

# Module 3



# Growing as a Disciple

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# LEARNING OUTCOMES :

On completion of Module 3 you will be able to know what is growing as a disciple

# SPECIFIC OUTCOMES :

On completion of this Chapters you will be able to know:

## ✚ Chapter 1

How to mature in spirit and in truth

## ✚ Chapter 2

How to find a balance in spirit and truth

## ✚ Chapter 3

How to cultivate character to His Glory

## ✚ Chapter 4

How to cultivate a prevent prayer life

## ✚ Chapter 5

How to walk in faith

## ✚ Chapter 6

What is baptism in water

## ✚ Chapter 7

What is baptism in Spirit

# MODULE 3

# CHAPTER 1

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## M3C1

# Maturing in Spirit and Word

*Layout by E Cloete*

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**1 Corinthians 13: 11**When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.

When one is but a mere baby, or even an infant, then one is solely and undeniably reliant on one's parents.

They have to feed you, clothe you, protect you, make decisions for you and make sure that one's needs are met. When one grows older, into the teenage years and beyond, that independency gradually peels away as we develop the intellectual and emotional capacity to meet our own needs.

This is very much the same with our spiritual growth – when we first come to the Lord, we are but mere babies and infants when it comes to knowing Him and His divine ways. We are very much dependent upon Him to 'spoon-feed' us, to nurture us, and to grow us.

We are after all vulnerable as we struggle to grow out of our spiritually 'baby' and 'toddler' clothing.

The Lord, however, expects us to mature and to grow spiritually beyond our 'spiritual nappies', beyond our infancy and be able to walk, talk and move with the Holy Spirit unto His service to His glory.

And such a spiritual journey is one of thousands and thousands of steps.

It is a journey and an adventure.

But is a journey that we need to embark on if we want to grow spiritually mature.

The Lord will always be there with us, but we cannot expect the Lord to always hold our hand.

We need to learn to walk on our own, move in His Spirit and to become mature disciples helping others to mature spiritually.

And just like one's growth in body and soul, so often we think that we know all that we need to know.

In our teenage years we believe we have all knowledge.

When we reach our twenties, we realized we knew very little when in our teens.

And so as our journey progresses through life, we keep learning and we become little wiser as our experiences mold and shape our character.

This is the same with our spiritual journey. We must never think that we are now mature 'enough' spiritually.

There is always more to learn from God.

There is always more to know about Him.

There is always more room to know Him.

There are always more opportunities to expand our capacity to become spiritually wiser in His service.

The author of Hebrews [identity uncertain] wrote in chapter 6 the following: 1Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, 2instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. 3And God permitting, we will do so. We therefore read of an urgent plea by the author that one needs to move on to the deeper truths of the Lord by shedding our 'spiritual nappies'.

We have all access to the Word of the Lord and in the western.

To lay the foundation of our faith, which happens in the infancy of our spiritual growth, is therefore an elementary step, but beyond that we need to grow, expand and be filled more and more by the Spirit.

This can only happen when we continually read the Bible and study it.

It is essential to spiritual growth.

As believers, it is essential that we read, memorize, study and meditate on the Word of God.

It is written in Psalm 119: *14 I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches. 15 I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. 16 I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word. The only way to know God's truth, His commandments, His precepts and His Kingdom is to read the Word.*

Yet, we can only truly understand the Word and apply the Word when we listen to God and when we allow the Spirit of the Lord to teach us and show.

This therefore implies spiritually growing so that we may know the voice of the Good Shepherd (John 10), and this implies being filled/baptized by the Holy Spirit.

John 3: 5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Once we are led by the Word and by the Spirit, we will be led in the truth of the Lord, and we be led to understand His Kingdom and how to pursue the ways of the Lord.

Our spiritual journey after all is nothing more than the ultimate quest to know God. We may argue that one can never really know Him, which is true, but He has made it possible for us to have a living relationship with Him.

For all eternity we may learn to know the Lord, but here on earth we must seek Him, we must hunger for more of Him for this is a God who is alive and who speaks and acts and who is personally involved in our lives.

And as we grow in the Lord and we know Him more intimately, then truly we shall no longer speak and act like children spiritually.

It says in 1 Corinthians 13: 11 When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. 12 For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

You see, spiritually maturity still calls us to walk in faith like a child but at the same time to put away childish things where we think, act and think no longer as a spiritual child but as a mature disciple of the Lord.

Our behavior, our attitude, our mind-set and our approach to this world will be a reflection of spiritual maturity and not the spiritual nature of a mere child.

And this is so sorely needed ... for this world needs the spiritual mature whose very behavior and attitude and deeds and words reflect the Lord Jesus and by that authority will bring the lost to the light.

But if we remain as children spiritually, our deeds and words and behaviors will be inconsistent and volatile.

Paul wrote in Ephesians 6: ... *13until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.*



*14Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*

Paul therefore made the urgent plea for spiritual growth so that we may attain the fullness of Christ.

And the result - We will then no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.

We live a world where many false teachings, false doctrines and false Messiahs have come to deceive the flock of the Lord.

And we can easily be deceived and be led astray as long as remain spiritually immature.

As we grow spiritually mature, we grow in the understanding and comprehension of the Spirit that we will know what is from Him and what is not from Him.

We shall know Him and His ways, and we will also know what is from the world and the devil. 1 Corinthians 2: 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.

Let us therefore make every effort to grow as we come to Him daily, even if it is only in thought and spirit, as we seek Him, His truth and His love.

May we grow spiritually strong to His glory and service so that we will stand for the truth, and that we may guard against the ways of the devil that destroys, kills and deceives.

Galatians 5:16-18, 24-26: "So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law... Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other."



There is thus the necessity to grow spiritually.

The end goal of such a journey and such a process is to walk closer with God and to know Him more intimately.

This is the goal of the disciple – to grow.

To grow spiritually is detailed in 2 Peter 1:3-8: "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

So, to grow spiritually will lead to an increase in your knowledge and understanding of God's Word, a decrease in your frequency and severity of sin, an increase in your practice of Christ-like qualities, and an increase in your faith and trust in God. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul says, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ."

Therefore, the best description of spiritual growth is to live in the image of Jesus.

Spiritual growth, however, cannot take place if one hasn't first and foremost made a committed choice to follow Jesus. For when we follow the Lord then the Holy Spirit lives inside of us (John 14:16-17).

And it is the Holy Spirit who has come to lead us in all truth and to lead us in the ways of Jesus to the glory of the Father.

When we walk in the Spirit and Truth, then our old nature, which is dominated by sin, is replaced with a new nature that is under the influence of God's Spirit.

Spiritual growth can only occur in a person who knows the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her Savior and who has allowed the Spirit to become the dominant teacher and guiding truth.

Walking in the Spirit is allowing God to be in control of our lives, and it allows the Spirit to change us in the image of the Lord (Ephesians 5:18).

This is brought about by consciously choosing by faith to rely on the Holy Spirit to guide in thought, word, and deed (Romans 6:11-14).

Learning how to grow spiritually is a life-long journey, which also occurs as you read and apply God's Word. 2 Timothy 3:16-17: All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

In the end, as one walks in the Spirit and lives by the Word, we will draw closer to God for within us will produce more and more the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

It is so important for us to submit to the Spirit's leading, for it the Spirit who produces the fruit of spiritual growth in our lives.

And as we grow spiritually, we will become like Paul who walked after the example of Jesus, and therefore will be true ambassadors of the Lord.

Considering that fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, it stands to logic that if we become more loving, more joyful, more kind and more self-controlled then spiritual growth is genuinely occurring.

God, however, works in different people in different ways.

Some people grow rapidly, while others grow slowly, but steadily.

Our focus should not be on comparing ourselves with others, but on comparing ourselves with God's Word.

The Scriptures acts us a mirror to show us what we are like spiritually and to shine light on the areas that need to experience and learn spiritual growth.

James 1:23-25: Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it - he will be blessed in what he does."

As mentioned, we cannot move in spiritual maturity unless we are led by the Spirit of the Lord, for the Spirit leads us in all truth and to be closer to the Lord (John 16).

We cannot understand the ways of the Lord or the Scriptures or the Kingdom without the Spirit of the Lord to lead us in all understanding, wisdom and knowledge.

Our natural reasoning will never lead us to spiritual truth.

We cannot mature without the Spirit guiding and leading us.

A mature disciple is someone who is baptized in the Spirit, for the Spirit of the Lord will lead you in all wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

Before we can understand the truth, we need our minds transformed from their natural, earthly perspective, until we can see with the eyes of Christ, hear with His ears, and understand with His heart.

For true disciples, this is the ultimate pursuit.

For us to therefore follow God, to live out our callings, we need to be reborn in the Spirit.

Only through a birth in the Holy Spirit and a submission unto the Lord give we truly walk in love, fear, obedience, truth and glory.

2 Corinthians 3: 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Only the Spirit of the Lord can unveil us by stripping away the bondages of religion, tradition, legalisms, old habits, and the strongholds of our spirit and soul. If we behold the glory of the Lord through all of the veils of our traditions and mindsets, we will distort His glory and try to make God into our image.

One of the biggest presumptions we can have is to think that God sees everything just like we do or thinks about everything just like we do.

A spiritual maturing that we must undergo is to first have the humility to see the veils we're wearing, which are distorting what we see, and then to have our minds renewed and the veils removed so that we see and hear clearly what the Spirit is saying.

We after all can only be led by the Spirit if we hear the Spirit, and we can only change and be transformed by obeying what we are hearing.

We need to be reborn, and we need the Spirit of the Lord to strip away our stubbornness, pride and arrogance to walk in His Glory.

One of the most famous passages regarding a life in the Spirit is Romans 8 : New King James Version (NKJV):

*Free from Indwelling Sin: 8 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death.*

*3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 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. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

And also Galatians 5: Walking in the Spirit: *16 I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*

As disciples of the Lord, we can therefore only mature when we are led by the Spirit, when the Word of God being Jesus (John 1:1) is our foundation and when we continue to draw closer to the Lord in fellowship and in submission. For then we shall grow and mature.

Let us therefore pay diligent attention to the Word of the Lord, let us pursue yielding to the Spirit and let us seek to be disciples who yearn to be more like the Lord.

This is the way of the disciple. One who walks as a worshipper in Spirit and Truth, and such Truth comes by the Word and by the Spirit.

# MODULE 3

## CHAPTER 2

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### M3C2

# Finding Balance in Spirit and Word

*Layout by E Cloete*

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It seems today the Church wants the gifts and the ministry, but we are not willing to allow God to change us so that our character glorifies Him. To grant gifts and to awaken callings is easy for the Lord, but to build character speaks of a journey and it speaks of self-sacrifice, obedience, faithfulness and a deep submission.

This we need to understand – God can instantaneously heal, deliver and redeem, but He cannot force our character to change. We have a free will, and it takes plenty of time and staying close to God in order to grow in your character.

Character along with the gifts implies leading a balanced spiritual life as a disciple. A disciple needs to be wary of leading a life of extremes, where he walk in the Spirit at the expense of the Word, or being too grounded in the Word without walking in the reality and presence of the Holy Spirit.

We live in troubling times and these are also troubling times for the believers. Part of our growth as a disciple is to learn to lead a balance in our spiritual walk. It seems these days that some in the church has given themselves solely over to a spiritual life based on the sensory experience, while others have rather chosen to follow a different route and followed a path of quenching the fire of the Spirit for the mere sake of just focussing on the Scriptures.

We need to wake up for today's new brand of Christianity presents a different gospel and is targeting thousands of the younger generation with a so-called hip, cool, experiential spirituality, much of which is embracing a form of mysticism and philosophy of uniting people from all faiths to work together and bring about a new world of peace and harmony.

Over the last 2000 years we have seen many movements in the Church that has led to our dilemma in this day and age. From the more conservative and 'intellectual' approach of the Catholics to the modern-hype of the Charismatic/Pentecostal movements, it seems believers are caught in the grey areas of extremism. Either we are too intellectual, seeking Truth through logic or rationalism, or we are too spiritual, breaking free from being grounded in the truth (Scriptures) of the Lord.

For those who pursue the more 'intellectual' route of only focussing on the Scripture, therefore a life dictated by Logos, run the risk of suppressing the move of the Holy Spirit, leaving no room for the Rhema Word, or for the supernatural that defies logic or reason. So often we see today that those in this camp are dismissing the manifested presence of the Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, of being slain in the Spirit, of laughing or dancing in the Spirit. Such spiritual manifestations tend to defy logic and reasoning and do not always fit into the neat world of Scriptures.

For those who pursue the other route of Charismania is in danger of falling prey to emotionalism, where emotionalism is mistaken for a true and real Holy Spirit life. Charismania after all has become a journey of the senses, which feeds directly into our emotions.

So often we see with the hyper-spiritualism movement only an emphasis on the 'moment', the 'experience' and the 'emotion', and so people crave for the touch of the Holy Spirit and to be swept aside by the worship. Yet the danger comes in when this define their spiritual growth.

While we need to seek the spiritual and the move of the Holy Spirit, at the same time we must seek to GROW in truth by learning, knowing and studying the Word.

For Jesus when tempted spoke three times to the devil "it is written". There was nothing hyper-spiritual about the temptation of Jesus and about how the Lord overcome the devil. The Lord was grounded in the Word for He is the Word, and He overcame by the Word and not by the senses or the emotions.

For this reason Charismania will focus heavily on the 'experience' or the 'feeling' of the moment. Charismatic churches are known for its larger than life experiences of worship, of sermons driven to touch our emotions and creating an ambience. Within such environments the sensory experience is of prime importance, where people's senses of touch, hearing and seeing are stimulated. The problem again is that so many times there is very little depth to such a spiritual walk and the pitfall remains that there is little depth concerning knowledge of sound doctrine and the Scriptures.

Without a doubt, the disciple of the Lord these days need to be able to lead a balanced spiritual life where the disciple is able to embrace both the Rhema and the Logos, both the intellectual and the sensory, both the Holy Spirit and Word, and where the experience and the reasoning exists side by side.

The reality is that our spiritual walk as disciples should not just be about the sensory without a solid understanding of Scripture, and neither should we commit to Scripture in such a measure that the Holy Spirit has no room to move. This is ultimately the balance that we need to find. This challenge also translates how to balance living in the liberty of the Spirit while not flowing into legalism and license [freedom to sin].

For example, is it good to walk in strict observance to His commandments, or is good to allow some room for enjoyment? Will allowing some liberties not lead not a licence to be rebellious and sinful, while will not walking according to strict observance cause legalism and a religious heart to set in? Can we see how difficult it is these days to make sure we must walk a balance life, because God is one of order and balance, not of disorder and extremes.



Ultimately our relationship with God should be one of balance that comes from a sound mind, and yes, the Scriptures does say the Lord has given us not a spirit of fear but of a sound-mind, faith and love (2 Timothy 1:7). In order to walk in a life of balance requires wisdom, it requires maturity, and it requires humility and a keen walk with the Spirit. The Lord calls us to lead balanced lives, not one of extremes, for extremes in any measure causes us to be out of balance.

We are called not to walk in the extreme of liberty or legalism, but to walk by Grace in the Spirit of God so that we can manifest fully His holiness and glory.

This walk of a disciple is thus a walk of balance, of a sound mind, of being grounded in Jesus who is the Word yet a walk led also by the Spirit and by Truth.

*It says in 1 Timothy 6: 11 But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.*

*And also in 2 Peter 1: 5 But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, 6 to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, 7 to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. 8 For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins.*

Both Paul and Timothy spoke about a process of pursuing and adding, meaning growing spiritually so that we become more like Jesus. And we can only grow in the fellowship of the Lord when we listen to the Lord, when we are led by the Holy Spirit and when we are grounded and rooted in the Word.

And remember John 1:1 which says In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Jesus is the Word, and we are also called to be built our lives on the Rock, being Jesus, according to Matthew 7. So our entire spiritual walk must be one of being grounded upon the foundation of Jesus and the Truth and the Way of the Kingdom.

The balanced life of the disciple is sadly under attack because liberty is so often found in the Charismatic/Pentecostal churches, where the sensory experience negates the need for sound knowledge of Scriptures. There is only one way to follow a true path, and that is following the Spirit. Remember what 2 Timothy 4 says: 3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; 4 and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Yes, the time is here where so many are turning away from sound gospel, and would rather listen to fables and myths. Why? The answer is found in *1 Timothy 4: Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, 3 forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.*

We will be deceived and be led astray if we are not led by the Spirit, when we are not grounded in the Word, when we do not abide in the Lord and when we fail to walk the path of both Logos (the written word) and Rhema (the uttered word). This is when we turn away from sound doctrine to listen to fables which sadly abound in churches today, causing the disciple to walk an unbalanced spiritual life.

As human beings created in the image and likeness of God, we are all endowed with these wonderful things called emotions. Emotions are an internal thermometer inside of us which activates a neurological sensory response to the world around us. We also have five fantastic physical senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch through which we interpret our surroundings as well as communicate and interact with others. The vast majority of what we see being called faith today and what we hear being labelled as a “move of God” is rooted not in truth but in experience. Closeness to the Father is measured in feelings, sensations, impressions, “divine hunches” and the way a certain spiritual encounter made one feel. The closer we feel to God, the closer we think we are.

Emotions and senses are truly awe inspiring things but when they are misdirected or used to navigate our lives and choices, they have a power and will all their own and become fuelled by the soulish drives of our carnal humanity. Emotions and senses can be manipulated. They are like the variable “x” in an algebra equation. When they are not under the direction of the Spirit of God, by default, they become yielded to the flesh...which is Satan’s playground.

When we do not submit ourselves to the Lord and filter our experiences through the truth of His word, we all too easily will yield to the temptation of trusting what we felt or experienced over what scripture teaches to be immovably solid and true. Emotions, thoughts and sensory experiences that are not completely yielded to the Lord become loose cannons and we will be deceived when we use these highly unpredictable wild cards to navigate our choices and beliefs.

So often this is called “feels good faith.” It is in effect not truly faith at all because it is based upon the foundation of personal spiritual experiences and emotions. True faith is to put our total and complete trust in God...the creator and sustainer of all life.

It is a trust in the nature and character of the one true God who is the same yesterday, today and for all of eternity. It is not a trust based upon feelings, warm fuzzies or senses. We trust because He is supremely trustworthy and binds Himself to His own covenant and fulfills to the letter every word He says He will do. His love and faithfulness are everlasting and He is not like man that he should lie or wake up one day and have a personality makeover. After all, how can we prove the accuracy of our experiences when they dwell in the realm of emotional variables?

And the only problem to negate a spiritual realm purely based on the emotions is when we fellowship with the Lord so that we may know Him intimately, know His Word, His Truth and Ways so that we are not led astray by all kinds of feelings, emotions and senses. The Christian life is not one of feelings but of spiritual certainty and absolutes. Herein lays then one of the greatest dangers of having an experienced-based faith. It is our human nature to base reality on feelings. If we felt it, then it must be real. We become one with our experiences and when someone disagrees with our experience then they have disagreed with us. It's dangerous because if someone challenges what we are sure we have experienced and that experience is the foundational basis of how we relate to God then one tiny kick to the side of our "faith" will send that house, made of straw, falling down around us.

Then you also get those who think they have no authentic relationship with God because they lack these feelings, manifestations, experiences. So if they didn't feel warm fuzzies or have goosebumps or feel a warm sensation or the like, then "something must be wrong with me." Can you see what a dangerous dichotomy has now been created because experiences have defined reality?

Emotions and experiences can be moved and manipulated. You can be having a glorious and wonderful day and feel on cloud nine and one bad experience can immediately and involuntarily alter your emotional state in a fraction of an instant. If natural events can manipulate emotion and change how we feel about our lives (even momentarily), how much more potentially destructive can a change in feeling or experience rock our spiritual worlds when we let that define our reality in God?

A balanced life calls for us to put our wholehearted trust in the nature and character of God and allow the truth of His word to be the plumb-line which we measure our experiences up against.

We have a responsibility to diligently guard and keep our hearts in check and filter our emotional and experiential messages through the truth of Scripture which is never wrong and will never change. This produces a trust that is not easily shaken because it is built on the foundation of a God whose faithfulness never changes, whose love never runs dry and whose character is more dependable than the sun.

Jesus is our rock and the fortress upon which we must build our lives. Experiences will change. Emotions will fluctuate. If we evaluate reality based on things that move, then we will totter to and fro based on this variable environment. If we are firmly rooted in truth, we can build a trust that is tried and true and that will carry us through any storm we face in this life.

While hyper-spiritualism is a huge problem in the Church today, driven by emotionalism, it's opposite yet equal, anti-spiritualism, is just as prevalent and just as destructive. This is when we move in the extreme of logic, reason and rationalism.

So why is Intellectualism dangerous? Intellectual Christians place far more value on the knowledge which they perceive to be true than the souls of those whom they are attempting to pass that knowledge on to.

Often times others will reject this knowledge, even if that knowledge is indeed true, simply because the person presenting such knowledge is doing so in a prideful, uncaring manner thus they make the person they are attempting to minister to feel unloved and unimportant.

In Christianity, any truth that is not accompanied with love and humility is no truth what so ever. In other words, you can possess all the right doctrine but without love your doctrine is rendered useless to you as well to others.

You see, it is our compassion for others with keeps our passion for knowledge in check thus keeping us from falling into pride and self-righteousness.

Without love for people, our love for knowledge is nothing more than useless dead religion that can become a serious stumbling block.

Jesus showed us how to lead a balanced life. Firstly, He was no intellectual elitist. It is said of Him: "How is it that this man has learning, when He has never studied?" (John 7:15). He lacked advanced, formal training (unlike Saul of Tarsus, of course for He was a carpenter). But Jesus' lack of academic pedigree did not make Him anti-intellectual. He did not tolerate a lack of knowledge of Scripture for He Himself said "have you not read ... ?" (Matthew 12:3, 5; 19:4; 22:31.). He also did not put up with slowness of understanding - "do you not yet perceive or understand?" (Mark 8:17).

When asked about the greatest commandment, Jesus answered by quoting from a passage in Deuteronomy called the Shema which promoted hard, theological work: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength" (Mark 12:29-39).

You see, Jesus did not place much emphasis on signs, wonders and miracles. It is not character or faith building. He rather wants us to walk like Him in character and nature. When we become so hyper-spiritual that we ignore the importance of sound doctrine, the necessity for true character and the need for systematic spiritual growth through trials, tribulations and testing times then we are in danger of being out of balance.

Three times Jesus was tempted to betray the cross by the devil: in the desert, in the garden and on the cross. When He faced Pontius Pilate, Jesus did not act with power and glory. He was tempted by the government of this world and by the people to quickly fix His problems. Jesus didn't. He chose love and the cross. He chose character and faith and trust above the circumstances and above the ridicule. He chose to complete the journey despite the persecutions. Jesus held onto His path.

As in the dessert when the devil wanted God to show His full power and betray the cross, so we want so many times for God to rather show up as the dominant, powerful and all-consuming fire. We want answers now, we want healing now, and we want deliverance now. We seek answers immediately, we seek signs and miracles, we want to seek the sick healed now and we to see Him move in enormous power. This is the world of hyper-spiritualism without sound doctrine. Jesus was tempted with this and in the dessert as in the Garden of Gethsemane, but God did not move.

You see, we want the crown but not the cross. We want the shortcuts and the quick provisions and the quick solutions. Jesus didn't offer a quick solution in the dessert. He rather showed that through the journey of character where we learn to love like Him, walk like Him and be like Him is where the truth lies to having a true relationship and to being a disciple grounded in truth.

Sound doctrine calls for a disciple with a character of Christ and that character is determined how much we have allowed for the Spirit to be God in our lives. In the dessert God understood free will cannot be compromised and man's loyalty and obedience will not be brought through a display of power and brutal force. Man's obedience unto God has been brought by the shed blood of Jesus who chose to die on the cross as the Suffering Messiah so that we could be set free in righteousness.

Do we still serve today the Jesus who chose both the crown and the cross? Do we only want the cross? It seems man wants what the devil offered in the dessert. Man wants the miracle, mystery and authority. He wants to skip the trials, tribulations, suffering and everything that goes with being human. Man wants to skip the responsibility of taking responsibility for his actions. God's children don't want the pain of being human. Man wants what the devil offered: provision of bread without the work, protection without the obedience and trust unto Him and man also wants the kingdom of this world by bowing to another master. Jesus chose the hard road and that drew people to Him and that pleased the Father.

Today, we want to serve a God who pours out all kinds of miracles, signs and wonders. We want that crown, yet we want to leave the cross. We want to serve the Jesus who is the mighty Teacher, but everything He did was a portrayal of the character of the Father. The entire Beatitude is a portrayal of the Father and the Son and the Spirit. It speaks of character.

The ideals of the Beatitudes and all that Jesus spoke and showed cannot be reached upon a journey where we only seek God as the Lord of wonder and miracle. Such ideals we can strive for when we choose to walk the road that Jesus did, meaning taking that walk to Cavalry and resisting the temptations of the devil and this world. Quick solutions, easy answers, powerful displays of miracles lead to weak faith and even weaker character.

The Lords wants strong character and strong faith. Jesus showed us how. He did miracles, but many times He wanted no one to know about it. He may have healed the sick, but Jesus' greatest purpose was the healing of the spirit and the soul. He reached out to the lost, the sick and the sinners because they had a different disease, namely rejection and that they were unloved and unwanted.

Jesus restored love and acceptance unto them because of His character that was formed on his three-year journey. Jesus raised Lazarus unto the glory of God and displayed true power over death. Oh yes, the Lord still heals today divinely, but God seeks above all else the true healing of spirit and soul. Our greatest miracle is salvation. Love is God's greatest weapon on earth.

A man is truly tested by his character. This is the path of the disciple and the way to lead a balanced life. We want those quick answers and we want God to show up in fire and fury, but God wants sons and daughters who have sought Him earnestly, who held unto Him in truth and faith during all seasons, who have chosen both the crown and the cross, who have chosen character above wonderful works, who have chosen to resist the temptations of the devil and rather obeyed the Lord. Jesus chose twelve disciples of character. He chose not the rich, the powerful, the politicians or the even the religious. He chose mere men who were poor in Spirit, hungry for truth and righteousness.

Let us truly seek God, build a relationship so that we are grounded in Truth.

We must therefore strive as disciples to lead a balanced life of both Spirit and Word, where we remain rooted in sound doctrine but not quenching the fire of the Holy Spirit.

This is certainly not easy, but the Lord calls us to grow in such a manner which only comes by a relationship with the Lord and being led by the Spirit who leads us in all truth.

Let us guard against a walk of extremes, and let us rather stay close to God and be moved in His power, passion, compassion and truth to His Glory. For this is the path of the disciple and the path of growth – it is a balanced one of Logos and Rhema, of the liberty of the Spirit but also the obedience to His commandment.

Let us therefore pray for such wisdom, understanding and knowledge to be a true disciple unto the Lord. Let us grow in balance in the will of the Lord to His Glory.



# MODULE 3

## CHAPTER 3

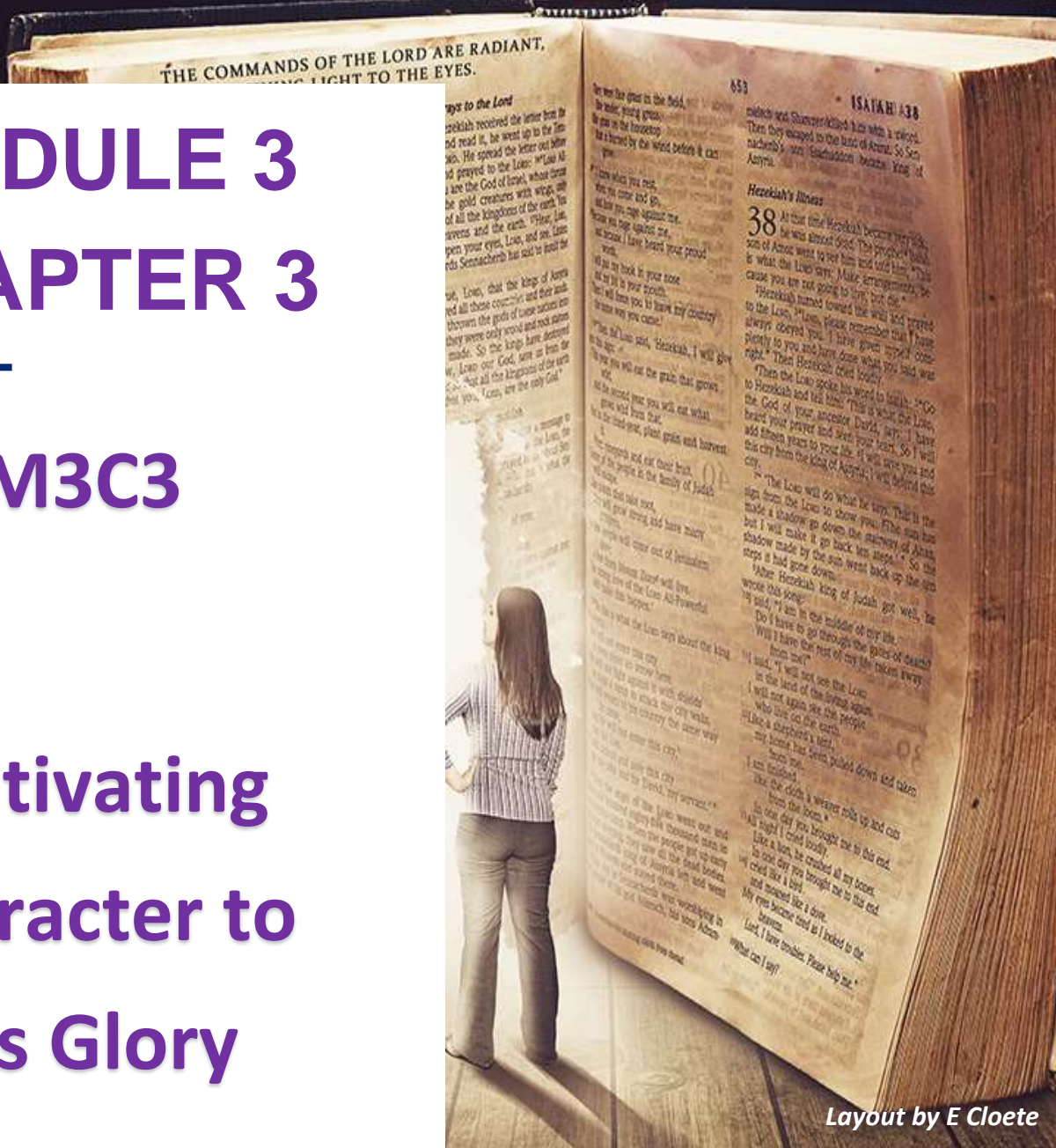
### M3C3

# Cultivating Character to His Glory

LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

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Layout by E Cloete



To grow as a disciple, we have looked at the importance of growing in Spirit and in the Word so that we can lead a balanced spiritual life. Just as important is that we need to grow in character.

*We read in 2 Peter 2: Confirming One's Calling and Election: 3 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. 4 Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. 5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins. 10 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, 11 and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

*And also ... Titus 1: 15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. 16 They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.*

These Scriptures continue to be a reminder for us to bolster our understanding and to grasp His ways.

Let us keep in mind that the Lord calls us to obedience, He calls us to keep His order, He calls us to worship Him as I Am and He calls us to seek Him daily to receive a fresh revelation of Him.

If we seek Him, then He will go with us to prepare a favorable path.

How then do we reach such a place as a disciple in our walk on earth?

Works is not the answer.

True works should always be the outflow of our walk with God.

How then?

Simply through what extent we have allowed the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to change us to become more like Him. It is only when we love like Him, walk like Him and, like Jesus, have a true and living relationship with the Father that would cause our names to resound.

It is when we do this that we will in our existence glorify Him.

For this reason, our eyes are not set on the temporary, but the eternity, yet it is in the temporary where we need to make a statement that will resound forever.

It is only our character that proves if we are truly children of God, not our works.

No matter what works we do, if it is without the character of Jesus it could easily fool and deceive.

Remember *1 Corinthians 13* which says: *2 And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.*

Charity in this case speaks of love, which speaks of your character which must be like that of our Lord.

Preaching to millions, evangelizing, baptizing or whatever form of work unto God can have the appearance of godliness yet it can also be without true power or anointing.

Sons and daughters are truly known by their fruits.

*1 Thessalonians 4: Living to Please God: 4 As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more. 2 For you know what instructions we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus. 3 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; 4 that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, 5 not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God; 6 and that in this matter no one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister. The Lord will punish all those who commit such sins, as we told you and warned you before. 7 For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. 8 Therefore, anyone who rejects this instruction does not reject a human being but God, the very God who gives you his Holy Spirit.*

*9 Now about your love for one another we do not need to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love each other. 10 And in fact, you do love all of God's family throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, 11 and to make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, 12 so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.*

Character is the key to making an eternal difference.

For only through character, implying the way we behave, the way we react, our attitude and so forth serves as the key to what extent we have submitted and allowed God to change us.

In his epistles to Timothy, Paul alludes to the importance of character.

Paul was writing these epistles late in his life, during his first and second imprisonment in Rome.

Paul had thus by this time done a lot, seen a lot, experience many highs and lows, and now we like Timothy are in the privilege position of hearing from a man who reached a point of greater spiritual maturity.

And it is clear from the letters to Timothy that for Paul to walk in accordance to God's character, in His image, in His will in order to bear fruit of the Holy Spirit is of utter importance.

At the end 2011 the Lord placed it on my heart today we sit with a church without character.

We have concentrated on doing things right according to our ways, and equipping people to minister, that we have neglected that just as important, if not more, is to build character and to grow in the image of the Lord.

What good is it then if we can preach and teach until the heavens weep but we have no character and no integrity?

Character speaks of values, morals and ethics.

It speaks of walking in the ways of God because we are being transformed in His image.

It seems today the Church wants the gifts and the ministry, but we are not willing to allow God to change us so that our character glorifies Him.

To grant gifts and to awaken callings is easy for the Lord, but to build character speaks of a journey and it speaks of self-sacrifice, obedience, faithfulness and a deep submission.

Paul sees Timothy more like a son, and by all likelihood Timothy was a delegate to the apostle to keep the Church on track in Ephesus.

So Paul was speaking to Timothy as spiritual father, a friend and a mentor.



Paul therefore finds it important to keep urging his spiritual son to always seek goodness, godliness and to ultimately grow in the character of God.

Paul writes in *1 Timothy 4: 12 Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity. 13 Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.*

Paul often urges believers to follow his example and his conduct. He even mentions to Timothy when he writes in *2 Timothy 3: 10 You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, 11 persecutions, sufferings.*

Again, in his epistle to Timothy he urges the young believer to walk in God's character which is reflected in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity.

If we look at the Church today, are we truly setting an example of God's character and nature by our conduct, faith, speech, love and faith?

Again, it is easy to appear godly and pious, but the condition of our character will manifest itself.

Therefore, Jesus spoke clearly on the fruits we carry, which is a referral to the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5.

Paul, during his second term of imprisonment, writes the following: *2 Timothy 3: 22 Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. 24 And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. 25 Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, 26 and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.*

Again, Paul is placing strong emphasis on character, on godly conduct, on how to move in faith and love.

How the Church needs to once again pay close attention to its character, because without it we become power hungry without a proper foundation.

Paul after all sounds warning to the lack of character at the end of days, and this warning is specifically directed at believers in the Church who are sowing discord and preaching deceit.

*2 Timothy 3: But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. None better of this is the illustration of the temptation of Jesus in the desert.*

Paul also wrote his epistles to the churches in Ephesus and Colossae during his imprisonment in Rome.

In Ephesians 4 and Colossians 3 he makes strong argument on how to live as a believer, which alludes to one's character.

His prayer to the church in Ephesus was as follows: *Ephesians 3: 14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18 may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19 and to know this love that surpasses knowledge —that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

Paul's desire has always been for the believers to walk in the fullness of the Lord, and in the fullness of the Spirit, so that all believers are grounded in faith, love, and hope.

And once we are grounded and rooted in the Lord, living by the Spirit and Truth, our character will be shaped and formed to reflect and glorify the Lord.

In his epistles to Timothy and to Titus, Paul also warns about false teachers, erroneous doctrines and false teachings.

Considering Paul's last ditch attempt to preach on character and living a godly life, it remains clear that Paul was concerned that those who walk not in the character of the Lord are most likely not grounded in love and faith and thus will be susceptible to spiritual corruption.

What is also interesting is that when Paul writes to Timothy about the qualification of overseers/elders, along with deacon, he is not placing emphasis on what they can do but the kind of people they should be in character.

*1 Timothy 3: 3 Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task. 2 Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.*

*4 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full[a] respect. 5 (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7 He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. 8 In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. 9 They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. 10 They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.*

With Paul it was an urgent matter that the Church needed to be led by those of character and integrity, because they are the ones submitted to the Lord, manifesting the fruits of the Spirit and would thus be walking in God's Truth and Ways.

Again, therefore Jesus spoke about fruits.

The only true sign of someone's willingness to submit and to be led by the Lord is by the evidence of his character, which is reflected in his conduct, speech, love and faith.

Those without character have clearly not submitted in totality to the Lord, and will thus remain susceptible to the lures and temptations and deceptions of the world and the devil.

Indeed, the Scripture teaches a lot about our conduct:

*1 John 2: 15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.*

*Ephesians 5: Amplified Bible (AMP): 5 Therefore be imitators of God [copy Him and follow His example], as well-beloved children [imitate their father]. 2 And walk in love, [esteeming and delighting in one another] as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a slain offering and sacrifice to God [for you, so that it became] a sweet fragrance. 3 But immorality (sexual vice) and all impurity [of lustful, rich, wasteful living] or greediness must not even be named among you, as is fitting and proper among saints (God's consecrated people). 4 Let there be no filthiness (obscenity, indecency) nor foolish and sinful (silly and corrupt) talk, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting or becoming; but instead voice your thankfulness [to God]. 5 For be sure of this: that no person practicing sexual vice or impurity in thought or in life, or one who is covetous [who has lustful desire for the property of others and is greedy for gain]—for he [in effect] is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one delude and deceive you with empty excuses and groundless arguments [for these sins], for through these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of rebellion and disobedience. 7 So do not associate or be sharers with them.*



*8 For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of Light [lead the lives of those native-born to the Light]. 9 For the fruit (the effect, the product) of the Light or the Spirit [consists] in every form of kindly goodness, uprightness of heart, and trueness of life. 10 And try to learn [in your experience] what is pleasing to the Lord [let your lives be constant proofs of what is most acceptable to Him]. 11 Take no part in and have no fellowship with the fruitless deeds and enterprises of darkness, but instead [let your lives be so in contrast as to] expose and reprove and convict them. 12 For it is a shame even to speak of or mention the things that [such people] practice in secret.*

Character determines how much we have allowed for the Spirit to be God in our lives.

In the desert God understood free will cannot be compromised and man's loyalty and obedience will not be brought through a display of power and brutal force.

Man's obedience unto God has been brought by the shed blood of Jesus who chose to die on the cross as the Suffering Messiah so that we could be set free in righteousness.

The Lords wants strong character and strong faith. Jesus showed us how.

He did miracles, but many times He wanted no one to know about it.

He may have healed the sick, but Jesus' greatest purpose was the healing of the spirit and the soul.

He reached out to the lost, the sick and the sinners because they had a different disease, namely rejection and that they were unloved and unwanted.

Jesus restored love and acceptance unto them because of His character that was formed on his three-year journey.

Jesus raised Lazarus unto the glory of God and displayed true power over death.

Oh yes, the Lord still heals today divinely, but God seeks above all else the true healing of spirit and soul.

Our greatest miracle is salvation.

Love is God's greatest weapon on earth.

A man is truly tested by his character.

We want those quick answers and we want God to show up in fire and fury, but God wants sons and daughters who have sought Him earnestly, who held unto Him in truth and faith during all seasons, who have chosen both the crown and the cross, who have chosen character above wonderful works, who have chosen to resist the temptations of the devil and rather obeyed the Lord.

Jesus chose twelve disciples of character.

He chose not the rich, the powerful, the politicians or the even the religious.

He chose mere men who were poor in Spirit, hungry for truth and righteousness.

It amazes me the backdrop to Jesus giving His Sermon on the Mount.

Here was Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, having beaten the devil at his own game, having survived the dessert for 40 days, to truly begin His ministry among the people.

The people on the other hand were expecting a Messiah who would tell them to be strong and defeat the Romans.

They expected encouragement and a sound Winston Churchill order to be brave, to be powerful, to be strong, never to give up and to keep on fighting.

Jesus was faced with such a crowd at the beginning of His ministry.

How easy it would have been for Jesus to stand on the Mount in a display of glory.

He could have sealed the allegiance there and then.

What Jesus told them must have astounded them.

He gave them a sermon exactly the opposite of what they wanted to hear!

He told them to love their enemy; He told them to feel blessed when persecuted, to love, to be holy, to be meek, kind, gentle, pure of heart and poor in Spirit.

Jesus risked losing a whole lot of supporters because He didn't put on a performance, didn't seek their approval on what he said or did, didn't seek to appease the religious authorities and neither was He there to destroy any earthly Kingdom.

He stood on the Mount to advance the eternal Kingdom and laid the principals of His constitution that focuses on character and choosing both the crown and the cross.

Jesus took on the religious authorities, not Rome. He took that which corrupts character and obedience unto the Father unto the cross. His focus was not for glory on earth or fame or wealth.

He was focused on the Father's will. What do we seek?

Do we advance the Kingdom or do we advance ourselves in the failing kingdoms of this world?

We need to abstain from evil, but not abstain from doing good.

We must love and be charitable; to the extent we love our enemies.

We must be pure, humble and true unto Lord.

We must cast aside sadness; doubt and anger, for these speak not of faith.

We must be true oaks of righteousness.

We must seek modesty, simplicity, charity, faith and truth. Let us fear the Lord and also fear the work of evil, for it destroys the character of the virtuous.

As a stone that is tossed up into the sky will never reach heaven, so is a man without a virtuous character, for he will not touch the heavens.

A virtuous character opens the door to the throne room, invited, to speak to the Master.

Let us be those who stand for truth yet we draw the sinners in so that they may the Father and His redemption by the Blood.

Jesus was a friend of sinners, yet uncompromising in His virtue and holiness.

The Church today repels the sinners and struggles in a mire of sin and ungodliness.

Where is the character?

So, let us then be pure of heart, let us be meek, peacemakers, righteous and poor in Spirit, for then the lost, sick and the sinners will be attracted to us.

Let us walk thus in true divine character, for the rewards are great in eternity, where our names will be spoken and what we do will indeed have an everlasting impact.

# MODULE 3

## CHAPTER 4

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### M3C4

# Cultivating a Fervent Prayer Life

*Layout by E Cloete*

LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

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It says in James 5:16: The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. 17 Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit.

James makes it clear that in order to achieve much – thus avail – we need to pray with passionate intensity, which is what fervent means.

Take also notice, he speaks about “effective” and the prayer of the “righteous”. So in order for our prayer lives to make an impact, we need to prayer effectively, fervently and with righteous intent. James specifically made mention of Elijah, whose prayer availed much, for this was a prophet who stood in right standing with God and who followed the Lord with great passion and zeal.

The devil of course does not want a people that will pray with fervent prayer, or who will seek the Lord in prayer. The altar of prayer has thus been broken down, for the devil knows that when the believer walks in the will and righteousness of God, and then prays, that much will be availed for the Kingdom. We need to restore true and fervent prayer, thus seeking His Will above all else in order to avail much.

So how then we do we pray in such a manner that our prayer avail much?

Let us consider the word effective and let us consider Matthew 6 when the Lord taught us about prayer. “8 Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. 9 In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. 10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”. The foundation to effective prayer is to pray in the will of the Lord, thus “Lord Your will to be done”.

This then links up with John 15:7 NKJV: “ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you”. It doesn’t help we come to the Lord praying with a selfish heart, seeking the manifestation of our needs and wants and desires. We must seek the Lord and His Will, and then pray accordingly for then we shall avail much.

It says in Mark 11:24: Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

This passage speaks of both faith, but at the same time we need to pray according to the will of God. We cannot simply ask fervently for things that feed our selfish desires and needs and that have no impact on the Kingdom of God. We need to pray according to God's Will and with faith, for then our prayers shall be effective.

Consider John 17 where the Lord Jesus is praying to His Father. Here we find a prayer where the Lord is also praying for His disciples and for all believers. This is truly a prayer that is in alignment with the will of the Father and of the everlasting Kingdom. Consider also the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, which demonstrates about praying according to God's will (Luke 22).

Jesus prayed and asked if there was a way that the cup of His sacrifice be passed from Him. We read ... "nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done." 43 Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. 44 And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

So the Lord prayed that His Father's will be done, and He prayed earnestly, thus fervently, even to the point of bleeding. God's eventual answer was not prevention of death but resurrection from the grave, victory over death not only for Jesus but for all who believe.

Question is, are we praying merely for our own needs, or are we praying according to the will of God?

Secondly, let us consider the word fervent. As mentioned, this speaks of passion, of intensity. Do we truly pray with conviction, with faith, and with passion? It says in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 that we must pray without ceasing while in Ephesians 6:18 it says: "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints."



And also Philippians 4:6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God ... Colossians 4:2 Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.

In Acts 6, at the time when Stephen was chosen to serve, we read the following: 2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

Take note, they had to appoint others to do certain tasks because the disciples had to devote their time to continual prayer. This is a fervent prayer lifestyle what is so needed among believers today as well.

Take also note of praying with THANKSGIVING, which implies we need to always approach God with a sense of joy, with a sense of gratitude and contentment. After all, He remains God and we remain man.

We must simply place our prayers before Him, knowing His wisdom and grace far exceeds our understanding and perspective on what we deem to be reality.

It says in Psalm 100:4 Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name.

It is also written in Psalm 69:30 I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving and Psalm 95:2 Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

Thirdly, consider the word righteous. Indeed, we have been made righteous (in right standing with God) by the Blood of the Lamb, but we must still walk in such righteousness through a holy and pure living.

Consider “Matthew 6: 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you”. It also says in “Psalm 34:15 The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their cry” and also “1 Peter 3:12: For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil”. So in order to prayer in such a manner to avail much, we need to walk in the holiness of God, for then God shall hear us, for indeed His eyes are upon the righteous. This was the cry of David in “Psalm 61: Hear my cry, O God; Attend to my prayer. 2 From the end of the earth I will cry to You, When my heart is overwhelmed; Lead me to the rock that is higher than I”.

So yes, we must keep on praying. And as we pray in the will of God, and we pray with intensity and we pray with the right heart, then surely we shall pray in the authority of God.

It is all about coming into alignment with the Lord, seeking His heart, seeking His way and seeking His Truth. Paul wrote in “1 Timothy 2:8: I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” and also “1 Timothy 2: 2 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men”.

Prayer is of critical importance to advance the Kingdom of God here on earth, but we must remember the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. And as we pray in faith, in thanksgiving, and with great passion, let us also pray in love, for God is love and very motivation for the existence of the Kingdom is all about love.

Take note, Paul speaks about that we continue to pray for all, and we must do so with faith (not doubt) and without wrath (thus in righteousness). Jesus said in Luke 18 regarding the Parable of the Persistent Widow: Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart ... In this parable he also touched on persistence, on truth, and on faith and so we must pray with persistence, in hope, in faith and always trusting God. But then again, we must pray according to the Lord’s will, pray without ceasing, and we must pray as the Holy Spirit leads.

For it says in “Romans 8:26 Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”.

As we thus are led by the Spirit in prayer, we shall pray according to God’s will, and we shall pray with the passion and compassion that comes from a life infilled by the Holy Spirit of the Living God.

Consider also the Lord’s Words in Matthew 6: 5 “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. 6 But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. 7 And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words”.

Fervent and effective prayer is thus all about relationship with the Lord, thus abiding in Him and being led by the Spirit of the Lord. Our intentions and motivations will thus be pure and true.

Our prayers should be Christ-centered, Kingdom-centered, truth driven, love-motivated, and revolve around the perfect will of God.

Paul reminded us in Philippians 4:6,7 of the following: Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

There is great power in prayer, for God will hear our cries and as we pray according to His Will He shall the answer, but then we need to also listen and hear closely to what He says.

We must always be mindful of the power of prayer and that our prayers never fall on deaf ears. God listens to those who truly revere and honour Him, and who stand in awe of His greatness, goodness, and power.

Malachi 3:16, 17: "Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name. 'They shall be Mine,' says the Lord of hosts, 'on the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him' "

There are testimonies upon testimonies of the power of prayer and how the Lord hears our cries, our inner groaning and our whispers, even during the darkest of nights and when we have fallen far in our sins and transgressions. For the Lord earnestly seeks those who are humble before Him and who will seek Him and pray unto Him with fervent love, hope and trust in the Almighty.

It reminds one of the great John Knox (c. 1510 – 24 November 1572), who was a Scottish clergyman and leader of the Protestant Reformation. He is considered to be the founder of the Presbyterian denomination. He was a thunderous preacher who was known for his confrontations with royalty who held on to their own beliefs.

In response to Knox's hefty prayers, Mary Queen of Scots at the time is reputed to have said: "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe." In response to the rising resistance of the Scottish Reformers, Mary eventually fled Scotland and was later put to death by a court of English who had accused her of plotting to assassinate Elizabeth I.

Knox was survived by the Scottish Covenanters, who drew up a compact in 1638 asserting their right, under God, to national sovereignty. It is reassuring that God hears our prayers. "The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16). Indeed, God listens to the righteous. The Psalmist wrote: "Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul. I cried to Him with my mouth, and He was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.

But certainly God has heard me; He has attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, who has not turned away my prayer, nor His mercy from me!" (Psalm 66:16-20).

We read of many answered prayers in Scripture. God heard the cry of Ishmael when he and his mother were without water in the desert (Genesis 21:17). God heard Rachel's prayer for a child, and Joseph and Benjamin were born (Genesis 30:22-24). God heard the cries of the Israelites in Egyptian slavery (Exodus 2:23, 24) and sent Moses to set them free. He heard when they were hungry and gave them manna (Exodus 16:12).

God gave water to the thirsty, children to the childless, and freedom to slaves and food to the hungry. God heard the prayer of King Hezekiah and extended his life (2 Kings 20:1-6). In this Scripture we read how it was because of Hezekiah's prayer that God changed His mind. God also heard the prayer of King Josiah and postponed Judah's punishment until after his reign (2 Kings 22:11-20).

Indeed, our God is a loving Father who hears His children but God is sovereign and He has all wisdom and all knowledge. He knows the future and knows what the best course of action in every situation is.

This is why we need to keep praying according to His will, as led by the Spirit of the Lord. Much has been written and talked about prayer. For many it is an almost unfathomable concept.

Prayer is not but a few random words that bounce back from the walls, or it doesn't just float into the sky aimlessly. Prayer is not something to be done with the purpose of saying a few words and then you shall be fine. Prayer is how we humbly and directly talk to God. Prayer is our telephone line to God the Father, through the Son Jesus, in the Holy Spirit.

When you pray, you enter into a conversation with God.

So again, it is about relationship, and those who pray within the context of a relationship will avail much.

Every time you speak words to God, then you are not just talking to the walls or the open sky, and you are talking directly talking to God. Prayer, however, won't feel like a dialogue with God if you are not in a relationship with God. But this doesn't mean God is not listening. God is always listening.

Every word we utter in prayer is being heard by God. But God will only answer those who are praying according to His will, His Word, who are humble before Him and who has accepted Jesus as the Saviour.

In Ezekiel 8 we read the following: "17 And He said to me, "Have you seen this, O son of man? Is it a trivial thing to the house of Judah to commit the abominations which they commit here? For they have filled the land with violence; then they have returned to provoke Me to anger. Indeed they put the branch to their nose. 18 Therefore I also will act in fury. My eye will not spare nor will I have pity; and though they cry in My ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them." God was speaking at the time about the abominations in the Temple, so it reminds us that God shall not be mocked and we must walk in righteousness.

How important is prayer? Very, for even Jesus, who is God Himself as the Son who became man, prayed on earth to the Heavenly Father. There were times he prayed the entire night! Is it possible?

In prayer there is such power that we can heal the sick, set the captive free from the bondage of spiritual darkness, to battle the power and principalities of the kingdom of darkness and to find strength to overcome sin. In prayer we have the power to change our surroundings and our lives.

May we, like John Knox, know that God hears us, that our words fall not on deaf ears, and may we be like Jesus in saying "nevertheless not my will, but Yours o Lord be done."



# MODULE 3

# CHAPTER 5

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## M3C5

# Walking in Faith

*Layout by E Cloete*

LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

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God calls for the disciple to walk in faith. But in order for a disciple to walk in faith such a disciple needs to GROW in faith, meaning drawing ever closer to trusting the Lord, relying upon Him and leaning upon His counsel, wisdom and guidance

There is an interesting Scripture in Leviticus 19 which states the following: 23 And when you come into the land and have planted all kinds of trees for food, then you shall count the fruit of them as inedible and forbidden to you for three years; it shall not be eaten. 24 In the fourth year all their fruit shall be holy for giving praise to the Lord. 25 But in the fifth year you may eat of the fruit [of the trees], that their produce may enrich you; I am the Lord your God

This Scripture points out that there is thus a progressive nature to any spiritual growth, and in this case the fruit was only seen as a holy after four years. Just so, we who are called to be a living sacrifice unto God also need to grow spiritually and become mature so that we get to a point of abiding in God. Only God knows when we are truly ready and mature like the fruit of the Holy Land that takes five years to mature

How long does it take for us to mature and become sanctified for God to use us? This means how long is it going to take for us to submit, to yield to His Will and to follow in His ways? How long will it take to deny the flesh and the self to seek His glory? Only when we have come to a point of denying the self and carrying the fruit can we begin to mature and become sons and daughters of purpose in His glory and will

Therefore, just as it took a time for the fruit to be ripe in order for the vitamins to come forth to bless and enrich, just so there is a progressive nature to our spiritual growth. It therefore takes time for us to spiritual 'ripen' and to 'mature' until we are flowing in the Lord's Will. It is only when we are truly submitted to His way and truth and path that we can flow in the manifestation of His Glory and Power

And this process of ripening and growing and maturing is the spiritual path of the disciple, and it also applies how we grow in our faith

We so often think we come to the Lord and then we are ready to move in His glory. This is not so. It takes time. It took the disciples 3½ years to be ready for ministry, and they were discipled by Jesus!

We need to be careful therefore not to jump the gun and jump into things in terms of ministry or our calling until we have gone through a process of ripening and maturing. Paul after all didn't immediately start to minister. By all account it took more than 10 years of spending time with God until the Lord released him into the harvest field

A lot of people these days are getting burned when moving in ministry or their calling because they have not allowed for a process of ripening and maturing and processing.

We need to be very careful of such things, because when we are still immature, we run the risk of walking in deception, and we can easily sow more harm than good. And this process is really one of submitting, learning God's ways, exercising walking in the Spirit, walking in His Truth and growing in understanding, knowledge and wisdom

We do not become a mature believer/follower overnight. We do not walk in faith overnight. Faith comes by a process of maturing and ripening. It takes time, and just as we learn how to walk in the fullness of the holiness and anointing, so we need to allow God to show us the path of maturity

This spiritual growth is also emphasised in Amplified Bible (AMP): 26 And He said, The kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed upon the ground, 27 And then continues sleeping and rising night and day while the seed sprouts and grows and increases—he knows not how. 28 The earth produces [acting] by itself—first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. 9 But when the grain is ripe and permits, immediately he sends forth [the reapers] and puts in the sickle, because the harvest stands ready

*And also in Ephesians 4: 12 His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ's body (the church), 13 [That it might develop] until we all attain oneness in the faith and in the comprehension of the [full and accurate] knowledge of the Son of God, that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ's own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him. 14 So then, we may no longer be children, tossed [like ships] to and fro between chance gusts of teaching and wavering with every changing wind of doctrine, [the prey of] the cunning and cleverness of unscrupulous men, [gamblers engaged] in every shifting form of trickery in inventing errors to mislead*

As mentioned, this progressive nature of our growth has especially significance when it comes to walking in faith and to love, which are foundational stones [held together by the capstone] of our spiritual lives

In Luke 18, we read how Jesus challenges us to walk in persistent faith. Persistent faith comes when we continue believing and keep on hoping in God's Word

Persistent faith is a result of growing, maturing and ripening. "However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?" Luke 18:8

In Luke 18 Jesus asked his disciples if He would find faith on earth. This was said 2000 years ago. God is the only one who knows when the Son of Man will return to earth.

Jesus would therefore have known that in thousands of years from the day of His resurrection that the earth will be populated by billions of people, and among them quite a healthy number of disciples. Jesus would have known, when He spoke the words of Luke 18:8, that on the day of His return, therefore the day that the Body of Christ is prepared, that there would be millions and millions of followers of His Word

Yet, He still spoke the words of Luke 18. He still asked the question if He would find faith on earth. He did not say if He will find little faith. No, Jesus said if He will any find any faith, meaning will He find any faith whatsoever among all the believers? And this is worrying, since faith is part and parcel of the life of the disciple. By faith we please God, by faith we trust in God, by faith we grow spiritually and by faith we abide in His perfect will

The words of Jesus were spoken following His teaching on persistent prayer in the same chapter. *The Parable of the Persistent Widow: 18 Then He spoke a parable to them, that men always ought to pray and not lose heart, 2 saying: "There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God nor regard man. 3 Now there was a widow in that city; and she came to him, saying, 'Get justice for me from my adversary.' 4 And he would not for a while; but afterward he said within himself, 'Though I do not fear God nor regard man, 5 yet because this widow troubles me I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.'"* 6 Then the Lord said, "Hear what the unjust judge said. 7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you that He will avenge them speedily

So, we could then say that Jesus asked if He would find persistent faith, meaning faith that continues daily to work through us. It is, however, clear that we do not live in persistent faith, but rather in a state of temporary faith. Understand, Jesus did not say this in jest. This was a direct challenge directed at the believers concerning our walk of faith

Let us understand the faith of Noah, Abraham and Moses grew because they trusted completely in the Lord and they walked with God on an intimate level

Today we will be quick to answer Jesus' question in Luke 18 by saying yes, that surely there must be faith on earth. Surely there must be someone, somewhere, who is walking in the true faith of the Lord? We can argue, but then again, Jesus still asked if He will faith. Jesus would have instead asked how much faith or how many believers would be walking with faith

But He didn't say this. Jesus specifically challenged the Body of Christ (believers), asking a most valuable and difficult question: do we walk in faith?

We can say that naturally there is faith, because we are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, believing in His death and resurrection. Yet, we are not talking about life saving faith; we are talking about walking in daily faith. We are talking about completely trusting God



We serve a supernatural God – there is no question of His ability, His wisdom, His strength, His glory and power. There is no argument that He is God and we are man, and that He is beyond all comprehension, imagination, or even understanding. He is vast in all that He does and so at times it is still puzzling how believers can doubt in Him or fail to trust Him. God has given us all the means, therefore all the power by the abiding work of the Spirit, to walk in holiness, to walk in faith, and to walk in love. We have no excuse; after all, we just need to have faith like a mustard seed. So the Lord says He has given us all the means and the ability to walk in victory

*It says in 2 Peter 1: 2 May grace (God's favour) and peace (which is perfect well-being, all necessary good, all spiritual prosperity, and freedom from fears and agitating passions and moral conflicts) be multiplied to you in [the full, personal, precise, and correct] knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. 3 For His divine power has bestowed upon us all things that [are requisite and suited] to life and godliness, through the [full, personal] knowledge of Him Who called us by and to His own glory and excellence (virtue)*

This is also what Paul prays for in *Ephesians 3: 16 May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened and reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by the [Holy] Spirit [Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality]. 17 May Christ through your faith [actually] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love and founded securely on love, 18 That you may have the power and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints [God's devoted people, the experience of that love] what is the breadth and length and height and depth [of it];*

*19 [That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]!*

God's power by the Spirit resides in us so that we can progress and grow spiritually as a disciple. There is no excuse. It is up to us as disciples ... it depends on how much we submit, yield and trust the Lord in all things

To continue, in *2 Peter 1* it says: *4 By means of these He has bestowed on us His precious and exceedingly great promises, so that through them you may escape [by flight] from the moral decay (rottenness and corruption) that is in the world because of covetousness (lust and greed), and become sharers (partakers) of the divine nature. 5 For this very reason, adding your diligence [to the divine promises], employ every effort in exercising your faith to develop virtue (excellence, resolution, Christian energy), and in [exercising] virtue [develop] knowledge (intelligence),*

*6 And in [exercising] knowledge [develop] self-control, and in [exercising] self-control [develop] steadfastness (patience, endurance), and in [exercising] steadfastness [develop] godliness (piety), 7 And in [exercising] godliness [develop] brotherly affection, and in [exercising] brotherly affection [develop] Christian love. 8 For as these qualities are yours and increasingly abound in you, they will keep [you] from being idle or unfruitful unto the [full personal] knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) 9 For whoever lacks these qualities is blind, [spiritually] short-sighted, seeing only what is near to him, and has become oblivious [to the fact] that he was cleansed from his old sins*

Peter argues that firstly we have the all the inner strength we need to overcome sin, to overcome corruption and decay, and secondly, we have all strength to be persistent in our efforts to walk in faith. And we can walk by faith for it is God we make the promises, so that we can stand in faith!

Paul in his writings says that in the end we will learn to walk in Christian love when we exercise our persistent faith. Therefore, in order to walk in Christian love, we first need to walk in habitual faith! Habitual faith teaches us about submission, and submission leads to our character and mind-sets being changed by the indwelling powerful working of the Holy Spirit

It is by this powerful indwelling that we are changed from glory to glory, but we need to allow the Spirit to move, and we need to have faith in the indwelling of the Lord so that by that faith we may behold Him in all things throughout our day and so allow Him to change and heal us

Praise God, the more we hold onto God, submit to Him, then surely as He changes our character by that divine and powerful inner working there is a process of walking in greater virtue (excellence, resolution, Christian energy), which leads to the [exercising] of virtue [develop]. This is the path of the disciple

And once we walk therefore in virtue by character, then by that submission through faith we begin to add knowledge (intelligence), and in [exercising] knowledge [develop] self-control, and in [exercising] self-control [develop] steadfastness (patience, endurance), and in [exercising] steadfastness [develop] godliness (piety), and in [exercising] godliness [develop] brotherly affection, and in [exercising] brotherly affection [develop] Christian love

Glory to God! There is an indwelling working of the Lord, and by that powerful presence and movement of His Glory, we by faith act upon His Word and Way, and by that faith we allow His inner working to break down strongholds so that we may mature and ripen in our character and spiritual walk. And when we truly begin to mature and ripen like those fruits, we then begin to walk in greater virtue, character, brotherly kindness, godliness, and ultimately, love



Peter, however, emphasises exercising faith, because through this process of exercising there is a process of practical application, of growing, and of developing into godly virtues. To exercise implies a constant, dedicated and resolute action – like an athlete – to improve in skill, knowledge and understanding. We can thus only truly mature and ripen by a process of walking habitually in the Spirit, learning the ways of the Spirit, and acting upon His Word by faith. And such a process of obedience unlocks our character to receive the inner power of God to lead us from glory to glory

So Peter speaks of exercising faith, and he talks about exercising virtue, self-control, godliness and brotherly affection. For Paul, this is important, for he implies we cannot simply sit back and grow or mature. To ripen takes an action and it requires a process of acting upon decisions. To lay down one's will take action, to allow the Spirit to change one's character takes action, to follow in His ways takes action, and to deny the self and carry the cross requires fervent and persistent and faithful action

Peter thus says that we will not from the outset walk in great faith, virtue, knowledge or self-control. We will not from the outset walk in God's love or in brotherly affection. This will take a process, and a path of development. This calls for a process of ripening, because only when we grow in His Presence will we truly grow in His character, power and glory

Again, this is the spiritual walk of the disciple. It is a path of growing and maturing in spiritual maturity until we walk in persistent faith, trusting and leaning upon the Lord for all things. Thus, when we develop and grow spiritually by exercising such virtues such as faith and love, will we truly begin to habitually and persistently walk in His Presence. And once we walk in such a manner in His ways, then we walk in persistent and habitual faith!

Paul also sums up this process in *Colossians 1: 9 For this reason we also, from the day we heard of it, have not ceased to pray and make [special] request for you, [asking] that you may be filled with the full (deep and clear) knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom [in comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God] and in understanding and discernment of spiritual things-10 That you may walk (live and conduct yourselves) in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him and desiring to please Him in all things, bearing fruit in every good work and steadily growing and increasing in and by the knowledge of God [with fuller, deeper, and clearer insight, acquaintance, and recognition]. 11 [We pray] that you may be invigorated and strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, [to exercise] every kind of endurance and patience (perseverance and forbearance) with joy, 12 Giving thanks to the Father, Who has qualified and made us fit to share the portion which is the inheritance of the saints (God's holy people) in the Light. 13 [The Father] has delivered and drawn us to Himself out of the control and the dominion of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, 14 In Whom we have our redemption through His blood, [which means] the forgiveness of our sins*

Paul therefore says that we need wisdom and knowledge in order to continue the road of bearing fruit in every good work and steadily growing and increasing in and by the knowledge of God. And this is made possible when we are invigorated and strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, [to exercise] every kind of endurance and patience (perseverance and forbearance) with joy

Paul, like Peter, therefore agrees that we can walk this path by this inner invigorating work of the Spirit, but we need to submit, we need to obey, we need to listen to God, so that we can exercise endurance and patience when it comes to the fruit of the Spirit. But note, walking in true love begins by walking in habitual faith. A true realisation and a deep walk in God's love begin with that faith that dwells within – a faith released by the inner and powerful divine working of a persistent and habitual God

*It says the following in 1 Samuel 2: 26 Now the boy Samuel grew and was in favor both with the Lord and with men. Samuel grew in favour. We don't just wake up one day and have favour. It is a process of walking in God's favour, which comes by the process of submitting and allowing by faith God to change us so that we may follow His wisdom and glory. It says in Proverbs 3: 1 Let not mercy and kindness [shutting out all hatred and selfishness] and truth [shutting out all deliberate hypocrisy or falsehood] forsake you; bind them about your neck, write them upon the tablet of your heart. 4 So shall you find favour, good understanding, and high esteem in the sight [or judgment] of God and man 5 Lean on, trust in, and be confident in the Lord with all your heart and mind and do not rely on your own insight or understanding. 6 In all your ways know, recognize, and acknowledge Him, and He will direct and make straight and plain your paths*

Solomon in Proverbs 3 is also describing a process of walking in mercy, kindness and truth. He talks about taking a wise choice of following God's voice, His truth and His ways. And we take a decision to trust in the Lord's Truth and His guidance, we gain favour

The path of the disciple is one of character, where we grow in the character of the Lord and thus grow in virtue and where we learn to develop and exercise such virtue by increasing faith, love, hope and trust

These matters all come by maturity, and maturity comes by a persistent and decisive action of submitting, of seeking, of yielding and of beholding the Lord. And by maturity, we can walk by habitual faith that breeds habitual love by the inner Presence of God

Such is the path of the disciple

# MODULE 3

## CHAPTER 6

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### M3C6

# Baptism in Water

*Layout by E Cloete*

LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

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For Jesus said *Matthew 28: 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...*

It is the mandate and the duty of a disciple not only to be baptized but to also baptize others. For it says in *Acts 2:38 (New King James Version): 38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*

The baptism of water goes hand in hand with the baptism of the Spirit. As we will see in this study, baptism of water is our commitment to God to lead a new life, washing away the old ways, so that we can be worshippers in Spirit and in Truth. Let us understand we can be baptized in the Spirit before baptism of water, but so often when we are first baptized in water this will then prepare the way for our baptism in the Spirit

For now, let us look at the concept of the baptism of water. Firstly, we may ask is baptism necessary. Well, we see how Jesus Himself was baptized in *Matthew 3: 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan [River], to be baptized by him. 14 But John tried to prevent Him [vigorously protesting], saying, "It is I who need to be baptized by You, and do You come to me?" 15 But Jesus replied to him, "Permit it just now; for this is the fitting way for us to fulfil all righteousness." Then John permitted [it and baptized] Him. 16 After Jesus was baptized, He came up immediately out of the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he (John) saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove and lighting on Him (Jesus), 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased and delighted!"*

So if Jesus was baptized in water (take note which was followed by the Spirit of the Lord coming upon Him), then surely baptism is not a small issue. Let us understand Jesus allowed Himself to be baptized to show His disciples part and is parcel of our spiritual walk, for it is about committing your life to the Lord and making a declaration you wish to serve Him and His Kingdom

You see, God has made it simple for us to follow His plan of salvation

What God requires from us in order to be saved is to believe in His Son Jesus Christ, repent of our sins, and commit our life to Him, which is physically but also spiritually displayed by us getting into water and being baptized (immersed) for the purpose of having Him forgive our sins and be born again in this manner.

Baptism has caused much debate, even though Jesus Himself was baptized by the immersion of water. It was after all John the Baptist who was stunned when Jesus came to Him for baptism – and even though this was the Son of God, Jesus again put his teachings into a practical demonstration by Himself being immersed in the river.



Jesus was simply showing the importance to John and the disciples of Him throughout the ages of the significance of the baptism which is the separation from the old and the new

Many have asked is baptism necessary for salvation. In other words, will we fail to inherit eternal life if we are not baptized? We need to remember salvation comes by our faith in Jesus and our relationship with Him. Baptism will not save us. But baptism is surely the testimony we deliver in the natural and the spiritual realm to declare we are now seeking to serve the Lord as His disciple

Now, let us read *Acts 19:4* *Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.* According to this verse, John the Baptist baptized people by mentioning just the name of Jesus Christ only. This baptism is called the baptism of repentance. This baptism was the 'Jesus only baptism' and was done away with, because the purpose of the ministry was only to prepare the way of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus introduced the complete baptism, which is in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Baptism is not only about repentance, but about preparing to lay down one's life before the Father so that the Holy Spirit can fill a person and work within a believer. Baptism of the water needs to lead to the baptism of the Spirit; otherwise it is only the baptism of repentance

When it comes to baptism by water, theological arguments have caused us to miss the spiritual principle of this action – it has never been something that has been bound by the physical but it speaks of our spiritual desire and hunger to draw closer to God and to draw closer to His beauty and divinity. Arguments and debates regarding the form of baptism negate the longing of the Lord for us to make a dedicated commitment unto Him in service and in our life. As we see with the spiritual betrothal of the Bride unto the Bridegroom [Jesus], there is a time where we have to push aside all that separates us from God, and we need to be “cleansed” by the washing of the Word, and we need to be separated by the spiritual act of baptism of water and of the Spirit

It is true that according to the Word, demonstrated by Jesus Himself, baptism is the immersion into water in order for our entire being to be renewed [as it prepares the way for the Holy Spirit and a closer walk with Father and Son], just not our mind as demonstrated by the sprinkling of water. So baptism is about immersion, and it is about willingly making a decision and a self-commitment to serve the Lord.

Therefore, you cannot baptize an infant, for an infant cannot yet make that choice. You can merely dedicate an infant to the Lord, but the infant when grown up needs to make a spiritual decision to be baptized by laying down his or her life for the Lord

Let us understand the word baptism comes from the Greek word "baptizos" which means to "wash or immerse." This Greek concept is derived from the Hebrew term "t'vilah."

Some might be surprised to learn that Christian baptism has its roots in Judaism. Indeed, baptism is an old Hebrew custom, and if one understands it, one will understand the significance of it and why Jesus Himself was baptized. During Jesus' time, as today in Israel, baptism was the immersion into a water bath called a mikvah. The word 'mikvah' means a pool of living water which was used for ritual purification. This procedure is called tevillah [t'vilah], which means immersion

Before John the Baptist came preaching "repent and be baptized", immersion was thus already an accepted practice in the life of the Hebrew people. As John the Baptist stood in the Jordan River, he wasn't doing anything radical or new. T'vilah (immersion) was part of the Biblical faith before Jesus came. Immersion or baptism still remains to be seen as the "gateway" into being set apart unto the Lord spiritually

The power of immersion was thus seen by the Hebrews as something that cleanses the spiritually unclean and brings about healing and restoration. Throughout the Old Testament, "baptism" or cleansing by water was a central part in dealing with uncleanness. For example, the leper would go through washing rituals (Leviticus 14) not for physical cleansing but spiritual cleansing. Like Naaman who immersed seven times and was healed in the Jordan River, the immersion completed the healing process for leprosy. The priests also went through immersions in preparation for temple service (Leviticus 16). The same concept of cleansing and healing from our old ways and our old nature is carried over to the New Testament

The method of baptism during Biblical times was different than today. The person would first wash himself and make sure he was physically clean. Then he would walk into the water by himself and squat down into the fetal position. This was usually done three times and was witnessed by someone who stood nearby to make sure the immersing person was completely covered by the water. This "witness" would declare the immersion complete "in the Name" or "as a follower" of Jesus

According to Jewish law the immersion had to have a required witness. In several New Testament references such as I Corinthians 1:13, 15; Matthew 21:25; Acts 1:22; and Acts 19:3 we see early baptism mentioned in conjunction with the name of individuals such as John and Paul.

Still today, not only does God as Father, Son and Spirit bear witness to the baptism, but it is preferable that someone bears witness to declare the baptism valid in the spiritual and the natural Brides in ancient Israel, as well as brides in Israel today, experienced a mikvah prior to her wedding.



This immersion in water is part of the Bride's physical and spiritual preparation for the wedding ceremony. The mikvah represents a separation from the old life to a new life

The need for cleansing and making holy is therefore clear through the many types of washing connected with the Temple worship. For example, in Bible times, the Tabernacle, and later the Temple, was the place of God's presence. A people could only approach the Most High at these places, and only if they were ritually clean. The unclean were cut off from worship until their condition had been dealt with

Just so, we as the Bride of Christ also must experience our mikvah which is being baptised in water and in Spirit while also being cleansed by the Word of God

Bride = bridegroom

Temple – Spirit can live

Our baptism of water and Spirit is indeed our separation from the old life so that we may be betrothed as a new creation unto God. *Mark 16:16: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe, will be condemned."* How we need to be set apart unto God so that we may be found ready as the Bride for the Bridegroom!

The baptism therefore remains a question of life and death and a cleansing from this unclean world and unclean ways. It is a time when new life is given and actions reflect inward change

The most important reason we have been called to be baptized or to be immersed is to reinforce the Bible's message of separation. As believers, we have been called out of darkness into the Light of Jesus. He called us as His own precious people. *1 Peter 2:9 (New King James Version): But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*

Baptism or immersion has many avenues of purpose in Judaism, yet one main goal remains, which is to be being set apart, and this is the one desire of our Lord for us to also be set apart. After all, the entire Old Testament speaks and echoes of this desire, and thus the 613 Laws of Moses was so that the nation could be set apart

We are set apart to God as His children. He has called us to set ourselves apart in this world, and through our actions. As we choose to obey His Word and thus replicate His will, we set ourselves apart unto Him.

***2 Corinthians 6:17-18 (New King James Version): 17 Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.” 18 “I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the LORD Almighty.”***

Baptism or immersion’s purpose is to spiritually cleanse the sinner from all that is contrary to the Word. ***Acts 2:38 (New King James Version): 38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit***

The main purpose of immersion is thus of separation. Separation is the calling of all believers. It is one reason why we were called out of darkness to walk in the light of God. Separation is central to the gospel of the Messiah. God desires His people to be set apart, or “kadosh” - be holy.

As we separate ourselves from this world, we actually separate ourselves unto God. We have been called to draw lines of separation between the common and the pure, the clean and the unclean, and the profane and the holy

Immersion is thus a "procedure" that sets us apart as holy to God. Immersion is also an act of repentance, following our rebellion as the old man against God. All believers have been called to the priestly worship of God through a covenant with Him. We are to walk in cleanliness, to be free of defilement and to demonstrate daily God's standards. We become unclean when we cross the lines that God has set for living

We need to therefore be cleansed from our old life so that we need to pass over by the Blood of Jesus into a new life. Therefore Jesus died for us and rose again on the third day, so that we may draw closer to God and experience Him. It is therefore a mandate for the disciple to be set apart by being baptized, and then baptizing others

We see this in action in ***Acts 8:26-40*** when Phillip baptized an eunuch: ***36 As they continued along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch exclaimed, “Look! Water! What forbids me from being baptized?” 37 Philip said to him, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he replied, “I do believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” 38 And he ordered that the chariot be stopped; and both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him***

What was the prerequisite for the baptism? Simple – the eunuch had to believe with all his heart that Jesus is the Lord. This is after all the definition of a disciple. And so Phillip fulfilled his task as a disciple by baptizing the eunuch. And yes, all disciples are called to be baptized and then to baptize others in water and in Spirit

Baptism is important.

The author of Hebrews urged his listeners to return to God through repentance, coupled with immersion. *Hebrews 10:22 (New King James Version): let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water*

Immersion also takes another meaning with the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. *Colossians 2:11-13 (New King James Version): 11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. 13 And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses*

Indeed, a true desire to be spiritually separated unto God as demonstrated by the water baptism speaks of our desire to be free from our old life in order to be raised anew into Jesus. It speaks of our desire to be converted from our heathen ways unto Christianity. As mentioned, this powerful conversion is understood in Judaism, while the apostles and the early believers continued the Jewish practice of mikvah (baptism) as a symbol of conversion

Therefore, as a disciple, we need to understand the significance of the baptism, as to why we are being baptized and why we are baptizing someone else. And remember, baptism is done in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

We baptize in the authority of Jesus, but to the recognition of the Trinity where all three persons of the Godhead pays witness and testimony to the rebirth. Note, there has been confusion when it comes to baptism, with some saying we must only baptize in the Name of Jesus, for He is God. However, Jesus taught the proper form of baptism is in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as designated in Matthew 28:19

But why do we see so many instances in the New Testament where people were baptized "in Jesus' name"? It says for example in *Acts 2:38, "And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"* And also *Acts 10:48, "And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days."*

However, keep in mind *1 John 5: 6 This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. 7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.*

*8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one*

The baptism is about spiritual recognition. All three persons of the Godhead have to agree, because even though God is ONE, there are three persons who all play an important role. To only baptize in the name of Jesus is NOT to recognise the presence and reality of the Father and the Holy Spirit

The disciples would have spoken about the baptism in the name of Jesus, for they simply wanted the Jewish people to understand that this deals with the New Covenant and not the old covenant of ritual cleansing.

The disciples would have talked about the baptism in the name of Jesus to effectively indicate the gulf between physical Law and Grace. But when they baptised, it was most likely in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Baptism is about recognition. To be baptized in the name of the Father, or unto the Father, means publicly, by a significant rite, to receive his system of religion; to bind the soul to obey his laws; to be devoted to him; to receive, as the guide and comforter of the life, his instructions, and to trust to his promises

To be baptized unto the Son, in like manner, is to receive Him as the Messiah - our Prophet, Priest, and King - to submit to his laws, and to receive him as a Saviour. To be baptized unto the Holy Spirit is to receive Him publicly as the Sanctifier, Comforter, and Guide of the soul.

The meaning, then, may be thus expressed: baptizing them unto the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit by a solemn profession of the only true faith, and by a solemn consecration to the service of the sacred Trinity

The significance of baptism is therefore summed up in *2 Corinthians 5:17-21 ESV: Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.*

By the Blood we are reconciled unto God, and by the baptism we declare we are a new creation, washed clean and willing to follow the Lord afresh

Note: Always seek and follow the leading of the Spirit of the Lord when baptizing someone. At times we can allow a religious mind-set to stand in our way from doing the work of the Lord. Even though it is proper for baptism by immersion, at times the Lord can give the order for someone to be baptized by simply pouring water over them while they are kneeling or standing. It is about obedience

**So if you follow the Lord, you are called to be baptized and to baptize others in water. This is the walk of a disciple, for a disciple is set apart unto God, unto His kingdom and unto a life committed to the Lord's Way, Truth and Life**

# MODULE 3

# CHAPTER 7

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## M3C7

# Baptism in Spirit

*Layout by E Cloete*

LIGHTHOUSE MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

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For Jesus said *Matthew 28: 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ...*

Again, as stressed in chapter 5 of this module, it is the mandate and the duty of a disciple not only to be baptized but to also baptize others. For it says in *Acts 2 (New King James Version): 38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*

The baptism of water goes hand in hand with the baptism of the Spirit. While baptism of water is our commitment to God to lead a new life, washing away the old ways, so that we can be worshippers in Spirit and in Truth, just so the baptism of the Spirit empowers and equips us for ministry and to lead a life where we abide in the Lord.

Let us read *Acts 19:9 And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples 2 he said to them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” So they said to him, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” 3 And he said to them, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism.” 4 Then Paul said, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus.” 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. 7 Now the men were about twelve in all.*

Acts 19 speaks of the greater work of the Lord by baptism. Many considered in the day that the baptism of John as being similar to a ritual cleansing, which sets one apart for ministry [priestly service]. What they failed to understand is that the true purpose of the baptism in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was to bind that person to the Kingdom of Heaven under the New Covenant of Grace sealed by the Blood which allows for the Holy Spirit to renew a man’s spirit.

Remember, baptism of water and Spirit was not an option with Jesus. It is vital for our spiritual life for we cannot continue to live an old life while we seek after Him. It says in *John 3: the New Birth: 1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” 3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” 4 Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” 5 Jesus answered, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.*

There is no greater process of being renewed than the infilling (baptism) of the Spirit (John 3), where Jesus says we cannot see the Kingdom of God until we have been reborn in the Spirit. Truly, we cannot know who we are – meaning the way God sees us – until we can see what God sees. And we will only know who we are called to be in God’s eyes when we allow Him to show us and reveal it in us. But this happens when we embrace Him, pursue Him and truly hold onto Him until He blesses us with this insight and revelation. This comes by the infilling of the Spirit.

To be reborn in the Spirit, or in other words to be baptised in the Spirit, was according to Jesus of vital importance and if we are not baptised in the Spirit, we cannot see the kingdom of God. To “see” means walk in the reality of the Kingdom here and now. We are on numerous times reminded that if we truly love the Lord, then we are called to obey His commandments and His full doctrine. And to be filled by the Spirit is of such a matter – it is not optional like fashion, but of dire necessity. And so the words of Jesus when He says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God”, should jolt us to realise the absolute importance of walking in the Spirit.

We read of Jesus’ baptism in water and spirit in *John 2: 29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ 31 I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.” 32 And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. 33 I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ 34 And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.”*

Jesus Himself was baptised in the Spirit, and only after this momentous event did Jesus walk in the fullness His ministry. Jesus was indeed the Son of God, and He was the Anointed One to reconcile the world to the Father, but His teachings and miracles flowed from the work of the Holy Spirit. If Jesus ministered in the power of the Spirit, how much more do we not need the Spirit today as mere mortals?

Let us remember *Romans 8 : New King James Version (NKJV): Free from Indwelling Sin: There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 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. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.*

*6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. 10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

It is clear we are called as disciples to lead a life in the Spirit, not in the flesh. For by the Spirit we also walk in a life of knowledge, power, understanding, counsel and wisdom (Isaiah 11). We simply cannot abide in the Presence of the Lord without the Spirit of the Lord dwelling in us.

We also realise the importance of a disciple being led by the Spirit when we read about the fruits of the Spirit in *Galatians 5: 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. 24 And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

It is therefore important for the disciple to be baptised in the Spirit, but also to disciple others by showing them how to lead a life under the guidance of the Spirit. For when we are led by the Spirit of the Lord, we walk in the ways, nature and in the glory of the Lord, reflected in our behaviour and character.

In our pursuit of the Lord and knowing our Lord, we must always keep in mind the basic truth given to us in *1 Corinthians 2: Spiritual Wisdom: 6 However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, 8 which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." 10 But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. 11 For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.*

We as disciples of the Lord cannot understand the ways of the Kingdom, or the voice of the Lord, without having the Holy Spirit. Our natural reasoning will never lead us to spiritual truth. Before we can understand the truth, we need our minds transformed from their natural, earthly perspective, until we can see with the eyes of Christ, hear with His ears, and understand with His heart.

For true disciples, this is the ultimate pursuit. For us to therefore follow God, to live out our callings, we need to be reborn in the Spirit.

We cannot grow into spiritual maturity without the Holy Spirit. We cannot draw closer to God or conformed to His image without the Holy Spirit. We cannot minister and be servants of the Most High without the Holy Spirit. Without the Spirit, we will follow a religion, and a not relationship. Without the Spirit, we will continually battle the flesh and operate under the dominion of the flesh.

We cannot be a disciple without being led by the Spirit. For John 16 sums up the work of the Spirit in the life of the disciple: *Unless I go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. 8 When he comes, he will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 about sin, because people do not believe in me; 10 about righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11 and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. 12 "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will receive from me what he will make known to you."*

Only through a birth in the Holy Spirit and a submission unto the Lord can we truly walk in love, fear, obedience, truth and glory. Only in the Spirit can we know the ways of the Lord, be empowered in the gifts of the Spirit to be workmen approved for His Kingdom, and to walk in His life, hope and faith.

It says in *2 Corinthians 3: 17 Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 18 But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.* There is liberty in the Spirit, meaning we are no longer bound by the chains of religion, tradition, legalisms, and carnal matters. Indeed, only the Spirit of the Lord can unveil us by stripping away the bondages of old habits, and the strongholds of our spirit and soul.

Therefore it so important to be a Spirit-filled disciple, for a disciple is one that follows in the ways, truth and manner of the Kingdom. It is our mandate to be led by the Spirit and to disciple others to be filled by the Spirit of the Lord. It says in *Ephesians 5: (NKJV): 18 And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit ...*

Remember, the Church only got birthed on the day of the Pentecost at the outpouring of the Spirit, and subsequently in the power of the Holy Spirit the Gospel has over the last 2000 years or so been spread throughout the world. We are only reborn as children of God when we are filled by the Spirit.

The truth is simple – without the Holy Spirit we as Christians are lost on our spiritual journey. A Christian faith without the Spirit is a religion of dead rules and regulations and customs.

Without the Spirit, we will but continue to flounder in our spirit, in our character, in our daily lives and in our ministry.

Without the Spirit we remain but self-conscious, sin conscious, world conscious instead of God and Word conscious.

Without the Spirit, we are subjected to a time where we remain in bondage to the fears and the uncertainties and the perplexities of life, instead of being set free in the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Without the Spirit, we will but remain wandering according to our own self-worth and self-image, instead of seeing ourselves in Christ and being raised anew in the truth and reality of the Lord. Only in Spirit does our self-worth and self-image change into the image of Jesus.

Indeed, without the Spirit we “cannot enter the kingdom of God”.

A disciple has therefore been called to walk in the fullness of the Spirit. The question has been raised what does it really mean to walk in the fullness of the Spirit? What does it mean to walk in the guidance of the Spirit? Some will answer this implies walking in the gifts of the Spirit. Others will point to the fruits of the Spirit. There are those who refer to the Spirit’s wisdom and council and being able to speak in tongues.

When you however consider the true work of the Spirit in the life of the believer, then you realise that without the Spirit we are like a cork drifting on the ocean hoping to find a distant shore. The fullness of the Spirit extends way beyond mere gifts or callings; it deals with our fundamental essence of being a follower of the Lord.

Therefore, it is so important to be filled by the Spirit. When we contemplate the fullness of the Spirit, we must consider the following:

- The Spirit is the Conformer of our Morality and Character
- The Spirit Awakens us to become Spiritually Conscious and Conscientious and no longer carnal and worldly orientated



- The Spirit is the One who equips, empowers and strengthens us for ministry
- The Anointing of the Spirit destroys our flawed ways of thinking and perceptions that translates into our negative behaviour, our habits, our emotions and our actions
- The Spirit brings us into alignment with the will of God through the Truth
- In all, things, from day to night and from night to day, the Spirit is our guide, advisor and counsellor when it comes to our daily lives.

In a nutshell, the Spirit of the Living God works in our spirit, He works in our soul (emotions, character, mind-sets, morals, values), He trains and equips and empowers us for service and He works in Truth and Power to set us free from strongholds of thoughts and emotions and behaviour that dictate our lives. The Spirit is the Anointing that breaks our yokes and burdens.

Without the Spirit, therefore, we will not be renewed in our minds and in our character to become more like God. Without the Spirit, we will stay worldly and carnally minded instead of being spiritually orientated. Without the Spirit, we will remain in bondage to our emotions and thoughts and behaviour and habits, which have not come under the liberating power of the Blood. Without the Spirit, we will try to be in service of God without the anointing and the wisdom.

In the end, we cannot ministry and be unto service of the Lord unless we become spiritually conscious and conscientious. This calls for the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot become spiritually liberated to grow closer to God unless our emotions and thoughts and habits come under the Lordship of Jesus. This calls for the work of the Holy Spirit.

We cannot become more like God in character and in our morals and values while our spiritual man remains dormant and we haven't submitted ourselves completely to the freedom of the Truth. The work of the Holy Spirit in our lives in all its dimensions are interconnected and intertwined.

To therefore walk in the fullness of the Spirit implies a complete submission to God in order for Him to work in us, be it in our spiritual man, be it in our soul, be it in our ministry or be it in the liberating truth of divine deliverance. Only then, indeed only then when we have submitted completely in the all-encompassing work of the Spirit, will we be able to move in greater power and authority to do God's work for then we will flow in His will and in His Sovereignty.

This is why we need to be disciples walking in the Spirit, who have been baptized in the Spirit and who baptize others in the Spirit by teaching them about the Spirit, and showing them how to lead a life submitted to the Spirit.