all who experience a genuine work of God encounter one Spirit, not two or three. They do not experience three personalities when they worship, nor do they receive three spirits, but they are in relationship with one personal spirit

being, the Spirit of Jesus.

The name of Jesus means Jehovah-Savior and thus donates God dwelling with us (Matthew 1:21-23). It is the highest name and the only saving name (Philippians 2:9-11; Acts 4:12). It encompasses the fullness of God's revelation in the New Testament.

In eternity, we will see the one God as revealed in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the One on the divine throne. (See Revelation 1:7-8, 17-18; 4:2, 8). The vision of the One on the throne and the Lamb depicts the Incarnation and Atonement. The Lamb is not a second person but a symbol of Christ as the sacrifice for sin. The Lamb actually came out of the throne and sits on the throne (Revelation 5:6; 7:17), yet God in His sovereignty and transcendence always remains on the throne. God and the Lamb is one being with one throne, one face, and one name (Revelations 22:3-4). Only Jesus is both sovereign and sacrifice—deity and humanity—at the same time. He is the image of the invisible God, and His name is the highest name by which God is revealed. In Heaven, if we asked to see the Father apart from Jesus, the words of Jesus to Philip would still apply: *“He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”* (John 14:9).

## THE HUMANITY OF JESUS CHRIST

The Scriptures proclaim Christ's genuine and complete humanity. (See Romans 1:3; Hebrews 2:14-17; 5:7-8.) He was human in body, soul spirit, mind, and will. (See Luke 22:42; 23:46; Acts 2:31; Philippians 2:5; Hebrews 10:5, 10.) Jesus was a perfect human, with everything genuine humanity includes. Christ's true humanity does not mean He had a sinful nature. He was without sin, He committed no sin, and sin was not in Him. (See Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5.) He came with the kind of innocent human nature that Adam and Eve had in the beginning.

Belief in Christ's humanity is essential to salvation (1 John 4:3). If God did not truly come in the flesh, then there is no blood for remission of sin, no sacrifice of atonement. The purpose of the Incarnation was to provide a holy human (not a second divine person) as the mediator between the holy God and sinful humanity (1 Timothy 2:5).

Jesus acted from both divine and human viewpoints and spoke from both divine and human self-consciousness. Only as a human could Jesus be

born, grow, be tempted by the devil, hunger, thirst, become weary, sleep, pray, be beaten, die, not know all things, not have all power, be inferior to God, and be a servant. Only as God could He exist from eternity, be unchanging, cast out devils by His own authority, be the bread of life, give living water, give spiritual rest, calm storms, answer prayer, heal the sick, raise His body from death, forgive sin, know all things, have all power, be identified as God, and be King of Kings. In an ordinary person, these two contrasting list would be mutually exclusive, yet the Scripture attributes all of them to Jesus, revealing his unique identity as both God and human.

Although we must recognize both deity and humanity in Christ, it is impossible to separate the two in Him. (See John 1:1, 14; 10:30, 38; 14:10-11; 16:32.) While there was a distinction between the divine will and his human will, He always submitted the latter to the former. While on earth Jesus was fully God, not merely an anointed human. At the same time, He was fully human, not just an appearance of a human. He was God by nature, by right, by identity; He was not merely deified by an anointing or indwelling. Unlike a Spirit-filled believer, the humanity of Jesus was inextricably joined with all the fullness of God's Spirit.

Christ's humanity means that everything we humans can say of ourselves, we can say of Jesus in His earthly life, except for sin. In every way that we relate to God, Jesus related to God, except that He did not need to repent or be born again. When Jesus prayed, submitted His will to the Father, and spoke about and to God, He simply acted in accordance with His authentic, genuine humanity.

Jesus is the fullness of God dwelling in perfect humanity and manifesting Himself as a perfect human being. He is not the transmutation of God into flesh, the manifestation of a portion of God, the animation of a human body by God, or God temporarily dwelling in a separate human person. Jesus Christ is the incarnation—embodiment, human personification—of the one God.

## CONCLUSION

The beautiful message of Scripture is that our Creator became our Savior. The God against whom we sinned is the One who forgives us. God loved us so much that He came in flesh to save us. He gave of Himself; He did not send someone else. Moreover, our Creator-Savior is also the

indwelling Spirit who is ever present to help us. God told us how to live and then came to live among us. He showed us how to live in the flesh and laid down His human life to purchase our salvation. Now He abides within us and enables us to live according to His will.

Jesus Christ is the one God incarnate, and in Him we have everything we need—healing, deliverance, victory, and salvation (Colossians 2:9-10). By recognizing the almighty God in Jesus Christ we restore correct biblical belief and experience apostolic power.

# SESSION TWO:

# PRAYER AND FASTING

## PRAYER

### Matthew 6:5-15

Prayer is one of the highest privileges afforded the saint, whether a new believer or a veteran of many years. Since God's people are a praying people we would do well to know what prayer is, why we pray, and then be able to share with others the whys of prayer.

## WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is simply communicating with God- listening and talking to Him and enjoying His presence. Through prayer we actually experience relationship with God. The quality of our prayer life then determines the quality of our relationship with God. If a husband never speaks or listens to his wife, the marriage will quickly deteriorate. It is the same way with God. Prayer helps us grow closer and more intimately connected with God. Prayer is not simply saying words. It is not repeating formulas. We are told by Jesus not to make meaningless repetitions of words when we pray (Matthew 6:7). Prayer must be words that come from the heart. Talk to God as your Father (Matthew 6:9).

## ARE WE REQUIRED TO PRAY?

If any doubts fill your mind concerning whether you should pray or not, perhaps these Scriptures will answer your questions.

*"I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." (1 Timothy 2:8).*

*"And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint;" (Luke 18:1).*

*“Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).*

*“...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much...” (James 5:16; see 5:13-16).*

*“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto will all perseverance and supplication for all saints;” (Ephesians 6:18).*

*“But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost,” (Jude 1:20).*

Our Lord set an example for us in prayer. Jesus Christ was both fully God and fully man; therefore, Jesus did not pray because he was God but because He was man. In Him dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9). This was not one God praying to another God, but flesh praying to Spirit. What a pattern Jesus set for us in prayer (Luke 6:12; Matthew 14:23; 26:39-44; Hebrews 5:7).

## **WHY PRAY?**

We pray because we love God. We spend time with God in prayer and communion because we love him. Just as a man and woman in love desire to be together and communicate, so we – if we love God – will desire to be with Him and to fellowship with Him in proportion to our love for Him.

We pray because we depend on God. God is our source. He is our life (Colossians 3:4). Through prayer we receive the comfort, the strength and all the other resources that we need in life – both naturally and spiritually. Prayer – relationship to God – is as necessary to the spiritual life as air to the natural life.

We need to pray in order to resist temptation. *“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.”* (Matthew 26:41). Much sin is the result of the sin of prayerlessness. Through lack of prayer, we are weak, others are weaker and Satan gains the advantage in our lives. When taking upon yourself the whole armor of God you are also instructed to pray (Ephesians 6:13-18). This armor cannot be supplied to us, or appropriated unto us without prayer. Putting on, and keeping on the armor of God can only be accomplished

through prayer. In prayer we learn to walk in the Spirit and conquer the flesh (Galatians 5:16-17; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

We need to pray because God commands us to pray. *“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.”* (Colossians 4:2). *“Then he [Jesus] spoke a parable to them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not lose heart.”* (Luke 18:1). The need to pray is as great as the authority of God which commands us: *“Pray without ceasing.”* 1 Thessalonians 5:17). Prayer is so vital to all that God wants to do on the earth, and so essential to us, that God commands us to do it all the time. (Matthew 6:16; Luke 6:12; Luke 21:36; Colossians 4:2; 2 Corinthians 11:27).

## THE POWER OF PRAYER

Prayer’s awesome power is inexplicable. Our faith to believe God and pray unceasingly should be bolstered by the following examples: to heal the sick (James 5:13-16), to sanctify our food (1 Timothy 4:4-5), to unlock prisons (Acts 12:1-9), to cast out devils (Matthew 17:14-21), to find salvation (Acts 10:1-22, 44-48), to turn back the judgment of God (Genesis 18:22-23; 19:29; Exodus 32:7-14), to give children to barren mothers (1 Samuel 1:10-28), to help in time of problems (1 Samuel 8:1-9), and many others.

Every Christian needs to develop a consistent, faithful pattern of prayer. Contrary to popular opinion, prayer doesn’t come easy. Learn through discipline to pray lengthy prayers; not vain repetition but sincere prayers; learning and being taught by the Word and Spirit, how to pray should be a priority. There is a SECRET PLACE OF THE MOST HIGH (Psalms 91:1), it is found in the closet of prayer.

## HOW TO PRAY

In order to pray effectively, we need to listen to what God has to say about it. Not all prayer is effective because some people do not follow the conditions that God sets forth in His Word. The following guide is designed to help you learn the key elements of effective prayer. Specifically, we are going to look at the acrostic that many have found to be a useful pattern of prayer: ACTS.

**A - Adoration.** One of the main reasons why God saves people is so that they will praise, adore, and worship him! (Psalm 22:22-23). Adoration is simply praising God for who He is and what He has done. *Adoration leads to...*

**C - Confession.** Confession is the acknowledgment to God of your sin. Daily acknowledging your sin to God is an important part of a growing Christian life. (1 John 1:9) *As you experience God's forgiveness, you cannot help but be filled with an attitude of...*

**T - Thanksgiving.** We have so much to be thankful for. Psalm 103 gives us many reasons to thank the Lord for. Being thankful is a reminder that everything we have is because God has given it to us and that it is not because of our own devices. *Finally, you need to bring to God your...*

**S - Supplication** (praying for your needs and the needs of others). When presenting needs in prayer it is important that we pray *specifically* (avoid generalities like “God bless so and so”. It would be difficult to see that sort of prayer answered in a clear way), *expectfully* (Matthew 7:7-11), and *submissively* (realize that God ultimately knows what is best, Matthew 26:39).

Use this as a guide in establishing your prayer life. You can also see this pattern of prayer modeled in the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:9-13.

Prayer may also encompass praying in an unknown tongue (1 Corinthians 14:14-15). Not all praying is to be done in this manner; some is to be done with the understanding, i.e., in our native tongue. The understanding will be unfruitful but the spirit strengthened and edified. Praying in the Holy Ghost (Jude 1:20; Romans 8:26-34), is a needed form of intercessory prayer among believers.

## PRAYER AND ITS CONNECTIVES

Connective tissues bind our physical bodies together to keep them strong. There are connectives to prayer that make it strong and effective; without them prayer becomes powerless and weak. Offered with its connective, prayer becomes a most powerful force in the life of a Christian.

**PRAYER AND OBEDIENCE-** Disobedience to God and His Word destroys the desired results from our prayers. Obedience to God is a key to answer prayer (Acts 9:1-20; 10:1-8, 30-33, 44-48).

**PRAYER AND THE ARMOR OF GOD-** The effectiveness of the armor is obtained through prayer. An inseparable bond exists between **PRAYER** and **ARMOR** in (Ephesians 6:10-18).

**PRAYER AND FAITH-** Doubt will reduce the most sincere prayer to an ineffectual request. It is the prayer of faith that saves the sick (James 5:14-18). Faith coupled with prayer can move mountains, and accomplish the impossible (Matthew 21:21-22; Mark 9:19-27; 11:22-24).

**PRAYER AND PERSISTENCE-** So often we pray briefly and without persistence, manifesting to God the unimportance of the request. Continual asking is important and Biblical (Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-7; Daniel 10:1-14).

**PRAYER AND FASTING-** Fasting is a powerful ally of prayer. Some things are accomplished **ONLY** when two are used simultaneously (Mark 9:29; Luke 2:37; Acts 13:1-3; 14:23).

**PRAYER AND FORGIVENESS-** An unforgiving spirit actually hinders and stops our prayers. Forgiveness must emanate from the heart while we pray (Mark 11:25-26; Matthew 18:23-35).

Prayer is one of our highest privileges, and one of the most effective forces in our lives.

## **HINDRANCES TO PRAYER**

When any or all of these known hindrances are removed we are ready to persist and persevere in prayer until the answer comes. Write down other things, in addition to these, that you feel hinder your prayer life, and then work to remove them.

**IMPROPER HUSBAND/WIFE RELATIONSHIP-** Contention, strife and disharmony in a home affects ones prayers (1 Peter 3:7).

**SIN IN OUR LIVES-** Actively engaging in sinful practices, never repenting, or being hypocritical will stop the answer to your prayers (Isaiah 59:1-2; Psalms 66:18).

**NOT ASKING ACCORDING TO GOD'S WILL-** God's will in this context is His Word. Neither are we to ask God for things contrary to His will for our personal lives. His Word and His plan for your life should be considered when you pray (1 John 5:14-15; Romans 8:27).

**WAVERING-** James is telling us to not be double minded, doubting, hesitant, or to stagger at God's promises when we pray. Ask in faith, nothing doubting, and the answer will come (James 1:5-8).

**UNBELIEF-** Doubt is one of the biggest hindrances we have to fight in our prayer life (Mark 9:23; 11:23-26; Hebrews 11:6).

**UNFORGIVING-** Forgiveness must emanate from our hearts while we are praying; failure to do so hinders our prayers (Mark 11:23-26; Matthew 18:35).

**FAILURE TO USE THE NAME OF JESUS-** All power in heaven and earth is in Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18). His titles and attributes are good to call in prayer, but never forget the power is in the name of Jesus Christ (John 14:12-14).

**NOT ASKING OR ASKING AMISS-** The word amiss means unbecoming, not befitting, incorrect, and wrong. Some never ask, therefore no answers are produced (James 4:3; Matthew 7:7-8).

**BEING DISOBEDIENT TO GOD'S WORD-** Keeping His commandments is an essential prerequisite to answer prayer (1 John 3:19-22).

**UNTHANKFULNESS-** Failure to be thankful for past and present blessings can stop the flow of future blessings (Philippians 4:6; Ephesians 5:4; 20).

**LACK OF POWER WITH GOD-** Prayer is a generator of power in our lives. There is no lack on God's part when it comes to power (Acts 1:8; Ephesians 3:20; 6:10).

**IMPROPER MOTIVES-** Praying to be seen of men, vain repetition, and trying to be heard through much speaking are improper motives. Keep your motivation proper when asking God for things and the answer will come (Matthew 6: 5-8).

## **THE IMPORTUNITY FACTOR IN PRAYER**

**PRAYERS MADE** and **PRAYERS ANSWERED** are two vastly different things. God wants to bless us, give people the Holy Ghost, and supply our needs, but there is a Biblical principal of importunity (shameless persistence) in prayer. Praying is enjoyable and rewarding but it is also hard work and taxing to the flesh. Never should we feel repulsed when we do not get the desired results in prayer. Being timid, bashful, or easily discouraged in prayer will not bring needed answers. Unabashed determination and stamina is necessary for opening heaven's doors.

## **FASTING**

**Matthew 6:16-18; 9:14-17**

Fasting is one of the most powerful and effective forces we can employ against the enemy. Fasting solidifies the Christian's life into one of productivity and fruitfulness.

## **WHAT IS FASTING?**

Fasting is a mental and verbal declaration of doing without food in order to achieve spiritual strength, answers, and direction for ourselves and others. When we fast, we willingly deprive the body of nourishment and the pleasurable taste of food; therefore, our hearts and minds must be totally focused and directed towards God so that He may be the full source of our strength during our period of fasting. Fasting is not a dieting process or missing a meal because we were too rushed to eat. Although fasting is healthy, we fast for spiritual reasons. Fasting is not a way to manipulate God into doing things for us. Rather, the purpose is to produce a transformation in *us*—a clearer, more focused attention and dependence upon God. Fasting increases our faith to a greater level where God can flow through and accomplish His will.

## TYPES OF FASTS

Here are some fasts that are documented in Scripture:

**The normal fast-** on this fast no food is eaten but water is drunk (Matthew 4:1-2; Luke 4:2).

**The absolute fast-** during this fast you abstain from both food and water. It is recommended that you do not go over three days without water unless supernatural strength and help is provided (Acts 9:9; Ezra 10:6).

**The partial fast-** this is a fast in which the diet is restricted rather than totaling abstaing from food (Daniel 1:15, 10:2-3).

Engaging in any one of these fasts would have a deep spiritual impact on our lives. It should be noted, however, that you should check with your doctor before fasting if you have any health conditions.

## GUIDELINES CONCERNING FASTING

There are some guidelines that will help us in our approach to fasting:

Fasting should be done in a manner of humility and secrecy. Matthew 6:16-18, *“Moreover when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret ...”*. Let our fastings be unto God, performed discreetly, with a normal appearance.

Fasting is closely related to prayer and reading the Word. Nehemiah 9: 1-3, *“... the children of Israel were assembled with fasting . . . and stood and confessed their sins . . . and read in the book of the law of the Lord their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the Lord their God.”* Reading the Bible and praying should be incorporated in your time of fasting.

There is a place for both the corporate (group) and the individual (personal) fast. 1 Samuel 7:5-6, *“And Samuel said, Gather all Israel ... and they gathered... and fasted ...”*. Psalms 35:13 *“But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting ...”*

Only fasting that is done with the right motive, that of glorifying God, can be pleasing in His sight (Matthew 6:16-18).

Lay aside pleasure and as much business as possible to obtain the most from your fast. Remember, fasting is to get your focus back on God and seek His face.

Confess your sins before God. Fasting can actually help you conquer weaknesses and fleshly struggles in your life.

## **PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR FASTING**

Beginning and ending a fast is very important. When beginning an extended fast it is recommended to gradually transition a few days before by limiting the amount of food and avoiding fatty, sugary, caffeinated products. This will help alleviate painful headaches and other symptoms. Also, when breaking a fast, most scholars recommend taking the same number of days you fasted to return to a normal diet (i.e. after fasting three days, take three days to return to a normal intake of food).

## **CONCLUSION**

We are so time conscious due to the fact that our time is measured in terms of dollars and cents. As a result our busy, rushed, society has reduced its prayer time to pitiful proportions. Oh for a fresh awakening to the value of time spent in prayer. We could have more of everything God has promised us if we would discipline our flesh to fast and pray. The rewards of these spiritual principles surpass the highest compensations man can pay. Our generation needs men and women who know how to pray, fast, and seek the face of God!

# SESSION THREE: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WORD OF GOD

**Job 23:12; 2 Timothy 3:16**

Our faith, hope, and salvation are based upon the Bible. The Bible is God's thoughts and ways expressed to us in written form (Isaiah 55:6-11). In our journey to a deeper relationship with the Lord it is imperative for us to study the Scriptures because they reveal who God is and what His will is for our lives. *"But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."* (Matthew 4:4)

## FACTS ABOUT THE BIBLE

The word "Bible" comes from the Greek word, "BIBLIA", which literally means "books".

The Bible contains 66 books. 39 books comprise the Old Testament and 27 books comprise the New Testament.

The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew language, while the New Testament was written in the Greek language.

When printing was invented in 1450 A.D. the Bible was the first book printed. It was previously copied by hand.

## TRANSLATIONS

Many translations of the Bible are available today. After years of investigation and study, it is strongly recommended that you use the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible as the basis of your study. Other translations can be used in conjunction with the KJV while studying; however, many modern translations, posing as helpful in clarification of older unused words, actually destroy truth and meaning contained in these words.

## WHAT THE BIBLE IS USED FOR

Four basic essentials are needed in the lives of men in relation to truth. God has provided all of them for us through Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16). We profit tremendously when we use God's Word for its designated purpose in our lives.

**For Doctrine-** We are to use the Word of the Lord to teach, instruct, and direct us in established doctrinal teachings on salvation and holy living (Deuteronomy 32:2; Matthew 7:28; Isaiah 28:9; John 7:16; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 4:14; 1 Timothy 4:13-16).

**For Reproof-** Paul in this context means we are to use the Bible for evidence and as a means of admonishing, showing fault, or rebuking us (Hebrews 11:1-3; Proverbs 1:23-30, 10:17, 15:5; 2 Timothy 4:2; Ephesians 5:11).

**For Correction-** God's word corrects false theories, restores things to their proper use, corrects matters arising in the believer's life and in the church (Jeremiah 2:30, 5:1-3; Hebrews 12:6-11; Job 5:17; Proverbs 3:11-12).

**For Instruction in Righteousness-** Teaching the man or woman of God in righteousness, perfecting (maturing) them, and instructing them how to live is another goal of God's Word (2 Kings 12:1-2; Matthew 13:52; Acts 18:24-28; 2 Timothy 2:25; Proverbs 15:32, 6:23).

## THE POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD

No word or phrase devised by man can sufficiently reveal the power of the written Word. The Word of God is powerful in the following areas:

**To defeat Satan-** Jesus in his temptation defeated Satan on every point by quoting Scripture. Three times during His temptation Jesus declared, "*It is written*" (Matthew 4:1-11). The written Word is your most powerful force to defeat Satan (Deuteronomy 8:3). The Bible is the only visible part of our armor, but it is one of our greatest weapons against the enemy (Ephesians 6:17; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Hebrews 4:12; Philippians 4:8).

**To change a person-** David gives us an unusually powerful insight into what God's Word can do in the life of an individual (Psalms 19:7-11). He

identifies how the word can change us by “*converting the soul*”, “*making wise the simple*”, “*rejoicing the heart*”, and “*enlightening the eyes*”.

## HOW TO SYSTEMATICALLY STUDY THE BIBLE

Often heard from believers and unbelievers alike are statements such as, “I don’t know how to study the Bible”, or “How do I study the Bible?”. We are given a divine instruction to study (1 Timothy 2:15). Discipline must be exercised, and the Bible given priority, if we are to learn and excel. Casual reading, skipping from place to place, non-meditative, and disruptive study will never produce the needed knowledge of God’s Word. Dig deep (Luke 6:48), build upon the sure foundation, and then the wind, rain, and flood will not destroy what you build.

### Tools Needed

We spend hard earned money for tools of other types of work to make the job easier and faster. Why not have good tools for the most important task? Beginning at point number one, as you have funds, purchase books in listed order.

1. A good Bible- purchase a well-made, durable, King James Version Bible for study. Thomas Chain reference, Dake’s Annotated Bible, Scofield (1917 edition), Cambridge, Naves, and Oxford Bibles are all good choices.
2. Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance
3. Bible Dictionary
4. Webster’s Dictionary
5. Commentaries- Matthew Henry, or Adam Clark. Please note that commentaries are just that, comments from Bible scholars. You should be careful not to take their words as absolute but as a guide to help in your understanding. Commentaries that present more than one point of view, especially on verses relating to doctrine, are a good choice.

There are also some good resources on the Internet; however, be cautious to make sure the website is a reputable source. If you are more computer savvy, a great option is to purchase Bible study software, such as Logos

(www.logos.com), that gives you access to many study books (various Bible translations, commentaries, dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc...) and organizes them to aid in your study. So instead of purchasing many books individually, you can make a one-time purchase.

## Types of Study

Developing a personal methodology of study is important. Here are some ways to help in this development:

**Listening-** as elementary as this sounds, an open ear can result in a wealth of knowledge. Discussing the Bible with others, taking notes during your pastor's or other minister's preaching's, even listening to recorded preaching's will help you gain better understanding.

**Reading-** read the Bible through in one year if you are serious about study. Do not read just to get through it, but make sure you understand what you are reading. Use the study tools outlined above to aid in this understanding.

**Memorizing-** Knowledge can be acquired and retained if we will discipline ourselves to commit important facts and scriptures to memory. Some suggestions to memorize are: key verses of doctrine, entire chapters on key subjects such as Psalm 23 (God's guidance), 1 Corinthians 13 (love), Hebrews 11 (faith), Books of the Bible and their correct spelling, the twelve Apostles names, The Beatitudes (Matthew 5), The fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23), the gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:1-11).

**Studying cross references-** compare scripture with scripture. The Bible is its own best commentary.

**Writing Notes-** during your times of study and hearing sermons you should write notes of what you learn. Always have a blank sheet of paper in your Bible to write down worthy thoughts that come during study. You can then perform exhaustive research into particular subjects relating to those thoughts that will reinforce their truth and help in your understanding.

## CONCLUSION

Studying the Word of God is essential to Christian growth and development. Never become neglectful or discouraged because you do not learn it all over night. Keep working at it, the rewards are innumerable and indescribable. Develop good study habits early in your Christian walk, making the Word apart of your daily devotion. *“Give us this day our daily bread.”* (Matthew 6:11)

# SESSION FOUR:

# FAITH TOWARD GOD

## Hebrews 6:1-10

We are admonished to leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ; not laying again the foundation of these principles, rather, we should go onto perfection. God is not telling us to forsake or abandon these principles. He is telling us to establish them in our lives as new believers. Know them; understand them; have them in mind and heart; *then* go on to maturity in Christ.

Since the essentiality of faith has already been established as a necessity for salvation, we should do well to note its importance in our daily Christian walk.

Clarity of the terms FAITH and THE FAITH are important to us so we can keep the Scripture in context. THE FAITH is the doctrine and teachings established by Christ, taught by the Apostles, and delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3). When the Bible speaks of “*contending for the faith*”, “*one Lord, one faith, one baptism*”, and “*some shall depart from the faith*”, this is not in the same sense as having “FAITH”. Learn how differentiate between the two terms. Here are some scriptures relating to “THE FAITH”: Jude 1:3 & 17, Ephesians 4:5, 1 Timothy 4:1, 2 Corinthians 1:3-5, Romans 1:5, Galatians 1:23.

FAITH, or FAITH TOWARD GOD, as found in Hebrews 6:1 can be defined as trust in God and in his actions and promises. Hebrews 11:1 says, “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*”

## HOW DO WE OBTAIN FAITH?

“*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.*” (Romans 10:17) As the Word is heard, it must be mixed with faith on our part for it to profit us (Hebrews 4:2). Our journey toward God and salvation really begins when we hear the Word of God and believe it. At this juncture we give mental and verbal assent to God and His Word.

Having faith or believing must exist in our lives through every step the Bible leads us. Although we may not be able to explain it, or have full understanding of the Bible, yet we believe it. That is faith toward God.

When you believe, you are eligible to receive anything and everything God's Word promises you. Believing in, or on Jesus Christ and His Word doesn't constitute salvation within itself. Rather, your faith becomes the propelling force that causes you to act on what you believe (John 1:11-13). Satan believes (James 2:14-26), but that doesn't save him. It takes more than believing to be saved, yet we can never be saved without believing. Faith is the first step, the beginning ingredient, a part in the sum of salvation. Every step toward God must be prefaced by faith.

Great things can be acquired from God through faith. The most important is salvation from sin. Some of the following benefits accompany salvation but are constantly dependent on faith to keep them alive in our heart and soul. Since the major impetus of the lesson is on salvation let us give special attention to this topic.

## SALVATION

Unbelief will stop you from receiving salvation for your soul. Do not allow the devil to confuse your mind by telling you that you doubt, when the problem is the lack of understanding of God's Word. There is a vast difference between the two. Unbelievers have their part in the lake of fire (Revelation 21:8). These are the ones who refused to accept God's Word, believe, and obey it. Jesus declared, "...*repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" (Mark 1:15) Here are some other Scriptures relating to faith and salvation: Hebrews 11:6, John 7:38, Ephesians 2:8, John 1:12, Romans 3:25, Colossians 2:12, Acts 20:21.

## HEALING

Healing, along with seven other topics we will outline below, are really addendums to the subject of salvation. Each of these require faith to activate them. Let's see what the Scriptures say about faith and healing. "*And the prayer of faith shall save the sick...*" (James 5:15). Other Scriptures: Matthew 9:20-22, Acts 3:1-16, Matthew 9:27-31.

## PLEASING GOD

Every born again Christian is filled with a basic desire to please the one who saved them from sin. This desire will bring discipline to our lives, with the resulting blessings of God upon us. Again, this can only be accomplished by faith toward God. *“But without faith it is impossible to please him”*. (Hebrews 11:6)

## VICTORY

Our means of success in living for God, along with the conquest of besetting sins, can only come through faith. To avoid defeat in your Christian walk keep your faith strong. *“...This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* (1 John 5:4)

## UNDERSTANDING

Though inexplicable by us, there is an abiding comprehension of the things of God. We accept them by faith; therefore, the things baffling to theologians, scientists, and philosophers are readily understood by the believer. *“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God...”* (Hebrews 11:3)

## SANCTIFICATION

True sanctification is acquired when we are born again. This state of purification, holiness, and consecration is retained in our lives through faith. Other factors are involved, but faith remains the foundation upon which they stand. *“...That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.”* (Acts 26:18)

## JUSTIFICATION

Justification is another plus of being born again- that of being declared just, set apart, innocent, holy, and righteous in the eyes of God. This blessed state is achieved and maintained through faith in God. *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Romans 5:1)

## DIRECTION

The path of the Christian is often obscure; his only sense of direction is found through faith in God and His Word. Nothing more is needed; we just need to be aware of the type of circumstances under which we must travel. *“(For we walk by faith, not by sight)”*. (2 Corinthians 5:7)

## RIGHTEOUSNESS

Righteousness, which is closely connected to sanctification and justification, can only be acquired initially by the new birth experience (John 3:1-8). It is then maintained in the believer’s life through faith in God and obedience to His Word. Our goal is to have the righteous of God ruling in our lives. *“...The Gentiles, which followed not after righteous, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith.”* (Romans 9:30)

## FACTS OF FAITH

Below are some important facts concerning faith that you should commit to memory and understand:

1. Faith works by love (Galatians 5:6)
2. All men do not have faith (2 Thessalonians 3:2)
3. Faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26)
4. Without faith you cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6)
5. Faith is a weightier matter than tithing (Matthew 23:23)
6. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17)
7. The shield of faith is part of the Christian’s armour (Ephesians 6:16)
8. We are to hold to faith lest we make shipwreck of our loves (1 Timothy 1:18-20)
9. Faith is one of the nine spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8-10)
10. Faith is a part of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22)

Faith toward God is a very extensive subject. The first object of this lesson is to establish faith in your heart for salvation. Secondly, it is to increase your faith, causing you to build upon it in such a manner that you will never fall (2 Peter 1:5-10).

# SESSION FIVE: SPIRITUAL WARFARE

## ENEMIES OF THE SOUL

When you began your walk with God, one of the first realizations that came to you was that something or someone was not happy about your being born again. Enemies wanting to destroy us in hell is the age old story of the redeemed. Singly and collectively forces attack our mind, body, soul, and spirit in a concerted effort to separate us from the love of God. The purpose of this lesson is to expose our enemies that war against our Christian walk. When you analyze your problems, trials, and temptations you find that there are three basic areas (enemies) that are the root cause.

## FLESH

### 1 Peter 2:11

The definition of “flesh” comes from the Greek word SARX which indicates human nature with its frailties and passions. It also encompasses carnality and being carnally minded. As you note in its definition, the term “flesh” does not refer to the physical flesh of the human body but rather the carnal, human nature of man.

## Origin

When man fell in the Garden of Eden the Law of Sin (Romans 7:18-25) became apart of the human race. This corrupt, defiled sinful nature is automatically transmitted through the procreation process. Humanity’s bloodline not only carries and transmits physical death, but spiritual death as well (Genesis 2:9-17; 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-19). We inherit from our father Adam, our evil nature, which tends to sin. Our Adamic nature is a permanent part of every nationality and is passed from generation to generation. God does not take away human desires, feelings, and tendencies when we get saved. Our soul is redeemed and saved but our

body or the flesh is not. We will get a redeemed body when Jesus catches away His church (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Romans 8:11). Then and only then will we be free from the flesh as we know it.

## **Works of the Flesh**

Clearly outlined and defined by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 5:19-21, the works of the flesh are as follows: Adultery (sexual relations with someone other than your married spouse), Fornication (sexual relations between unmarried individuals), Uncleanness (filthy or impure thoughts or actions), Lasciviousness (sensual and lewd behavior), Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance (disputes), Emulations (dissensions), Wrath (violent rage), Strife (fights/struggles), Seditions (revolting against lawful authority), Heresies (belief contrary to accepted doctrine), Envy (desire for another's possession, looks, popularity, etc.), Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings (wild parties). *"...and such like: of which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."* (Galatians 5:21)

Anything promoting and inciting conduct related to the above should be shunned. Carnal actions and desires must be curbed and controlled through a Biblical method in order to stop Satan's plan to destroy us. All of the works of the flesh are lethal enemies to the spirituality of the child of God.

## **Your Body - The Temple of the Holy Ghost**

Inside this earthly temple, there abides both the sin-principle and the Holy Ghost when we have been born again (1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:9-20). Christ wants to be Lord, and Satan wants to be Lord of our lives; herein lies the conflict. *"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."* (Galatians 5:17)

Every Christian, by nature of the fact that he is a Christian, possesses two natures, one fleshly and one divine. We, by natural birth have a human, carnal, earthly nature (1 Corinthians 11:14; Ephesians 2:3; Romans 1:26). Because we have been born again, we are and partakers of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Both want to rule, so a fight ensues.

You can readily see your paradoxical position; you are in the world but not of the world, belonging to Christ with Satan wanting us back. Daily we must die to the flesh and walk after the Spirit if we want to be saved.

## Controlling the Flesh

Our Bible is concise and clear on how we are to handle this enemy of the soul. Though unpleasant, the method is surprisingly successful. We are to crucify the flesh, in order to be alive unto God. Historically, crucifixion was a horrible means of death. Jesus Christ was physically crucified for our sins and the Bible teaches that we should spiritually crucify our flesh, that is, die to it. By doing this we can control our fleshly nature. Galatians 5:24, *“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.”*

Luke 9:23-25 defines being Christ’s disciple by following three principles: 1) deny ourselves 2) take up our cross daily (signifying crucifying our flesh) 3) follow Him. Prayer, Fasting, Bible study, faithfully attending church services, taking communion, loving our enemies, giving our time and money, and submitting ourselves to authority are just a few ways we can crucify the flesh and keep our focus on Jesus.

## THE WORLD

### 2 Peter 2:20-22

The second enemy of the soul is the world. Many attacks of the enemy will be channeled through this medium. There are different definitions of the term “world” used in Scripture but we will focus on the one that concerns this topic. “World” is defined as a space or period of time, especially a lifetime. From each age of time, there arises a spirit, inventions, allurements, enticements, carnal trappings, places, and events invented by man. Every generation of humanity produces an atmosphere and environment, peculiar to its own day that is destructive to spirituality if you involve yourself in it. *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* (Romans 12:2)

## What Comprises The World?

You can pinpoint the elements that the world is made up of regardless of the age or time in which you live. Root causes can be traced to one of the following things (1 John 2:15-17). Lust of the flesh, Lust of the eyes, Pride of life.

## Scriptural Warnings against The World

The world has its pollution (2 Peter 2:20)

The world has its corruption (2 Peter 1:4)

The world has its cares (Matthew 13:22)

The world has its god (2 Corinthians 4:4)

The world has its lusts (Titus 2:12)

The world has its fashion (1 Corinthians 7:31)

## Biblical Method For Handling the World

Though it may sound simplistic and elementary, the biblical method for handling the world is to overcome it! Jesus overcame the world (John 16:33) and gave us that same power through the Holy Ghost (1 John 4:1-4). We are to overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21). There are many great promises to those that overcome the world as seen in Revelation 21:7, 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:26, 3:5, 3:12, 3:21. While we live in this world we are not of this world. Until Christ comes, we must be separate, holy, and distinguishable people remaining unspotted by the world (James 1:27).

## SATAN

### 1 Peter 5:8

The final enemy of the soul is Satan (Devil) himself. Satan not only wages personal attacks against the believer but he also works through the two other enemies (Flesh and the World) that we have been studying above.

## Origin

Lucifer, in the beginning was created as an angel of God, rebelled against God, and led other angels into his error (they became demons). He was

then cast out of heaven into the earth, where he now works against the kingdom of God (Isaiah 14:12-15; Luke 10:17; John 8:44; 1 John 3:8). Throughout Scriptures, there are various terms used to describe Satan. They are as follows: Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12-14), Dragon (Revelation 12:3-17), Serpent (2 Corinthians 11:3), Devil (Ephesians 6:11), The Wicked (Ephesians 6:16)

## **What Satan Is**

Our adversary in reality exists as the following things, using one or all of them to destroy the child of God. Knowing what he is equips us with needed knowledge to stand against him with the help of God. Satan is: The tempter (Matthew 4:3), a liar (John 8:44), an accuser (Revelation 12:3-9), a hinderer (1 Thessalonians 2:18, a murderer (John 8:44), the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4), the deceiver (1 Timothy 2:14), our adversary (1 Peter 5:8), and the destroyer (Psalm 17:4).

## **Giving Place to the Devil**

A saint of God can give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27), but this does not mean he is dominated, possessed, or controlled by Satan. Giving place to the devil refers to a temporary failure of the Christian through temptation, lust, or testing. We are warned against allowing this to happen, but if it does, the child of God should repent, correct the error and go on for God.

## **Thoughts And Imaginations**

Our mind is the most venerable and accessible area of our lives to the devil. Although we can control our thoughts, we cannot stop thoughts from entering our mind. Such strategic effort becomes the object of Satan's most vicious attacks, due to his access to our minds. While Satan can put thoughts in our mind he is powerless to make us act upon them.

Thoughts allowed to remain active and alive in our minds will become intentions of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). Acting upon these intentions is a sin that began as a thought (James 1:12-16). Sin destroys our reputation, character, and other's confidence in us. Restoration is available but sins of a moral nature leave scars and reproaches (Proverbs 6:27-33).

# Biblical Method For Handling The Devil

*“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:5)*

Submit yourself to God. This is the preparatory step to defeat the devil successfully. So many try to by-pass this step and end up in despair because Satan still torments them. Submission to God and His Word are absolute musts in order to defeat this enemy of the soul. Next is resist the devil. Resist in this context means to stand against, to keep from yielding to, and being affected by. When you are tempted, oppressed, depressed, discouraged, and tested, keep doing things Christians should do; not out of inspiration but by commitment. Then, the devil will flee from you. According to history, Job did this for about a year before he got the victory. Nothing drives Satan away like resisting his advances.

## How To Resist The Devil

There are many ways one can resist the devil. Weapons of a spiritual nature (prayer and fasting, the Word, the armor of God, etc...) are at your disposal for use to cast down imaginations, thoughts, and everything that exalts itself against you and your Lord (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). We will name a few basic spiritual weapons from Scripture that will greatly assist you in your efforts to resist Satan.

**Prayer and Fasting-** A devil possessed boy could not be delivered by the prayers of the disciples due to a lack of prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:14-21). Develop a consistency in these areas and you will be able to stand against the attacks of Satan.

**Word of God-** Jesus did not use any more power to overcome Satan during His temptation than is available to each of us. In all three instances when the devil approached Jesus He used Scripture to defeat him (Matthew 4:1-11).

**Armor of God-** Quenching fiery darts, withstanding in the evil day, and standing against the wiles of the devil is possible when we have the armor of God (Ephesians 6:13-18).

## CONCLUSION

Spiritual failure is not the result of improper and unavailable resources; we fail because we do not use what God has provided us. Eternity is before us; if we gain the whole world and lose our soul we have profited nothing. Yes, we have enemies, but thank God we have resources more powerful than all the combined enemies. Let us defeat them in Jesus name!

# SESSION SIX: TITHES AND OFFERING

**Malachi 3:8-10; Proverbs 3:9,10; Luke 6:38**

*“The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it...”* Psalm 24:1. As Followers of Jesus, we believe that we are stewards of God’s resources because He is the owner of all that we have. Throughout the Bible, we are reminded of the importance of giving back a portion of what God has so generously provided. His Word tells us that giving is actually an act of worship that should be done with a spirit of thanksgiving. Tithing and giving offerings not only teach us to put God first in every aspect of lives, specifically our finances, but also it is the way the Lord has chosen to support the work of His church. The church is not a store that sells goods and services to survive. The church gladly relies on the faithful and regular giving of God’s people (that’s you)!

Approaching the Biblical subject of tithing, we want to present Scriptures and thoughts to you as a source of enlightenment and help. Encouragement and instruction are the goals of this lesson. Many feel that tithing is a nonessential matter; therefore they never investigate what God says on the subject. God’s Word teaches Christians to pay tithes and give offerings. This principle is not to be taken lightly or performed un-scripturally.

## WHAT DOES THE WORD “TITHE” MEAN?

We’ve all heard the word “tithe,” but what does it mean? Tithing means a tenth. From Abraham on down, people would take the first 10 percent of their income and give it back to God (Hebrews 7:2-5).

## WHERE DID TITHING ORIGINATE?

Tithing is a Bible plan originating before the Law of Moses; it was incorporated into the law, and is now included in the New Testament era of grace as God’s method of financial support for His work.

14:20). This is the first mention of tithing in the Bible.

2. Under the Law – God’s law, given to Moses, stipulated all the particulars of what, when, where, and how of tithing (Leviticus 27:30-34; Numbers 18:20-24; Deuteronomy 12:5-6).
3. Under Grace – According to Jesus, mercy, faith, and justice are weighty matters that we must continue to exercise as Christians. These we ought to do along with paying our tithes (Matthew 23:23). Can our obligation to tithe be less than Abraham’s, since we are considered his children (Galatians 3:7)?

## TITHING AND WORSHIP

Paying tithes should not be a dreaded task, but one of worship. “...*God loveth a cheerful giver*” (2 Corinthians 12:13). Paying tithes and giving offerings for Abraham, Jacob, and the Israelites was an act of worship (Deuteronomy 26:1-11).

Spiritual people will tithe regularly and Biblically just as they will sing, pray, and testify. Tithing is our way of acknowledging God as our Provider and Lord of our life. He is the one that has given us the ability (our intellect, talents, gifts, strength) to create wealth. Without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). The Bible says, the purpose of tithing is to teach you always to put God first in your lives. (Deuteronomy 14:23 TLB) Tithing is a reminder that God is the supplier of everything we have.

## TITHING AND FAITH

2 Corinthians 9:6-7, “*But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. [7] Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.*” The Bible instructs us that tithing is strongly connected with our faith in God. Our level of faith will determine our level of giving. Two important principles can be gleaned from this verse:

**God will bless us according to how much we give.** Just as a farmer plants many seeds to reap a large harvest, so the Bible is telling us to sow liberally with our giving in order to reap many blessings. We can only

reap what we have sown. Luke 6:38, *“Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over; shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”* Proverbs 3:9-10, *“Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.”* (ESV)

**Giving must come from the heart.** God wants you to give because you love and trust Him. If your giving does not come from your heart, it will be in vain. Every time you pay your tithe and offering, remember all that God he has done in your life, and your giving will flow from a heart of gratitude.

## WHAT SHOULD TITHES BE USED FOR?

Bible examples of what tithing was used for should set the proper precedent for the church today. Levites, who were Old Testament priests set apart to care for the tabernacle and offer sacrifices, received tithes for their livelihood and services rendered to God and the people (Numbers 18:20-24).

Paul was supported by the New Testament churches, and I am convinced this was through tithing (1 Corinthians 9:1-14). Paul writes some instruction regarding Christian giving in I Corinthians 9:14, where he states that, *“...the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”* In other words, preachers should be compensated to preach. Where does this money come from? In Galatians 6:6 Paul tells us, *“Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things”* (this can be better understood from another translation: *“And let the one who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches”* (NASB). We see this same concept again in 1 Timothy 5:17-18 where Paul writes, *“Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.”* Therefore, we should tithe to support those who teach us faithfully.

## WHERE SHOULD I PAY MY TITHES AND OFFERINGS?

Tithing went to the Levites, and was to be paid in the place God set His name (Deuteronomy 12:5-6, 11-17). Tithing was to be brought to the house of God and set before the altar (Malachi 3:8-10). You should pay your tithes and offerings where you attend church, and to the pastor you sit under.

God established the tithe to support the local church. Nehemiah 10:36-38 (NIV), *“As it is also written in the Law, we will bring the firstborn of our sons and of our cattle, of our herds and of our flocks to the house of our God, to the priests ministering there.”* Some people mistakenly understand that the tithe is to be given to whomever they choose to as an offering or a charitable donation. In the scripture above it says that it will be brought to *“the house of our God, to the priests ministering there...”* that is our local church.

## HOW MUCH MONEY IS TITHES?

We can already see from the numerous scriptures previously cited in this study that ten percent (10%) of our increase (earnings) is tithes. Trying to make or insinuate that any less than this amount is our tithes is dishonest.

Those working on salary or hourly wage jobs should tithe on their earnings (gross income). Taking our taxes, insurance payments, retirement, car payment, house payment, etc. out of our earnings before we pay tithes is wrong. Pay tithes on **ALL** that is an increase to you and you will be richly blessed!

## WHAT IS AN OFFERING?

The Bible teaches that we are mere stewards of what God has given us. Therefore, we see tithing as giving back what is God’s to God (and He lets us keep the other 90% to use appropriately). Any amount above 10% is considered an offering to God. This type of giving is over and above and should also be done with cheerfulness.

## WHY IS GIVING SO IMPORTANT?

There is no such thing as a stingy Christian. The primary ethic of our faith is generosity. The Father in Heaven GAVE His Son to die for us (John 3:16). In fact, Jesus talked more about giving than the subjects of heaven, hell, or prayer. In Matthew 6:21 and 24 Jesus says, *“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also...No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.”*

## BLESSING OF TITHING AND GIVING OFFERINGS

There are very few instances in the Bible where we are asked to test the faithfulness of the Lord. Malachi 3:10 (AMP) says to, *“Bring all the tithes (the whole tenth of your income) into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and **prove** me now by it, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”* God is asking you to put Him to the test! He will be faithful to supply all of your needs if you obey His Word. When you tithe and give offerings, you are connected to the economy of God, which is not affected by this world’s economy (Philippians 4:19). God’s economy has unlimited resources!

1. **We tithe out of gratitude for the past.** “God, I realize that everything I’ve achieved up to this point, anything I have, all belongs to you anyway. I want to give 10 percent back to you as an act of gratefulness.”
2. **We tithe to keep our priorities right in the present.** Deuteronomy 14:23 says, *“The purpose of tithing is to teach you to put God first”* (TLB). It’s a reminder that God is really first in my life, and it helps me set my priorities.
3. **We tithe as a statement of faith for the future.** When I write out the check or give the money, I’m saying, “God, you’ve taken care of me in the past, so I trust you and I’m giving this to you as a demonstration of my faith that you will provide in the future.”

## **DISTINCTION BETWEEN TITHE AND OFFERING**

According to the Bible there is a definite difference and distinction between tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:8-10). The tithe is ten percent of our increase; offerings are a sacrificial gift from the remainder of our personal money. Tithes, we owe; offerings are gifts of love and sacrifice given in the spirit of Christ (2 Corinthians 9:6-7; Romans 12:8).

## **WHAT HAPPENS IF I DO NOT PAY TITHES?**

First of all you place yourself in the place of a robber (Malachi 3:8-10). By doing this you close the windows of heaven upon your soul. What measure you mete out will be measured to you again (Luke 6:38). Where your treasure is there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:19-21). We are the losers in time and eternity if we fail to tithe.

## **CONCLUSION**

Time and space forbid us to attempt to answer every question, but perhaps what we learned will guide us to do what is right and give to God what is His. How awesome is it that we GET to give anything back to Our God? After all He has given us by way of talents, finances, opportunities, possessions, and more – God only asks us to give back a portion. Instead of asking us to give back the bulk and live off of a small percentage, God made giving to His church an achievable commitment. It is through your commitment to God and the church that we enable more hearts to be reached, more lives to be changed, more strongholds to be broken, more families to be brought together and more hope to be shared. Make a commitment to give and you will be blessed!

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