



TAKE THIS BOOK!

THE LIGHT OF “CHRIST AND GOD’S KINGDOM”

JESUS SAID “I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD”

BY JEFF BRADSHAW

TAKE THIS BOOK!

The Light of Christ and God's Kingdom

Written by Jeff Bradshaw, United Missions, Inc.

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This book is one of the "Encounter Books" series of writings aimed at awakening hearts to "The Light of Christ and God's Kingdom". Any donation sent to United Missions, Inc. (501c) for sharing the Gospel is greatly appreciated.

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United Missions, Inc.



Cross Connected

EMAIL: united.missions@aol.com

US MAIL: 2403 Griffin Court
Ocoee, FL 34761

URL: www.unitedmissionsinc.com

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This short book was written to be joined with the ongoing testimony of Christians who enjoy the fullness of life through a personal relationship with the “Father, Son and Holy Spirit”.

“You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:13)

“Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name. (Psalm 33:20-21)”

Preface – The Light of Christ and God’s Kingdom

“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.(1st John 1:5)”

Currently, you may be someone who is walking with Jesus in His light or someone who is considering walking with Jesus in His light. Those who are walking with the Lord possess hearts that have been awakened by the “Light of Christ and God’s Kingdom”. They’ve been led into steadfast, eternal fellowship with God founded upon His Son’s “light, love and life”. How does one step out of darkness and enter into God’s light? They open up their lives, “body, soul and spirit” to the Lord’s “Good Testimony”, His life-giving Gospel Light.

Those who walk in His light, carry God’s promise of eternal life within them as they follow the Son’s light and God’s Kingdom that He has brought into view. They wake up daily expecting to see the Son’s new light that has come into this world rise up in their hearts of faith just like the morning sunrise. They wake up excited to see how the light continues to bathe the earth and chase away the darkness. They walk by faith not by sight in the new realm of God’s eternal, spiritual presence and power. They’ve laid down their burdens of trying to stay one step ahead of the darkness in exchange for their new purpose of being light bearers. They embrace their new calling to testify about the new light which transforms lives as it brings eternal separation from darkness to those who have come to know the heart of God. Where is God’s heart directing His light bearers? I invite you now to read on and see...

Introduction – Sons and Daughters of God

“A book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. ‘They shall be Mine’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘On the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.’ Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him. (Malachi 3:16-18)’

How we face hardship and crisis inevitably determines who we become. I’ve had my share of both over the years. The first major crisis I faced occurred during my senior year of High School. At that time, I was experiencing a great amount of anxiety in the spring as I found myself facing the unknown of what was next after graduating H.S. I had no idea what my long term purpose in life was. I had no idea what kind of profession I should take up. Until my senior year, I was simply a student looking forward to finishing H.S. My goals were to: get a car, be free from H.S. and be of legal age (18). My parents didn’t have the means to pay for me to continue my studies in college so that wasn’t my guaranteed next step. For some, that was a luxury that allowed them to put off making this major decision about their future career for a while. For me, if I was to go to college, I needed a future job and a career plan that would make it worthwhile. That spring of my senior year, my mind was consumed by this crisis.

I was raised in the church but like school I just wanted to be free, in this case from religious training. The intoxication of being free and on my own had closed my “heart and mind” to seeking God’s plan for my life. If I had taken God’s Word to heart, the Lord would have led me to His greater freedom and direction for my life. *“(God) who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began.(2nd Timothy 1:9)”* God who has always been there offers freedom and grace for difficult times.

No matter our family of origin or profession we've chosen, those who possess freedom in Christ are destined for greatness; they have been chosen by God to be joined with His Son's "light, love and life". In Malachi 3:16 printed above, we read that the names of the "sons and daughters" of God have been written in His "Book of Remembrance". God's children have chosen God's freedom from the bondage of sin in order to take hold of His righteousness through Christ. This freedom coming from God is at the core of every decision a "son and daughter" of God makes.

Interestingly, both Malachi 3:16-18 at the end of the Old Testament and Revelation 20:11-15 at the end of the New Testament speak about God's judgment and the names of those recorded in the "Book of Life (Remembrance)". God's record of His righteousness includes the fruit, offspring of His "Living Word". It is recorded in heaven and written upon the hearts of His children for eternity; *"they overcame him (sin and death) through the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony (Revelation 12:11)"*. God's family, awakened by coming to faith in His Son, is creation's living record of His life-giving work of grace, His eternal "Kingdom Light".

God's children have been awakened by the heart of God. They enjoy intimate fellowship with Him as God has done this in their lives as stated in Ezekiel 36:26-27; *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."* My first great crisis of life after High School was an opportunity missed by me to surrender my stone heart to God. Later during another life crisis, I finally did surrender my stone heart to God. This occurred as the allures of the freedom this world offered were seen as nothing compared to true freedom in Christ. How does one approach God to be free? *"Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 18:3)."*

In the beginning of my life, my focus had been on leaving my childhood behind. This actually hardened my heart against God's Word. His Word can either set us free and keep us free or come crashing down on us later in life. Through the grace of God I had a second chance, as I faced another large hurdle, a mid-life crisis. Being a child of God is what God's children are given a new heart for. Thankfully, my pride based upon the deception that I could find my own way in life without God was finally humbled. The truth that God's direction for life is greater than any other direction led to my conversion, my new direction, my new life in Christ. Now with this new understanding, I find myself creating and sharing inspirational writings with the hope that my lost time between High School graduation and the time in which I received God's new heart, might be redeemed. My prayer is that others might learn not to be hard hearted, not to live distanced from God through pride and sin. Rather, they might learn to surrender to God and cherish His fellowship, what we were created for.

The Pearl of Great Price: Christ in you

"The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it. (Matt. 13:45-46)" God's treasure of Christ to all nations brings "heaven to earth" and "earth to heaven". This short parable about "The Pearl of Great Price" is meant to illustrate where God's heart is directed, towards His Kingdom treasure. God's greatest treasure is His Son, Jesus Christ living in His children. This is why He paid the great price, one for all as the parable tells of the merchant selling all He had (one pearl, His sinless Son) to attain it. Often, Jesus used parables to communicate truths about the "Kingdom of God". Truly, God gave everything the world had to offer, His sinless Son sent in the flesh, so that His "Kingdom of Heaven", righteousness would come. Jesus, the Son of God stepped down into humanity by becoming flesh and blood (Phil. 2:7-8). He humbled himself as He was hidden for a time amongst sinful humanity.

He was like a beautiful pearl hidden in a massive pile of smelly clams. Eventually, as His ministry entered its final stage, He identified who He was and paid the greatest price by being rejected and turned over to the Romans to be crucified by His people. He was crucified willingly so that He could complete His ministry; pay the debt for the sin of the world. This act of obedience to God the Father restored humanity to its true destiny. Faith in Christ (the Son) joins those who believe to His holy life. Their destinies are fulfilled as they become by faith, God's eternal treasure sparkling in the righteousness of His Son.

Embracing God's Heart

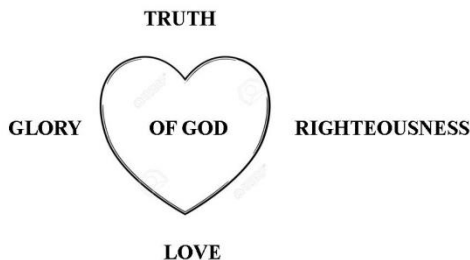
God gives His children a new heart through faith in His Son so that they can enjoy His eternal fellowship, a non-stop personal "heart to heart" relationship with Him. This fellowship was first seen in the lives of the early disciples who opened their hearts up to the "Heart of God" as they embraced God's Son. They experienced the intimate, life-changing work of the Gospel; the fullness of "grace and truth" found in God's Son. Their hearts became one with Jesus just as His heart was one with the heart of the Father. This unity is eternal life (John 17:3).

The Apostle Paul described his continuous, lifelong relationship with God in this world as follows: *"by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain (1 Cor. 15:10)."* He remained focused; he had a singleness of eye on the life of Christ in order to submit his life to the fullness and fruit of God's "grace and truth". Jesus spoke of seeing one's focus on His "grace and truth" like recognizing the presence of light, *"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light (Matt. 6:22)."* Each redeemed life is marked; born in and bathed in the "Light of Christ and God's Kingdom". This "Living Word" of the Lord, both cleanses souls and leads God's "Sons and Daughters" to fellowship with Him.

God's grace in believers is not in vain as God reveals Himself to them as God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; One God with three persons revealed so that all may know Him fully and personally. God's light shines through His heart to His children's hearts and produces fruit. His grace through faith is NOT vain in His "sons and daughters" as it was NOT in vain with Paul. Jesus stated *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. (John 8:12)"* Each life that has the "light of life", carries the light of life into the darkness of this world because it is shining within them. By the grace of God, Paul who walked in the Lord's light from the moment he was confronted by the light of Christ on the Damascus Road certainly bore much fruit.

All of God's children have these words of Jesus to contend with, *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. (Matt. 5:14)"* The "Light of Christ and God's Kingdom" only becomes visible to the world and bears fruit when one embraces the heart of God. Now this book will expand upon how one embraces the heart of God. It will share how God's heart stays focused on bringing His "Kingdom of Heaven" to earth through His "truth, righteousness, love and glory".

**"The Light of Christ and God's Kingdom"
leads God's redeemed to God's heart of...**



"Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.(John 3:3)"

Jesus Christ invites humanity through His “Living Word” to open their hearts to receive eternal fellowship with God. *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. (Rev. 3:20)”* God’s mercy demonstrated through the “life, death and resurrection” of His Son provides the way for all to be free from the power of sin and death. Jesus is the *“Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)”*. Hearts that receive Christ and His Gospel Light, receive the Creator of heaven and earth. By faith God takes residence in many hearts, whereby connecting them to God’s righteousness in Christ and His Kingdom purpose for humanity. God brings them into an intimate, personal relationship with Himself as “sons and daughters”.

What specific instructions in Scripture has the Holy Spirit given for new believers to receive Christ into their hearts? This is what Peter shared through the Spirit on the “Day of Pentecost”, the day the church to all nations was born, *“Then Peter said to them, ‘Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 2:38).”*

Reflection Questions:

1. How does one discern between the unrighteous and the righteous? (Malachi 3:16, Revelation 20:27)
2. Does God know us personally? (Isaiah 43:1, Rev. 3:12)
3. How does one embrace God’s Kingdom heart?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I come to You who are the Son of God. I open my heart to You to take hold of Your light and let it shine brightly. May my “thoughts, words and deeds” be focused on shining Your light. Thank You for Your grace which is new every day and Your light which constantly guides me into the depths of Your “truth, righteousness, love and glory”. Draw me ever to closer Your heart and its ongoing work of moving and changing of the hearts of people through the Gospel for God’s honor, glory and praise...

1. Intimacy with God's "Eternal Truth: The Word of Christ"

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)" "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)" "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)"

The Bible tells the story of the Creator and the "apple of His eye", humanity. It unfolds the story of how God created the earth and its people to be with Him. It shares how the people found themselves separated from God as they fell into sin. Despite this, God triumphed over their sin through His Word made flesh which redeemed humanity through His Son, the Holy One of God, fully God and fully man. Jesus has brought a personal invitation to all to be reconciled with God in the "Spirit and Truth" of the Gospel message. All are invited to turn from their sin that leads to eternal death (separation from God); to faith in Jesus which leads to the "forgiveness of sin" and God's eternal, life-giving Word, full of grace and truth.

Jesus through His life has intimately and permanently knitted God's "Eternal Truth", His Word into the very center of humanity's existence despite humanity's fall from grace into sin. God's Eternal Word accomplished this as it came to humanity through the "flesh and blood" of Jesus, in the fullness of "grace and truth". God's work of knitting His truth into rebellious humanity can be painful to read about in the Bible. It's painful to witness because of humanity's unbelief; its lack of trust in God's Word has caused tremendous suffering. Although unbelief has brought tremendous suffering to humanity, God remained committed to love humanity despite their choice to suffer from sin (John 3:16). He did this by manifesting His Holy Word in the "Son of Man", Jesus and by sending Him to the cross on humanity's behalf to overcome sin and its wages, death (Romans 6:23).

God's Story of Restoring Humanity

The finished work of the cross is God's redeeming love seen at its best for humanity. Through it God draws humanity back to Himself to walk in His Eternal Truth. Jesus, the Chosen One is the culminating (apex) story of each person who walks by faith with God. He has come to be the sinless one who unites humanity back to its rightful destiny; to be the darlings of God, the objects of His holy, eternal love. As Jesus took on human sin at the cross, He took on humanity's brokenness, separation from God so they could be reconciled back to God's holiness. In doing so He restored humanity back to its true identity, total freedom from "sin and death" (holiness) and gave them hope through His resurrection. The Risen Christ calls humanity through His "life, death and resurrection" to embrace (be empowered by) God's Word as they walk in union with His Eternal Truth (holiness and destiny). When people reject God's Word (Christ), they foolishly remain enslaved by God's Word, His final judgment.

Jesus foretold God's plan of restoring humanity in the parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32) which He shared with His followers. In this story, there were two sons; one who stayed home with his father to work with him and one who walked away from his father to do his own thing. Despite their different physical locations, both of these brothers suffered from the same state of heart, being separated from their father's heart. One son chose a life of rebellious living away from home. The other chose a life of serving his father but in his heart thought only of his sacrifices and having a brother who wasn't as faithful to his father as he thought he was. In reality, both sons had heart issues with their father who in his heart desired relationships built upon unconditional love.

Humanity's lack of vision into the mission of God's heart, to demonstrate truth in His creation, causes them to miss the mark of their life purpose. Jesus walked with his disciples for 3 years and revealed to them God's "Living Word", full of life.

God's Son walked in a lifelong partnership with the Father's "heart of truth". Jesus approached his disciples this same way as partners; not like the older brother in the Lost Son parable who wanted to hold his works over his younger brother. God's "truth and love" that comes through the forgiveness of sin (New Covenant) has provided "The Way" for all to receive a life of being empowered by God's Word. The power of truth sets one free. It is not meant to enslave or do harm to others. In God's "New Covenant Way", one is lead to possess a deep, strong "heart-to-heart" level relationship with God's truth. Fallen humanity must approach God in "truth and love" to prevent sin from building walls which separate their hearts from God.

God's way of receiving eternal life through faith in Christ is the only way to completely break the bondage of sin at every level. This is how God's eternal truth bears eternal fruit. It demonstrates that God's grace is NOT in vain as it causes Christ followers to witness the "Lamb of God", Jesus removing humanity's bondage to sin in a very intimate, life-changing way. The work of Lord's heart-to-heart relationship with His people in truth separates them from past ways and leads them to learn through personal experience about the righteousness of Christ. God's amazing grace joins His children to His ministry of truth reconciling the world. As one receives the truth, they begin walking in eternal truth with God. *"He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.(1st John 5:12)"* Looking back on my personal story, I was a son who couldn't wait to get away from his family. My parents were strong Christians both firm and loving, wonderful people. Yet, I was blinded by my need to make my own way in the world. Eventually, after much personal suffering caused by my unbelief, I found my way, was led back to my true home, the heart of God and His "Living Word". My life now is similar to that lost son in the parable of the "Lost Son (Prodigal)". The Lord has put a ring on my finger and a robe on my back, restored me back to Himself. Where are you in this parable?

Living for the Cause of Truth

The most life-changing revelation comes through God's greatest cause, the cause of truth. It speaks about God's work of charity (love) and how He faithfully knits His "eternal truth" into the heart of His children through the Gospel. His truth alone must become the "Superior Word", one's cause for living above all other worldly causes. As His Word reigns in one's heart, it draws one into the realm of walking intimately with God. Jesus came for this cause to be the "Word made flesh" for humanity; to illuminate "God's Superior Word" in human hearts. He came as the "Lamb of God" who takes away the sin of the world (Savior) and the rightful master (Lord) of ALL life (hearts). Intimacy with God's "eternal truth" brings truth's eternal promises to light. This is what happens when the central work of God's charity, His Son is seated on the throne of the heart of a believer; *"the truth will set you free (John 8:32)"*. Whether you have been a prodigal or a good child in a family, all of humanity desperately needs intimacy with the inner workings of God's truth. God's truth reveals God's holy commitment to set and keep hearts free forever from sin and bondage. This "cause of truth" is what God has called (set apart) His family of faith to join Him in. They do this as they live to celebrate the Living Word (Christ), the "Lamb of God" and "Lord of Life".

Jesus shared these words with the Roman leader Pilate as he was being interrogated before being crucified about the cause of truth, *"For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth (John 18:37)"*. God has been speaking His cause of truth, Word over the world and humanity since its conception. His children trust in His Word as they grow in intimate knowledge of its validity and power, the presence of Christ in their lives. The fullness of "grace and truth", Christ leads them perfectly to respond to God's cause of truth as they rest in Him, His ability to bear witness to His truth (Living Word) through them.

For the cause of eternal truth, God's Word has been recorded for humanity in the Bible. Its short books use mostly narratives to tell the story of God, humanity and faith-filled relationships to pass God's truth across generations. The Bible draws many to know God intimately and to live for the cause of truth. The Old Testament books were canonized in the 1st century A.D. The New Testament books were canonized in the 4th century A.D. (year of the Lord).

Through Christ, God now speaks to all who have opened their hearts up to the whole counsel of God found in the Bible (O.T. and N.T.). Christ continues to shine His light in "spirit and truth" upon the written Word so that humanity will follow Jesus who lived for God's full revelation of truth. How does God's Word direct followers of Christ to go out into the world on behalf of The Lord's cause of truth? It reveals the cause of truth by informing and empowering humanity in regards to:

- 1) How to relate to God and others justly; how to be both moral and loving individuals and communities?
- 2) How to come alongside of God's plan for creation; how to live from God's eternal perspective with a heart that desires to tell others about God's plan for His children?---And---
- 3) How to receive God's power and presence daily; how to partake in a lifestyle that leads one to experience communion, intimate fellowship with God?

As one enters into intimate fellowship with Christ and His cause of truth: one has turned to God's truth (repented); one has received Christ's forgiveness (through public confession and baptism) and one has opened their heart to and received the Holy Spirit, the Living Word made flesh (Acts 2:38). The Gospel of Jesus Christ speaks the only truth that can fully and eternally change the human heart. Every other word is vain because it's based on humanities power which is in bondage to sin. Christ is God's highest revelation to humanity. Christ brings light to understand the God of eternal life and His "dominion and power" (Kingdom).

Only faith in the “flesh and blood” of Jesus can draw the sinful heart of humanity into holy union with God’s eternal, holy way. Without the eternal light of Christ, one misses the heart of God and misinterprets His testimony given in Scripture. Without the Holy Spirit it’s impossible to be united with God’s “heart of truth” and clothed in the righteousness of Christ, God’s robe of holiness for His children. Without the Father there is no holy love emanating from one’s heart for God’s creation and new creation in His Son. Only God’s cause of truth is able to direct the hearts of His children to beat with “grace by faith”.

Celebrating Eternal Truth

In due time, God’s Word (Truth) became flesh in His Son, Jesus Christ. Humanity was created to personally know the “God of the Living (Mark 12:27)” NOT the “god of the dead (this world)” through the “Light of Christ and God’s Kingdom”. For the purpose of leading humanity to celebrate God in truth, His Son was sent into the world. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit in His mother, a virgin and He lived the sinless life humanity couldn’t under the Law. He gave His life as a full payment (ransom) for the sins of the world as He took humanity’s sin upon His flesh to the cross. He was buried with the sins of the world and resurrected on the third day as He foretold (Matt. 16:21) The Old Testament prophets as well foretold of His coming. Now, through these fulfilled words seen in the Lord’s life many trust in Him and have entered into an unending journey of walking in intimate knowledge of God’s desire for humanity (His heart). God declared before the Son came into the world through the prophet Hosea: *“For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings. (Hosea 6:6)”* This knowledge of God is what those set apart by faith celebrate daily. It gives them confidence as they worship and share God’s truth like the early disciples. *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek...”*

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:16-17)"As one celebrates God's eternal truth they live a life of being a witness for the Lord's righteous "presence and power", His Word, alive in them. "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. (Rev. 12:10-11)"

Growing in Eternal Truth

Children of God put their trust in the teachings of Christ and grow in confidence as they follow Jesus (The Living Word). The Holy Spirit takes them on a personal journey of growing in intimate knowledge of "eternal truth" with the "Risen Christ". The "Spirit of Christ" teaches them daily how to worship God in Spirit and live empowered by God's Living Word at work in them. The Living Word stands upon the "Good Testimony" of Christ. God's people demonstrate this as they follow the Lord's example of living for the cause of truth as follows:

1. Truth sets them apart from the fear of eternal death;
2. Truth leads them away from the power of sin;
3. Truth yokes them to "The Rock", the foundational life of Christ (God's love) and guards their hearts;
4. Truth reveals to them the fullness of life in Christ which proceeds from the Holy Spirit;
5. Truth joins them with God's dominion (victory) over false gods and "kingdoms of this world";
6. Truth brings them contentment and joy despite their struggles and circumstances;
7. Truth lifts them above unrighteousness, untruth and hopelessness;
8. Truth imparts grace to one's "body, soul and spirit".

Growing in eternal truth is more than an intellectual exercise. The “Spirit of Christ” delivers His best to ALL growing in God’s Word as the Lord personally reveals His cause of truth to them. *“When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (John 16:13)”* The Spirit is meant to be joined with the teachings of Christ in order to guide God’s flock. *“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. (John 10:27-28)”*

Growth requires one to open their hearts daily in order to commune with the Lord in “Spirit and Truth (Living Word)”. They must learn to feast upon and be sustained by God’s Word. Through faith in Christ, they experience the Bible’s meaning being activated in their new Spirit-filled hearts. Jesus was trained in the Old Testament scriptures which spoke of God’s holiness (justice) and mercy. The New Testament speaks of Jesus and the Holy Spirit coming to all believers in the fullness of the Lord’s “grace and truth”. The eternal truth of God is now embodied in His “Living Word (Christ)” for all to receive. The world has exerted great effort to attain what the person of Christ makes freely available through the Father’s unconditional love and His life (truth).

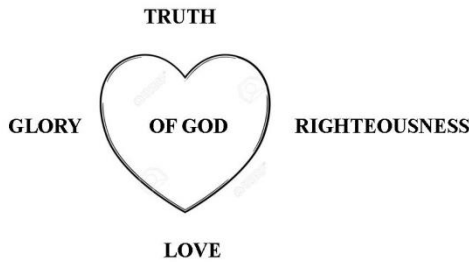
The world’s unsuccessful attempts to make everything right through their limited understanding are like reliving those painful stories recorded in the Old Testament of those who stood against God. Trying to attain justice for one’s life solely through: religious practices, traditional practices and practices born out of worldly philosophies is a futile pursuit. Growing in eternal truth leads redeemed humanity to live with the Risen Christ at the center of it all. God’s truth leads to His eternal justice while Christ-less truth leads to the world’s injustices.

Embracing God's "Heart of Truth"

Two life-changing promises that God's children have been born into and learn to stand upon as they embrace God's "Heart of Truth" are: 1) God's mercies are new every morning, *"they endure forever (Psalms 106:1)"*; and 2) God's mercy has the power to redeem the lives of His children. The Apostle Paul who walked in the Spirit and power of Christ said in 1st Cor. 15:10, *"His grace toward me was not in vain."* Christ himself said in John 15:8 *"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."* Both were teaching believers that by embracing God's "heart of truth", they will witness the power of God bearing fruit in/through their lives. Embracing intimate fellowship with God's "heart of truth" leads disciples to seek His presence and power as the Bible instructs. God's Holy Word is alive in Christ and keeps God's people secure in the cause of God's "grace and truth" as they abide in His Light (truth).

This is how the "Light of Christ and God's Kingdom" is on display; shining in and through His followers for others to take notice of. *"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.(2nd Cor. 5:20-21)"* The same message that the early disciples embraced in "spirit and truth" is available to the disciples of today as they embrace God's "Heart of Truth".

**Intimacy with God's "Heart of Eternal Truth"
Leads God's redeemed to stand upon His Word...**



“Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ (John 6:68-69)”

All those who walk with God in truth carry the same message Jesus brought and placed in the hearts of His first disciples. *“This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1st John 1:5-7)”*

Reflection Questions:

1. How does one personally know the truth?
2. How does one approach truth with Christ living inside?
3. When the “Living Word” becomes one’s life, what changes?
4. Describe the difference between a life with God’s “Living Word” empowering them in Grace verses a life distant from God that only knows Him by the Law (judgment)?
5. How does one embrace God’s “heart of truth”?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I thank You for Your eternal “Spirit and Truth” coming to me daily through Your finished work on the cross. Your mercy is here to accompany truth as one enjoys an intimate, personal relationship with “Your Light”. Teach me how to let God’s glorious “Light of Truth” shine in me and through me. Draw all into an unending relationship with You in “grace and truth”; to be a people undone by Your gift of eternal life. You stepped into rescue many from a life of darkness, eternal separation from Your “Living Word”. Keep my heart connected with Your eternal truth as I walk in the “Light of Christ and God’s Kingdom”...

2. Intimacy with God's "Righteousness: The Faithfulness of Christ"

"Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts. (Romans 13:13-14)"

Jesus modeled the way we should live righteously in fellowship with God. Jesus said to His disciples, *"If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him. (John 14:7)"* I have fond memories of my days as a child growing up as a football coach's son. My first memory is of running around the football complex with my brother when mom sent us to be with our father as he coached his football players. I had the freedom to run around the practice facility, although I was instructed to not leave the facility while my father was busy coaching his football team. He was the offensive line coach.

Also, I have memories of the way that I use to look up to some of the star players. I remember having conversations with them as they sat on the steps going up to the practice field and down to the locker room. They would have to sit down and put on their metal cleats as they left the locker room and later sit down to remove them before re-entering the building. Years later, I would become a high school football player. By then the cleats had changed and were made out of plastic rather than metal. Therefore, when I played on the team I was able to put on my cleats in the locker room and walk straight out to the field. Also, we could re-enter the locker room without having to take off our cleats. This opportunity for the coach's kids to get to know these models of a high school football player was lost by then. God sent His Son Jesus to model for His followers how to experience what it's like to be adorned in His righteousness. It's a lifestyle like being a football player. You can't just show off to others on Sundays if you don't practice every day of the week.

This lifestyle that follows the righteousness of Christ is one that comes from His righteousness residing in one's heart. Like the child who looks up to a football hero, a disciple looks up to the Lord's righteousness. I like how football players describe their practice experience when they are interviewed. They usually say "we're trying to get better day by day". In Christ, the sin of the world is taken away. Now, getting better every day is about learning how to surrender to the fruit of this finished work, God's righteousness that Jesus clothes his followers in as they trust in Him. By the grace of God, God's Word is becoming flesh in all His children. *"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)"*

God's Righteousness Modeled by Christ

Only the "righteousness of Christ" will measure up to God's standard for eternal, holy fellowship. This is the holiness which humanity has been called to experience since the beginning. God called his servant Abraham, the father of faith to walk blamelessly before Him (Genesis 17:1). God provided a covenant for Abraham to do this. He made a vow to Abraham, He provided a sacrifice for Abraham and He committed to the work of changing Abraham's life. He taught Abraham how to live by faith under His covenant. God's covenant allowed Abraham the grace to be built up by God's righteousness. *"My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. (Gen. 17:13)"*

God made a vow to today's world (John 3:16). He provided a sacrifice for Christians at the cross. His Son's "Blameless Way" received through grace by faith is how people shall walk with God forever. *"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (Heb. 8:10)"*

The practice field is NEVER meant to replace the game experience in football. “The Law” by itself given to the descendants of Abraham by Moses never “enabled and empowered” God’s people to stay on the game field, fully connected with His life-changing righteousness. It provided outward attempts, exercises to teach about God’s righteousness, how He perfectly executes His every move. Only perfect performance on the field of play would lead them to win the championship, eternal union with God’s inward “righteousness of the heart”. They needed a champion of righteousness (Christ) to win for them and to perfectly model for them how to walk where God’s eternal justice is leading. Where does the champion of righteousness (Jesus) lead God’s children? *“He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)”*

The gift of the “righteousness of Christ” planted in the hearts of those who trust in the Lord enables and empowers them to taste and see the perfect faithfulness of Christ. These four categories of the Lord’s model for His followers provide a framework for believers to walk in the Lord’s righteousness and emulate His faithfulness on the gameday field of “new life” in Christ both privately and publicly as follows:

In His Private Life...	In His Public Life...
Jesus did what was right even in private because of His constant awareness of the presence of “God’s Righteousness”.	Jesus would shine the “Gospel Light” with godly “thoughts, words and deeds” as He represented “God’s Righteousness”.
Jesus valued “God’s Righteousness” above all things and was identified by God’s justice, not by the unrighteousness of this world.	Jesus joined others in worshipping and serving the “God of Righteousness” as He saw himself united with the “Word of Life” (holiness).

Another way to look at these categories is to look at them as four offensive formations that Jesus (The Living Word) aligns God's children into. This lines them up so they can follow His instructions (plays) meant to bring forth God's Kingdom and righteousness from heaven to earth. The living playbook of the "spirit of the Law" places God's children on the gameday field of God's justice and mercy whose strategy follows: *"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Romans 13:8-10)"* The "faithfulness of Christ" is the apex, model, highpoint we experience as we seek after the heart of God's righteousness. It reveals Him, Christ the heavenly quarterback producing righteous fruit through His followers who abide in Him.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, He sent down the Holy Spirit to His earthly body (the church) to empower them to follow His leadership. *"And I will pray to the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.(John 14:16-17)"* It's impossible to follow Jesus and be a vessel for God's "Kingdom and righteousness" without being indwelt with His "spirit and truth". How does being supernaturally joined with the righteousness of Christ look? *"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. (1st John 4:7)"*

Representing God's Righteousness

God the Father sent His Son for His people to know His "heart of righteousness" personally as they fellowshiped with Him.

As Christ dwells in a heart through faith in Him, their “words and deeds” emulate the “words and deeds” of Christ. The Apostle Paul describes walking in the “righteousness of Christ” this way, *“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)”* The “newness of life” is put on display as one dies to their old life and lives raised up from the dead in the “Spirit of Christ”. The Gospel becomes a life-changing message as one grows to personally walk with the “righteousness of Christ” starting with its victory over “sin and death”. The Gospel of Righteousness sets the captives free to learn how to experience abundant life through God’s grace by faith. This new, just way of living in Christ, moves believer’s hearts to proclaim, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’ (Romans 1:16-17)”*

The “newness of life” expressed through a personal and deep understanding of the full Gospel is what God’s family displays. The “body of Christ” from first to last shall be adorned in this wedding outfit, the “righteousness of Christ” which has set believers apart as the bride of Christ (Matt. 22:1-14). Knowing God’s “new life” for humanity, breeds confidence in God’s grace by faith and leads them to grow in the maturity of Christ. They represent God’s righteousness as follows: *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works. (Titus 2:12-14)”*

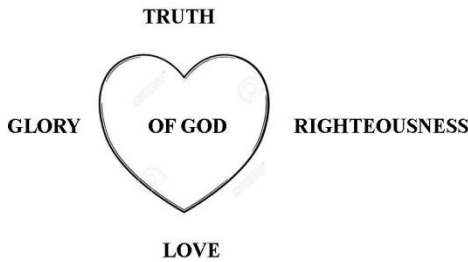
Embracing God's "Heart of Righteousness"

The Lord is calling His followers to live a life that goes beyond simply following religious rules and godly principles. It's a life that calls God's children to embrace His Kingdom and righteousness (Matt. 6:33); to make Christ in us the hope of glory the guiding priority for life. How does one live like this? They trust in God's eternal and supernatural power over their lives as they live under His eternal Lordship. They believe all earthly governments and systems are inferior to the Lord's "Way of Life". They believe they are connected to the same "power and love" that the Lord and His early disciples demonstrated. They come to trust that His Kingdom has come in "spirit and truth". They are led to pick up their personal crosses and put on the "righteousness of Christ".

They believe in the prophetic words of the prophets of old like Isaiah who had this to say about God's Kingdom coming through Christ. *"Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:7)"* God's people have been set free from strict religion and overbearing systems to honor God with lives that direct God's provision towards being a light for many to know God, to love God even their enemies.

The "righteousness of God" has come into this world through the finished work of Christ. It is unstoppable and will continue to penetrate hearts until the Lord returns. The Light of Christ shines brightly to chase away the darkness of this world. Even the gates of hell can NOT penetrate this sacred movement of God's Kingdom, His righteousness has overcome the world (John 16:33). The "sons and daughters" of God have been born into a life of sharing God's truth and walking blamelessly before Him. The Holy Spirit faithfully continues to inform and empower the church to do this as they honor God by embracing His "heart of righteousness".

**Intimacy with God's "Heart of Righteousness"
leads God's redeemed to represent Him...**



*"For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but
righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
(Romans 14:17)"*

I have experienced plenty of good times of eating and drinking BUT nothing compares to consuming and being consumed by the righteousness of Christ. As one follows Jesus, they see the mercy of God and the faithfulness of Christ come to many, His Kingdom come. They walk in the revelation that this is the most satisfying place, the eternal justice that humanity was created to experience forever with God. Come Holy Spirit!

Reflection Questions:

1. Describe how one is empowered to emulate the faithfulness of Christ and become like Christ?
2. What does following the model of righteousness look like?
3. How is God's grace NOT in vain in your life through this newness of life He has given you?
4. How does a message that emphasizes the finished work of Christ bringing His righteousness to immediately bear upon its listeners differ from a message that only emphasizes going to heaven one day?
5. How does one embrace God's "heart of righteousness"?

Prayer: Lord, I thank You for Your door of “grace by faith” that has been opened to allow me to receive Your eternal righteousness. In and through the sinless life of Jesus Christ, I come to you. Your righteousness is fully revealed to the world through the faithfulness of Christ alone. This just “Way of Life” is what Your “heart of righteousness” has joined me to. Continue to lead me in representing the “righteousness of Christ” as Your Spirit informs me and empowers me. Mold me and change me to be the Kingdom light You desire for me to be, as I walk forever adorned in Your righteousness...

3. Intimacy with God's "Heavenly Love: The Love of Christ"

"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39)"

There are many lessons one can learn as they study the Bible. One of the most impactful lessons to learn is how intimacy with the "love of Christ" moves the heart of God's children to overcome any challenge this temporary world has for them (John 16:33). The "love of Christ" radically changed the Lord's first disciples. His love was always at the center of the early church's experience. His unbridled love continues to bring about radical growth as it captures the hearts of His people. The Apostle John who's Gospel teaches about the "spirit of the law" (love) coming with the Holy Spirit heavily emphasized God's heavenly love (John 3:16). Also, in the epistle of 1st John 4, John writes how being born again is being born of God's love. Throughout the New Testament the link between God's Spirit and God's love saturating hearts is prevalent. The Apostle Paul emphasized that the greatest work of the Holy Spirit is love in 1st Cor. 13:2 *"if we have not love, we have nothing"*. This carries over into all areas of one's life. Especially when one is sharing the truth, it should be ultimately directed by God's love; *"speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15)"*

Approaching God's love from the place of knowing His "truth and righteousness" allows one to go beyond their feelings. It helps them to better recognize, receive and share His love in radical ways. When God's Word becomes the "Living Word" in one's heart, it bears the fruit of having intimate knowledge of God's love. Faith in the Gospel stands upon this truth about God, *"God is love...He first loved us (1st John 4:8, 19)"*.

As faith in God's love takes hold, one approaches God like a child who approaches a loving parent. The loving, heavenly Father never gives up on His commitment to love His children through thick and thin. His first, last and ongoing love brings forth the keeping power of the Gospel which Paul wrote about above in Romans 8:37-39. Knowing the "heart of God's love" inspires His children to stand upon their faith in Christ no matter the situation or challenge in their life. The maturity of faith can only properly develop in followers of Christ who intimately know the power of God's love to keep one close to Him eternally. This maturity develops as one looks at ALL of life (creation) as "The Work (Object)" of God's love. It grows out of hearts overwhelmed by the heaven-sent love of God.

Doubt tries to enter one's "heart and mind" to alter one's perspective of life's challenges. Immaturity sees difficulty or unexpected outcomes as times of being all alone, stuck again or slowed down by living in this world. Maturity leads "hearts and minds (souls)" to approach life with faith in God's eternal promise that His children are encased, saturated by the "love of Jesus" to face life's challenges. *"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. (Eph. 1:4-5)"*

Choice: My Way or God's Most Excellent Way?

My first job after high school was to be a gas attendant at a service station. I knew nothing about cars but found myself in the company of many who knew a lot about auto mechanics. I wanted to prove to them that I too could do auto mechanics. Eventually I did this by rebuilding the engine of my car, a Chevy Impala which had serious problems. Not long after finishing this project, my confidence in my mechanical ability soared and I was led to drive my car with the rebuilt engine from N.Y. to Michigan to visit my sister.

About one hour into my drive on the highway, the emergency engine light began to shine on my car dashboard. I foolishly let my pride get the best of me in this situation. I thought there can't be a serious problem with MY rebuilt engine job. The problem must be with the idiot light on the dashboard. However, the car had a real issue and I was the idiot. It was leaking oil. Needless to say, I barely made it into Pennsylvania, approx. 3 hours into the 12 hour trip when the car engine seized. My trip to Michigan looked like it had gone up in smoke as smoke poured out from under the hood. This decision to ignore the idiot light spoke volumes about what was going on in my heart at that time. Fortunately, God through His prevenient grace provided a way for the trip to be continued without a running car.

Our hearts can be looked at times like car engines. They're central to how we operate. They need lubrication to keep on running. They need the lubrication of God's love not to seize. Does God attend to our hearts like I attended to my first rebuilt engine job? Unlike my rebuilt engine work which was lacking in many aspects, God does a complete job that addresses all the problems. He accomplishes this by giving His children a new engine, rather than partially rebuilding an old engine. The Apostle Paul describes this work in 2nd Cor. 5:17, *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new."* This new engine work can never happen inside the heart of someone who approaches the unknowns of life with pride and is satisfied with covering up the deeper issues of the problems within oneself. God sent His love to bring about this life change that comes from receiving a new heart. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16)"* In and through the love of Christ, God's love, His heavenly love is now available to all of humanity. When one rejects the love of Christ, they're saying from their heart to God that their pride and ability to cover up real issues within them are good enough to take them through this life. They continue to choose their way over God's Way.

Choosing “God’s Way” only occurs when one receives God’s “heart of love” through His Son. His love’s transforming power brings out the person one was meant to become through God’s love demonstrated at the cross. *“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)”* Humanity was created to be the object of God’s love and to know His love intimately. This “most excellent way” for living has been presented to the world through God’s Son. All have the free will to choose between trusting in Christ, receiving God’s heart of love or rejecting Christ and living their lives with at best rebuilt engines, their best versions of what a new heart looks like.

The “new heart” and “new life” of Christ which demonstrates “perfect love” stands ready to take its rightful place under one’s hood and remove the mask that everything is alright. God drops in the new engine when one willfully turns to Him (repents). Granted, living with God’s new heart may at times look to others like the life of someone who is struggling to do their best. Nonetheless, when God enters one’s life, He takes them beyond their fixer-upper abilities into the place where God’s new engine, His “love and power” is always available to get the job of His redemption done. Only God’s “heart of love” provides a fully lubricated and perfect engine to take one on the journey of receiving heaven’s best for life. *“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.(Romans 6:23)”* The love of this world can’t take one on the successful journey of receiving heaven’s best. It only leaves one broken down on the side of the road at its end. Let’s look at how the Bible shows us the “apples and oranges” difference between the world’s love and God’s heavenly love.

God’s Heavenly Love Stands Alone

Understanding God’s eternal truth and righteousness better prepares the “heart and mind” to receive the work of God’s heavenly love. God’s unlimited supply of “Heavenly Love”, is there to move in His power into humanity’s lives.

It does more than bridge the gap between the love of this world and the love of God. Through Christ, the “Light of the World”, God has made available to His children the fullness of His “truth and righteousness”. This doorway to God through His Son brings His “power and love” to bear upon the hearts of many now bound by faith to His “heart of love”. This amazing work of God’s grace and its fruit demonstrates a heavenly love that is clearly above all earthly love. The Bible shares about the fruit of God’s love which has been poured out from His heart to His children in 1st Cor. 13:6-8. His love ALWAYS is: *“rejoicing in truth”, “hoping all things”, “believing all things”, “bearing all things”, “enduring all things” and unfailing.* The holy “flesh and blood” of the Son has made this love available to flourish in the “new hearts” and lives of His followers. As God’s children receive the “life of Christ” they are flooded with the heavenly love that constantly: rejoices, hopes, believes, bears, endures and overcomes.

Deep faith in Christ leads one to live a life possessed by the love of Jesus. It radically changes lives because of the radical relationship of their new hearts to the radical, heavenly love of God. This is what I experienced on July 13th, 1997 as I gave myself over to God’s love. I had been frightened for many years about giving myself like this to God. In that moment of a desperate prayer from a broken man, God showered His love on me. My broken heart was awakened to the presence of God’s “heart of love” within me. *“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us. (1st John 4:18-19)”*

The “love of Christ” sets God’s children on a faithful, heavenly course to follow. God both prepares hearts for heaven and teaches them how to live in the abundance of His love in this world. As one meditates upon the heavenly love of God, one is led to approach life following His love as written about in 1st Cor. 13:4, *“love is patient (long-suffering), love is kind...it thinks no evil”.*

Living one's life by constantly getting on the takeoff runway of God's love as one interacts with others is what Solomon taught others to do in Proverbs 3:3 *"Let not kindness (mercy) and truth forsake you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart."* God's love moves believers to relate to others with "grace and truth". Jesus speaks of why one does this in Matt. 5:45, *"that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."*

God's heart directs His children to approach others from the abundance of His love; hoping all things, so that all might know and trust in the Lord (Romans 8:28). All who turn away from this (re)direction of God's "Heavenly Love" remain captives of a self-serving heart and human generated love. Look at how the Bible describes earthly love, the love of this world in 1st Cor. 13:4-5. It produces: envy, pride, craving for attention, rude behavior, seeking its own way, provoking discord, planning evil, revenge and often rejoices in all kinds of unrighteousness. These fruits of the world's, earthly love cause the heart of unbelievers to remain broken, rebuilt engines at best walking in the darkness without the "The Light of Christ and God's Kingdom". Those who shun God's love miss out on the fruit of God's heavenly love where; *"The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. (Luke 18:27)"* By rejecting the life of one being consummated by the "love of Jesus", one lives their days stuck on the runway of unbelief made of the dirt of "what you see is what you get". Without God's love directing them, they will miss God's heavenly work in the lives of ALL who trust in His love. They will miss seeing others being impacted by God's "heart of love" directing them.

Jesus Brings "Heavenly Love" into View

Bringing the "love of Jesus" into view moves God's children to step into uncomfortable places. As I mentioned above, in 1997, I had a radical encounter with the Lord's love.

During that encounter through God's "Spirit and Truth", I had a deep revelation of God's love for me. Basically, my brokenness before the encounter was undone by the "love of God". I had let the love of this world break me and almost separate me from my wife and family. I needed to be awakened to God's presence. At that time in desperation I surrendered my life to the "love of Jesus". In my heart I said "Lord, take my heart and I don't want it back---it's yours!" I turned away from the place where my love controlled my heart. I was crying out to God for His love to take control and that's exactly what happened.

For 23 years now I have been walking with a re-directed life through the first love of God. The key here is to give God's love FULL access to one's life; to let Him direct one's experiences. This is the game changer for a follower of Christ. It separates hearts from the loves of this world and the power of sin. It sets them apart to follow God's "Way of Love". *"Above all things have fervent love for one another, for 'love will cover a multitude of sins.' (1st Peter 4:8)"* God's fervent love became personal to me as I was consumed by the Lord's "light, love and life". God brings this about through faith in the "flesh and blood" of His Son, His Son's righteousness so that His heavenly love would radically change humanity. *"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. (John 15:13)"*

Now since Christ has "lived, died and was resurrected"; He continues to make the Father's perfect love visible. His love challenges all to answer this question: "what does His love mean to me? Those who accept God's perfect love in Christ, follow Him. They have chosen each day to listen to His voice and walk with Him. They have chosen to close their ears to the love of this world shouting at them. They have learned to discern the voice of the Lord. *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. (John 10:27)"* Their lives are being transformed as they follow the voice of the Lord. He manifests His radical love through them for others to witness.

There are MANY ways to make the “love of Jesus” visible as we follow Him. It always begins with trusting in what God has done for us through the “life, death and resurrection” of His Son. After giving my heart to Jesus, I was excited about sharing about what the Lord had done with others. I wasn’t sure where the Lord’s radical love would lead me. Nonetheless, these words shared by Jesus to His disciples would become a large part of how I would respond to God’s love even now years later, “*Let the little children come to me (Matt. 19:14)*”. They moved me at that time in 1997 to pour my heart into showing God’s love through the work of Compassion International. I joined its volunteer network which helped raise support to minister to children stuck in poverty. They did this through sharing the Gospel and placing children in schools while providing uniforms, food, personal hygiene supplies and medical attention. They molded the love of Jesus into the children. While I was volunteering for Compassion International I witnessed God take their number of children sponsored to over 1 million children living in poverty in 3rd world nations. During this time, the Lord doubled the number of sponsorships. I personally witnessed the Lord’s Spirit moving on behalf of children stuck in poverty.

Some might be skeptical of what I just shared and think “that’s nice but how do you know this wasn’t just done out of the generosity of people’s hearts?” First of all, I have already shared with you what God did in my life separating me from sin’s hold and restoring me as His radical love placed me in the volunteer network of Compassion International. Also, I personally witnessed God’s radical love drawing in some of those new children being sponsored. Often, Compassion International would partner with Christian bands that were willing to share about their ministry during the concert. A band member from the Christian group would actually give a short presentation during the show about Compassion Int’l children. My job of manning the sponsorship table depended upon the people responding to these presentations.

Before each Christian event (concert) I would pray by myself and with other volunteers for God to supernaturally move people to sponsor children. Those prayers did not go unanswered as the Holy Spirit moved and drew sponsors to the loving heart of God. I witnessed the hand of God plucking children out of poverty's strong hold. I'd like to share three undeniable and tangible examples of this...

1. Occasionally, I'd witness people walking past the sponsorship table in the midst of friends, activities and other tables selling various items get very visibly drawn to the table. There would be a young person actually stopped in their tracks and spun around as they were about to walk by the table. It appeared as if they were being yanked over to the table. I have to admit it looked funny to see them with their eyes scanning everywhere to take in everything going on all around them, abruptly stop and be re-directed to a specific child packet displayed on the table. They would admit that sponsoring a child wasn't what they were thinking of doing before they were overcome by God's love directing them to a specific child. These sponsorships had the markings of the hand of God all over them, sponsors being plucked by the Holy Spirit to pluck a specific child out of their poverty situation.

2. Other times, it was less dramatic as people would stop to scan the pictures of the children on the table. After a while of doing this some would say "I know that God wants me to sponsor this child". God was personally joining two people together through His heavenly love. Just sponsoring a child because you feel sorry for them will only last a short time before a person decides they want to back out of their financial commitment. However, when God's love through the Holy Spirit directs a person to sponsor a child they typically will sponsor that child until the child has finished all their schooling (age 18-19).

3. My first Compassion concert event after my conversion experience in 1997 was the most extraordinary move of God I witnessed that convinced me 100% of God's participation in this ministry. At the end of this Compassion concert event we had 9 children sponsored by people who had responded in a more typical way to the appeal to sponsor children. However, being on fire for God at that time I had to pray for one more child to be sponsored. The problem was that I said this prayer after the concert had ended and the place was almost entirely empty. My prayer to God away from the sponsorship table in this beautiful sanctuary was: "Lord, even the bathrooms in this place would be a mansion for a child living in poverty to stay in. Could we have one more child sponsored tonight before I leave?"

After saying this prayer, I walked into the sanctuary and up front to the stage to speak with the band who were breaking down their equipment. It had been my first time at a church concert event working the table alone. I had no idea what needed to be done before I could leave. They told me to put the children packets in the boxes under the table and they would take care of the rest. As I returned to the table set up outside of the sanctuary I was pleasantly surprised that there was someone standing at the table. I don't know where he came from, the place was empty now but God had moved him to the table. He was visibly shaking as I got close to him with a child packet in his hands. He asked me as I stepped up with his hand shaking "what do I need to do with this packet to sponsor a child tonight?" His voice was shaking as he spoke. I instructed him to fill out the information required on the back and hand it back to me. I told him he had a month to mail in his first donation. The supernatural power of God's love had immediately answered my prayer. From that time forward I called often upon God's radical, heavenly love to move. No matter how obvious it is to witness God moving, He is constantly plucking people out of spiritual poverty. This is what the Lord said about His servant (priest) Zechariah, *"Is this not a brand plucked from the fire? (Zech. 3:1-2)"*

Embracing God's "Heart of Love"

Embracing the "love of God" leads one to take hold of a life centered on walking in unbreakable union with the Father's heavenly love. Surrendering to the Lord's "power and love" connects one with the people of the Bible who lived for God. I had given my heart previously to other things in this world like playing football. Now, finally I let God bring me to the place of being "all in" to His heavenly love. The prophet Daniel was a man who lived his life connected to God's heart of love despite living in exile. Here are some personal words God sent to the prophet Daniel through an angel as Daniel was waiting on the Lord's response to a prayer request He had made knowing God's great love. *"Then again, the one having the likeness of a man touched me and strengthened me. And he said, 'O man **greatly beloved**, fear not! Peace be to you; be strong, yes, be strong!' (Daniel 10:18-19)"* The heart of every child of God has been formed to receive and witness God's love moving. We must be strong and have faith.

Over the past three years, I've been watching the reaction of my granddaughter as she's passed between my wife and my daughter during those times when grandma helps out with the babysitting. I wonder what my granddaughter is thinking as she's passed off especially during those times she cries. She MUST know by now how much she is loved by both her mother and grandmother. Her grandmother thoroughly enjoys these time of giving her plenty of loving attention. What's driving these times of crying by my granddaughter?

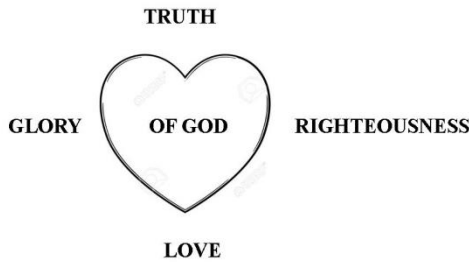
How does this relate to us? Why would those who believes in the finished work of Christ on the cross and His resurrection live distant from the "power and love" of God. The movie, "The Passion of Christ" strongly displayed to me these eternal bookends of the Christian faith. It showed in great detail the crucifixion (love) of Christ and the power of the resurrection of Christ. These events are book covers for the "Book of Life" which contains the names of many loved eternally by God.

Jesus came through the Father's love to personally ransom many from the wages of sin, eternal death. If anyone was responsible for the death of Christ, I confess I belong at the front of that line; I'm guilty as charged. Nonetheless, God who knew me before I was born sent His Son to live and die for me before I could commit my first sin. The God of creation who "is love (charity)" and is unchanging NEVER withholds His love from humanity even though their sin cost the life of the one sinless man (His Son) who lived on earth. This revelation of truth about God's love for me in the midst of all my brokenness and selfishness broke my heart so that I could embrace God's "heart of love" for ALL eternity. Through faith in Christ, even my brokenness is not put to waste as God uses it, like a perfume bottle that been crushed, to release the sweet aroma of His Son Christ into the world (2nd Cor. 2:15).

We can feel like my granddaughter as one who is being passed around in this world but God's love insulates us from anything the world throws at us. *"For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)"*

As believers mature and grow in the Gospel, they grow in their ability to trust in the resurrection power of Christ to move God's "Heavenly Love" into this world. This Gospel message of Christ is filled with God's "power and love". It's been very visible to me for the past 23 years through service in love and life's relationships. Growing in God's heavenly love, causes one to look differently at the situations of life, to view them as opportunities to be instruments of His love even if suffering is required. It causes them to live from the overflowing spring of God's heavenly love. This is why the Apostle Paul prayed for God's children, *"to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. (Ephesians 3:19)"*

**Intimacy with God's "Heavenly Love"
leads God's redeemed to love Him and others...**



“He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:13)”

The message of the Gospel will always be a message that calls people to be new creations in the “love of Christ”. The Gospel is so much greater than a message only focused on going to heaven after one dies. What impact does a message that only speaks about a onetime event, the day you die really have in regards to changing the world we live in today? The Gospel was never meant to be a message that leads people to remain self-centered because it denies the work of God’s Spirit and its fruit, God’s radical, heavenly selfless love. One must encounter the Father’s heart through the “love of Christ”, to become one with the life of Jesus Christ, God’s Kingdom justice coming to this world. God’s love is meant to impact His children for ALL eternity as they encounter His Son.

Reflection Questions:

1. How has God’s heavenly (agape) love come to earth?
2. What does it mean to choose to live by God’s Way of Love?
3. Describe how God’s love is above earthly love? What’s its motive for taking action?
4. How does one personally embrace God’s “heart of love”?

Prayer: Lord, I thank You for Your gift of “Heavenly Love”. Your love was made visible to all the world through the cross. Help me to testify about Your redeeming love which redeems the world from its sin. Your love has led me to the depths of trusting alone in the finished work of the cross to overcome any obstacle. Lead me Jesus to follow Your “Most Excellent Way” every day. Your love is the fuel which illuminates my heart. Let Your love have its way as it saturates my being...

4. Intimacy with God's "Glory: Co-Heirs in the Body of Christ"

"For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2nd Cor. 4:6)"... "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. (Romans 8:16-17)"

The manifestation of God's glory that the "body of Christ" has been united with comes through the Lord's "light (truth), love (agape) and glorious life". The Lord's glorified body connects God's children to God's glory in Christ. The Lord spoke of His life being glorified together with the Father in His final prayer before He went to the cross. *"And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. (John 17:5)"* The "body of Christ" walks in the light of the eternal glory of God revealed through the life of His Son. The body shines His light as it demonstrates obedience to God's "Living Word". *"They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. (John 17:16-17)"* "As Christians are joined into the Lord's body by faith, they are joined to the harvest of the "Father's and Son's" glory; they become partners in God's glorious work of making all things new (Rev. 21:5).

"Sons and daughters" of God have been adorned in the righteousness of Christ. They have been yoked to God's perfect love (Col. 3:8-14). They have been equipped to eternally carry God's "banner of love"; His ministry of reconciling the world to Himself through Christ, *"that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. (John 17:23b)"* They are called to see themselves as partners in the fruit bearing work for God's glory (co-heirs), like Christ as they love their neighbor as themselves (Matt. 22:39).

The sacrifice of Christ on the cross causes them to pick up their crosses, become living sacrifices for God's glory. The children of God are yoked to the sinless life of Christ and are forever looked upon by God through the glorified life of His Son. This "Amazing Grace" through faith in the "life of Christ", has provided a glorious place for God's children, to be like Christ residing in the apple of God's eye (Matt. 3:17). Some believe that the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eve was an apple. Lucifer gloried as he deceived "Adam and Eve" into taking a bite out of the apple (fruit) they were told NOT to eat by God. The glorified life of Christ through redeeming love has separated humanity as far as the east is from the west from ALL sin, including the sin of Adam and Eve. His glorious life has set God's children free to be made in the image of God and His radical love, the apple of God's eye. Through Christ, God's children are yoked to the Father's unswerving faithfulness, the obedience of Christ which is transforming believers into the image of Christ, co-heirs of God's glory. *"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one. (John 17:22)"* "Faith in Christ" focuses one's heart on living for God's glory. God's glory moves one's faith to take flight as they follow the example of and Spirit behind the Lord's glorious life.

This lift off of faith is what had happened to me in 1997. My "faith in Christ" took off as God's "Spirit and Truth" shifted my heart from looking at Jesus as my last resort to looking at Him as my "Savior and Lord", first resort. God took me from hoping I was saved, to dying to my godless ways and embracing His Kingdom coming in "power and glory". He took me from only seeing my weakness to depending on His strength. He took me from obedience to my flesh to obedience to His Spirit. He took me from only expecting what could be done in my strength to believing for His strength to manifest in me (Luke 18:37). He joined my obedience into the annuals (testimony) of all believers who like Christ live for the glory of God. This is why the Lord prayed to be glorified in John 17:5 so that we could be in every way co-heirs in Christ.

Intimacy with God's glory radically shifts one's approach to the life which faith calls them to. It leads them to take the "Great Commission" to heart and to depend upon God's Spirit which comes with His calling. *"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2nd Cor. 3:17-18)".*

Transformed by the Lord's Manifest Presence

Every day, God's children walk in the manifest presence of the "Lord of Glory". As they do so, they grow in the awareness of God's eternal presence and faithful work in their lives. *"Clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. (2nd Cor. 3:3)".* New fruit of the Lord's glory is witnessed as His "life, death and resurrection" flows through His followers. They find rest in the promise of the "Lord of glory" that they one day will lay down their crowns before Him and behold Him face-to-face. *"For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me! (Job 19:25-29)"*

Intimately knowing God's glory, His manifest presence moves hearts to look for God's Spirit moving in the world. As one believes in the presence of God, one looks for opportunities to co-labor (partner) with the Spirit for God's glory. Disciples who stand upon the truth that the Lord wants to be known by all, live to witness eternal fruit coming from the Lord's finished work on the cross. *"You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you...By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples (John 15:3,8)".*

Partnering in God's glory becomes one's new priority as they live to witness God building His Kingdom and reconciling relationships. They learn to depend upon the wisdom, power and authority of the Father of glory. *"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. (Eph. 1:17-19)"*

What becomes common place between the Lord and His believers who partner with Him is a consistent reliance upon the Holy Spirit who orchestrates activities and magnifies God's Word in creation. Jesus spoke of the wind of the Holy Spirit which moves salvation (revelation) into one's heart (John 3:3). Through this initial, glorious, saving work the Lord has positioned His followers to be moved by the wind of the Spirit; to proclaim and demonstrate God's Kingdom "justice and love" coming to earth. Co-heirs in God's glory begin to see their lives in this light; *"But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:4-6)"* Only by living one's life joined with God's "heart of glory" will one witness God's glory moving His manifest presence (Christ and Kingdom) into the world. They walk in the "newness of life" in Christ working within them and through them: *"Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:4)"*

Witnessing the Power of God's Glory

When the Lord stepped radically into my life in 1997, I wrestled with Him over how I could be focused on His presence daily while doing mundane tasks and holding a full time job. Prior to God crashing into my world through a prayer of surrender, I had worked as a computer programmer which is very mentally straining. During those days, I would only call upon God in times of frustration for help (and He graciously would help). Now that the walls I had built between God and myself (compartmentalized faith) had fallen; like the walls of Jericho collapsed, the breakthrough of the Holy Spirit convinced me that God wanted me to witness His power and glory at work in me and through me daily.

As I stopped my foolish wrestling with God, He began to show me that even in the middle of my busy work days He can use my simple interactions with others to bring Him glory and to demonstrate His “power and love”. What had I been missing during my previous years of just attending church? Jesus shared this truth with a Pharisee named Nicodemus (a church leader) of how God desires to operate through His children for His Kingdom to come, *“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit. (John 3:8)”* God pinned my shoulders to the wrestling mat by saying “just look for the wind of the Spirit to blow through your heart my child”. As God’s presence had become undeniable during my crisis time, I began to look for the signs of the wind and listen for its movement during my life especially as I interacted with others. I discovered over the second half of my professional career that I could do my job well and be tuned in, look and listen for the wind of the Holy Spirit at the same time. This led to many stories of the impossible becoming possible at the work place as I’ve surrendered my heart to the Lord and took notice of His wind blowing, doing something with those around me. I was mindful that His wind can come as a gentle breeze or a strong gust.

Gentle breezes often come during our conversations with others and can lead to both parties acknowledging God, lifting Him up. In these cases, one will gently speak of their lifestyle of faith to another during a conversation knowing it might lead to sharing one's faith, praying for another or serving another in love. I've learned NOT to be offended or surprised when people are quick to shut down talking about one's faith during conversations. This is no surprise because there is the Spirit of Christ and the spirit of anti-Christ, another wind moving hearts in this world (1st John 2:22-23).

Nonetheless, looking for the presence of the Holy Spirit daily has led to some rather interesting testimonies which make being put off worth it. In addition to being open about my faith at church and at work, I have opened up my life to being a witness in public places. The Lord moves me to share my faith and pray with others in public during normal activities. This doesn't have to be overbearing on others as one looks for the cooperation of the Spirit of Christ. If the person I speak with is strongly under the control of the spirit of antichrist, I let my actions as a good or concerned citizen do the speaking. Whether one's ministry is random (in public) or part of an organized outreach, discerning what God's Spirit is doing makes all the difference. This leads one to discern first, to be bold second and then to follow the direction God's wind is blowing. God's spiritual work, His Kingdom moving always supersedes our skills. Here are 4 personal stories that I selected to strongly emphasize that God's Holy Spirit will move in undeniable ways (strong gusts) when one's life is submitted to moving within the flow of God's Kingdom:

1. Sharing One's Faith – In 1997, I started volunteering at food ministries that needed people to share their faith. I've had the privilege to pray with many people to receive Jesus. Being willing to share my faith has challenged me to grow in the knowledge of the Word and the Lord's calling for His redeemed to *"Go and make disciples (Matt. 28:19)"*.

Studying different Gospel presentations and scriptures they use has been made easier through the internet. When I first began sharing my faith, I selected six verses to use from various presentations. My presentation style and verses I use have changed over multiple times of sharing the Gospel. What's remained the same is my desire to see God's "Word and Spirit" move like the wind. Others who share their faith will often confirm what I've observed. It's not the great Gospel presentation that inevitably moves people "to repentance and to receive Christ", it's God's Holy Spirit presence.

My first time presenting the Gospel confirmed the work of God's presence to me. I was very nervous as all I could do was read six pre-selected Bible verses to this first person I shared Jesus with. The presentation was very dry and felt like it was going nowhere. At the start, I had asked this guy if he knew about Jesus and he responded "Jesus was just a man". However, he allowed me to read the six verses to him from the Bible that I had selected. While I was reading these verses with a brief short explanation (recap), I noticed that his eyes began to blink and small tears appeared in the corners of his eyes. I was witnessing God's Spirit (the wind) touching him so I asked him as I finished "do you want to pray with me to receive Jesus?" He answered "yes". I just witnessed for the first time outside of my own conversion, the Lord producing new life through His Spirit. God demonstrated that His Spirit is always at work as one shares their faith even though the outcomes have been different over the years.

Witnessing God working on people's hearts amplifies His amazing grace to me. No matter our salvation experience, when God moves into one's heart, His "presence and power" becomes evident like the wind. One who receives Christ doesn't hold onto an unchanged life. Even if the wind of God's Spirit first appears like a gentle breeze its compounded life-changing effect will be like a mighty, rushing wind. As one approaches God believing the words of His Son, God's Spirit makes Christ's life very real to them.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. (John 5:24)”

2. Prayers for Major Circumstance Changes – As my ability to discern the movement of the Spirit (wind) grew, my testimonies with the Lord increased. My boldness to call others to receive Christ in prayer now led me to make other bolder petitions to the Lord. Knowing that the Lord had prayed in the Gospels to change the weather, I’ve done likewise on occasion to see God’s Kingdom furthered. While the Lord hasn’t called me to a “change the weather” ministry, on occasion I’ve witnessed my prayers move a bad weather situation into a much better weather situation to do His ministry. One of these times occurred when the weather was severely disrupting a 3-day weekend outdoor youth event.

The first 2 days of the event were dominated by constant rain. On the third day it appeared that the whole weekend was going to be a washout as day 3 started with clouds and a light drizzle. On the 2nd day, the youth actually just played in a big puddle created by the rain. No one was focusing on what they had gathered for. I had volunteered for 3 days of serving Compassion International manning a child sponsorship table. As the youth were playing in the rain, others were huddled under umbrellas by the stage or under canopies. The youth were paying little attention to the stage presentations and no one was visiting any of the tables.

My heart began to be moved by the Holy Spirit as I surveyed the clouds in the sky. The Lord spoke to my heart, “If you want to see something different today then believe that I can do something about this.” I sensed God challenging me to approach another volunteer and pray with them to change the weather in agreement with His Word, *“I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. (Matt. 18:19)”*.

The Lord specifically wanted me to approach the first person I saw as my eyes had dropped down from scanning the cloudy skies. It happened to be a security person standing at the entrance to the VIP parking behind the stage. This guy was a big dude with lots of tattoos who looked to me more like a biker or professional wrestler than a prayer warrior. Immediately, I thought “God doesn’t really care who I pray with” but I really wanted to see good weather and good ministry on day 3. With reluctance, I obeyed God and went over to the security guy. I said to him “You may not believe this but God spoke to my heart and told me to pray with you to change the weather”. He said “then we better do it” and we prayed. Despite my reluctance at first, as this was the first time I had approached prayer like this, I discovered that God was there yet again. Question: Is it better to accept a bad situation and do nothing about it or to lift up a prayer of faith to God in situations like this? What has the Lord called us to do in all situations? *“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice (Phil. 4:4)!”*

Again, the Lord proved the benefit of obedience, taking everything to Him in prayer and thanksgiving. Before I prayed, the Lord had increased my boldness to overcome my reservations about approaching the security guard. In our weakness, God provides strength (2nd Cor. 12:9). In reality, the guard turned out to be a faithful servant who got to witness God’s miracle through our joined prayer of faith. Within 15 minutes after the prayer, God parted the clouds in the sky and had them moving in a Canadian geese v-formation around the property. Another 45 minutes later there wasn’t a cloud in the sky. You might call it a coincidence but I describe it as witnessing God’s mighty, rushing wind changing the weather for all to enjoy the last day of the 3 day weekend event. That wasn’t the last time I prayed like this for an outdoor ministry or the last time God responded. Prayer first and foremost needs to chase away the clouds of doubt. Then we can see this, *“The things which are impossible with men are possible with God. (Luke 18:27)”*

3. Prayers in Emergency Situations – In 1998, the Holy Spirit began to move me to broaden my circle of influence in foreign countries. I had become internationally involved in 1997 through the Compassion International Volunteer Network. This experience stretched me and grew me as I participated in Spirit-led ministry. I was drawn into a new understanding of how the Lord wants to mentor ALL His disciples. *“The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. (Acts 1:1)”* Jesus was a man of action who taught His disciples to be the same. As Jesus interacted with the people and circumstances around Him, He taught His disciples. I began to learn from the Lord the same way as the Holy Spirit led me in my interactions with others.

In those early years of serving Compassion International, I was challenged to speak in public. It was a totally frightening experience at first. However, as I began to share the message of sponsoring children through Compassion International to churches, the Spirit taught me how to do public speaking. I practiced different techniques and the Lord showed me that He would help me speak from the heart He had given me. As the Lord drew me to partner with Him in bringing children into His Kingdom, His message (words) began to flow through me. I was hungry to learn more from the Lord, so I continued to step out even more in faith. My next step in internationally ministry took me on a visit to Haiti where Compassion International did ministry. They organized trips for sponsors to visit their sponsored children in their foreign mission fields. As my wife and I went on a tour of their work in Haiti led by a local pastor, the Holy Spirit led me to decide to return to Haiti. In 1999, I returned by myself to meet the same pastor and visit a poor, church community in the mountains. This began an ongoing ministry outside of Compassion International who didn't work in this community. This has required me to take many steps of faith over these past 20 years. The Lord has taught me MANY personal lessons through the challenges we have faced together.

Through this experience I was reminded of the Lord's presence especially in times of emergencies. On one trip up in the mountains to Cornillion we were driving a SUV that a large amount of donations had purchased and restored. Also, we had purchased concrete water filters, molds to build our own filters and the supplies necessary to build these water filters. There was a life and death need for clean water in the households of Cornillion. The number one cause of death in poor countries is unclean drinking water. Not surprisingly we had a monumental spiritual battle occur as we headed up the mountain. As the 2000 Mitsubishi SUV was carrying the supplies up the mountain, the vehicle broke down halfway up the mountain.

The situation looked very bad for us as we were in the middle of nowhere. The transmission had overheated and felt mushy as I pressed the accelerator to slowly climb up a mountain halfway through this trip. I was forced to pull over because smoke actually started coming into the SUV's compartment under the backseat from the overheated transmission. In addition, the radiator had overheated and needed fluid so we stopped. We rested the SUV and prayed for 30-40 minutes as we waited for the car to cool down so we could get the radiator cap off and more water into the radiator.

After filling up the radiator, my Haitian friends tried to start the car but it wouldn't start. The battery lost its ability to turn over the engine during their attempts to start the car. My friends in Christ had tried numerous times to start the SUV and now it appeared that we weren't going anywhere. Knowing what God had put on my heart to help the people with their water I asked them to give me the keys. I refused to accept what looked like the end of our journey, not to mention that we would still be in a dangerous situation, broken down in the middle of nowhere in the mountains of Haiti. I sat in the driver's seat with the keys in my hand. I bowed my head and prayed once more. I reminded the Lord what He had put on my heart and prayed for a miracle, for Him to start the car.

I placed the key in the ignition and turned the key and the car started right up. We were all overjoyed to see the SUV start right up but we still had more mountains to climb. We all praised God loudly for most of the remaining trip as we completed our journey. God took us to Cornillion and helped us to complete our work up there with the water filters. 3 days later, the SUV started right up and made it safely back down the mountains with no major incidents. As soon as we made it back home to Port-au-prince, I stopped the SUV at the first home where we dropped off one of my Haitian friends. The car refused to start after dropping Him off. Being in the city, it was easy to get a jump and make it to the place where I was staying. The next day a mechanic looked at the SUV and told us that the battery was dead and completely dry. It had no battery acid in it. A dry battery is incapable of charging itself and running a vehicle. This was one of many vehicle crisis times I have faced in Haiti. Through these times the Lord personally connected my heart to these words Peter spoke to the Lord during one of his first major ministry crisis times, *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. (John 6:68-69)”*

4. Prayers for Immediate Healings – The Lord wants us to grow in our abilities to pray for others, to battle with Heaven’s help to overcome ALL situations. While there are different methods for praying, one’s faith should remain focused on the fact that nothing is impossible for God as we pray. I have prayed for others in church, in Bible studies, immediately whenever I hear of a need and in the midst of everyday life (including while working). One area of growth has occurred in how I pray for others to be healed. Initially when I prayed for others in church, my expectations were set on hopefully hearing a good report back from the recipient after the prayer time together. My expectation for these healing prayers was that immediately God would give them hope. Then over time I might hear a good report about their medical healing that had further glorified the Lord for answering our prayer.

These are low expectations to have when praying for others to be healed. How did the Lord model and teach His disciples to pray? Is praying for healing later missing an opportunity to demonstrate more faith and to bring more glory to God? Will God still heal others like Jesus modeled and taught His first disciples? These scriptures can lift one's expectations for the Lord's healing power to manifest immediately:

1. *"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us. (Matt. 1:23)";*
2. *"[Jesus was] teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matt. 28:20)";*
3. *"[Jesus commanded] Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matt. 10:8)";*
4. *"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True (Rev. 19:11)".*

Most of the "body of Christ" today is praying for healing later because of years of experience, NOT seeing their prayers for healing answered. Meanwhile, the Word of the Lord instructs them that *"they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."* (Mark 16:18) The angel on announcing the arrival of Christ declared His name as being Immanuel, "God with us". As Jesus was ascending to His throne in heaven, He commanded His followers to follow what He had modeled to them and to believe that He is ALWAYS with them. Jesus specifically commanded His followers "to heal (present tense) the sick through prayer and the laying on of hands". The Lord Jesus alone is the one who is "faithful and true". When we pray for others we represent Jesus and trust in the One who is "faithful and true". Therefore, our intercession for others stands upon Christ the healer, NOT our abilities. As believers take risks and step out in faith to pray for others, God's grace brings the power of the blood of Jesus into play.

"If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1st John 1:7)" On Monday evenings, I participate in a wonderful ministry downtown "Jesus loves you, love Him back" which feeds the homeless. Part of what I do when I'm there, is to encourage the homeless and pray for them. On one particular Monday as we were handing out meals under a highway bridge, I noticed a young lady who was very pregnant walk by me. Seeing her in her situation, pregnant and homeless really moved me to want to pray for her but she was moving quickly by me.

I said to the Lord, I'm not going to chase her down she needs to stop so I can pray for her and she did. Then I approached her and asked her if I could pray for her. She made a noise with her mouth and pointed to her ear. Not only was she homeless and pregnant but she was deaf as well. I asked her if I could pray for her deaf ear which she had pointed to as she read my lips and nodded yes. I began praying for her deaf ear. I spoke into her ear and she began to hear. I prayed for her ear 3 times and each time her hearing got better. We both were amazed by this and praised God.

I was so amazed by this that I spun around to look for others to pray for. I had forgotten but the Holy Spirit reminded me to pray for her other ear. I spun around and prayed for the other ear with the same thing happening as for the first. Later on as I was praying for others, I noticed this woman again walking away from the bridge area. I had crossed the street now to pray for others. So I had to yell across the street to her. My travels to Haiti have made it easy for me to identify Haitian people and so I knew she was Haitian. Loudly in Creole, the Haitian language I shouted, "God bless you and praise the Lord!" She lifted her hands up high into the air and praised the Lord as she heard my voice and recognized my words spoken to her in Creole. I never saw her again but have seen others afterwards that the Lord has healed as I prayed for them based on the Lord's faithfulness.

These stories and others that I have experienced are part of the ongoing witness (testimony) that the Lord Jesus has given to me. *“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. (Rev. 12:11)”* The Risen Lord gives His people a life story of His presence, testimony as they submit their lives to walk with Him in His manifest presence. These testimonies bring glory to the Father through the glorified body of His Son by the power of the Holy Spirit. *“By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (1st John 2:5-6)”*

Embracing God’s “Heart of Glory”

God has called His “son and daughters” to live victoriously in Christ as *“heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ”*. Trusting in the Lord’s faithfulness has made them heirs of God. Being united by faith to the glorified body of Christ makes them co-heirs of the fruit of the finished work of Christ on the cross. Through the blood of Jesus and the “power and presence” of the Holy Spirit believers have been given a great privilege to glorify God by being seated with Christ in heavenly places, in His victory over sin and death. What should one do as they see through the eyes of faith how blessed they are to be in this position? They do what they see Jesus doing. They walk as Jesus walked knowing that they have been drawn to God’s “heart of glory”.

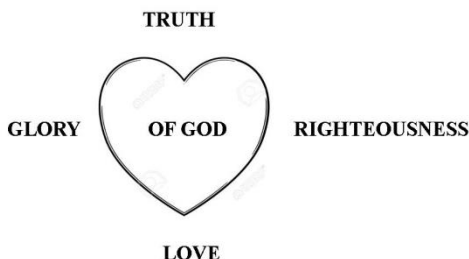
God has always planned for His children to have a special role in creation. *“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine...Everyone who is called by My name, Whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him, yes, I have made him...You are My witnesses,”* says the Lord, *And My servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, Nor shall there be after Me. (Isaiah 43:1,7,10)”* His children embrace a “way of life” that embodies the resurrected Christ in “Word and Spirit”.

Their lives are meant to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that God exists to both themselves and others. *“For in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ (Acts 17:28)”*

The Lord Jesus modeled how to be united with God’s glory as He lived His life best described as one moving in step (synchronized) with God’s heart beat. Jesus described the experience of being united with the heart-beat of God this way in John 5:19, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”* Therefore as we look to Jesus, we see the Son of God who does only what the Father does in like manner. God’s children know what this looks like as they experience His Son’s heart beating inside of them. The Father’s heart was certainly beating inside of Jesus.

The hearing and receiving of the full Gospel, the “Light of Christ and God’s Kingdom” leads believers on an eternal journey of knowing intimately God’s “heart of glory”. What are some signs of having intimacy with God’s “heart of glory”? *“And they said to one another, ‘Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?’ (Luke 24:32)”* As one begins to walk with the Lord for God’s glory they begin to recognize God’s presence and Him guiding the intentions of their hearts to bring forth godly “thoughts, words and deeds”. At times they will even sense the “heart of God” beating inside of them; “thump-thump, thump-thump, thump-thump ...” Many road signs from God will become visible along the journey as one desires to know intimately God’s “heart of glory”. *“Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light and your justice as the noonday. (Psalm 37:4-6)”*

**Intimacy with God's "Heart of Glory"
leads God's redeemed to radiate God's glory...**



“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.(2nd Cor. 3:18)”

Reflection Questions:

1. How has God connected His children with His glory?
2. Describe transformation via the Lord's manifest presence?
3. How does one witness the power of God's glory?
4. How does one personally embrace God's "heart of glory"?

Prayer: Lord, I am thankful for Your finished work on the cross and Your glorified, resurrected life. Every morning You wake me to Your wonderful "heart of glory" thumping and pumping vibrantly within. Your heart moves God's children to embrace the glorious way You modeled for all to live. It moves me to respond to Your compassionate heart nudges as You call me to partner in the ongoing work of reconciling humanity to Yourself. May we all in the "body of Christ" obey the Father's will, walk in fellowship with God and live for His Kingdom come, His glory to be manifested in and reflected through every heart...

Conclusion – Christ in you...

Colossians 1:27 “To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory...”

Jesus Christ, the embodiment of the “Living Word”, the “Son of Man” and “Son of God” is the darling of creation. His-story, “Good Testimony” is at the center of every redeemed “heart and soul”. His story is one of God’s heart of “truth, righteousness, love and glory” bringing reconciliation to the hearts of all who have received His Son. He is the eternal hope of glory for humanity! The history of the kingdoms of this world pale in the “Light of Christ and God’s Kingdom” no matter the temporary, earthly glory they demonstrate.

Now, the children of God are being sent into the world to be witnesses to His story as He has connected them with His story. “Christ in you” far surpasses the “best version of me” which today’s culture has set as its high bar. This is so because living in Christ takes one beyond their sin and selfishness. Sin’s fruit is closed thinking and limitations based upon one’s strengths and weaknesses. The wages of sin is judgment and death. This life of always looking to self can’t compare to walking with the “Word of Life”. The Lord’s life cultivates the “hope of glory”, eternal life in humanity to bear an abundance of faith and love to sustain His creation.

Union with God’s “newness of life” is experienced as one walks intimately with the “heart of God”. This experience that the first Adam initially enjoyed has come through the second Adam (Christ) and His victory over sin and death. Hear these words of the Lord as He instructed God’s children to live abundantly between His resurrection and the resurrection of His body (church) to come: “*Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ (Rev. 21:5)*” In Christ, one receives the heart of a champion, their destiny to overcome this world and to possess for all eternity.

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal. (2nd Cor. 4:16-18)” One can spend their whole life focusing on things that like their body will perish or they can join the creator in what He is doing, focusing on the eternal things of greater value.

God has chosen to record His works forever in the hearts of His redeemed. One should ask themselves “Are any of their life deeds worthy of being recorded for eternity?” Any work that is joined with the testimony of Christ is worthy. Scripture tells us that one’s time is short, *“For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away (James 4:14).”* Whether one came to faith out of a stable environment or a very broken life, I pray that this book helps to motivate ALL to live their lives like a branch plucked out of a fire, fully appreciative of God’s second chance to receive the “newness of life”. Through Christ, God has called ALL to turn from sin and embrace a life of being His child. A blessed life is not defined as a life lived to draw as much as one can to themselves, it’s a life of following the “Light of Christ and God’s Kingdom”. *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. (Matt. 5:14-15)”*

Prayer: Lord, thank You for Your faithfulness and Your Light which is drawing hearts to receive You and Your Kingdom. You’ve ALWAYS planned for humanity to be Your eternal family united in Your “truth, righteousness, love and glory”. May Your “Living Word” continue to rise up in the hearts of those who testify to Your “justice and love (Kingdom)” coming to earth as it is in heaven...

Appendix 1 – New Hearts for God

The “people of the Gospel” receive new hearts for God through His “Spirit and Truth”. This spiritual heart resides inside the center of one’s being like one’s physical heart pumping to keep everything alive. This heart surgery occurs through repentance, baptism into Christ (committing one’s life to Jesus) and receiving the Holy Spirit to guide one’s life. God’s Spirit works continuously within all who walk in the “Light of Christ and God’s Kingdom” unto eternal life. All who shun this Light know and walk only in eternal darkness.

