

Christian
Perseverance

Instruction for Christian Living

STUDY GUIDE

INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CONVOCATION | 2015

Christian Perseverance

Instruction for Christian Living

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Study Guide for International Youth Convocation 2015

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THE WORD OF HIS PERSEVERANCE

David Hall

As sons of God we need to be careful to observe the times in which we live. We are living in a world that is growing increasingly hostile to the knowledge of God. Times of great stress, lawlessness, and betrayal are coming upon the church and we will need to know how to endure until the end so that we will be saved.

Thankfully, Jesus has given us the word of His perseverance as a command. He said that we should keep 'the word of My perseverance' and 'hold fast what you have, so that no-one will take your crown'.¹ He meant that if we will unite ourselves

¹ Rev 3:10-11

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with Him and take up the word of the cross, then we can endure in faith, love, and hope until the end. Instead of being lawless, we will live in first love and obey His 'sound doctrine' regarding godly living.² He will deliver us from every evil work and preserve us unto His everlasting kingdom.³

Sound doctrine sets out for us the essential and complete teaching and training that we need in order to understand how to live as a son of God in the context of all of our relationships. This teaching will help us to adjust and prune our lives so that we continue to be the son of God He intends us to be. This means that who we are and how we live will be in agreement with the reality of the name and work that God has declared for each one of us.

It is often the difficulty we experience in life that highlights to us where we need to change in order to be the person He named us to be. If we are willing to come to this reality of Christian faith and commitment, even in the midst of difficulty, then we will understand what it means to keep ourselves in the love of God. This is how we keep the word of His perseverance.

Jesus warned us that before the time of the end trouble will increase. Nations and kingdoms will rise up in war and threaten each other as they seek to establish their own security and authority. Natural disasters such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, famine, and pestilences will increase throughout the earth. On account of this turmoil, it might seem as though we have come to the time of the end. However, Jesus told us that these events were not signalling the end of the world.⁴ Rather, they were 'the beginning of birth pains' and 'the fullness of times'.⁵

We recognise that we are living in this particular phase of God's purpose because we observe these events increasing in the world today. The increase of trouble, or birth pains, among the nations and in nature itself is evidence that the seventh world kingdom is beginning to be established across the world. At the same time, the restoration of the lampstand administration of the church is signalling that the fullness of times is already coming upon us. This is the phase of history when God will gather all things into Christ.⁶

Jesus said that in our day there will be an increase in lawlessness, or iniquity, and this will cause the love of most people to grow cold.⁷ By this He meant that, as Christians, they would cease loving one another. Lawlessness is at work in the

2 2Ti 4:3-4

3 2Ti 4:18 KJV

4 Mat 24:6

5 Mat 24:8. Eph 1:10

6 Eph 1:10

7 Mat 24:12

church when people reject the name and work that God has given them. This happens when they do not accept and submit to God's authority in the church, nor lay their life down for their brethren. Because they reject the authority of God, given to those in the body of Christ for their benefit, they become lawless.

Ultimately, a lawless person will become offended at their brethren when their terms for acceptance are rejected. When they are not received by others as they believe they should be, a root of bitterness and betrayal will spring up within them. It is for this reason that their love of the brethren will grow cold. Rather than giving themselves in first love and offering, they will give themselves to a spirit of bitterness and iniquity.⁸ The Scripture calls this betraying spirit, 'the spirit of antichrist'.

Lawlessness and opposition are the hallmarks of the spirit of antichrist. A *lawless* person will seek to establish their own name at the expense of others. Rather than being able to hear and obey the authority of Christ in the church, they will do what is right in their own eyes, or what they think is best for themselves.⁹ Those who *oppose* the culture of godliness do so because they want to be accepted and relevant to people in the world. For this reason they allow a culture of compromise with the world, in opposition to the godly culture of God's household. If we maintain our commitment and do not let go of our perseverance in the face of these pressures, we will gain our own lives.¹⁰

As Christians living in this phase of history, we are being stressed and harassed by the spirit of the world as it sends a flood of its ungodly and lawless culture against the people of God.¹¹ The apostle Paul wrote that this 'mystery of lawlessness' is already at work in the world and is energised by Satan's power.¹² This antichrist spirit wants to impose upon our lives, and discourage us so that we cease to obey His word of perseverance. We need to remember Jesus' word that only the one who endures to the end will be saved.¹³

In the book of Revelation, Jesus commended the church at Philadelphia for keeping His word and for not denying His name. This meant that they had been able to endure in their warfare against lawlessness, by keeping the word of His perseverance.¹⁴ Jesus promised that because they had kept His word He would

8 Act 8:23 14 Rev 3:10

9 Deu 12:8-9

10 Luk 21:19

11 Psa 18:4

12 2Th 2:3-12

13 Mar 13:13

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also keep them from the hour of temptation which is coming upon the whole world, before the end.

We need to remember that Jesus' word to the church at Philadelphia was recorded for our sake. His command to persevere was given to us so that we would know that we can endure in first love during times of stress. At times we can feel tormented by the world's pressures because its culture is at war with the culture of the body of Christ.

As we seek to persevere in this cultural conflict, we may experience anxiety, fear, and trauma as the spirit of the world, the spirit of antichrist, comes against us. We may become timid and tempted to compromise our godly culture because we might encounter opposition from those at church or in the community. It is at these times that we should remember that God's word has been written for our instruction. God has spoken His word to us so that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope and not be discouraged.¹⁵

If we will give attention to His sound doctrine when it is taught to us, God will give us His perseverance and encouragement.¹⁶ This is His capacity given to us so that in the midst of trial and tribulation we can endure until the end and be saved.¹⁷ With this capacity, we as members of the body of Christ can serve others in their trials by being able ministers of His consolation and encouragement to them.¹⁸

The Scriptures encourage us in the hope of our sonship because they teach us how to live as a son of God, even in times of stress and opposition. There are many things we encounter that have now become the normal pressures of life in this present age. The spirit of antichrist in the world is unashamedly promoting secular beliefs and ungodly behaviours and cultures as though they are normal human experiences. Immorality, impurity and idolatry are bringing the judgement of God upon the sons of disobedience.¹⁹ These cultural pressures to compromise our culture as sons of God will continue to increase, and we will need to know how to cope with these pressures as we persevere in the word of Christ.

The Scriptures contain the instruction of sound doctrine so that from them we can be encouraged to persevere in the hope of our sonship. The apostle John identified Jesus as the Word of life. We need to come to Christ and learn from Him so that

15 Rom 15:4-6

16 Rom 15:5

17 Act 14:22

18 1Ti 4:6

19 Eph 5:5-6

The word of His perseverance

He can give us His peace in every circumstance.²⁰ Jesus said that if we would come to Him, take up His yoke, and learn from Him, then we would find rest for our souls.²¹ As we trust Him in all of the difficulties in our life, He will give us freedom from anxiety and wisdom for every circumstance.

As with Abraham's nephew Lot, our souls can become tormented day after day because of the lawless deeds of those around us in the world.²² We should understand that the spirit of antichrist is strongly opposed to the will of God. This is why all who call themselves 'sons of God' will be opposed by the spirit of antichrist in the world. God's desire is to bring many sons to glory through the Lord Jesus Christ. We will only find rest if we come to Christ and take up the word of His cross. If we unite ourselves with Him, He promised that we will find rest for our souls.²³

We will only endure to the end if we stay alert and on guard so that our hearts will not be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life.²⁴ Nevertheless, we are encouraged that not a hair of our head shall perish.²⁵ In the day of our trial, the Holy Spirit will give us the grace of God to endure, and after we have suffered awhile we will be strengthened with the consolation of Christ.

As individual disciples and as Christian families, we need to learn how to cope with a hostile spiritual environment in the church and in the world. We need to understand how to seek and find peace as a family. Then, having found peace, we can also help others to cope with what have now become the normal pressures that beset us as Christians. If we unite ourselves with Christ, His sound doctrine enables us to openly speak of the virtues of Him who called us out of darkness and into His light.²⁶ This means that we will be able to serve and support others with the same encouragement and consolation that we ourselves have received.

This is an important understanding for us, because the God who gives perseverance and encouragement is also 'the God of all comfort'.²⁷ He is not only bringing forth many sons to glory, He is also helping them with His capacity to persevere. He is comforting them with His comfort as they enter the everlasting kingdom through tribulation.

Now we understand an important focus for our fellowship. With the capacity we have received from God we now are able to comfort one another with His

20	2Th 3:16	26	1Pe 2:9-10 LITV
21	Mat 11:29	27	Rom 15:5-6. 2Co 1:3-7
22	2Pe 2:8		
23	Mat 11:28-30		
24	Luk 21:34-35		
25	Luk 21:18		

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comfort and encouragement. When those who fear the Lord speak to one another, they are not simply speaking into the air without any purpose or effect.²⁸ They are speaking of His virtues, learned as sound doctrine and lived in the power of His perseverance. With this word they are able to encourage their brethren with His comfort. In faith and love they can support each other to persevere in whatever circumstance God has asked them to walk. The Scriptures call this ‘the perseverance and faith of the saints’.²⁹

As Christians we have an obligation to keep Christian community alive by maintaining viable fellowship and first love, and maintaining offering. When we give, or offer, ourselves to the fellowship of the body of Christ, our aim is to promote and support the perseverance of the saints. When we do this, we are expressing faith and keeping ourselves in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.³⁰ This is the culture of faith that belongs to the body of Christ.

The apostle Paul prayed that the God of hope would fill us with all joy and peace in believing so that we would abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.³¹ If we make the commitment to persevere as disciples of Christ and follow in His word, then He will support us. He will guard, support, and encourage us so that we may persevere in faith, hope, and love until we reach the fullness of our maturity as sons of God.

The Lord will rescue you from every evil deed, and will bring you safely to His heavenly kingdom. If you will endure, He will preserve you unto His everlasting kingdom.³²

28 Mal 3:16

29 Rev 13:10

30 Eph 4:3

31 Rom 15:13

32 2Ti 4:18 KJV

Study Questions - The Word of His Perseverance

All Christians living in this phase of history are being stressed and harassed by the spirit of the world and the spirit of antichrist.

- What signs of the spirit of antichrist have you recognised in the contexts of your daily activities?

- How has the spirit of the world and the spirit of antichrist challenged your Christian faith? How are you responding to these pressures?

- In these challenging times, how are you receiving perseverance and encouragement?

We have an obligation to keep Christian community alive by maintaining viable fellowship and first love, and maintaining offering.

- What is your testimony of giving and receiving the comfort and encouragement of God to one another?

WHAT IS SOUND DOCTRINE?

Luke Pomery

The apostle Paul taught the early churches the most fundamental aspects of Christian living. These foundations would equip followers in every place to maintain godly lives and godly relationships. The teaching in the Scriptures about how Christians should live and relate is called 'sound doctrine'. Sound doctrine is simply God's word concerning *godly living and godly relationships*. Paul wrote extensively on these matters in his letters to Timothy and Titus. It is essential that we become disciples of sound doctrine, receiving instruction from those who

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are able to teach us.¹ We will persevere until the end by holding fast to the pattern of sound doctrine.²

Present truth is the word that the Holy Spirit is presently illuminating to us. It is the word that we hear at the communion table each week. As it comes, it is new and fresh. And even though present truth is always in our view, we must not neglect to also give attention to sound doctrine. Sound doctrine teaches us the foundations of Christian living. We continuously seek to understand and be established in sound doctrine so that we can know how to live as Christians.

Sound doctrine is always applicable to us. Let us consider an example of sound doctrine teaching. We have learned from the Scriptures that children are to obey their parents.³ This is how children rightly relate with their parents. However, what happens when the instruction to 'obey your parents' is not specifically spoken at church on a Sunday? Does this mean that children are not required to obey their parents during the following week? Clearly this is not so. Sound doctrine is an ever-present reality. As Christians, we take heed to the instructions of sound doctrine throughout every season and stage of our life.

Godly living

Paul explained to Timothy that the word of sound doctrine *conforms* us to godliness.⁴ Godliness is the culture of Christian living. Christian disciples are taught to live sensibly, righteously and in a *godly* manner in this present age.⁵ Sound doctrine addresses our whole life; every aspect and every context. We do not present a form of godly living on Sunday and yet live another way throughout the week.⁶

We are nourished in our spirits when we heed the words of sound doctrine.⁷ By this we are able to live a godly life! The word of sound doctrine produces confidence in young people.⁸ They are confident because they are being conformed to the culture of godliness.⁹

We need to realise, however, that the culture of Christian living does not come naturally to any one of us. Rather, we learn the culture of godliness as we receive the instruction and training of leaders and older men and women in the faith.¹⁰ Timothy had known the Scriptures from his childhood, being raised in the way of faith by his mother and grandmother.¹¹ However, Timothy needed instruction

1	2Th 2:15. 1Co 2:13. 2Ti 2:2. Heb 13:7. 2Ti 3:10	5	Tit 2:12	11	2Ti 3:15. 2Ti 1:5
		6	2Ti 3:5		
2	2Ti 1:13	7	1Ti 4:6		
3	Eph 6:1	8	1Ti 4:12		
4	1Ti 6:3	9	1Ti 6:3		
		10	1Ti 1:2. Tit 2:3-5		

from Paul regarding the culture of Christian faith. Paul taught Timothy the words of sound doctrine, and Timothy became a disciple who was nourished in this doctrine.¹²

Paul listed the qualities of godliness that will be evident in us when we become followers of sound doctrine. We live in reality and full acceptance of our identity.¹³ We live a godly lifestyle in a sincere and truthful manner.¹⁴ We know how to participate in an active, perfecting process.¹⁵ We know how to find the will of God for our lives.¹⁶ We live by faith and a good conscience.¹⁷ We recognise strange doctrines and refuse to heed these alternatives to the truth.¹⁸ And we are able to guard ourselves from ungodly living.¹⁹ There are many other qualities that pertain to godliness listed throughout the Scriptures.

Godly relationships

Sound doctrine includes the instruction concerning godly relationships. In his letters to Timothy and Titus, Paul explained the way Christians are to relate together. He wrote to Timothy, ‘Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.’²⁰

The book of Titus clearly outlines the sound doctrine of godly living and relating.²¹ Paul explained the manner in which older godly men are to conduct themselves (e.g. worthy of respect; self-controlled; sound in faith, love and perseverance).²² Likewise, he highlighted how older godly women are to live (i.e. reverent in their behaviour; not malicious gossips; not given to much wine; teaching what is good).²³ Because of their example, the older women can then encourage the young women in the culture of godliness. They are to be discreet, pure and kind, so that the word of God may not be blasphemed.²⁴ Paul also exhorted Titus to urge the young men to be self-controlled, or ‘sober-minded’; and that young men should receive the admonition of older godly men.²⁵ And Titus was to be an example to the young men of being pure in doctrine, dignified and truthful in what he spoke.²⁶

The sound doctrine of godly relating continues throughout Paul’s writings. We are to honour those in authority over us.²⁷ We are to be subject to the ruling authorities in the world.²⁸ We should show respect and care to all people.²⁹ We

12	1Ti 4:6	17	1Ti 1:5,19	23	Tit 2:3	29	Tit 3:2. Gal 6:10
13	2Ti 1:9. Eph 4:1	18	1Ti 1:3-4	24	Tit 2:4-5		
14	2Ti 3:12. Tit 2:12. 1Ti 1:5. 2Ti 1:5	19	Tit 2:12. 1Ti 1:10	25	Tit 2:6. Tit 1:13		
15	Heb 6:1	20	1Ti 5:1-2	26	Tit 2:7-8		
16	Col 1:9	21	Tit 2	27	1Ti 6:1. Tit 2:9-10		
		22	Tit 2:2	28	Tit 3:1		

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are to be hospitable.³⁰ We obey our boss.³¹ We obey our parents.³² And we submit to those who lead in the church.³³ In all of these things, we learn that the sound doctrine of godly relating is both instructive and clear.

Constantly nourished

Timothy was encouraged to be constantly nourished by the words of sound doctrine.³⁴ In so doing, he would be sustained in his spiritual walk. Likewise, we are nourished as we diligently apply ourselves to understand the sound doctrine of Christian living. We are to give ourselves to consider the sound doctrine implications that are relevant to our age and stage of life. We are to 'dwell on these things'.³⁵

Sound doctrine is described as the pure milk of the word. Just like newborn babes, we are to crave this pure, spiritual milk, so that we can be nourished and grow up in our salvation.³⁶ By this means, we mature in the Christian faith, having been trained to discern good and evil.³⁷ This is the discernment that enables us to make right choices.

Paul compares the training of our physical bodies to training for the purpose of godliness. Physical training is of some value. However, godliness is profitable for all things. It is profitable not only for this life, but also for the life to come.³⁸

Jesus taught that we become a disciple of the kingdom when we practise this culture of Christian living. A disciple is someone who is trained. And a disciple guards the treasures that have been entrusted to them.³⁹ Jesus said, 'A disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings out his treasure things new and old'.⁴⁰ New treasure is the word of present truth; that is, the truth that is presently being illuminated by the Holy Spirit.⁴¹ Old treasure is sound doctrine. It is the word from the beginning and, in one sense, it never changes.⁴²

Being an example to others

Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the 'traditions' that the messengers of Christ had passed on to the churches.⁴³ These traditions included sound instruction about Christian living. Paul said to the Corinthian church, 'Hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you'.⁴⁴ These traditions had been delivered

30 Rom 12:13.
Heb 13:2

31 1Ti 6:1-2

32 Eph 6:1. Col 3:20

33 1Ti 6:2. Heb 13:17.
1Th 5:12-13

34 1Ti 4:6

35 Php 4:8

36 1Pe 2:2

37 Heb 5:14

38 1Ti 4:7-8

39 2Ti 1:14

40 Mat 13:52

41 2Pe 1:12

42 1Jn 2:7

43 2Th 2:15

44 1Co 11:2

to the churches not only by word-of-mouth and by letter, but they were also *demonstrated* by the messengers as they lived among them. This is why Paul exhorted the churches to imitate the way he lived, just as he imitated Christ.⁴⁵ Interestingly, when you teach others, they will always follow the *way you live*, much more than the things you say.

We are an example of sound doctrine by the way we live. Even in our youth, we are to be an example of good works in all aspects of our lives. Our good works bear witness to the effect of the sound doctrine teaching upon us. And we should be able to also instruct others in the traditions we have been taught. Both of these things will be a positive example to others; that is, our sound conduct and our sound speech.⁴⁶

Persevering in life

We need to persevere in the word of sound doctrine. We can be assured that sound doctrine will conform us to godliness.⁴⁷ However, we firstly need perseverance. Peter's first epistle clearly teaches us that the fruit of godliness is added to us *after* we show forth the fruit of perseverance.⁴⁸ How are we able to persevere? It is the work of the Holy Spirit that enables us to persevere. It would not be possible for anyone to endure without the help of the God of perseverance.⁴⁹ Perseverance is a gift. And godliness is the gift that follows it.

We remember Christ's command to us, to keep the word of His perseverance.⁵⁰ The word of present truth is the word of His perseverance.⁵¹ And the reality is that present truth will constantly highlight implications regarding the *way we are living* as Christians. In this way, present truth always leads us back to give attention to sound doctrine. Furthermore, the word of present truth equips us to *endure* sound doctrine.

We are taught in the Scriptures that, sadly, there will be some who will not continue in this teaching.⁵² They will abandon the culture of Christian living for doctrines that are more appealing. The Spirit clearly says that this falling away will increase in these later times.⁵³ Paul makes the point that, 'they will not endure sound doctrine'.⁵⁴ These ones turn away from the truth in order to follow their own desires.⁵⁵

45 1Co 11:1

46 Tit 2:7-8

47 1Ti 6:3

48 2Pe 1:6

49 Rom 15:5. V Hall with D Falk, D Baker, 2014, *An Introduction to Bible Prophecy*, Vision One Inc, Toowoomba. Page 22.

50 Rev 3:10

53 1Ti 4:1

51 Ibid.

54 2Ti 4:3

52 2Ti 4:3-4

55 2Ti 4:4. Eph 2:3

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These people will object to the culture of godly living and godly relationships. They will argue that ‘sound doctrine’ is a matter of personal interpretation. When a person begins to argue in this manner, they are already falling away. Instead of heeding the sound doctrine of the Scriptures, they search for others to support their point of view.⁵⁶ In contrast, the Scriptures set clear lines that guard us in our godly culture and godly relationships.

We are disciples of Christ. And we are followers of sound doctrine. For this reason we are to pay close attention to ourselves and to what we teach others.⁵⁷

It is incumbent upon us, as disciples of Christ, to seek the treasures that are both ‘new’ (present truth) and ‘old’ (sound doctrine). We are to actively seek fellowship and receive training from those who teach us sound doctrine, at every age and stage of our life.

Sound doctrine will constantly nourish both the teacher and student as they give themselves to the discipline of godliness.⁵⁸ This is why Paul instructed Timothy to, ‘persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you’.⁵⁹

56 2Ti 4:3

57 1Ti 4:16

58 1Ti 4:6-7

59 1Ti 4:16

Study Questions - What is sound doctrine?

Sound doctrine is the scriptural teachings concerning godly living and godly relationships. Present truth is the word that the Holy Spirit is illuminating to us each week at the communion table.

- How are you nourishing yourself with the words of sound doctrine?

- What areas of godly living and relationship are you currently giving attention to?

We are an example of sound doctrine by the way that we live. Even in our youth, we are to be an example of good works in all aspects of life.

- How do we persevere in the word of sound doctrine?

- How is present truth and sound doctrine securing you in your Christian walk?

PERSEVERING IN FAITH

- a journey of hope lived by faith

Jonathon Wills

Introduction

The journey of every Christian should lead them to the fulfilment of a hope. This is the hope of receiving an eternal inheritance as a son of God.¹ The plans for this journey, including its start and finish, were written in God's book of life before the foundation of the world.² Until we know the hope of His calling on our lives, the Scriptures describe our journey through life as aimless and futile.³ However,

1 Php 3:20-21.
Rom 8:23

2 Psa 139:16.
Eph 1:4. Eph 2:10

3 Eph 2:12.
Rom 1:21. 1Pe 1:18

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with the hope of sonship set before us, we continue on our journey by faith. This journey takes us through many ups and downs and will require us to persevere in faith.⁴ While at times we may be tempted to give up and to lose heart, it is important that we always keep our hope firmly set before us.⁵

Journey by faith

When the love of God was poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we were filled with the hope and the faith of sonship.⁶ The love, hope and the faith of God were fully expressed to us in Christ.⁷ In Christ, we can be a new creation. The old can pass away and new things can come.⁸ By the grace of God we can be saved from His judgement and begin the journey of our sonship.⁹

When Paul said that we were to walk by faith, he was speaking of this journey.¹⁰ Faith comes to us through the word of God, and becomes ours as we believe, trust and obey His word.¹¹ The capacity to believe is not sourced in ourselves, but is given to us in the word of God. Until God speaks to us, there is no capacity for faith. But once He has spoken, we can believe, hope for, and live in the faith of what He has said.

The proceeding word of God is the daily provision for our journey. Jesus didn't do anything until there was a word from the Father. He even described this as His 'food'.¹² His constant testimony was, 'I do only the things the Father has spoken.'¹³ Jesus could not be persuaded to live by another will. He would not allow His trust in the word of God or His connection with the Father to be broken. He kept Himself in the love of God and *remained under* trial and suffering by the power of God. By this means, many sons would be brought to glory.¹⁴ The hope of sonship would come to all men through the offering of the cross and the resurrection. This was the faith of the Son of God, and it is the faith that we are to receive from Him.¹⁵

Hoping with perseverance

Paul taught that 'Hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see with perseverance we wait eagerly for it.'¹⁶ If we hope for what we don't see, then we are hoping for something God has promised to give us, but we don't yet have. We are hoping that He is going to save us and give us the fullness of our sonship. We can be certain that God will do what

4 Rom 8:25

9 Eph 2:8

15 Gal 2:20

5 Heb 12:2.
Heb 6:18-19

10 2Co 5:7

16 Rom 8:24-25

11 Rom 10:17

6 Rom 5:5

12 Joh 4:34

7 1Co 13:13

13 Joh 8:28-29

8 2Co 5:17

14 Heb 2:10

He promises.¹⁷ However, we find that there is a gap between hearing the promise of sonship and receiving it in full. As we journey between these points, we are to live and persevere by faith.¹⁸

The psalmist said of Joseph that *'Until the time that His word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him.'*¹⁹ Joseph patiently endured slavery, injustice, prison, and neglect.²⁰ Through this process he proved, or attained to, the word of faith that he had received in his youth. Time and chance didn't try Joseph. It was the word of God that tested and refined him. God, being faithful, will not allow us to be tested beyond our ability, or beyond the measure of faith that is ours.²¹

Simply stated, God wants you to believe. We are to believe that God is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.²² We are then to maintain trust and connection with Him as 'God fearers'. The fear of the Lord keeps us on the journey towards the fullness of our hope. We know that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.²³ We need wisdom because, without it, we don't know how to walk the journey. Although we don't know how all things can work together for our good, we fear God and not man.²⁴ As we pray for wisdom, God gives it to us so that we can maintain the journey of faith, all the way to the finish.

Inheriting the immortal

Our hope is that our mortal body will be changed to an immortal body for the new heavens and new earth.²⁵ We have received eternal identity, but it lives in a weak mortal body. Our body has to be transformed into an immortal body. The perishable must put on the imperishable, and the mortal must put on immortality.²⁶ Wherever there is a hope for an inheritance, there needs to be perseverance. Only the one who endures to the end will be saved.²⁷

Help on our journey

Persevering on this journey to inherit our hope is critical. We continue in the way by faith, but we need help. The Holy Spirit is going to help us on the journey. Jesus, knowing our weaknesses, sent the Holy Spirit to be our strength and Helper.²⁸ He has come to walk with us and guide us into all truth.²⁹ 'All truth' means the truth of realising and inheriting *all that* God has promised to each one of us. The Holy Spirit helps us by guiding us into the truth of who we are as sons of God.

17 Rom 4:21.
1Th 5:24

18 1Ti 6:11. 2Ti 3:10.
Tit 2:2

19 Psa 105:19

20 Gen 37-50

21 Rom 12:3

22 Heb 11:6

23 Pro 9:10

24 Rom 8:28

25 Php 3:20-21

26 1Co 15:53

27 Mat 24:13.
Luk 21:19

28 Joh 14:26

29 Joh 16:13

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As much as we are hoping for our sonship, God is also believing for us to make it. He's in faith for us. Christ gives us the Holy Spirit and we abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.³⁰ Knowing our weakness, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us so that we can receive our hope. Our weakness is that we don't know how to pray for what we can't see. This is where He helps us. When we begin to pray in the Spirit, He intercedes for us with groanings that are too deep for words. The Son, also, searching our heart and knowing the mind of the Spirit, intercedes for us according to the Father's will.³¹ The Father gives grace so that we can continue on the journey of hope without drawing back into unbelief.

The nature of our faith

Faith is an attitude that accepts responsibility to maintain trust and connection with God. If you believe, you are going to trust.³² In the midst of the fiery trials that we face in our Christian walk, we are to keep ourselves connected to God through faith. We are to keep trusting God, keep seeking wisdom, keep fearing God, and keep the connection with God.

The fiery trial is the trial of faith. These are circumstances of life where our faith for sonship comes under pressure. In the midst of these times it can seem as though God isn't answering our prayers. It's at these times that we are tempted to say, 'God doesn't love me', or even, 'There is no God'. We can feel as though God has let us down. The temptation in the midst of our trials is to let ourselves go from the love of God. However, faith is the attitude that accepts responsibility to keep ourselves in the love of God.³³ We do this by putting off disappointment and anger. Our constant endeavour is to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace with our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.³⁴ Such faith, working by love, can be likened to a mustard seed. Just a small amount will remove relational difficulties that seem like a mountain.³⁵

Everyone knows that life can get difficult. There are many things that can come against us and cause us to consider giving up on the journey of sonship. Satan wants us to stop persevering in faith, to become discouraged, and to abandon our hope. This is where we have to watch our spirit and our attitude.³⁶ As we persevere in faith, we put off all the temptations of the flesh, especially unbelief. We have to be resolved that we are not going to give up on our hope.

30 Rom 15:13 35 Mat 17:20

31 Rom 8:26-27. 36 Eph 6:18
Psa 139:23-24

32 Pro 3:5-6

33 Jud 20-21

34 Eph 4:3

We have to be resolved that if life doesn't proceed the way we would have chosen, then we are not going to 'take our bat and ball and go home'. Our testimony can be 'I'm in this for the long haul'. 'I'm going to persevere in faith.' 'I'm going to keep on trusting God and maintain connection with Him.' 'I'm going to keep myself in the love of God by aligning myself to His will.' 'I'm going to remain in the securing fellowship of the body of Christ.' 'I'm going to pray in the Spirit.' 'I'm going to accept the fiery trial of faith and rejoice that it's burning up everything that wars against my sonship.' 'I'm going to trust that He will work all things together for my good.' 'I will believe that the precious value of my sonship will be purified in the fire.' 'I will believe that by persevering in faith in the midst of suffering I am being made worthy for the kingdom.'³⁷ The substance of who we are as sons of God is proven as we persevere in faith by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Good Shepherd

Psalm 23 is an encouragement to keep ourselves in the love of God and to persevere in faith. We are to keep trusting the Lord and not fear evil, even when we feel as though the shadow of death looms over us. In this passage of Scripture we are encouraged by the truth that Christ, our Good Shepherd, leads those who are obedient to His voice. Their assurance is that He is leading them through the trial of their faith. They know that the Lord is with them. They know His comfort, His encouragement and His strength.

The Good Shepherd leads us into the valley of the shadow of death so we can receive the reward of faith.³⁸ As He leads, He asks us to trust Him. He appeals to us to not lose heart and draw back into unbelief, but rather to believe to the saving of the soul.³⁹ He says '*Keep your eyes fixed on Me! Don't look to the right or to the left. Don't fear the evil or the shadow that surrounds you.*' Jesus endured the cross and despised its shame, all for the joy that was set before Him. In doing so, He became the author and perfecter of our faith.⁴⁰ We now run with endurance the race set before us, keeping our eyes fixed on Him. He endured the hostility of sin (the outcome of sin), so that we would not grow weary and lose heart.⁴¹

37 2Th 1:4-5

38 Jas 1:12

39 Heb 10:39

40 Heb 12:2

41 Heb 12:3

Believing God when the fire burns

The apostle Peter said that we are tested by fire and shouldn't be surprised when the fiery trial comes upon us.⁴² We are responsible to believe God when the fire burns. We are to believe that as the fire burns it is only the wood, hay and stubble that are being consumed. The gold, silver and precious stones are refined in the fire. We are those precious stones that God uses to build His house.⁴³ He builds with 'tried' stones. They are people who are likened to precious stones, believing stones, whose faith has been tried. The fire will consume everything that is not of God in our lives. Our testimony can be that we were preserved by the power of God.

At times we will fail. We will come up with all sorts of ideas and projections, plans and schemes. In His mercy, God will burn them up, but He won't burn us. He'll use the fire to purify us as long as we continue to believe. When the fire burns, we are responsible and accountable to keep ourselves in the love of God. We must believe that He loves us, no matter what happens.

Our testimony can be, 'I know that on this journey I am weak and easily tempted. I know that I'll need help and I'll need to persevere. I know that I'll need to *remain under* the hand of God when things get tough. I know that I'll need the encouragement of the Scriptures and the comfort of His body.⁴⁴ I know that I'll need those who are strong to bear with me in my weakness.⁴⁵ I have to keep on hoping and persevering in faith. I can't take my eyes off the prize.'⁴⁶

Beloved now we are ... but it doesn't yet appear

The point is, '*Beloved now we are the sons of God ... and such we are!*' We already have the promise of sonship, even the firstfruits of the Spirit.⁴⁷ But our hope has not yet been fulfilled. Our sonship is not fully realised. We don't have the resurrection body yet. Instead, we are waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons; the redemption of our bodies.⁴⁸ And so we keep the hope of salvation before us. We know in part what the Lord has for us, but we yearn to know it fully. We see through a mirror dimly, but we yearn to see Him face to face. We have this treasure in an earthen vessel, but we yearn for this mortal to put on immortality, and this perishable to put on the imperishable. We yearn to be clothed in light. We *rejoice in hope* as sons of God. We have some walking to do and we do it in hope, as sons of God who are persevering in faith.

42 1Pe 1:7. 1Pe 4:12-13 47 1Jn 3:1-3

43 1Pe 2:4-7 48 Rom 8:23

44 Rom 15:4-5

45 Rom 15:1

46 Php 3:14. Jas 1:12

Study Questions - Persevering in faith

God has a course for each person to run in order to receive the promise of an eternal inheritance. To maintain our course in view of this hope, we need to persevere in faith.

- What is your experience of being tested by the Lord until you knew that His word concerning your life was coming to pass?

- How was your faith maintained in the course of this testing?

In the midst of fiery trials our faith is tested. Faith is the attitude that accepts responsibility to keep ourselves in the love of God in all circumstances of life.

- How are you keeping yourself in the love of God? What has this meant, practically, for your relationships with others in your family and in the church?

- What does it mean to put off unbelief? How have you done this in the midst of 'fiery trials'?

STANDING IN ACCOUNTABILITY

Richie Kaa

Living in an accountable manner as a son of God can all too often be mistaken as living according to a set of rules or principles in the hope of achieving a certain outcome. You may think that if you attend the weekly prayer meeting, practise your instrument and do your devotions daily, then you will somehow be closer to where you need to be in God. You may well learn some valuable disciplines for your life in keeping to such a routine, but accountability has an altogether different focus.

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Christian accountability is based on the simple fact that God knows you. Before you were inclined to want to know God, He knew you. The gospel is not fundamentally an invitation for you to get to know God; it is actually the complete opposite. We are on a journey of being known by God.

Accountability can be generally viewed as a person's 'acceptance of responsibility'. From this definition, it follows that an individual who shows accountability is someone who takes ownership of his or her decisions and behaviours. However, for a son of God, a more helpful understanding of accountability embraces the relational elements of being answerable, or responsible, to someone. In other words, we recognise that the points of reference for our accountability do not begin with us, and neither are we measure of what is 'good' or 'right'. A helpful illustration is given in the parable of the talents, where each slave was called by the master to give an account of how they had stewarded his possessions in his absence.¹ How would you give an account to the Master for how you have stewarded what He has given you?

The amazing truth of the gospel message is that God had a plan for your life even before He created the heavens and the earth. He knew you before you were even aware of yourself!² To live accountably, then, is to be the person whom God foreknew. The challenge for each of us is to understand what God knows concerning us.

The Scriptures state that 'God knows us'. This links us directly to the Lamb's book of life, where our names and works were recorded before the foundation of the world.³ Whilst this is a promising reality, it is also worth remembering the words of Christ, that 'many will say to Me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness".'⁴ These are sobering words and describe the person who refuses to be constrained to their name; refusing to be and do what was named for them by God.

The Father is completely committed to who you are and who you are to become as a son of God. The Son is completely committed to make you useful by training you as His disciple. Christ is not firstly interested in your identity as a person;

1 Mat 25:14-30

2 Psa 139:13

3 Rom 8:29. Eph 1:4

4 Mat 7:21-23

rather, His desire is for you to take His yoke so that you might learn of Him. He is focused on the accountable response that you have made concerning what the Father knows about you, and your commitment to be that.

The Father knows us. We have to be and become the person He planned us to be. This is only possible as we become a disciple of Christ. Christ learnt obedience through suffering, and He trains us as His disciples in the same way.⁵ As the Son is making us useful, we are being given capacity to hear and obey the Father's will. The Father's will concerning every son is that we might join the fellowship of the body of Christ, which is connecting us to our name.

Fellowship is the context in which we are known, because the testimony of who we are is confirmed in the light of fellowship.⁶ Equally, we have to know when we are behaving in a way that the Father does not recognise. This is also confirmed in fellowship. When a person does not know who they are, they attempt to make a name for themselves. The Father will not meet us this way; neither will he accept the name we have made for ourselves. If we are being other than whom the Father made us to be, for long enough, He will say, as the Son said, 'I never knew you'.⁷

Your name defines everything about you. Who you are is expressed through obedience to the word of your name. However, it is important to note that 'name' is not precisely the same thing as 'identity', even though to have a name is to have identity. Your name is what you will 'be' and 'do' as an identity, which is a person. Your name is you, and can only be revealed and known in the community, or fellowship, of the body of Christ.

So a person's name is what distinguishes one spirit from another spirit, or one identity from another identity. Through our natural birth, we are spiritual identities. However, unless we receive a name there is no distinction. So your name is that unique and distinct expression of your individual spiritual identity. This then distinguishes you from the next person because what you have been named to do and become is not the same as another.

Our name is committed to us but we do not have possession of it at our natural birth. It's as though it's held in trust until we are born of God and begin the journey of being known by God. This is only possible once we are connected to our name. The second chapter of Acts describes how we are connected to our name. Various

5 Heb 5:8

6 1Jn 1:7

7 Mat 7:23

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messengers proclaimed the wonderful works of God in different languages to the gathered crowd. The name of each one is indeed a wonderful work of God and so it is proclaimed to us during our lifetime according to His timing. This provokes us to know more and we will ask, 'What does this mean?' Asking the question connects us to a messenger who is sent with the word of Christ, illuminating us concerning our sin. Filled with the sense of sorrow as our eyes are opened to our sin and the shame of its impact, we are further compelled to ask, 'What must I do?' It is here that we are commanded to repent and be baptised, which invites each hearer to join the fellowship of the body of Christ. It is here that you are connected to your name.

Your name describes the dignity of who you are, all your capacities, and what your works will be. Accordingly, it becomes a personal possession and the measure to which you are answerable, or accountable, to the Lord. When we speak of the 'works' of your name, we are describing how your name is expressed. We noted earlier that it's possible for a person to 'do' all kinds of 'works' in the context of His name. And yet, if these are not the works, or the expression, of their particular name, then the Son will say 'Depart from me, I never knew you.'

To be given possession of our spiritual identity means that we have the dignity to choose what direction and pathway we are going to walk. But we do not have possession of our name. Our name is being revealed to us in the fellowship of the body of Christ. Only when our spiritual identity joins this fellowship are we able to find connection to our name and have true connection to God. Our name then connects us to God because He knows us by this name, and we are on a journey to be who He knows in every season of our lives.

Long before a child is able to be accountable they are asked to give an account. When a parent brings discipline to a child, the child is being taught to give an account for what they do. As we grow and develop, we learn to give account, acknowledging that there are consequences for our actions. So, if a child receives effective discipline they learn to make a decision and to account for the consequences of their decisions. They learn that obedience to parental instruction has a good consequence and this is what the Lord is teaching each of us. If we begin to head off track, God will, by some means, meet us and bring us to some kind of crisis (i.e. health, career, relational, family, faith, identity). Think of the prophet Jonah as one who was under the crisis of judgement. The judgement of

God is, then, an important part of accountability. It is a tool that God uses to bring us back on track when we stray from our name and who He knows us to be.

This kind of crisis can be thought of as God's righteous judgement, and serves as a discipline. We read in the book of Hebrews that 'No discipline seems pleasant at the time but for those who have been trained by it, afterwards it produces the peaceable fruits of righteousness'.⁸ To be trained by discipline suggests that you are in submission to the discipline and to the one administering the discipline. 'For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives.'⁹ As we persevere through the seasons of life and submit to the discipline of the Lord, He brings forth His righteousness in us. This means that the will of God is being done in us; and God's will is that you will be your name.

Fruit, then, indicates two things – what was sown and how we are known; 'For by their fruit you shall know them'.¹⁰ If you are constantly unsettled, stressed, late or regularly tired then you need to make an adjustment somewhere in your daily program. We must take account of our behaviours. As we observe the patterns of our behaviours, we can make adjustments. We demonstrate that we are being accountable as we adjust our behaviours so that we are being conformed to the will of God.

'For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it?'¹¹ It is important that we consider the behaviours, attitudes and cultures of our lives. We each need to be attentive to what is happening in our lives so that we can put off what is not us and put on what is us. This is what it means to live accountably.

A Christian person who is standing accountably acknowledges that God knows them by name. As such, they have committed to live and walk in fellowship as a member of the body of Christ. They regularly seek fellowship with those whom God has called to care for His people.¹² In their fellowship together they are able to discuss all matters of life. In doing so, the Christian young person is able to hear a reflection of the reality of who they are and who they are not. Equally, as they are being trained as a disciple to become useful, they are bearing witness in themselves about the truth of their name. Such a person is also growing in confidence and is becoming increasingly aware of their insecurities and immaturities. As these come

8 Heb 12:11

9 Heb 12:6

10 Mat 7:16

11 Luk 14:28-29

12 Heb 13:17

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to their attention, they commit to resolving them in an accountable manner by finding fellowship with leaders, walking in obedience to the word of God, prayer, apology and forgiveness.

Another very important step in growing toward an accountable reality is to let go of self-definition and to let go of the need to control who you say you are. Our own desires and the vain longings of what we think to be true can rob us from hearing the very name that God has declared concerning us. An accountable son is beginning to accept their grace and call in Christ, which is confirmed and established by the witness within ourselves and by a witness among our brethren. This then illustrates that we trust the sight of our brethren and embrace their input for our lives.

To live accountably is to acknowledge that God knows us. No amount of religious effort will connect us to our name or to God. Accountability is the appropriation of our faith, and faith comes by hearing the word of Christ. His messengers proclaim our name to us through the preaching of the word from the beginning. As we receive the word, we can join a fellowship where our name will be revealed to us and where we will become our name. As we hear and obey God's word, we are doing God's will. This describes the very mode by which a son of God lives and the only way that we can become who God knows.

Study Questions - Standing in accountability

To live accountably is to be the person God made you to be. Ultimately, every person will give an account to God for how they lived their life. The reference point for this account will be the name and works that He wrote down about us before we were even conceived.

- In this season, where are you needing to grow in your accountability for your life?

- How do you know that these are the areas that you need to give attention to?

An accountable son of God accepts their grace and call in Christ. This is confirmed and established both by the witness within ourselves and by a witness among our brethren. These will not be in conflict with each other.

- Explain why discipleship is essential to living as a Christian who can give a good account to God for their life?

- How has the discipline of God been evident in your life? What impact has it had on the way that you live as a son of God? Give practical examples of these changes and their fruit in your life.

PERSEVERING IN OFFERING

Kane McNally

Call to move forward in our participation

As young people, we are called to participate in the life and ministry of the church. In our recent season, the Lord has been calling each of us forward in our participation in prayer, praise, worship, singing in the Spirit and body ministry. We are growing in confidence as the Lord instructs us in knowing how to conduct ourselves in His household.

Certainly, we all have much to learn! Our desire is that we can be fully operational as members of the body of Christ. The apostle Paul said that God *gives us the*

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capacity to persevere. This enabling is given to us so that we can learn to function and minister as He wills. This is not just as individuals, but also as congregations. We can be encouraged, then, to persevere in offering and service. Let's press in and press on, to learn how to effectively contribute and minister as a member of the body of Christ.

Persevering in prayer

Persevering in prayer is an essential part of our preparation towards each communion service. We make it a high priority to pray individually and to pray together, particularly in our prayer meetings. As we pray in the Holy Spirit we are building ourselves up in faith and preparing ourselves to hear what the Spirit is saying. This means that we come to the communion meeting ready to follow His leading. He will illuminate us to participate according to the gifts that He has given each person. We are illuminated also as we hear the word spoken. We receive instruction and wisdom for the way ahead as sons of God.

At times, the Holy Spirit will enable us to travail in prayer. This travail is a unique work of prayer. We labour in prayer with the Holy Spirit. As we pray in a unique tongue given by the Holy Spirit, we know that God's life is being multiplied as a gift to someone else. This may be expressed and ministered at the communion by us or another person. The life of God is passed on to the one in need.

With all this in mind, let's persevere in prayer. The apostle Paul exhorts us to pray without ceasing and Jude instructs us to pray always in the Holy Spirit, building ourselves up in our most holy faith.

Persevering in participation

When we gather together at the beginning of the communion meeting, we begin to participate by praising, singing, worshipping and fellowshiping together. Often we are exhorted to put off any thoughts which will distract us from participating in, and receiving, the ministry of the Spirit to us on the day. We can simply take accountability for ourselves and persevere to put off anything that will distract us. This means we can fully participate and enter in to what the Lord is wanting to minister through us, and to us, on the day.

Persevering in worship

As we begin to sing praises and participate in the communion service, we are ministering to the Lord and to one another. As we sing choruses led and hosted by graced leaders, we are beginning to be illuminated to what the Lord is saying to us. These leaders urge us to participate and engage with the word of the Lord, as we sing around the theme that the Holy Spirit is highlighting to us.

Those who are leading, call us to continue to press in and offer as we sing. As we offer ourselves, more illumination comes. We notice that our cares and anxieties are falling away, and God is meeting us. He is bringing grace and capacity to each body member as we participate. We receive capacity to sing, worship and fellowship as individuals and as a congregation. We are being equipped by the Lord so that we can participate, fellowship and worship as He wills.

Now that the Lord has equipped us individually and corporately to minister, the Holy Spirit takes the lead as He wills. Let's persevere and continue to grow in confidence so that we can receive instruction on what is happening as we sing praises and worship together. This is a real and tangible fellowship for us to grow in.

Singing in the Spirit together

After we have finished singing choruses, we begin to sing together in the Spirit. As we sing together in worship as a congregation, something amazing is taking place. We are singing and joining in one Spirit, even though there are many expressions. Each person in the congregation is adding a unique expression. And yet there is one corporate expression led by the Holy Spirit. We are singing in the Spirit and harmonising together as one congregation. The musicians are supporting and joining the expression of song as they 'sing' on their instruments.

As we participate in this way, we sing in the unity of the Spirit. There are many voices singing but we are flowing together in one Spirit. Every person sings with the voice God has given them. The Spirit leads us to swell in volume and expression together and then to quieten. When we sing and worship together, the Lord is singing in our midst. We ebb and flow, rise and fall, as we sing together, led by the Spirit. This is the fellowship of worship.

Spiritual songs

Quite often, as the Holy Spirit leads, there will be room for individual songs in the Spirit. From time to time some of us may be illuminated that the Lord is still calling us forward in our participation as a congregation. Perhaps there is more joy or confidence to press in and receive. It may be the case that we have not yet fully put off all hindrances. Some may exhort us and call for an obedience on this matter as they sing. Others will simply sing a song of joy or encourage us in our participation. As we respond, we are now, as a congregation, fully participating and joining what the Lord is seeking to achieve in the meeting.

There are other songs in the Spirit, too. At times, some with a particular grace may be illuminated around the fellowship we are now having with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. As they sing and minister, we are also illuminated. We receive knowledge and understanding regarding the nature of our fellowship with God, and we appreciate that we are in fellowship with God and our brethren.

There are also songs ministered by those in the congregation, which directly speak to us what God is saying. They are most often sung in the first person; for example, 'I call you to repent and believe.' This is God speaking to us, and it is ministered by a singer. We simply respond in obedience to this song, and we receive the ministry and capacity to achieve the obedience God is calling for.

Persevering in body ministry

The Holy Spirit is leading us as a congregation to see that we are fully equipped for the season ahead. He gives gifts to specific people in the congregation as a word to speak. This is the sovereign and specific word of the Lord, applied to our lives. The word spoken may be for an individual, families or even the whole congregation. This word applies directly to our lives and enables us to access grace. For example, the wisdom of God may be spoken to us for a work situation. A word addressing family culture may be spoken. A word of deliverance and healing may be ministered. Whatever the Holy Spirit is ministering in the meeting, one thing is for certain: we are gaining access to the grace of God to walk forward in obedience and confidence as sons of God.

We are qualified to participate in this ministry because we are baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and baptised in the Holy Spirit. We *are* members of His body. Did you know that to *every* member of the body of Christ is given a

special gift for the good of those in the body? The Holy Spirit moves upon us at times with illumination and gives us understanding to participate in this ministry. As we speak the word of the Lord, instruction from God is received on how to live as sons of God. We are able to access grace to walk the unique path the Lord has planned for us.

When we participate in body ministry, the body of Christ is built up in love through the proper working of every single body member. As we function in the gifts of the Spirit, we are building one another up according to the grace and gift that God supplies.

Eating and drinking at the Lord's table

We come to the communion table each week full of expectation to hear God's word and receive of His life. We appropriate the capacity that comes in the word that has been spoken, and receive God's life personally. As we eat and drink, there is mercy and grace for us. We receive grace to be the unique son of God He has planned us to be throughout the week. We can now walk forward, confidently equipped, enabled and encouraged to persevere as a son of God.

Persevere, don't disqualify yourself

It is important that you do not disqualify yourself when it comes to participating in body ministry. We can feel unworthy or feel we haven't measured up as sons of God through the week. The truth is that we *are* qualified because we are members of His body.

The apostle Paul uses the functioning of the human body to illustrate the operation of the body of Christ. Each part is necessary for the proper functioning of the body as a whole. Likewise, as members of the body of Christ, it is crucial that we do not believe our unique participation has little impact and is therefore not needed. On the other hand, let us not consider that we do not need someone else's participation. Rather, the function of each part of the body is essential to the effective working of the whole.

Exhortation to persevere in offering

It is most important that we persevere in offering. As we offer ourselves, we learn to participate as unique and precious members of the body of Christ from week to

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week. Remember, the Holy Spirit is giving us capacity to persevere. We are to come prepared in every season - whether we feel adequate or inadequate, and whether we are stressed or rejoicing. Even in seasons of difficulty and testing in our own sonship, let us persevere and remain encouraged. The Lord is ministering through us. And He is ministering to us. As we persevere, He is providing everything we need, week by week.

Study Questions - Persevering in offering

We are learning how to conduct ourselves in the household of God. Through instruction, our confidence to participate in prayer, praise, worship, singing in the Spirit, and body ministry is continuing to grow. The encouragement to us all is to persevere in our offering and service.

- What aspects of offering and service in God's house are you being encouraged to grow and persevere in at this time?

- What are some of the things that can hinder your participation in the life of the body?

- How are you finding deliverance from these unnecessary hindrances?

The Holy Spirit is given as a gift to each person who will receive Him. With the Holy Spirit, we are able to persevere in offering.

- What is your testimony of growing in the gifts of the Holy Spirit?

SALVATION IN COMMUNITY

Tim Maurice

Introduction

Wherever we look today we see the word of God being rejected in our society. The world is no longer simply ignoring the gospel: it is now trying to redefine the foundations of what Christians believe. There is mounting pressure for churches to accept sinful behaviour as normal. There is much fear being sown into society, as the media continually sows hostile and profane ideas into people's hearts.

Where are we safe from this pressure? Where is the truth to be found? It is found in true Christian community - the body of Christ. The church is called 'the pillar

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and ground of truth', and it is here that the Lord places His name. We know that the name of the Lord is a strong tower that keeps the righteous safe.

It is God's purpose for you that, as you seek after righteousness more and more, you will be kept safe from the corruption in the world. You will not fear what is happening. In fact, you will rejoice that, even as sin abounds, so grace abounds all the more. God is victorious and you are in Him!

As you read this article, think about these questions: What is a truly Christian community? How can I commit myself more fully into my local church community? What does Christian culture look like in a local church? In what areas is the Lord urging me to put off behaviour that is not Christian?

We want every one of you to understand that your salvation is found in the community of Christ. This is where you will find grace to live as an overcomer. It is where you find victory.

Christian community

As sons of God, our community is defined by who God is. When we say 'who God is' we mean 'the fellowship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit'. Their fellowship is the foundation of what ours should be. So, how do They live together?

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit live in a fellowship of giving and receiving. They show love to one another by laying down Their lives for each other. Even though They are three separate Persons, They are also united completely in one Spirit. There is no division between Them. There is no fear of loss, no need to defend Themselves. They live at peace with one another.

If we think of how this works in a Christian family, it will help to illustrate what we mean. A father, a mother, a son and a daughter are all different people. In that sense, they are all individuals. The father does not try to be a mother to the children, and the mother does not attempt to be the head of the house. They are unique people with very different roles in life.

At the same time, they are one family. If one member is harmed, they will all feel it. They maintain their unity by being of one and the same spirit, which unites all their hearts. They are led in one direction, not several. And, in being united, none of them feels demeaned or less important than anyone else. Each one is valued for who they are. They are all uniquely themselves and also completely 'one'.

This is an imperfect picture because, of course, God's capacity for love far exceeds ours. But the point of it is this: *in Christ, individual identity and community are in complete harmony*. The bonds of love work in such a way that unity does not come at the expense of identity. The uniqueness of each member is preserved. This is the power of life laid down. The strong do not prey upon the weak. Each person is governed by the fear of the Lord.

This is the picture of true Christian community. God brings us to birth and causes us to grow in His community. This community is made up of many sons of God. Each one of us is called by name, as an individual. But when we heed that call, God commands us to stop chasing our individual expression. He asks us to learn how to fellowship, to live and to love in community.

Israel - the covenant community

Think about the nation of Israel. Members of the nation were required to bring a personal offering from what they owned. But there was only one place where this offering could be made - the tabernacle. It was in the tabernacle that the Lord placed His name and His presence.¹

You were only included in God's covenant if you belonged to Israel. Furthermore, all members of the nation had to obey 'the law of the house'. God dealt with each person uniquely; but their salvation was obtained by belonging to God's covenant community. Israel was God's chosen nation; His instrument of salvation to the whole world.² If you were cast out of the nation, you were outside God's salvation.³ The nation was called 'God's firstborn son'.⁴

But then Jesus became flesh and was proclaimed as God's Firstborn. The Bible tells us that, as believers, we have now been joined to 'the church of the firstborn' if we are in Him.⁵ His body is now our nation. In the Bible it is called 'the Israel of God'.⁶ Becoming a Christian requires joining His body. This body is made up of His people, with Him as its Head.⁷ Once we are in His body, we must learn to abide.

1 Deu 12:11 7 Col 1:18

2 Exo 19:5-6

3 Lev 17:10

4 Exo 4:22

5 Heb 12:23

6 Gal 6:16

Human beings and community

We begin to abide in Him as we overcome the fear of losing control over our lives. We trust ourselves to the Lord, who holds the secret of our name and guards it.⁸ We are not afraid of being lost in fellowship.⁹ In fact, we recognise that it is in fellowship where our identity is truly found. No man knows himself until he stops fearing the loss of his own life. Like the prodigal son, he is safe when he returns to the watchman of his soul.¹⁰

People in the world cannot understand this. They have not been illuminated by the Spirit of God. Until the love of God has poured into a person's heart, they will not be able to love the way God loves. They will fear that they will not be heard. They will also fear losing the right to do what they want. When these fears rise up, such a person will pull back from fellowship and love; for without trust we cannot love.

The systems of the world reflect man's inability to trust. Either they place too much emphasis on the individual - what is called 'personal freedom'; or they give more power to the government, in the name of stability. For this reason, there is no true community outside the body of Christ. Neither lawless freedom nor control can be the basis for fellowship.

Within the body of Christ we can accept who we are, without fear. And this is God's will for you. As you learn to give thanks for what God has given you, you are able to make offering. You are able to enter the true tabernacle. This is God's place for you to make offering.

Found among His people

As you make offering, you will be found among the people of God. You will be part of the living fellowship of the church. As we have said already, the church is called 'the pillar and ground of truth'. This means that it is the good ground where you are to be planted and grow. But we cannot be planted until we lay down our life. Jesus said, 'I have power to lay it down and take it up again. For this reason the Father loves Me.' The laying down of life among brethren establishes the ground of fellowship.

8 2Ti 1:12

9 1Jn 4:18

10 1Pe 2:25

What is fellowship? One way of answering that question is to consider how fellowship is broken. This happened first when Adam and Eve listened to the serpent instead of to God. They did not separate from God when they ate from the wrong tree. They began to move away from God the moment they received an alternative word. They did not keep faith with the word of God, which had established them in fellowship. Instead, they listened to the voice of Satan.

You will agree that someone who is listening to Satan is not going hear from the Lord. That is what Adam and Eve did. They departed from their security in the community of God's fellowship as soon as they accepted the question, 'Did God really say?'¹¹ They allowed another voice to question the wisdom of God. This is what is taking place in the wider community today. People have arrogantly assumed that they have the right to question God's unchanging word and surpassing wisdom.

Satan and lawlessness

One final point about Adam and Eve needs to be made. Their decision to go their own way was motivated by the spirit of lawlessness, or iniquity. This spirit is sown by Satan. Now, Satan (when he was still called Lucifer) lived as an angel of the Lord in harmony with Him, until 'iniquity was found' in him. Satan refused to be defined by the Lord and to dwell in peace in the fellowship of God.

This is why he was 'cast as profane' from heaven. To be profane is to violate offering in the house of God. This is what a lawless person does when they decide to define their own offering. Satan motivates people to do this, stirring in them the desire to be like God, refusing to submit to God in any way.

The working of Satan

Adam and Eve's fall shows us the way sin gains control over people. The process starts with temptation, and the temptation provokes a desire. What happens next is that desire gives birth to sin, and finally to death.¹² When Adam and Eve listened to the lie of Satan, they suddenly wanted to be like God. The 'working of Satan' is based in selling people the same lie. If they accept the lie, what will stir within them is the spirit that is opposed to Christ - the spirit of antichrist.

¹¹ Gen 3:1-6

¹² Jas 1:14-15

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Satan comes to tempt us all. We are tempted to 'go our own way'. We will be tempted to believe that God has not spoken on a matter to us. Or we will be tempted to think that God's word is not final - that we can still get what we want. This is how deception works. We are deceived when we are led away from the simplicity that is in Christ.¹³ When you dwell simply in the body of Christ, in a fellowship of one spirit with your brethren, you will avoid deception.

That is why one of Satan's aims is to entice you away from being 'of the same mind' with your brethren.¹⁴ Once that happens, you will find that you cannot resist accusing or excusing yourself and others.¹⁵ You will open the door to the spirit of lawlessness.

We need to be very clear about this. Any voice that breaks the bonds of trust in the body of Christ is the voice of Satan. Any voice that questions the truth of the word of God is the voice of Satan. Any voice that encourages compromise instead of holiness is the voice of Satan. These are simple truths from which we should not depart. There is no middle ground where we can be a Christian and still indulge our own fantasies about life. There is only the truth or a lie.

Understanding the simplicity of this choice keeps us in the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord governs our attitude to fellowship and our diligence in living as a disciple. Without the fear of the Lord, we will presume upon God's mercy, not seeing the necessity of obedience.

The evidence of salvation

The primary evidence of our salvation is that we love. The apostle John wrote, 'We know we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren'.¹⁶ Now, when we talk about love, we need to be very careful about what we mean. When the world uses the word 'love', it is applied in different ways, none of which are measured to the word of God.

For example, people 'fall in love', meaning that they cannot (and should not have to) control their desire. Or they demand 'love' that tolerates any behaviour, which means: 'I can do what I want and you have to approve.' And, equally, 'love' can mean the absence of discipline or of going along with ungodly people or compromising on moral issues so that others don't feel 'left out'.

13 2Co 11:3

14 Php 2:2

15 Rom 2:15

16 1Jn 3:14

But John defines love very differently: 'By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us.'¹⁷ By this we *know* love. We don't necessarily feel this kind of love, and we don't find it to be natural at first. But we do come to know what love truly is, and also to see when we fall short of it. We learn how to love and come to know love in the safe boundaries of the body of Christ. We begin to live as God lives, to love as God loves.

As this takes place, the love of God starts to compel us towards the actions of love.¹⁸ These actions mean the laying down of our lives - the giving up of ourselves for others, valuing others over ourselves, serving, being patient, withholding judgement upon people, praying in the Spirit for their salvation or their needs, heeding the word of the messenger, resolving relationships where we need to.

Our life in the body of Christ

So the body of Christ is where the individual and the community are in complete harmony. We can be fully ourselves and also fully joined to our brethren. Like the Israelites, we come to the tabernacle with our offering. We present ourselves to the Lord as a living sacrifice.¹⁹ We approach the door of the tabernacle to hear the Lord speak. This tabernacle is made up of our brethren. It is among them that the Lord speaks. It is here that we find access to 'the mind of Christ'.

And this is what we do at our weekly communion. We find grace to live at the table of the Lord. We join the 'Feast of Unleavened Bread', committing ourselves to the purging work of the Holy Spirit.²⁰ We commit ourselves into the fellowship of our brethren, in the church of the firstborn. In doing so, a miracle takes place. By giving our lives away, we are more and more conformed to being the unique son whom the Lord Himself designed. We become truly ourselves, inheriting, finally, a name that will endure forever.

17 1Jn 3:16

18 2Co 5:14

19 Rom 12:1

20 1Co 5:8

Study Questions - Salvation in community

God places us in Christian communities. Our local communion gathering is our tangible point of connection to the community of the body of Christ.

- How can you commit yourself more fully in your local church community?

- In what areas is the Lord urging you to put off behaviours that are not Christian? How do you know that these are the areas that He is addressing?

The primary evidence of our salvation is that we love our brothers and sisters in Christ. We can only receive love; and it is revealed when we lay our lives down for one another.

- What is your testimony of receiving and growing in the love of God?

- How has the way that you engage with others in your local church changed as a consequence?

PERSEVERING IN RELATIONSHIP

Lachlan Perrin

In the days ahead we will see much opposition to the kingdom of God. The spirit of the world will gain energy and increase its warfare against the church. This will make it difficult for Christians to remain obedient to the word of God. The Scripture warns us that the love of most Christians will grow cold because of 'lawlessness'.¹ Jesus used the term 'lawlessness' to describe behaviour, attitudes and cultures that cast off the restraints defined by the word. In fact, the majority of Christians today will backslide, betray one another and hate one another as

¹ Mat 24:12

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we approach the fullness of times.² This is a terrifying thought! You might be shocked as you consider these words of Jesus. And you might wonder about your existing relationships in the Lord. We must each ask the question, ‘What can I do to persevere in these relationships?’

Two lies that the world is using to promote lawlessness involve sexuality and gender distinction. Immorality is increasing in the world because sex, sexuality and gender are being separated from identity. As Christians, our sexuality does not belong to anyone else. We have been bought with a price and instructed to glorify God in our body.³ This means we keep our sexuality hidden, or in covenant, with the fatherhood of God.⁴ But in the world today, a person’s sexuality is considered to be ‘out there’ for all to see. As a result, relationships, trust and respect between people in society are being broken. If the church embraces these lies, then we will no longer appreciate and honour the godly identity of our brothers and sisters in Christ. The focus of this article is to understand how we persevere in godly relationships. This knowledge is the foundation necessary for a Christian courtship.

The desire of the Gentiles

Let’s state the obvious. Christians cannot escape the increasingly sexual nature of the world. Furthermore, Christian teenagers and young adults will experience the physical and emotional changes of adolescence. For a Christian, adolescence is the physical, emotional and spiritual journey from childhood to responsible adult discipleship. It is helpful to point out that you will become sexually capable while you are a teenager, not when you are a spiritually and emotionally established adult. Therefore, you can acknowledge the effect of your hormones. You can stop feeling guilty or ashamed about your increasing awareness of the opposite sex and your own sexuality. You will begin noticing the opposite sex, you will experience feelings of attraction, you will have lots of questions, and you will wonder about God’s plan for your future marriage partner. You can relax. These thoughts are normal. Can you resist becoming anxious about finding a marriage partner? Instead, can you apply yourself to understand what the Bible teaches about gender and sexuality? This will help you to remain accountable for your godly identity.

2 Mat 24:10

3 1Co 6:20

4 Son 4:12

The key for Christians is to reject a common worldly mindset. The world promotes looking at and assessing other people based on how they affect us. And we are then encouraged to form opinions based on how our own sexuality is affected. The advertising industry plays on this worldly preoccupation. They design advertisements using sexual signals to catch our attention. Let's take heed to ourselves when we approach relationships. A person's sexuality must never be separated from their identity. If we view our brothers and sisters this way, we are looking at them with a pornographic mindset. We are regarding their sexuality as 'public property'. They become an 'object' for our self-centred desires and gratification. This is the mindset of unbelieving men and women who prey on others, sexually. They desire to 'conquer' others, both visually and physically.⁵ The apostle Peter reminds us that we are to live the rest of our time in the flesh 'no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God'.⁶ He calls the pursuit of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousing, drinking parties and abominable idolatries 'the desire of the Gentiles'.⁷ Many of you would recognise these activities as 'normal behaviour' for worldly young people. These interactions and 'friendships' are based on mutual comfort and selfish gain. Christian relationships are entirely different. We discipline ourselves not to perceive others on the basis of how they make us feel. Instead, we appreciate and attribute worth to their identity because they do not 'belong' to us.

Identity and gender

If we become lawless, then our capacity to express godly identity is removed. Lawlessness deceives us and convinces us that we can define our own identity. But a self-defined identity will only ever be the expression of an idol. True identity is our essential being, predestined by the Father. We each received our identity when we were conceived in the womb of our mother. It is our personal possession. And it becomes our will and motivation for life because we are 'self-conscious'. We could think of identity as our 'I'. When we believe or say things such as, 'I feel...' or 'I desire ...' or 'I hope ...', we are expressing identity. As Christians, we accept that obedience to the word of God sanctifies us to our godly identity and enables us to live righteously. If we reject God's will for our life, we cannot walk the unique pathway that He has planned for us. If we proceed to fellowship or make offering in this condition, God finds us unacceptable. Offering of this nature

5 Pro 7

6 1Pe 4:2

7 1Pe 4:3

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dishonours godly identity. This would result in Jesus saying to us, 'I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness'.⁸

Gender is fundamentally linked to identity. Every person is created male or female, and held accountable for honouring their gender. This is an element of our obedience and calling in Christ. We read in the book of Genesis concerning God's desire to create mankind. 'God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.'⁹ The Scripture nominates gender, whether male or female, as the first distinguishing characteristic of mankind's existence. The apostle Paul warned us that unrighteous fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, those who are effeminate, and homosexuals 'will not inherit the kingdom of God'.¹⁰ The Greek word that is translated 'effeminate' means 'soft'. We can consider an effeminate person as someone failing to measure themselves to the full stature of their identity in Christ, with regard to gender. They are not guarding the lines of sanctification that define their gender. They are not expressing themselves as male or female in a way that regards true godly identity. By doing this, they are 'quarrelling with their Maker'.¹¹

The lie of the world concerning gender is that being male or female is a decision we can make. 'Fully male' and 'fully female' are the two ends of a long line. The lie being promoted is that there are countless possible 'genders' in between male and female. Modern worldly philosophies argue that we should choose our gender. Males are encouraged to express femininity, and females are encouraged to express masculinity. Factors such as biology, whether we 'feel' more male or female, whether we prefer to express ourselves in a female or a male way, and any aberrant sexual 'preference' are used to 'calculate' our gender. The gospel rejects this approach completely. This is a warfare seeking to destroy godliness. Gender confusion corrupts our capacity to express identity. The Scripture is clear: 'Whatever exists has already been named, and it is known what man is'.¹²

God's creation of man as male and female is founded upon His desire to bring many sons to glory. God has given mankind the privilege of procreation in order to participate in His covenantal purpose. However, this has been given to us in this lifetime only. Sexual function should be understood as the procreative function that God has provided for a married man and woman. We understand this better when we recognise that there is no marriage or procreation in the new heavens

8 Mat 7:23

9 Gen 1:27

10 1Co 6:9

11 Isa 29:16

12 Ecc 6:10

and new earth.¹³ We remain male and female with regard to our identity, but we no longer have children. The point we are making is that any corrupted sexual orientation, such as homosexuality or bisexuality, is an aberration outside of God's design. 'Bisexuality' is an extreme case of gender and sexual confusion. It is when a person believes they are sexually attracted to both genders. Sexual 'preference' is not a 'deeper' level or indicator for gender. No-one is predisposed to an aberrant sexual orientation. This is a fallen condition of the 'old man' that must be put off and overcome through the power of the cross. Our gender is implicit to our true identity. And true identity is the 'first man' in its fathered image, together with new creation life in Christ.

Sexuality

The spirit of the world instructs us to separate sexuality from identity. This can be seen in the acceptance of pornography and immorality within society today. But sexuality is a function of gender and therefore cannot be disconnected from identity. It is part of our essential maleness or femaleness. It is helpful to think of sexuality this way. We are continually expressing our gender, but we are not continually expressing ourselves sexually towards others. Nor should we presume that others are doing that to us! As Christians we make two commitments. First, we do not view others on the basis of their sexuality. This was the faith of Job. He testified, 'I have made a covenant with my eyes'.¹⁴ We observe and respect the maleness and femaleness of others, but we discipline ourselves not to contemplate them sexually. Their sexuality does not belong to us, and we must not 'conquer' them with our eyes. We attribute 'honour' to others when we view and respond to them according to identity.

Second, we guard the communication of our own sexuality so that it remains covenanted with the fatherhood of God. Paul instructs every Christian disciple to 'know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honour'.¹⁵ Practically, we give attention to the way we relate with the opposite gender. We do not charm or flatter others using showy sophistication. This behaviour is commonly called 'flirting'. We do not give inordinate and undue attention to those who trigger romantic attraction in us; for example, 'holding someone's eye' across the room. We do not communicate in self-revealing ways to create inappropriate intimacy. This could also include 'deep and meaningful' conversations that we scheme to

¹³ Luk 20:34-35

¹⁴ Job 31:1

¹⁵ 1Th 4:4

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have. Also, we would not dress in a way that draws unnecessary attention to our sexuality. The Bible calls this 'the attire of a harlot'. We do not maintain social media pages that broadcast how we would like to be seen. This is the model of an 'exhibitionist'. We do not use social media to pursue others voyeuristically. This is the definition of a 'peeping tom' who looks through the windows of other people's lives. And we do not say to others, by text message and 'posts', what we would never say to them face to face. That behaviour is cowardly and nothing more than pursuing a fantasy. Rather, we conduct ourselves in 'sanctification'. That is, we take responsibility for how we express ourselves when we meet others.

A figure quoted recently estimated that one person in every American household is addicted to pornography. Viewing other people based on their sexuality is now commonplace in the world. There is increasing pressure on you, as young adults of this generation, to stray from the will of God in sexual ways. This will include agreeing, in principle, to sex before marriage, casual sexual relations, homosexual experimentation, orgies and sexual fantasies that are satisfied by pornography, and dehumanised behaviour and a promiscuous approach to relationships. The apostle Paul removed any doubt when he said, 'You know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God'.¹⁶ Sexual immorality will impact on your identity because it casts off the predestination God has planned for you. Unless an immoral person engages a process of restoration, they will remain bound to their transgression and its corrupting effect on their identity. Moral aberrations, sexual fantasizing and compulsive masturbation are ways of escaping when someone is not coping with their godly identity. They may not be accepting of their responsibilities in life. Or they may be escaping the steadfastness of accountability that they require to fulfil their sonship. As a result, they become sexually immoral to try to validate their identity. But this is a false search for identity that only results in uncleanness.

Do not awaken love until God pleases

When is the right time to pursue a romantic relationship? We have said for many years that, 'Only teenagers date'. An immature Christian will pursue a 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend' because of undeveloped identity and insecurity. Being 'in a relationship' is attractive because it becomes a 'status' or 'ego boost'. The

¹⁶ Eph 5:5

Persevering in relationship

Scripture, however, supports sanctified courting with the intent and readiness for godly marriage. Someone is ready for marriage when they can sustain the physical, financial, emotional and spiritual responsibilities of 'building a house'.¹⁷ Further to this, a Christian is ready to commence finding a spouse when their godly identity has the formation and structure required to sustain godly love. We love someone with the love of God when we value and appreciate them for the way God has created them. The foundation for godly romance is identity. It is never what another person can do for us! The apostle John wrote, 'For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome'.¹⁸ The indication that someone is established in the love of God is that they treasure obeying His proceeding word. This is the person who is secure in their identity and prepared to offer godly love as the basis for persevering in a relationship.

¹⁷ Isa 66:1

¹⁸ 1Jn 5:3

Study Questions - Persevering in relationship

Our awareness of the cultural differences between those who are a part of the body of Christ and those who are a part of the world should be very sharp. This is particularly the case for matters of gender distinction and sexuality.

- How are you making these distinctions clear in the way that you live your life as a Christian?

- In what ways are you being pressured to compromise on the culture of Christ in relation to gender and sexuality? How are you responding to these pressures?

As Christians, we accept that obedience to the word of God sanctifies us to the identity that the Father has given us and enables us to live righteously.

- What initiatives are you taking to guard yourself and others in relation to matters of sexuality?

- How is this commitment to sanctification enabling you to meet your brothers and sisters in Christ freely and considerately? Give some practical examples.

THE OTHER LAW

- *persevering in fellowship*

Bruce Hamilton

Introduction

The apostle Paul wrote, 'For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.'¹ Paul refers to four different kinds of law: 'the law of God', 'another law in my members', 'the law of my mind', and 'the law of sin which is in my members'. Paul noted that

¹ Rom 7:22-23

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the other law and the law of sin were in his members. They were in his flesh. He also wrote, 'For I know that in me [that is, in my flesh] nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find ... if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.'²

Paul was not making excuses or saying that he was powerless to obey God even though he wanted to obey. Instead, he was beginning to explain the mechanism, or the law, that works against every person to prevent them from being able to obey God just because they choose to obey. Paul goes on to further explain how to overcome this mechanism and therefore to also overcome sin.

The whole of life is lived between these four laws. The effect of these upon your life will depend on whether you live according to the flesh or the Spirit.

The natural way of the flesh opposes the way of the Spirit. They are contrary to one another.³ They are in conflict. Like Paul, as you seek to do the will of God, you will realise that this conflict is always present with you. Being a Christian does not remove the contrariness and conflict from your life. However, that does not mean you have to live your life being always conflicted, struggling and frustrated. You can delight in and fulfil the law of God despite the conflict between your flesh and the Spirit of God dwelling in you. This is because Christ has condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.⁴

If you are led by the Spirit, you are a son of God and you are not under law. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes you free from the law of sin and death.⁵

The four laws from Romans chapter seven

The law of God

The law of God explains how God lives and relates. It is how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit live in fellowship together. It is the way of love. It is the law of the Spirit of life to you when it is the law that is written on your heart by Jesus and the Holy Spirit. It is the law of sin and death to you when it is used by sin to kill you.

2 Rom 7:18,20

3 Gal 5:17

4 Rom 8:3-4

5 Rom 8:2,14.
Gal 5:18

The other law

The law of the Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus comes into our life once Christ has come to live in each one of us by the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit is within you and has brought Christ within you, then the Spirit is writing the law on your heart.

The law of God is the law of the Spirit of life when the Spirit is working in you and giving you the power to fulfil the law of God. The law on its own cannot give you life. If you grab the law to try to use it, it will kill you. If you let the Spirit do it, it will give you life. The law will give you life, only if the Spirit does it. The Holy Spirit gives you power to overcome the temptation that sin uses to take you captive to serve it.

The purpose of God's law, or commandments, is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.⁶ The law of God is good. Jesus said, 'Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.'⁷

We can conclude, then, that the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.⁸ This is delightful! Just as Paul found, you also can delight in the law of God according to your inward man.

The other law

The other law can best be described as 'my law'. It is different from 'the law of my mind'. Some translations of the Bible even call it 'a different law at work in my members'. This other, different, law in my members is simply the expression of what I want for myself. It is the law of self-preservation and self-seeking. My law is trying to convince the law of my mind to agree with and choose the way that seems right to me, rather than God's way for me. It is contrary to the law of God. In fact, my law is contrary to all other laws. It does not agree with any other law because it believes that it is right, no matter what any other law says. If there does happen to be some agreement, my law sees it as the other agreeing with me, and not me agreeing with the other. My law is self-centred. Every self-centred attitude that demands the right to want what I want and be who I want to be comes from this law.

6 1Ti 1:5

7 Mat 5:17-19

8 Rom 7:12

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Satan understands how this other law in our members works. Consider Satan's accusation to God concerning Job. The basis of the accusation was that even the most righteous of men was really only living according to his own law. Satan said, 'Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. But stretch out Your hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!'⁹ Satan was saying that because Job's life was blessed and things were going well, it only appeared as though he was living according to the law of God. The accusation was that the other law in Job, and therefore also in all mankind, would always choose the way that seemed to give him the best personal outcome. In addition to this, Satan believes that the other law will prevail and that it will even judge God if it seems as though He is not causing life to be comfortable and easy. However, Job did not sin nor charge God with wrong.¹⁰

The other law in your members is doing two things. First, it is warring against the law of your mind and, second, it is working to bring you into captivity to the law of sin. If this other law is your law, then why is it working to bring you into captivity to sin? Why isn't it working for your good? It is not actually the goal of the other law to bring you into captivity to sin or to lead you to death. Rather, captivity to sin is the result because your law thinks that it is doing you good and that it is the best way for you. Your law appears to be doing all it can to sustain and improve your life but, instead, it is only leading you to death.¹¹

The other law in your members will never choose to suffer or persevere under trial unless it is sure that things will ultimately work out for your good in the end. It is the law of self-preservation, and so it causes you to be tricked into thinking your way is better than God's way. In fact, God's way will even seem foolish to you.¹² God's way is not your way and His thoughts are not your thoughts.¹³ If you believe that your way is the right and best way, then you have been deceived, and you will be taken captive by sin which leads to death.

The law of my mind

The law of my mind is my sense of right and wrong, justice and injustice. It is my conscience which works to either accuse me or excuse me.¹⁴ By the law of my mind, I judge and justify my thoughts and actions. It also helps me to evaluate, understand and choose how I relate to others and to the world around me. In this

9 Job 2:45

14 Rom 2:15

10 Job 1:22

11 Pro 14:12.

Pro 16:25. Rom 8:6

12 1Co 2:14

13 Isa 55:8

way, it helps me to connect with other people. It is what helps me to live and be a part of a community.

I use my mind to reason, plan and choose. I can set my mind on something, and this motivates me towards some form of action. If I set my mind on the things of the flesh, it is because the law of my mind is agreeing with the other law in me.¹⁵ If I set my mind on the things of the Spirit, I delight in the law of God, but the other law in my members is warring against the law of my mind to try to turn it back to serve myself and satisfy my fleshly desires.

I can train my mind so that I will think and act in a certain way. This can be a positive thing. We read in the book of Proverbs, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.'¹⁶ However, you cannot overcome evil just with good training. Paul wrote to warn the Corinthian church, 'Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits".'¹⁷ Have you noticed that it is not the other way around? Good habits cannot overcome evil. This is because good habits are just my law at work. Training, discipline and self-regulation, without the Spirit of God, are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.¹⁸ Your will may be to fulfil the law of God, but you discover that you are powerless to actually do what you 'will to do'. Your mind must be renewed by the Holy Spirit to know God's will and to serve Him.¹⁹ It is not by your own efforts that you can prevail to live according to God's way. For it is by God who works in you, both to will and to do for His good pleasure.²⁰

Paul said that it was no longer him doing the things that he did not want to do, but sin in him.²¹ In saying this, he was not trying to avoid accountability for his actions by blaming sin. Instead, he was saying that the action of sin in his flesh was due to the weakness of his flesh.²² Even though sin was present with him, it was being dealt with in his life because he was in fellowship with God, and the blood of Christ was cleansing him from all sin.²³ Because Paul was living according to the Spirit, his mind was set on the Spirit, and so he was not a slave to sin.

The law of sin

The law of sin works against the law of God by lies and deceit. The law of sin does not work by truth. Sin only has power in your life by taking God's law and using

15 Rom 8:5	21 Rom 7:17,20
16 Pro 22:6	22 Rom 8:3-4
17 1Co 15:33	23 1Jn 1:3-10
18 Col 2:20-21	24 1Co 15:56.
19 Rom 12:2. Tit 3:5	Rom 7:8
20 Php 2:13	

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it against you because you cannot fulfil it in your own strength.²⁴ The law of sin abuses God's law because it uses it to kill you when the purpose of God's law is to bring you life and not death.

Sin works in the following way. First, your own law causes you to have your own desires. Second, you are tempted when you are drawn away by your own desires and convinced that you can have what you want. Third, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. Desire has conceived when the law of your mind is set on taking action to fulfil your fleshly desires. Sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.²⁵

All flesh is sinful, and this has been the case since the fall of Adam and Eve.²⁶ For this reason, the law is weak through the flesh and is unable to bring us life. However, Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin. He condemned sin in the flesh to bring us life and to lead us by the Spirit into fellowship with God.²⁷ Christ has opened a new and living way which enables us to rule over sin rather than being taken captive by the law of sin.²⁸

Persevering in fellowship

Not only do we have to persevere and be patient because of the contrariness between our flesh and the Spirit, but we also have to persevere and be patient with our fellow brethren in Christ because of the contrariness between their flesh and the Spirit. Just as God is patient and merciful to us, we must be patient and merciful to others. God's love is patient and kind; it does not seek its own way; it bears all things and it endures all things. Consider the perseverance of Job and the end intended by the Lord. The Lord is very compassionate and merciful.²⁹ This is how we are to love one another. Paul declared, 'Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.'³⁰ May it be that we are also of the same mind towards one another.

The Spirit and flesh are contrary to one another and our flesh is weak, which causes the course of our life to be narrow and difficult. For this reason, we need strength to be able to persevere and endure the trials of our faith and the troubles that we face. The Spirit of God is working in us, and for us, to lead us not into

25 Jas 1:14-15

31 Heb 10:36-39

26 Rom 5:12,19

27 Rom 8:3-4

28 Heb 10:20

29 Jas 5:11

30 2Ti 2:10

The other law

temptation and to deliver us from evil. The Spirit leads us into fellowship so that we can be strengthened to be able to continue to do the will of God and not draw back again to the way of our flesh, which leads to death.³¹

The lesson for us is that we need to be joined to the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – which includes every believer who walks according to the Spirit and not after the flesh. This is how we can fulfil the law of God. When we have the love of God poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we can love God and love our fellow brethren in Christ.³² In fellowship, we can strengthen our brethren and they can strengthen us to be able to continue to walk according to the Spirit.

³² Rom 5:5.
Gal 5:13-18.
1Pe 1:22

Study Questions - The other law

The whole of our life is lived through the four laws – the law of God, another law in my members, the law of my mind, and the law of sin which is in my members.

- How do you know that you have received the law of God? How is this evident in your life?

- What examples do you have of the impact of ‘my law’ being expressed in the actions and behaviours of your life? What impact did this have on others?

- How do we set our minds on the things of the Spirit? What is the practical outcome of this in your life?

- What is the law of sin, and how does it work? Give practical examples of its impact on your behaviour and attitudes at times.

We can fulfil the law of God as we are joined to the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The evidence that we have joined this fellowship is that we receive the word of God and love our brothers and sisters in the body of Christ.

- What does it mean, practically, for you to persevere in fellowship? Why is persevering in fellowship necessary for walking according to the Spirit as an individual?

AGE SIXTEEN TO TWENTY-ONE

Andrew Hay

In attempting to assist Christian young people who are struggling with their faith and personal commitment, I have come across many pastors who encourage their church's youth with the phrase, 'Fake it til you make it'. The meaning is that the young person should stick with the program and pretend that everything is fine until one day when 'they'll realise they're going okay'. The problem is that this approach doesn't work. The average dropout rate of youth from churches is between 80 and 90 percent.

Certainly, every 16-21 year-old Christian will feel there are times in their life when they are just 'putting on a good front'. The answer, however, is not to simply hope

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that these issues will go away. In fact, you must firstly understand that these years are actually a positive season that every Christian teenager must walk through to become a responsible, accountable and active member of the body of Christ. If you persevere in understanding and addressing the issues of these years, you will make faith real in your life.

Putting off ‘childish ways’

Young people who grow up in our church families will begin to hear the call of the Lord to them in a fresh way in their late teenage years. It has been most helpful to understand that this is not the process of new birth, because we know that every child who is under the faith of their parents is already a member of Christ, and counted as a son of God. Rather, young people are beginning to settle their own decision to become a disciple.

The Holy Spirit will be challenging you to stand up in our own faith; to declare that Christ is Lord of your life, regardless of your family, your circumstances, or your upbringing. You are being called to apply yourselves to the things you have heard and been taught through your childhood.

At first, you may feel uncomfortable as you become aware of ‘childish things’ that need to be put away. You may also wonder about how you make these changes. Whatever your response, the Scriptures are clear. Continuing in an immature mode simply isn’t an option.

‘When I was a child, I used to speak like a child, think like a child, reason like a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.’¹

One of the first and most important things that you begin to understand is that obedience to the word of God is the key to growing in maturity and putting off childish behaviours. The difficulty is that your experience of obedience will have mainly involved simply doing what your parents tell you. Of course, we will quickly realise that trying to ‘do’ the word in the same way doesn’t work. The Bible teaches that we must learn how to obey from the heart.

These verses from Romans chapter six are helpful.

1 1Co 13:11

2 Rom 6:17-18

'Thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.'² It is interesting that Paul identified God as the source of the Roman believers' obedience. To obey His word from the heart is not something that we can just decide 'to do'. The Holy Spirit pours God's love into our hearts so we can know the power of Christ's obedience. Like the Roman Christians, we can be set free from sin to become slaves of righteousness. In these early years of discipleship you will begin to understand how to hear the word by faith and see it bring change to your life.

God will also be speaking about seeing various other elements of your life become more mature and accountable. For example, many teenagers will have enjoyed participating in family devotions and Bible studies. They may even have their own devotional time but, generally, will have felt included in these things through their family participation. In the early young adult years, however, the Holy Spirit will challenge the young person to upgrade their prayer and Bible study habits.

It is common for young people to struggle to make this shift. At first, you might feel that your prayer life seems to be little more than a lifeless routine. You could become condemned and might even be tempted to 'fake it'. You must take heart, however, and remember that it is God Himself who wants to meet with you and teach you how to persevere. He is speaking to you as a son and calling you to press in to prayer. As you pray in the Holy Spirit, you will be strengthened to become a disciple who is spiritually alert and completely focused on His kingdom and the body of Christ.

Asking questions

Another feature of the later teen years is that young people begin to re-look at many of the things they have learnt and taken for granted. They will also find that secular teachers, work mates, lecturers and friends want to test and debate their faith. They may also begin to notice and become concerned about gaps between what is preached at church and what is lived within the culture of their family or within various friendship groups in the church.

You should not think something is wrong because you are asking these questions. These experiences are an essential part of each young person coming to own their

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discipleship apart from any family tradition or church peer group. We remember that Jesus said to Peter, *'When you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.'*³ In making the shift to adult discipleship, you will realise that knowing the love of God and following Christ comes before finding a neat explanation for every issue and dilemma. In learning this truth you will also come to understand how to let some questions go and not waste time worrying about things that simply don't matter.

During these years young people are recognised as adults by the broader society. You will find that you need to look at lifestyle questions about alcohol, keeping track of your finances and the place of worldly entertainment and recreational activities in your life. Managing these new found freedoms is not always simple. Many young people have found out how easy it is to cross a line of responsible Christian behaviour in relation to these matters. Persevering in understanding will mean learning how to set and keep clear lines of sanctification in these practical areas.

Young people in their late teens will also have questions about the area of sexuality. We noted at the start of this article that more than 80 percent of teenagers from Christian households stop attending church between the ages of 16 and 21. The main reason given for this falling away is that the young people form secular relationships.

In growing up, you will certainly have understood that there is much to learn before you begin to court and get married. However, you will also be very aware that the world promotes romance and sex as a 'normal' part of a teenager's life experience. We know that television and movies are filled with inappropriate themes and images, while smart phones and computers offer instant access to pornography. The Bible, however, teaches us to *'present your members no longer as slaves to impurity but as slaves to righteousness'*.⁴ It is our responsibility to guard our thinking and behaviour. We don't have to fill our minds with romantic thoughts or be tempted to form special friendships in the church. As a young disciple, you can know how to relate to peers of the opposite sex as a brother or sister.

3 Joh 21:18

4 Rom 6:19

Finding fellowship

Because this phase is one of formation and training, young adults in their late teens will need lots of one to one discussion. We need to understand how to find genuine fellowship in our development and growth. Because of this, young people must learn that they are free and welcome to drop into firstfruit houses for support and ongoing conversations about the issues of life. Such households will help you to overcome the awkwardness of knowing how to meet and relate in this new context. As you persevere to be known, you will learn how to meet and chat in a real way. One of the most important things that a young disciple learns through this connection is to relate with those who have a care for them. The prophet Zechariah said that he was ‘wounded in the house of my friends’.⁵ In this, we understand that it is only true fellowship that can help us learn to live according to our name, even when that fellowship involves plain speaking.

In these years, you will also typically begin to relate across a wider cross section of the church. You will discover that not all households or social events are of the culture of Christ. Whilst these situations are not ideal, they can actually be an opportunity for us to learn how to say ‘No’ to activities that are not sanctified or helpful.

You will also find yourself revisiting your relationships with your peers. Having grown up together as children in the church, you will have enjoyed friendships based on common interest and shared experience. In the transition to discipleship you will start to measure these relationships to the call of Christ. We remember that Jesus said to His disciples that ‘*You are My friends if you do what I command you*’.⁶ Jesus also noted that this commitment would transform the way in which we relate with others. So it is that in this phase we will begin to learn to appreciate the individual gift and grace of one another. We learn to fellowship together around the word of present truth and share our testimonies with one another. We will also learn how to encourage one another and guard the culture of Christ together.

Finally, as a young disciple you will also learn to make a shift in areas of personal accountability at home. In particular you will need to learn how to change the way you meet and relate with your parents and siblings. We all have to learn how to grow past immature reactions and unhelpful past patterns of behaviour and

5 Zec 13:6

6 Joh 15:14

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learn to appreciate and bless our families. For their part, parents will be excited to see their children moving into discipleship. They will be thrilled that their son or daughter has begun to relate about their life with elders and youth leaders while remaining keen to continue to be part of the fellowship in this new season.

Practically, young people will also understand the need to mature beyond having their parents oversee and direct their program and timetable for the sake of a 'successful' outcome. A wise parent will understand this transition and give themselves to caring appropriately. They will know when to give the young person space, and when to be close and resist any anxious reaction they may have to 'fix things up'. They will learn how to relax when things fall in a heap, and trust that through fellowship and encouragement such experiences will be positive and formative.

Conclusion

I have always loved the Scripture that says, 'A wise man's eyes are in his head'.⁷ This simply means that understanding isn't hard to find if we know where to look. As we meet our heavenly Father in the secret place, hold fast the word He speaks to us, and find fellowship with those around us, we can be confident that God is doing a work in us. He is causing us to grow as a son of God and, as the apostle Paul says, we are coming to know Him better. We need not feel uncertain or anxious during this phase of our life, because God is with us, supplying everything we need to be a committed disciple of Jesus Christ.

In this article we have discussed some important waypoints of understanding that must be established in those who seek to be disciples of Jesus Christ. In the late teenage years, every young person who has been raised in a Christian house will find that the Holy Spirit is calling them to attend to these matters. Paul explains that as you respond, and persevere in this calling, 'God will count you worthy of *your* calling, and fulfil every desire for goodness and the work of faith with power'.⁸

7 Ecc 2:14

8 2Th 1:11

Study Questions - Age sixteen to twenty-one

The late teen and early young adult years are a season of life for growing in responsibility, accountability and initiative in the body of Christ.

- Reflect on your current season of life. What are some of the 'childish things' that you are putting off as you mature into adult discipleship?

- Have you noticed any aspects of your life that have been more susceptible to crossing the line of responsible Christian behaviour? How are you going about setting clear lines of sanctification?

During this season young people can be maturing in their relational capacities and connections. They can be finding fellowship with ones who are able to talk easily about the issues of life.

- What initiatives have you taken to get to know 'firstfruits couples' (proven leaders) in your local area? What have been the topics of discussion?

- What initiatives have you taken to promote proper Christian friendships in the body of Christ?

KNOWING YOURSELF

John Hay

All over the world, young people and older people alike are searching for the answer to one simple question – ‘Who am I?’ Ironically, the answer to this question is very easy, and it’s the same for every person. You are the son of God whom He has named you to be! And, amazingly, this name has been written in His book. ‘Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.’¹ Now, even though the answer to this question is simple, understanding who God named you to be will require diligence. It will require you to *persevere* in diligence.

1 Psa 139:16

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Every person in the world is born with identity. We actually received identity when we were conceived in our mother's womb. Our spirit was formed within us, we were given identity, and we were given the right and privilege to be in possession of our spirit. All of that defines us as 'a living soul'. However, only Christians have access to their name. This is why many people in the world seem lost. They have a spirit and an identity, but they don't know their name. They don't know who they are and what they're supposed to be doing. This would be like owning a machine without its instruction booklet. You wouldn't quite know what the machine was used for, and you wouldn't quite know how to use it properly. You would just have to guess, which simply means that you would need to define its use *yourself*.

This raises an important point. Most people in the world are actually naming themselves, and encouraging others to do likewise. You will no doubt have been encouraged to 'be whoever you want to be'. This is not a new thought; it's the response of someone who is feeling lost and insecure, someone who is being led by their flesh. The men of Babel expressed the same thought after the flood. 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.'² However, this is a broad, easy way that leads to destruction.³ King Solomon wrote, 'There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.'⁴

Thankfully, Christians don't need to name themselves, and we need to resist the temptation to do so. The apostle Paul wrote that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden *in Christ*.⁵ This means that God has hidden our name as a *treasure* in the body of Christ, and we have access to it, in Him. What a precious promise! Those who are in Christ can know the days that have been fashioned for them. We can know what God has written about us in His book. We can actually know who we are and what we are supposed to be doing. Praise the Lord!

The key question for us is, 'How do we find the treasure of our name?' The simple answer is this. We must diligently seek for it. The book of Hebrews contains a precious promise for those who are in Christ. 'But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.'⁶ God doesn't somehow miraculously send us our 'file' when we become Christians! We are rewarded with the treasure

2 Gen 11:4

3 Mat 7:13

4 Pro 14:12

5 Col 2:3

6 Heb 11:6

Knowing yourself

of our name as we diligently and patiently seek God within the fellowship of the body of Christ. Jesus encouraged us, 'By your *patience* possess your souls.'⁷

Of course, when we were children, our parents diligently sought God and helped us to understand who He has named us to be. They also taught us how to be led by the Holy Spirit, and this is a key. As we mature, God expects *us* to diligently seek Him, and He has given us the Holy Spirit as a Helper, to guide us. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would teach us all things, and guide us into all truth. All truth includes the truth of our *name*! God reveals the things which He has prepared for us, through the Holy Spirit.⁸

The Holy Spirit will motivate us to pray, to fellowship, to listen to and study God's word. And as we diligently obey His leading, the treasure of our name will gradually be revealed. We will grow in the knowledge of the truth, knowing ourselves, just as God knows us.⁹ And while it's true that this is harder than naming ourselves, it is the glory of kings to search out that which God has concealed.¹⁰ If we are led by the Holy Spirit, persevering in diligence, we can be assured that God will reward us. He will reveal our name to us, and we will grow up to be the son of God whom He has named us to be.

7 Luk 21:19

8 1Co 2:9-10

9 1Co 13:12

10 Pro 25:2

Study Questions - Knowing yourself

To understand who God named you to be requires diligence. You find the treasure of your name by diligently seeking for it.

- You will no doubt observe people in the world attempting to name themselves. How will they know that the way you live your life is different from the way that they are living their lives?

- How is your diligence to seek out your name being practically demonstrated?

The Holy Spirit has been given to by God as a Helper, to guide us in the truth of our name.

- How are you practically availing yourself of the help of the Holy Spirit each day?

- How do you know that the Holy Spirit is leading you in the truth of your name?

KNOWING WHO YOU ARE

- the story of Gideon

Josh Mackay

God wants us to continue to grow as sons and daughters in His house. We do this as we walk worthy of His call on our lives. To walk this way means that we receive our definition from the word of God and continue to live by every word He gives to us. We all face the temptation to define ourselves. This doesn't always mean seeking to define our own future. Sometimes the problem is that we place unhelpful and unreal limitations on who we are and what we have to offer to the Lord. This can be in reaction to past hurts and disheartening comments from others. For some people, the difficult circumstances of their life dampen their

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confidence and willingness to serve in God's house. To live this way is no more pleasing to God than exceeding the name and works that He has defined for us.

We all want to know who we are. The problem is, we can't do it on our own. When we do try, it's like someone attempting to wash their dirty face without a mirror. It can't be done. We need other people to help us work out who we are. But there is a problem with that too. Which people should we hear from? Should our friends define for us who we are? Our parents? Our teachers? The answer is that all of these people will have some input on the matter. But in the end it is God who made us, and He is the one with the perfect plan and purpose in mind for us.

This perfect plan is revealed to us by God's word, spoken to us by our brothers and sisters. This word carries two things with it: suffering and power. Power sounds good, but not many of us want to suffer, do we? Well, the fact is, every one of us will have to persevere through times of suffering if we are to become who God wants us to be.

Gideon was a man who had to learn this lesson. He couldn't just be who he wanted to be. And he couldn't do things his own way either. He had to obey and persevere by the power of God. Let's look at Gideon's story.

Gideon lived in Israel during the time of the judges.¹ This was before Israel had a king. At this time, Israel was being oppressed by a people called the Midianites. It was a fearful time for the Israelites. The Midianites would come through the land and destroy Israel's crops. Many people fled the cities and lived in the mountains to be safe.

From the first mention of Gideon in the Bible we get the idea that he may have been a bit fearful and timid. We read about him crushing a small amount of wheat to make flour for bread. What is interesting is the 'when' and the 'where' of Gideon's activity. He was crushing this wheat at night in a wine press, which was like a big hole in the ground. Gideon was actually trying to hide from the Midianites.

Imagine the scene. Gideon was crushing his wheat in the dead of the night. He thought he was alone. All of a sudden, a man appeared and said to him, 'Gideon, you are a mighty man of war!'² Gideon would have jumped in fright. It probably took a second or two for Gideon to process what this man had just said to him.

1 Jdg 6-7

From Gideon's point of view, the man's statement would have been all wrong. He did not feel anything like a mighty man of war.

This man was in fact an angel. He went on to tell Gideon that he was to lead an army and defeat the Midianites. Not realising who he was speaking to, Gideon explained why he thought this was not right. You see, Gideon felt he had a very clear picture of who he was. He was the youngest son in one of the weakest clans which was from one of the lowest tribes in Israel. They weren't warriors. It seemed unlikely that anyone would have listened to Gideon if he tried to lead them. Besides, he didn't have any military training. He knew nothing of swordsmanship or battle tactics. He didn't feel qualified for the job.

Gideon had a difficult decision to make. All his life, he had had the impression that he was not a leader and that he was not great. Now he was being told something else. Who was he going to listen to - the other voices he had heard or God? Sometimes we know that there is more to us than what everyone sees. But it can be hard to break with our own and everyone else's expectations.

Gideon decided he was going to obey God. But after a short while he began to have doubts. He prayed to God, asking for a series of signs so that he could be convinced. Like Gideon, we often try to find reasons not to obey the word of God. Sometimes we think we need more convincing. While God is often patient with us, we need to learn to trust and obey immediately.

To obey God, Gideon needed to assemble an army. Israel did not have a regular army. A man who was going to lead an army would simply 'sound the trumpet'.³ The word would spread throughout the land and the men who were prepared to fight would leave their homes and their jobs, and come with whatever weapons they had. That's what Gideon did; he blew the trumpet and waited for men to gather. You could imagine the surprise of the men when they saw who it was who was going to be leading them.

Once everyone had assembled, there were thirty-two thousand men. That sounds like a lot of men, but it was not many compared to the Midianites. The Bible describes the number of Midianite soldiers as being like the sand on the seashore.

2 Jdg 6:12

3 Jdg 6:34

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Naturally, Gideon was concerned about the size of his army. God also had concerns about the size of Gideon's army. He spoke to Gideon, saying, 'Your army is too large. When you defeat the Midianites, I don't want you to think it was because of the strength of your numbers. I want all of Israel to know that it was because of Me that you were saved.'⁴ So Gideon spoke to all the men and told them that if anyone was afraid, they should leave and go home. Twenty-two thousand men walked away! Gideon was left with only ten thousand men. He had no idea how he was going to take on such a large army with so few soldiers.

God was pleased that Gideon had sent men away. He spoke again to Gideon, telling him that there were still too many! He instructed Gideon to take the men to the river for a drink, to watch how the men drank. Those who drank a particular way would stay, and the rest would be sent home. At the end of this process, Gideon was left with just three hundred men. Gideon certainly did not have the strength of numbers on his side. But he did have God, and God told him exactly what to do.

Gideon divided his men into three groups and armed them. But it was not with the weapons you would expect. Each man carried a trumpet in his right hand and, in the other, a large clay jar with a burning torch inside. The Midianites were all camped in one place called the Valley of Jezreel, which was surrounded by mountains. In the night, Gideon and his men climbed up and spread themselves throughout the mountains, surrounding the camp of the Midianites.

They lay in wait until the middle of the night, which is when Gideon gave the signal. All at once, the men broke the clay jars, exposing the torches, and shouted, 'The sword of the Lord and of Gideon!'⁵ Then they blew on their trumpets as long and as loud as they could.

Now, put yourself into the camp of the Midianites. You know that you have the biggest army around, so you're not expecting to be attacked. You're probably not very prepared. It is the middle of the night and you are sound asleep. You wake with a start because you hear shouting all around. Then you are nearly deafened by the sound of three hundred trumpets being blown from all directions. For these men, the sound of trumpets meant war.

4 Jdg 7:2

5 Jdg 7:20

Knowing who you are

So, drowsy and confused, you grab your sword and stumble out of your tent. You look up. As you look around, all you can see is the black night filled with hundreds of burning torches. They're everywhere, surrounding the camp. It can only mean one thing – the camp is under attack.

Suddenly, you hear a noise close behind you. You spin around and, in the dark, you see someone coming towards you, sword drawn. Instinctively, you defend yourself against the attacker, not realising it's actually your neighbour rushing out of his tent with his sword, just as you did.

That is what happened all over the Midianite camp. They were confused, and every man's sword was turned against his companion. Many of them died in the camp, while others ran away. Gideon and his men (with reinforcements) chased the remaining Midianites out of Israel.

So Israel had a most unlikely victory led by the most unlikely leader. God had chosen Gideon, even though he felt he was the wrong man for the job. You see, God did not need an expert; He simply needed someone who would obey. God needed a man who would endure under trial, especially when what he was asked to do didn't make sense to him.

The word of God came to Gideon and tested him. He didn't always respond very well when the testing came, but because the power of God was with him, he was able to persevere. He made it through and earned his reward as a son of God. This is what God wants for your life. Some of the things you're asked to do might not make sense to you. Perhaps the odds will be stacked against you. Like Gideon, you might feel totally unable to do what is being asked.

But, as with Gideon, God also knows exactly who you are. He knows that you can do what He asks you to do. But you're going to have to believe His word and to learn to endure. God has great things for your life, but are you going to listen and obey? Or do you think you know better?

Study Questions - Knowing who you are

God made each one of us, and His plan for our lives is perfect. This plan is revealed to us by the word of God. As we walk in the light of this word, we have fellowship with one another and continue to grow as sons and daughters in His house.

- What are some of the ways through which we can attempt to know or define ourselves apart from God's plan?

- How are you receiving clarity about God's plan for your life?

Gideon is an example of a person who received and obeyed the call of God even though it seemed at odds with the circumstances of his life and his upbringing.

- What are some of the experiences of your life that have influenced the way that you view yourself?

- The Lord wants you to be a confident son of God. Where does your confidence come from, and how is it demonstrated in your daily walk as a son of God? Give some examples.

THE WAY OF GOD'S DISCRETION

Julianne Hamilton

Introduction

The way of the Lord is a constant theme throughout the Scripture. Speaking of His ways, the Lord declared in the book of Isaiah, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways ... as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.'¹

¹ Isa 55:8-9

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The way of the Lord is not our way. We read in the book of Proverbs that there is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is *the way of death*.² Quite simply, our own way is not the Lord's way, because our own way leads to death. The Lord's way *leads to life*. Jesus said that only a few find the way that leads to life, because it is a *difficult* way.³ As Christians, do we understand that, when we choose to walk the way of the Lord, we are choosing a 'difficult' way? Are we surprised when, at times, the way of the Lord for us becomes 'difficult'?

The apostle John exhorted that we should not be surprised by one particular difficulty that confronts every Christian when they choose to walk the way of the Lord. That is, *the hatred of the world*.⁴ This is because it is the world's hatred towards them that causes many to stumble and fall.⁵ Rather, we are to remember the prayer that Jesus prayed to the Father: 'I have given them your word, and the world has hated them, because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world.'⁶

If we walk in the way of the Lord, our way is not the way of the world, because we do not belong to the world. It will be seen in the way that we live; for example, in the way we relate with others, the manner of our speech, the way that we dress or what we do with our time. If we walk in the way of the Lord, then every area of our life will be consecrated to Him.

Two ways set before us

It is clear, then, that there are two ways set before us: the way of life and the way of death, blessing or cursing, life or death.⁷ We must simply choose, and then let our 'Yes' be 'Yes' and our 'No', 'No'.⁸ This was the exhortation of Joshua to the children of Israel. He said, 'If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.'⁹

The Lord is establishing us by His word so that we may never be shaken as we walk in His way, even in these very unsettling times in which we live. Let's not be shaken by the hatred of the world! Let's not be shaken by difficult circumstances! Solomon wrote in the book of Proverbs that 'the way of the Lord is a stronghold to the upright ... the righteous will never be shaken'.¹⁰

2 Pro 14:12

8 Mat 5:37

3 Mat 7:14

9 Jos 24:15

4 1Jn 3:13

10 Pro 10:29-30

5 Pro 29:25

6 Joh 17:14

7 Deu 30:19

The apostle Paul declared that as we walk in His ways He delivers us from every evil work, preserving us unto His everlasting kingdom!¹¹ His discretion preserves us and His understanding keeps us in His way. Jesus said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'. So we may boldly say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?'¹² He is our great Shepherd who leads us in the way, through the green pastures, beside still waters and even through the valley of the shadow of death. We do not need to fear.

By His power, His wisdom and His discretion

What is the way of the Lord? Quite simply, the way of the Lord is *the way that the Lord is* and *what He does*. In the book of Genesis, we read about *the way of the Lord* 'in the beginning'. We read, 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.'¹³ In the book of Hebrews, we also read, 'You founded the earth in the beginning, Lord, and the heavens are the works of Your hands'.¹⁴

Further, in the book of Jeremiah, we read of *the way* by which the Lord created the heavens and the earth. Jeremiah writes, 'He has made the earth *by His power*, He has established the world *by His wisdom*, and has stretched out the heavens *by His discretion*'.¹⁵ It is clear, then, that the way of the Lord is by *His power*, *His wisdom* and *His discretion*.

The psalmist wrote, 'Teach me Your way, O Lord. I will walk in Your truth. Unite my heart to fear Your name'.¹⁶ If we are those who fear the Lord, then this prayerful psalm becomes our prayer, too. We pray, 'Lord, teach us the way of Your power; the way of Your wisdom and the way of Your discretion, that we too, may be established in Your name, and abide with You, forever.'

Only those who fear the Lord know the secret of His way. For 'the secret of the Lord is with them who fear Him'.¹⁷ The secret of *His power*, *His wisdom* and *His discretion* are only known by those who fear His name. This gives sense to the proverb, 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom'.¹⁸

11 2Ti 4:18 KJV 17 Psa 25:14

12 Heb 13:5-6 18 Pro 9:10

13 Gen 1:1

14 Heb 1:10

15 Jer 10:12

16 Psa 86:11

The way of His discretion

On his sickbed, as he wrestled with the Lord, Job asked the question, ‘Where does wisdom come from? And where is the place of understanding? It is hidden from the eyes of all living ... but God understands its way, and He knows its place.’¹⁹

Job then particularly details *the way of discretion* by which the Lord stretched out the heavens. (We remember how the prophet Jeremiah declared that the Lord stretched out the heavens *by His discretion*.) In his discussion, Job highlights the elements of wind, water, rain and lightning that are found in our natural heavens; or, in our language, ‘up in the sky’. He details how the Lord ‘imparted weight to the wind and meted out the waters by measure ... He set a limit for the rain and a course for the thunderbolt’.²⁰ As He stretched out the heavens by His discretion, the Lord *saw, declared, established and searched out* each element, and set them in their place. He gave each element its provision, its limit or measure, and its course or ‘pathway,’ by which it would function.

Receiving our name and provision

By His discretion, *the Lord gave weight to the wind*. This was His provision to the wind for its function and purpose. His provision was by the way of His discretion. Have you ever thought, ‘What is wind without weight?’ The answer would have to be that wind, without weight, wouldn’t be *wind*. It just wouldn’t *be*. The weight of the wind is its whole being. Its weight gives it the capacity to ‘blow’. We even measure a wind by its weight. The stronger the wind, the more its weight. The softer the wind, like a gentle breeze, the less its weight. The weight of the wind is its strength.

Jesus said, ‘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.’²¹ When we are born of the Spirit, we are born by the power of the same seven Spirits of God that reveal the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, each according to His name. By this, we are joined to Them, in one Spirit.²² Having heard the word of the gospel, proclaiming our name that was foreknown and predestined before the foundation of the world, we receive it as our provision to participate in the

19 Job 28:20-24 20 Job 28:25-26 21 Joh 3:8

22 V Hall with D Falk, D Baker, M Wylie, 2012, *My Spirit Among You*, Vision One Inc, Toowoomba. Page 235

same fellowship of the Spirit, by the same seven Spirits of God. In other words, we participate and function according to our name, given to us by God.

What does this mean, practically, for us? It means that those who are born of the Spirit are empowered to love with the love of God, just as Christ also loved. They are empowered to give, just as Christ gave. They have power to lay their lives down to grow up as firstfruits. Their participation in offering and trial by the Spirit brings them forth as pure gold. They know the secret of the Lord that sustains them through life, in every circumstance. Just as the natural man cannot tell from whence the wind comes and goes, so, too, those in the world who observe the life of one who is 'born of the Spirit' cannot tell from where it is that they get their sustenance and strength.

Knowing His constraint

By His discretion, *the Lord meted out the waters by measure and set a limit for the rain*. He measured, or constrained, the waters and the rain to their place and He constrained them by His discretion. The Lord has a limit and measure for every son of God, just as He has meted out the waters by measure and set a limit for the rain.

The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans, 'I say to every one of you not to think more highly of yourself than you ought to think, but to think with sober discernment, as God has distributed to each of you a measure of faith. For just as in one body we have many members, and not all the members serve the same function, so we who are many are one body in Christ, and individually we are members who belong to one another. And we have different gifts according to the grace given to us.'²³

This has been a season when we have been learning how to operate according to the measure of faith which the Lord has given to us. We see this practically ministered at the communion table each Sunday, when we are called as 'members in particular' to exercise ourselves according to the measure of faith the Lord has given.

We know the Lord's limit and measure of our life when we understand where our expression ends and another's begins. When we have not understood our limit and measure, we trespass against others, flowing over into areas where we should

23 Rom 12:3-6

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not. Like rain without measure, we overflow our boundaries like a flood and may even cause damage to others, because of our lack of discretion.

When we operate by the discretion of God, having the understanding of the Lord's limit and measure of our life, we know a contentment in the Lord for His provision of faith and the lines that He has set for us. Like the psalmist, our prayer is, 'Lord, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. The lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance.'²⁴

Finding His pathway

By His discretion, *He set the course of the thunderbolt*, that it may be established in the way it should go. This course was its 'pathway', given so that it may achieve its final destination. Have you ever observed the thunderbolt in its course? Although we cannot predict where it comes from or where it is going, it certainly has an authority to do what it does, as it follows its course to achieve its final destination!

What would a thunderbolt 'without a course' look like? It would be insecure, unstable and unable to reach its final destination. The Lord does not want us to be an insecure people. He wants to establish us. He has called us to His eternal glory in Christ. By His grace, He will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish each one according to the authority of their name.²⁵

We read in the book of Psalms that the steps of the righteous are established by the Lord and He delights in their way. Even if they were to fall, they won't be hurled headlong because the Lord holds their hand.²⁶ In this, we see evidence of their relationship with the Lord. They 'know' Him. The psalmist wrote that the Lord does not forsake His godly ones; He preserves them forever.²⁷

The Lord has set us a pathway. Like the course of the thunderbolt, we too have a course. Our course is set for Mount Zion, the spiritual city of our God. It says of those who trust in the Lord that they are like Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but abide forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people, from this time forth and forevermore.²⁸

24 Psa 15:5-6

25 1Pe 5:10-11

26 Psa 37:23

27 Psa 37:28

28 Psa 125:1

Behold, the fear of the Lord

As we have observed the discretion of the Lord by which He stretched out the heavens, and as we have seen the way by which each of the elements of the heavens received the name and provision of the Lord, submitted to His constraints and followed the pathway that He set, we are called to 'behold these things'. Having done all these things as He stretched out the heavens by His discretion, the Lord then declared to man, 'Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding'.²⁹

Wherever we read the word 'behold' in Scripture, we must give attention! There is something to give ourselves to understand. We are called to behold these things in the heavens. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways!' We are called to 'behold the fear of the Lord'. The way of the fear of the Lord is higher than our way.

What does it mean to walk in the fear of the Lord? From all that we have observed, it means to walk in His name and provision, according to the constraint of His limit and measure, as we walk the course, or pathway, that He has set for us. This is the beginning of wisdom. We can confidently say, then, that we walk in the fear of the Lord by His discretion.

Those who fear the Lord know His provision and submit to His constraint and measure, as they remain true to the path that He has set for them. In the fear of the Lord, we have strong confidence that the Lord will provide every need.³⁰ He sets the limit and measure of who we are and establishes every step we walk on the pathway He has set for us.

Just as He *saw, declared, established and searched out* each element of the heavens and set them in their place, the Lord also sees us and will declare our name before the Father, establish us and continue to search our hearts as we walk in His ways.³¹

Conclusion

God holds every person accountable for the way that they live their life. He sets each one free *to be, and to choose* the way in which they walk. As the children of God, we are accountable to live our lives by His power, His wisdom and His discretion.

²⁹ Job 28:28

³⁰ Pro 14:26

³¹ Psa 33:13. Rev 3:5.
1Pe 5:10. Jer 17:10

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If we choose to walk our own way by our own resource and measure, then we walk in bondage and sin which leads to death. If we choose the Lord's way, by faith we shall fulfil the predestination of our being and bring forth fruit unto life.

The Lord preserves us by the way of His discretion.³² It is His discretion that guards us as we walk in His ways, stewarding our lives. The Lord is with us in every season, answering our prayers with that specific, God-given remedy or direction needed to bring about the resolution. We walk with Him hand in hand and step by step. When we are obedient to steward our lives by His wisdom, His power and His discretion, we are called those who 'fear the Lord'.

³² Pro 2:11

Study Questions - The way of God's discretion

The discretion of the Lord gives to us the provision of our name, establishes the boundaries of our lives, and sets a pathway for our salvation.

- Our name is the provision of God to participate and function in the fellowship of the Spirit with others who have also been born of the Spirit. What has been the fruit, or outcome, of having received this provision for your life?

- Have you known a time when you exceeded the boundaries that the Lord set for your life? What was the impact on others? How did you make recovery?

- Christian young people can walk securely in the pathway that the Lord has set for them. How do you know that you have been made secure in the way of the Lord?

The Scriptures call us to behold the fear of the Lord. To 'behold something' means that we are to give it our attention.

- How are you giving attention to the fear of the Lord? What impact has the fear of the Lord had on the way that you live and interact with others each day?

RECEIVING HIS PATHWAY

Kaylene Hall

God has appointed every person a certain period of time to live on this earth. He did this for a specific reason. He desires many sons.¹ This time on earth is our opportunity to come to know Him as our heavenly Father and become His son or daughter for eternity.

God did not create us and simply 'leave us with it', to see what would become of our life on earth. On the contrary, He mapped out our life and created a pathway that we could follow every day and through every season of our life.

¹ Heb 2:10

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The Bible tells us that there are actually two pathways. There is the path of the righteous and the path of the wicked.² The path of the wicked is a pathway of their own making. It is a pathway which will only lead to death and complete alienation from God. The path of the righteous leads to everlasting life and relationship with God. This is the path God has established. God's pathway is simply His will for our life. By His grace, He gives us everything we need to walk with understanding and confidence along this pathway.

In Psalm 139, we read that God *fashioned* the days of our life before the beginning of time.³ Imagine that! Every moment of our life was created by God before we even existed. He is not just watching from afar, observing everything that is happening to us. He has planned every detail of our journey through life. Although each one's life experiences are different, as Christians, God calls us all to walk in the same way. That is, the *way of righteousness*.⁴ This is to be our whole manner of life as we journey along God's pathway.

We read in the Bible that those who walk in the way of righteousness are those who will appear before God in Zion.⁵ Zion is the spiritual city of God, the place where He dwells. If we follow Him along the pathway He has established for us, then we will be those who belong in Zion.⁶ Although we are living in this world now, we do not belong here. We are set apart for God, to dwell with Him in Zion.

It is clear that we have much to learn about the pathway God has set for us. His way of righteousness is not naturally born in us. We must learn the very practical realities of what it means for us to walk on God's pathway. Proverbs tells us that the one who listens to instruction is the one who is on the pathway of life.⁷ If we heed instruction, we can be confident that we are walking in God's ways. We must be clear, though, from whom we are learning. Our teachers are to be those who help us to understand what the will of God is for our life. We know that they love us. They are also walking along God's pathway and are able to teach us, by example, the way we are to live as Christians.⁸

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the *Highway of Holiness* and urged us that no unclean thing will be able to journey on it.⁹ We must put off any unclean thing that would hinder our walk along God's pathway. The Bible calls these things *the desires of the flesh*.¹⁰ Such things as anger, jealousy, selfish ambition, silly talk or coarse jesting,

2 Pro 4:18. Psa 1:1 8 Isa 30:20-21
3 Psa 139:16 9 Isa 35:8
4 Pro 8:20 10 Eph 2:3
5 Psa 84:7
6 Psa 87:5
7 Pro 10:17

youthful lusts and sexual immorality have no place on the highway of holiness.¹¹ The Bible tells us that those who do these things will not inherit the kingdom of God.¹²

As we put off the unclean things in our lives, we will be obviously different from those around us, who do not know God. There is a tangible difference in the way that we live as Christians. For example, the manner of our speech, the way that we dress, and the way that we relate to others will not be according to the ways of the world, because we do not belong to the world.

The apostle Paul said, 'Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person'.¹³ Our speech is the way in which we communicate. Communication is vital to the way of righteousness, and our ways of communication need to be sanctified. We live in an age where the use of digital communication tools and social media have become the norm in every household. We need to learn the limit and measure of these communication tools, so they do not become an alternative to face to face meeting and proper relating. We must not choose convenience over proper relationship. We need to understand what the will of God is, in every situation and in every interaction. It is not God's will for us to become obsessed with these things as the world does.

So, too, the way in which we dress and our manner of relating with others should exemplify a godly culture. We need to learn what the Lord defines as honourable in our dress and relationships. The way of the world is to define others on the basis of their outward appearance or conduct. Acceptance and worth is based on what the world deems to be 'desirable'. This becomes an inordinate pressure if we measure ourselves to this standard. We need to be wise concerning these things. We do not belong to the world and are not defined by the values of the world. We are defined by God. He teaches us to walk with discretion and give honour to ourselves and others in relationship.

As we walk on the pathway that God has set for us, it is true that we may be ridiculed, ostracised or even hated by the world. The pathway we are walking is a difficult way and we face very real pressures every day as we go to school, university or work.¹⁴ But, we do not need to be afraid. The Bible tells us that the

11 Col 3:5-8.
Gal 5:20. Eph 5:4.
2Ti 2:22. 1Th 4:3

12 Gal 5:21

13 Col 4:6

14 Mat 7:14

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fear of man will cause us to stumble and fall, but the fear of the Lord will lead us to life.¹⁵ The Lord does not want us to be insecure and uncertain. His pathway is sure, and He desires to establish and strengthen us in His ways.

As those who belong in Zion, we trust in the Lord with all of our heart.¹⁶ He is with us, guiding and helping us every step of the way. Let's not give up when the way becomes hard. We need to persevere as we continue to learn about God's way and hear the voice of our teachers who are walking with us. We must not be fooled that a once-off commitment is all that it takes. We commit ourselves to follow Him every morning and evening, and through every circumstance of life, as we receive His pathway for us.

15 Pro 29:25.
Pro 19:23

16 Pro 3:5

Study Questions - Receiving His pathway

God calls us to walk the way of righteousness. This way is not natural to us so we must receive instruction concerning the practical realities of walking on God's pathway.

- In this current season what practical aspects of the way of righteousness are you learning?

- Explain how you have been learning these realities of Christian living.

Walking in the way of righteousness has many implications for our cultural standards, including the way that we communicate with one another, the way we dress, our behaviour, and our relationships with each other.

- What practical aspects of your culture is the Lord addressing? How are your responses to the word of God leading to changes in the way that you live?

- In what ways have you known pressure to deviate from the pathway of righteousness? How did you respond to these sources of pressure?

WALKING WITH DISCRETION

Lisa Hay

People growing up in the world are encouraged to use their discretion when making life choices. It is considered their freedom and power to determine a pathway for their lives. However, a Christian does not live this way. The choices we make are not based on whether a particular direction is good or bad for us. Rather, our desire is to walk according to the will of God and within the limits and boundaries that He has placed in our lives. We recognise that discretion is a capacity that God gives to us so that we can live pleasing to Him. When we walk with God's discretion, we understand who we are and are conscious of our impact on those around us.

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The Scriptures are clear on the matter: God gives knowledge and discretion to young people.¹ Put simply, discretion is knowing how to walk with God's wisdom and understanding. The Scripture tells us that when wisdom enters our heart, then discretion will preserve us.² Now, God generously gives us His wisdom when we cry out to Him for it!³ When we have discretion, we know how to walk God's way in every situation. This can only be by the Spirit who leads us into all truth. Every day and in every circumstance, we can make thoughtful and sensible choices that are consistent with what God planned for us. This is how we demonstrate discretion.

For this reason the psalmist encourages us to delight in the boundaries, limits and lines that God has given us.⁴ At times, we can begin to grumble and complain about the constraints and limits upon us. Yet, King Solomon reminds us that all of the seasons and events in our lives are planned by God.⁵ Our obedience to His word is able to settle us and secure us, whatever season we are in. Remember, God has assigned us our portion, and He has made our lot secure! This means that we don't need to be unsettled about our life. As young people, you can say, 'The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; surely I have a delightful inheritance'.⁶ You can be happy and thankful in the years of your youth, knowing that the Lord makes everything beautiful in His timing.⁷

The spirit of this world encourages young people to define themselves and their futures. They are told to abandon any restraints and to pursue the desires of their heart. It is a sad reality that the more they do this, the more insecure they become. This should not be the case for sons of God. As sons of God we are able to love the lines and boundaries that He gives us. The limits and boundaries that the Lord places on us define who we are and what we are to be doing. The Scriptures call this 'the will of God, your *sanctification*'.⁸ These lines set us apart to be the person whom God has named us to be!

The book of Proverbs teaches us that His understanding will keep us and His discretion will guard us.⁹ As we understand the impact of our behaviour on all of our relationships, we will be careful to honour and guard these lines. We appreciate and guard the name of another person, knowing that they also belong to God! We simply know where we finish and where another begins. Our commitment is that every relationship will be guarded this way. Discretion will be evident; for

1	Pro 1:4	7	Ecc 11:9, Ecc 3:11
2	Pro 2:11	8	1Th 4:3
3	Jas 1:5	9	Pro 2:11
4	Psa 16:6		
5	Ecc 3:1		
6	Psa 16:5-6		

example, in our relationship with our parents, our friends in the body of Christ, in our interactions as men and women, as young people with older and younger ones, with our bosses and those whom we serve within the body of Christ.

We observe that water without limit or boundaries causes a flood, and a flood can do harmful damage. This same principle that overruns boundaries can occur in the way we express ourselves to others. For example, the wearing of revealing or suggestive clothes, or the use of flirtatious speech, won't communicate the name that the Father has given us, and may cause another to stumble. We are not free to trample over or even move the lines that God has appointed for us or for another person. In the book of Titus, the apostle Paul instructs us in this manner. He exhorts young women to be discreet and pure, and young men to be sensible and self-controlled.¹⁰ We must understand that this is not an unattainable ideal, but that the word of God is able to make us adequate to live this way as a son of God. He makes us adequate by His Spirit as we receive His word and obey it.

Understanding the constraints, limits and boundaries that God has given us impacts on our character and demeanour. These will set us apart from people in the world. Practically, we will appear different from those around us. Our motivation in all of our conduct will be to honour who the Lord has made us to be, and so we will think differently, act differently, dress differently and communicate differently from those who don't know this. From time to time, we can be unsure about the limits and boundaries of our lives. Finding fellowship with those who watch over our lives is a key. We need to *walk with the wise* if we are to grow in God's wisdom and understanding.¹¹

As a generation we are being called to raise a standard which will identify us as Christians.¹² This standard is a standard of holy conduct that identifies us as God's people, and through which the world will see Christ coming in our flesh. This is the standard that is defining the cultural limits of a Christian life that will endure forever.

At times we make allowances for unsanctified behaviour, and compromise being the person whom God has named. For example, a person may be loud and boisterous for attention rather than giving themselves to know others in true Christian friendship. Another example is that we pursue exclusive boy/girl

¹⁰ Tit 2:5-7

¹¹ Pro 13:20

¹² Isa 49:22. Pro 11:12

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relationships when we are not yet in a season when the relationship can lead to a marriage covenant. The lines of our sanctification become blurred if we attempt to live by the principles of this world. Jesus Himself has commanded us to *be on guard!* We are to be on guard so that our hearts will not be preoccupied with the cares of this world, that distract us from being the person God has made us to be.¹³ The Scriptures remind us that ‘whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God’.¹⁴ God has asked us to have clear lines in our culture.

As a son of God, we can’t ‘achieve’ our inheritance by our own good ideas, neither can we have an attitude that is double minded and causes us to be unstable in our ways.¹⁵ Rather, as we are taught by His word, the Lord brings us His wisdom and we can walk with His discretion! As we possess His discretion then it will become part of who we are and a basic motivation within us.

As Christian young people walking our pathway of sonship, we receive the wisdom of God so that we are able to know the way we are to walk and how it is we are to get there. God is faithful to equip us in every good thing to do His will so that we are found well pleasing in His sight.¹⁶ As we receive the word of present truth, we find that the Holy Spirit gives us the power to walk wisely and with discretion.

13 Luk 21:34

14 Jas 4:4

15 Jas 1:8

16 Heb 13:21

Study Questions - Walking with discretion

When we have received discretion from God, we understand who we are and are aware of our impact on others.

- How is the discretion that we receive from God different from the discretion that people in the world exercise?

- Consider the way that you interact with others. How do you practically demonstrate discretion in your relationships with your Christian friends, family members, and worldly acquaintances?

Understanding and accepting the lines that the Lord has defined for your life impacts on your demeanour and sets you apart from those who do not know God.

- In what practical ways has living according to God's discretion set you apart from others in the worldly contexts in which you live?

- What does it mean to be double minded and unstable in your ways? How do we return to the lines of sanctification when we begin to deviate in this way?

PERSEVERE IN HOPE!

Kane McNally

Introduction

The song, 'Persevere in Hope!', was written after hearing a sermon by Victor Hall at our recent International Bible Seminar. Titled 'Keeping the Command of Christ to Persevere in Hope', his message was one of encouragement. It was a command to every believer to *persevere in the hope* of sonship. We were reminded that we are not to let go of our predestination as sons of God, even in the midst of suffering and tribulation. Rather, in every season we are to hold fast to His word. God grants to us *His perseverance and encouragement* so that we can finish the race set before us. This is cause for great rejoicing! We can walk and grow confidently as sons of God in every circumstance of life.

This song encourages us to press on and to hold fast the hope of being sons of God until the day of our resurrection. The verses of this song outline the season ahead for the body of Christ and remind us how to proceed as sons of God in this season.

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Verse 1

*Keep yourselves in the love of God and don't hold on to any offence
Put off all your unbelief, for He desires you enter rest
Maintain trust with your brethren to receive your reward
It's up to you and me to keep ourselves in His love*

Verse one reminds us that it is our accountability as sons of God to keep ourselves in the love of God and to put off offence. We can choose to let go of our hurts and offences and to live in first love relationship with our brethren. Equally, we can put off, or lay aside, any unbelief. When we are unbelieving, we become restless and are weighed down by fear and anxiety. However, we can receive His love and capacity so that we can enter His rest. Even in the busy-ness and difficulties of life, as we obey His word, we are entering into His rest.

Let's be encouraged to maintain an attitude of trust with our brethren. As we stay in fellowship with them throughout the pilgrimage of our life, we will receive the reward of God's eternal life.

Verse 2

*The seventh world kingdom is rising up, don't fear but be on guard and alert
Times of great stress and lawlessness and betrayal are coming on
We will need to endure with Him and with our brethren true
Press on and persevere and keep yourselves in His love*

We might be surprised or even unsettled by the events facing the church now and in the times to come. There will be times of great stress and betrayal as lawlessness abounds. But we are not to live our lives in fear. Rather, Christ instructs us to be on guard and alert to what is taking place. In this verse we receive the exhortation to endure both with Christ and with our brethren so that we might press on in the coming season.

Verse 3

*Our work is a labour of love to put off unbelief and doubt
We believe that we'll receive the hope of becoming His sons
As we hold fast to this hope, we enter into rest
We'll persevere in faith and keep ourselves in His love*

This verse reminds us that it is part of our daily work to put off unbelief and doubt. This is our labour of love! As we are diligent to put off our unbelief, we are being Christian believers. We live in faith and confidence. This is how we should live as Christians. We believe and are confident in the knowledge that God is with us and He desires to give us sonship. We then make this commitment to one another that we will persevere in faith and keep ourselves in His love.

Persevere in hope!

Verse 4

*Don't draw back as pressure comes, for He has made provision for you
After you have suffered a while He gives strength as a gift to you
In each season of life we live, we remember His command
To persevere in hope and keep ourselves in His love*

God has made a full provision for us to persevere in the midst of the season of pressure, suffering and tribulation. He gives to us His perseverance and encouragement as we obey His word. In the midst of suffering, He gives strength to us as a gift so that we can persevere as a son of God in faith, hope and love. In all the seasons of our life, then, it is our prayer that we would remember the command of Jesus Christ to us. What is this command? It is to persevere in hope and to keep ourselves in His love.

Chorus

*Persevere, press on today!
Holding fast what you have that none may take your crown
I will keep and guard you from the hour which is to come
Let's persevere in hope and keep ourselves in His love!*

The chorus is the key message of the song and is taken from chapter three of the book of Revelation. This is Christ's command for us to persevere and hold fast as sons of God so that the crown He has for us will not be taken away. What a marvellous promise! We can be confident as we persevere in the pathway He has set for us. Christ will keep us from the tumultuous times ahead and from the 'hour which is to come'. This does not mean that Christ keeps us from all suffering and tribulation. Rather, in Christ we are guarded and kept as we persevere in hope and keep ourselves in His love.

Bridge

*Don't throw away your confidence because it has great reward
Don't throw away your confidence because it has great reward*

The bridge section reminds us of our accountability in regard to our salvation – don't throw away your confidence, for it has a great reward! No matter what our situation, no matter what difficulty we are facing, no matter the pressure we are under – do not throw away your confidence, for it has great reward. This means that we maintain our faith and the hope of sonship because we remember the reward that the Lord has for us.

Let's be encouraged as we obey Christ's command to persevere and hold fast our faith in every season of life. As we do, we will be confident and kept by Him through tribulation so that no-one will take our crown.

Persevere in Hope!

Kane McNally

VERSE 1

(♩ = 112)

Keep your-selves in the love of God and don't hold on to an-y off-ence Put off all your

6

un - be - lief_ for He_ de - sires you en - ter rest_ Main - tain trust with your breth - ren_ to re -

11

- ceive your re - ward_ It's up to you_ and me_ to keep our - selves in His love_

VERSE 2

16

The sev - enth world king - dom is_ ris - ing up_ don't fear_ but be on guard and a - lert

20

Times of great stress and law - less - ness_ and be - tray'l_ are com - ing on_

25

We will need to en - dure with Him and with our breth - ren true_ Press on and per - se - vere

VERSE 3

30

_ and keep your - selves in His love._ Our work is a_ lab - our of love to put

35

_ off un - be - lief_ and doubt We be - lieve that we'll_ re - ceive_ the hope

39

_ of be - com - ing His sons._ As we hold fast_ to_ this hope_ we

Melody

43 A^7sus^4 A^7 Dm^7 $\frac{Dm^7}{C}$ Bb $\frac{F}{A}$ Gm^7 $\frac{Bb}{C}$ F $\frac{Bb}{F}$

en - ter in - to rest___ We'll per-se-vere in faith___ and keep our-selves in His love.---

48 F $\frac{F}{A}$ **CHORUS** F C $\frac{F}{A}$ Bb F

Per-se - vere press on to-day___ Hold-ing fast what you have that

55 Dm^7 C $\frac{F}{A}$ Bb F A^7sus^4 A^7

none may take your crown___ I will keep and guard___ you from the hour which is to come.

60 Dm^7 $\frac{Dm^7}{C}$ Bb $\frac{F}{A}$ Gm^7 $\frac{Bb}{C}$ F $\frac{Bb}{F}$ F Fine

___ Let's per-se-vere in hope___ and keep our-selves in His love!___

65 **VERSE 4** F^7 Bb F $\frac{Bb}{F}$

Don't draw back when pres - sure comes for He___ has made pro-vi - sion for you

69 F Dm^7 G^9 C^7

Af - ter you have suff-ered a while. He gives___ strength to you as a gift___

73 F F^7 A^7sus^4 A^7 Dm^7 $\frac{Dm^7}{C}$ Bb $\frac{F}{A}$

In each sea-son of___ life we_ live_ we re-mem-ber His_ com-mand___ To per-se-vere_ in hope

78 Gm^7 $\frac{Bb}{C}$ F $\frac{Bb}{F}$ F **BRIDGE** A^7sus^4 A^7 Dm^7

___ and keep our-selves in His love.--- Don't throw___ a - way your con - fi - dence.

84 $\frac{Dm^7}{C}$ Gm^7 $\frac{F}{A}$ Bb Dm^7 $Csus^4$ C^7 A^7sus^4 A^7

___ be-cause it has___ a great re-ward.--- Don't throw___ a-

91 Dm^7 Cm^7 F Gm^7 $\frac{F}{A}$ Bb Dm^7 C^7 $\frac{F}{A}$ D.S al Fine

-way your con - fi - dence___ be-cause it has___ a great re-ward.--- Per-se -

GLOSSARY

Keywords

Admonition	Can mean one of two things. It may be a direct challenge to someone who is going astray or in error. Alternatively, it may be an encouragement of any kind to a person or people.
Adoption as sons	Describes both a process and a final event. The process takes place in this life as we overcome and obey the Lord, having been put in the place of sons. We rest in hope, knowing that the fullness of our adoption still awaits us. This fullness comes either when we die or when the Lord Himself returns and we receive our resurrection body.
Birth pains	Used by Jesus to refer to the pressure and tribulation coming upon the world prior to the end.
Body of Christ	The Christian community we discern and commit to as the place of salvation. Christ has given gifts to His body in order that it might grow in capacity and stature. The body of Christ is also a term that covers the worldwide church of believers from every tribe and tongue who call upon the name of the Lord.

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Brethren	Those who obey the word of God. These are sons of God, who are led by the Spirit. Brethren are able to meet together without threat, because they are continually laying their lives down for one another.
Childish things	Immaturities that are no longer appropriate to our stage of life.
Christian community	A group of Christians bonded together in first love, living in the order of God. It is a shepherded community, not simply a collection of people who believe approximately the same things. This means that its grounding is in the word proclaimed by true messengers, who are laying their lives down for their brethren.
Church of the firstborn	Another name for the body of Christ. It identifies Christian community as a company of sons, found and abiding in the firstborn Son - Jesus Christ.
Conscience	The rudder of the human heart which, without the cleansing of Christ's blood, is wicked and unable to judge righteously. A redeemed Christian, who has been renewed in the spirit of his/her mind, will possess a conscience that testifies according to the Holy Spirit. In other words, a conscience that does not lie, condemn or make excuses.
Courtship	The process by which Christian friendship is able to blossom into romantic love, commitment and marriage. The process of courtship is a fellowship that enables a couple to mature separately and together to a point where they are ready to be joined in one flesh and one spirit.
Covenant community	Those included in the covenant of God, through the circumcision of the heart and participation in the life of offering. Also describes a community in which sons of God can be birthed into the covenant of God. It is shepherded by mature messengers who can lead others in the way of understanding.
Discipleship	The training that a son of God undergoes by instruction and example. A disciple learns to put Christ before all else, to attend to the word and, finally, how to make other disciples. He imitates the one who teaches; and remains trainable throughout life.

Glossary

Discretion	The application of wisdom in ordinary life. Discretion extends to what is appropriate or inappropriate in a given setting. Discretion will adorn a person who is led by the Spirit. God gives us His discretion so that we know how to walk His way in every situation.
Exhibitionist	A person who likes to be seen or watched, usually with unclean or immoral intent.
Fiery trial	The action of the Holy Spirit upon the offering of the believer. It is through the fiery trial that our name is preserved and our priesthood is affirmed. The Holy Spirit 'salts' us with fire, by which means we are chastened as sons so that we will not be condemned along with the world.
Firstfruits	Can mean: 1. the first of the harvest, offered to God; 2. Christ Himself, the Firstfruits of the new creation; 3. Christians whose lives are consumed with the ministry of the saints; 4. ourselves as individual and unique sons of God, bringing forth the fruit of His life.
Firstfruits houses	A firstfruits household is one that manifests the fruit of the word that is proclaimed. They not only welcome the messenger into their house, they are also addicted to His ministry.
First love	The unique love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which Christians are given by the Holy Spirit. He pours this love into our hearts as the witness that we have 'passed from death to life'. This love enables us to lay our lives down for the brethren.
Fullness of times	The last part of the 2300 year phase signalled in the book of Daniel. During this phase there will be the signs of the end of the age and the birth pains signalled by Jesus. This phase is prior to 'the time of the end', which is the last hour.
Gender distinction	In other words, men are men and women are women. The two genders are unique, separate and not negotiable.
Godliness	The culture of Christian living in God's house. Christians are able to demonstrate this culture because they are receiving God's life and nature.

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- Highway of holiness** Describes: 1. how we are to be made clean from sin and corruption; 2. how we are to remain clean and pure; 3. how we are to make effective offering in the house of God. The highway leads to Zion which is the mountain of God. The highway is also the effective pathway of our priesthood, by which we retain 'clean hands and a pure heart', in order to ascend 'the hill of the Lord'.
- Honour** The fear of the Lord is the basis of honour. When we fear the Lord we are able to honour what He has given us, and thereby honour ourselves as His sons. As a consequence, we can honour other people. We have full regard for them as sons who are named and loved individually by the Father. Each person, being of inestimable worth in the sight of God, is worthy of our honour. Thus we are able to regard each one as more important than ourselves.
- Identity** Who a person is. The identity is what makes us spiritual. Hence, the spirit of a man is also his identity. Not to be confused with 'name', which is a term that covers who and what a person is, for all eternity. We carry our identity into the new heavens and new earth, where it is glorified with everlasting sonship. All people possess identity, but without Christ they cannot find out who they are. At present, like the apostle Paul, each one of us is who he/she is 'by the grace of God'. In the new heavens and new earth we will forever be who we are as unique, individual 'lights', shining in the presence of God.
- Idolatry** Placing something above the Lord, or in competition with Him. An idol can include anything that we seek in order to serve our needs, that we think God should meet, or that we should not be seeking. For example, we may trust in our ability or in how we are affirmed, rather than in God's provision for us. Idolatry always affects our behaviour towards our brethren and will bring us into sharp conflict with the word of present truth. The bottom line of idolatry is that we cannot serve two masters.
- Inheritance** The gift of sonship. The fullness of this inheritance will be obtained at the resurrection.

Intercession	1. Christ's advocacy on behalf of every believer; 2. the prayer of a person who has joined themselves to the Spirit of Christ. In the first case, Jesus is presenting our name before the Father. He declares to the Father that we belong to Him. As the Bible says, 'He ever lives to intercede for us'. Second, when we wait upon the Lord in prayer, we begin to touch His burden that He has for another person. The weight of this burden is allowed to fall upon us as we fellowship with Jesus on behalf of someone else.
Lampstand administration	The administration of Christ, through which His word is proclaimed to the world. This administration is fitting for the fullness of times, as the means by which Christ will be revealed on the earth through the restoration of offering in the church.
Lawlessness	The desire of people to go their 'own way'. Also known in Scripture as 'iniquity' - the sin that was found in Satan, and the reason he was cast out of heaven. Lawlessness is seen in the church when people reject the name and work that God has given them.
Making offering	Presenting ourselves and our whole lives to the Lord, in the context of fellowship. We make offering in order to prove and accomplish the will of God. His primary purpose for us is to multiply His life in His body and the world.
Measure of faith	This is the faith that each person is permitted by God to exercise. We cannot exercise faith that is beyond the scope of our name and calling. Nor should we be found shrinking back from the faith that God has given us.
Milk of the word	Describes the way we are to desire the pure word of God - like a newly-born child. Thus, a Christian who feeds off the word as his/her source of life regards it as 'pure milk'. Also implies the 'simplicity' which guards the Christian from the deception of Satan.
Mortal body	Our physical bodies.
My members	All that constitutes me as a person. Law is able to get to work in our members, rendering our actions and thoughts tainted at every point, until we have died to the law through the body of Christ.

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Natural man	Natural man is also carnal man, meaning he is unable to comprehend God by his own strength. He has eternity set in his heart, but cannot find it out. The natural man is hostile to God, because he believes the lie of Satan - that he can be like God.
New creation	Christ is the New Creation, the New Man. If we are in Christ, with His word abiding in us, we are a new creation. It is the gift of new creation that permits us to be 'partakers of the divine nature' - not God, but joint heirs with His Son.
Old man	At the most basic level, this means Adam. Our old man describes what belongs to our flesh, our carnality - the tendencies towards self and sin that are common to all, but particular in each case. Hence, each person's 'old man' must be understood individually.
Present truth	A direct quote from the apostle Peter, 'present truth' is the timeless word of God proclaimed in its season. It is illuminated to us by the Holy Spirit. Present truth defines the focus of the word for a group or groups of people. It can only be proclaimed where there is a genuine messenger administration, which is finding access to the throne of grace.
Proceeding word	The word of God is always proceeding from Him. The proceeding word overlaps with 'present truth', but it will include, for instance, the specific ministry of God on a Sunday. It will confirm the word of present truth to a believer, as the Spirit Himself applies that word individually. We remember that Jesus said to Satan, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'. Whereas present truth is proclaimed in a season, the proceeding word is His word coming to us today.
Procreation	The activity of conceiving and bringing forth children. Human beings are given life by means of procreation, not an act of special creation, which was the way Adam and Eve came into being. For the Christian, procreation is to take place within the sanctity of marriage.

Glossary

Profane	An offering that is made presumptuously, without the fear of the Lord. An unclean person is presumptuous, and therefore profane, when they fail to address their uncleanness while continuing to enjoy the benefits of belonging to the community of Christ. As it was for Esau, such a person will find no grace flowing to them at the communion table, no matter how emotionally they respond in church. A profane person must first go 'outside the camp' to deal with their uncleanness.
Resurrection body	The body we will have when we are fully clothed with Jesus Christ as adopted sons, able to endure forever in the new heavens and new earth. This will take place after Christ returns to judge the earth. The dead in Christ will be raised.
Sanctification	Also translated 'holiness'. To be sanctified is to be set apart from the world and set apart to the Lord. Sanctification is also a process of increasing maturity, by which we attain to the measure and stature of Christ. At another level, our sanctification describes our ability to discern where the world and sin seek to lay claims upon us. We are set apart to our brethren and to the word that proceeds among them in fellowship.
Sexuality	Pertaining to gender - male and female - as well as the expression of the natural physiological faculties given to us by God. For the Christian, sexuality is exclusively between male and female, and exclusively within the boundaries of marriage. Expression of sexuality outside marriage is aberrant and immoral.
Sound doctrine	The essential and complete teaching and training that we need in order to understand how to live as a son of God in the context of all of our relationships. It is based upon the proclamation of present truth and is proven by the Scriptures. Faithful men and women are able to be taught and to heed sound doctrine. Disobedient and lawless people cannot endure it.

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Spirit of antichrist	This is the spirit of lawlessness, which is against all the works of Christ. It particularly opposes the idea that the life of Christ is coming in the flesh, maintaining a superior position to the things of God. The spirit of antichrist exalts itself above God. This describes the very essence of lawlessness.
Spirit of the world	There is a collective spirit, or mindset, that governs the world. This mindset is carnal, setting its focus on things below, without any capacity to comprehend the way of God. It is ruled by principles which are the application of the law in the hands of sinful men.
Spiritual man	A person who has been born 'from above'; born of the Spirit of God. A spiritual man can discern and understand the ways of God. He can be led by the Spirit of God. He learns to be motivated only by the Spirit of God and not by his emotions, personal conclusions or reactions to suffering.
Travail	The burden of the Spirit of Christ that is given to those who wait upon Him. Also describes the labour of a messenger to see the formation of Christ in an individual son, or even within the culture of a congregation. When Christ joins us to His travail, we are privileged to touch His desire for the work of God to begin or to continue in the life of our brethren.
Voyeurism	A voyeur is someone who likes to look at what they should not look at, usually in secret. Voyeurism is therefore an action that dishonours both the person engaged in it, as well as other people.
Word of perseverance	In Scripture referred to as 'the word of His perseverance', meaning that it is Christ's capacity as the only begotten Son to endure tribulation and travail of soul. He enables other sons of God with the grace to endure tribulation. Finally, also, He gives us the capacity to inherit an enduring name, which is kept for us until our adoption as sons is fully realised. All things consist, hang together and endure by the power of His word.

Glossary

Zion

The destination for the Christian pilgrim. It is 'the mountain of His holiness'. Only those who have been cleansed and made holy are permitted to ascend this mountain. It is the purpose of our priesthood to walk the highway of holiness to the mountain of the Lord.