

The Organic Church Field Manual

*An non-religious approach
to following Jesus Christ*

ORGANIC CHURCH FIELD MANUAL

First Edition

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INTRODUCTION

This manual is being written for equipping purposes only. Like any manual, if you try to read it while you are NOT doing the thing it is written to guide you through, you will have this nagging feeling that something huge is missing. And it will be.

While this manual draws from a 37 year journey of following Jesus Christ, it is based mainly on the last three-and-a-half years of an adventure in “organic” church-planting. I am grateful to my companions in “The Journey in East Central Minnesota”, which began as a “house church network”, and later became just a “house church”, and then just a band of disciples, as God weaned us off of the institutional mindset we came from. These pages contain much of what we learned from: our attempts at “being” the church instead of going to one; helping each other to live like Jesus is really in the room; and, risking being honest about how hard relationships are while at the same time our Savior said we would be *known* by them. (John 13:35)

We never got anything perfect, but Jesus did -- and because it's His deal anyway, we decided we could be O.K. with that.

SECTION I. ORGANIC LEADERSHIP

To me the most profound thing that author/speaker John Maxwell ever said was in his second “law” of leadership:

*“...Leadership is influence -
nothing more, and nothing less.”*

I believe that this has to be the most “organic” definition of leadership I have ever heard, and it points us to this truth: That despite all the books a person reads, seminars attended and degrees earned - despite all the other ways we have come up with to measure a person’s “success” in life, in the end what remains of leadership is the *equipping* that happens in the lives of others for having been with us.

1.0 Defining “organic”

The dictionary definition of “organic” is:

“Of, relating to, or derived from living organisms.”

This kind of reminds me of the angels’ question in Luke 24:5, *“Why do you seek the living One among the dead?”* “Organic” implies a lack of filler, additives or substitutes for the real thing. The disciples to whom the angels were speaking were probably tending to the burial place of Jesus’ body—the place his remains would have been if He were still dead— as a comfort in their loss. It reminded them of *the Jesus they used to know*. It also pictures all that happens when we treat Jesus like a dead man—someone who *used to* do great things. *We seek remembrance* of Him instead of seeking *Him!*

We could say that “organic church” is *seeking the living One - among the living*: that is, not in programs or buildings that are created to honor His memory, but in the places He said He would be - like where two or more are gathered **in His name**, which I understand as “under His authority”. (I will go into in more detail on this in chapter 4) So the next question is how does leadership look when Jesus, the Living One, is present and “leading” in the room?

2.0 Can Leadership be “Organic”?

A Word About Structure. Some have asked me how focusing on leadership can have anything to do with “organic church”. There is a prevailing sentiment out there that “organic” means “un-attended”, or “without structure”. All I can say is this: Been there - done that...and in every case, nature’s distaste for vacuums has prevailed, and a “structure” has emerged anyway. The only thing that ignoring structure gets you is weeds.

I have seen that nothing is more predictable when it comes to developing community than the *results of unintentionality*. What will your lawn look like if you start

with dirt and do nothing? It will eventually look like...*your neighbor's*, only less cared for. Some how we dream up this vision that some extravagant strain of herb from an exotic place is going to blow in and find our dirt, and it's going to be awesome! - if we just leave it alone. Maybe this kind of thinking comes from a serious lack of farmers in the church.

So just look around you at the prevailing church culture in your community... If you try to start an "organic church" with no structure around leadership and how it works, you will be looking at what *you* will have in a very short time - just on a smaller scale.

3.0 Leadership Culture. I certainly am not the first one to believe that leadership culture is the determining factor in the church community. Samuel Chand in his book "*Cracking Your Church's Culture Code*" made the observation that, "***Culture—not vision or strategy—is the most powerful factor in any organization***".²

So when I talk about how leadership happens in "organic church", I am talking about how individuals influence the *culture* of the group. What we accept as "normal" behaviors in the group comes from the *influencers* of the group—the "leadership culture".

For example, if a person arrives at a house church meeting and upon coming into a living room full of people makes a loud comment that draws all attention to him or her, one culture would think that was rude, and promptly go back to what they were doing before the person came in. Another would immediately shower that person with attention and conversation. In still another culture, there might be one or two that respond by attending to the person while the rest go back to what they were doing.

Consider how the churches you have been in treat their pastor compared to other members of the community. This is all determined by "leadership culture", and if we are not intentional about doing it differently in our attempts to create a more "organic" community of Jesus followers, it won't BE different—just smaller. Many "organic church" groups have discovered the same thing, and it usually plays out the same way - After the novelty of the group wears off and the members discover that they are facing some *familiar* obstacles, they do what they did the last time they were disappointed with "church": They leave.

So what is the lesson here? One is that "***being***" the Church means ***you can't leave it*** (*I know... "Oh, crap!"*). You have to work *through* the problems this time, and as you do, you will see Jesus bring a spiritual and personal growth you never thought possible.

To stay among the "living" means you no longer make decisions based on the old standards of comfort, control and cash, but based on where Jesus is. The leading of His presence is not determined by these things. It's altogether different. So don't push away from structure when change is necessary, because *that's when it's needed the most*.

4.0 The Leadership of Jesus.

Jesus' "leadership culture" began with those closest to Him: Peter, James and

John, and moved outward to the community around Him. Two teachings of Jesus that are key to understanding His “leadership culture” are:

4.1. **Matthew 20:25-28:**

*“And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. **It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many,”** (emphasis added),*

and,

4.2. **John 13:5-17,**

*“Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, “Lord, do You wash my feet?” Jesus answered and said to him, “What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter.” Peter said to Him, “Never shall You wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.” Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.” Jesus said to him, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, “Not all of you are clean.” So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? “You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. “If I, then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. **“For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.** “Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. “If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.”*

The contexts of these passages support the proposal that they are both statements about leadership in Jesus' Kingdom - They are not “extra credit”, nor are they mere philosophical propositions to be commented on by scholars. Peter was told that if he insisted on preventing Jesus from washing his feet *he could have no part with Him*. we are truly called to lead from underneath.

Jesus was establishing what we call an “upside-down kingdom”. Because Peter was working from his *community's* leadership culture, he was adamant about not appearing to be “above” his master:...

But in Jesus' leadership culture, the “master” is *supposed* to be underneath, using his strength to empower those who are being influenced by him...

Jesus' teaching on these things is the heart and core of His Kingdom on earth, and put in the context of the identifier of discipleship from John 13:35, *the love we have for one another*,

In working toward a leadership (influencing) culture defined by Jesus, the Journey

community found that certain core values helped us established the flow of empowerment *away* from ourselves to others.

Ten core values:

1. Everybody is worth dying for; John 3:16
2. We are called to love people and control resources, not the other way around; John 13:35, Luke 16:9
3. The blood of Christ really works; 1 John 1:9
4. Eternal life is great for dead people, but we've been provided an abundant life here and now; John 10:10, Ephesians 1:18-20
5. We all lead, because we all have influence; 1Corinthians 7:14, Daniel 12:3
6. We can't lead well until we have learned how to follow; Matthew 3:13-15, John 5:19
7. If we aren't being led by God's Spirit, we will be driven by other things; Romans 8:14, Luke 4:1
8. We hold tightly to our personal calling, but trade our hats as needed; 1Corinthians 12:7-11
9. For all the theology we can conceive, at last what we do is what we believe; James 2:18-20
10. In the end, making disciples is the ONE thing Jesus told us to do. Matthew 28:18-20,

Of the ten, two of them address leadership directly, (5,6) while three others address how we treat people and the roles we have in ministry (2,8,10) The rest all address some aspect of how to walk with our Savior.

The culture of this movement is built around the high value that Scripture gives to each individual, and the universal equipping of the "royal priesthood" of believers called the Church. (1Peter 2:4,5,7,9) Every member of the body of Christ is seen as seated with Christ (Ephesians 2:6) and gifted for service in the Kingdom (1Corinthians 12:7,11), a walking tabernacle of the presence of God (1Corinthians 6:19). These are all part of a foundation for what we recognize as leadership in Jesus' Kingdom.

As a practical application of this, we have found great value in helping one another to know how each of us contributes to a group or community - doing a "360°" - type of evaluation of each member of a team, often with the help of tools like StrengthsFinder*, APEST*, or Meyers-Briggs to help us better see how we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" and equipped for the Kingdom work together. So many churches use these for paid staff, but we have to get away from the belief that they are the only ones God has called to partner with Him in Kingdom-building.

5.0 The Three "FAV's"

While we are all in a growing process as to how we influence others, for those who are to be sent out to establish followership of Jesus in *new communities and contexts*, we recognized three essential dynamics ("FAV's") in how Spirit of Christ in us influenced those around us:

5.1. Followership.

(How we are empowered to lead)

If we take Jesus at His own word, He was actually the *ultimate follower*. In John 5:19 Jesus testifies that He only did what He *saw* the Father doing, and did it in the same manner. The rest of the story tells us that He not only followed the Father's every impulse in all that He did, but he also followed *those the Father had sent*, even though we could say they were "beneath" Him in rank and position. In Matthew 3:13-15 we see that Jesus' cousin John, knowing who Jesus was, protested when Jesus came to be baptized by him, (which was symbolic of discipleship under him). But Jesus said it was "fulfilling all righteousness", in that he was coming under the authority of the prophets and by doing so, walking out the principle of **coming under authority before walking IN authority**.

For us, followers of Jesus who were going to be "sent" to start new house groups or go to new communities needed this principle going on in their lives. We also needed the grace to follow someone who we may consider to be less of a leader than we are. This is part of Jesus' character. If Jesus was content to lead from underneath, then we must also be ready to do that.

5.2. Alignment.

(How we decide to walk together)

We are all given faith, or "spiritual vision", to a certain degree. As Paul stated, we all "see in part,... as through a glass, dimly", (1Cor. 13:12) but to the extent we can see what God is up to, we become responsible to walk that out.

I think that one of the most perplexing questions for Western believers is that of knowing God's will, or how one can be "led" by the Holy Spirit. There are a lot of jokes and perversions around the topic, but we didn't see the Testimony of Scripture giving us a "plan B", just in case we were having a hard time knowing what the Spirit was saying to us. The record of Acts actually testifies that the Spirit spoke to people, led them, stopped them from going places, and even "snatched" them away at times. It is written,

"For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ,..." Rom 8:14-17a

How have we come to the place now where we look on anyone who claims to be "led" by the Spirit as anything other than a *normal* believer? Along the way we have noted two things that have been very helpful in demystifying the "leading" of the holy Spirit in our lives and community:

5.2.1 THE AWARENESS THAT BY DEFINITION, EVERY BELIEVER HAS HEARD THE VOICE OF GOD. It is the testimony of Jesus that NO ONE could come to Him unless “drawn” to Him by the Father (John 6:44-45), that is, the Holy Spirit of God. His statement there goes on to say that, “*Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me.*” This makes two things clear:

The evidence of having heard from the **true God** is being drawn to *Jesus*. In other words, no one can come to us and say that God, the God that Jesus Christ is referring to here, spoke to them without having been **directed to Jesus Christ the Son**. This background gives us the foundation for the “3 C’s” (see, “B” below).

Every person who believes in Jesus Christ has “learned and heard from the **Father**”, *already!* This is a life-long reference point for the voice of God in our lives: It’s the convincing *influence* in our hearts that proved to us that Jesus is the Son of God and Lord of our lives. Who cannot recall something of how he or she was drawn to Jesus Christ? This is the voice of God, and despite the protests of Calvinists everywhere, the unmistakable message is that God is speaking to the “unregenerate” everywhere about His Son, just as the two accounts in the Gospels record the audible voice of God repeating both times...“Behold my Son!”.

In order to live the normal life of a Jesus follower, we *have* to de-mystify this thing of the leading of God’s Spirit - there is no other option for believers. Despite the fact that we live in a *culture of unbelief* in the spiritual. Whatever our doctrinal background, we barely believe in God because He is a Spirit, much less the other spirits that affect life as a human on a daily basis. The truth is, we have come to *perceive* a God who is “spirit”, and we have no options but to worship Him *in spirit and truth*. (John. 4:24)

5.2.2 THE APPRAISING OF THE LEADING OF GOD’S SPIRIT BY THREE PRINCIPLES OF SCRIPTURE (THE THREE “C’S”) WE ASK, “IS IT...

A. Consistent with Scripture. Is what we are understanding consistent with the testimony we have in Scripture about God and His Holy Spirit?

There is still no way to leave this behind: That knowledge of how God has revealed Himself in history empowers us to identify Him today—His voice and His actions. “*Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.*” Acts 17:11

“*All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.*” 2 Tim 3:16-17

This all being said, we cannot stop there. The warning of Jesus to the Pharisees rings down the centuries to the “bibolatriy” of evangelicalism today: “*You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; and*

you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life.” John 5:39-40 In referring to the testimony of Scripture, we have to keep in mind that by itself, this record can be used just as effectively for evil as for good. There are two other questions that have to be asked.

B. Confirmed with Fruit. Does the way we are being “led” by the Spirit result in “fruit”? ...and what is fruit, anyway?

Jesus said, *“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits.”* Matt 7:15-16

One example that screams at me weekly in my profession as a family law mediator is the “fruit” of the contemporary church in the area of marriage. Pastors everywhere seem to have a lot to say about “Christian marriage”, and yet what is the “fruit” of this teaching? I will tell you. A divorce rate that rivals that of those outside the church. This “fruit” has helped us all come to an unprecedented accomplishment in the State of Minnesota: 2011 will be noted as the first year in which more couples lived together unmarried than married.

That is not good fruit. That is to say, for all the “biblical” teaching being given couples prior to marriage, there is no evidence that God is at work in it to establish the picture of Christ and His Church talked about in Ephesians 5:28-32.

C. Confessing the Lord. Does the *spirit* at work in the decision or leading testify to the Lordship of Jesus Christ?

Many, many have experiences they understand as being from God, yet the mark - the *signature* of God’s influence in the world since He pitched His tent among us as Jesus the Son, has always been the witness of Jesus as Lord, having come in the flesh.

Paul and John both gave instruction about this:

“Now concerning (that which is) spiritual, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware. You know that when you were pagans - led astray to the mute idols, however you were led. Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus is accursed”; and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit. 1 Cor 12:1-3, and,

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the antichrist, (or false anointing) of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.” 1 John 4:1-3

Most of us have experienced the resistance of the world around us to any verbal mention of Jesus Christ as other than a swear word. You want to see people get uncomfortable? Just start talking about Jesus. There will be an immediate division in the

room: some will be repelled or annoyed, others will be drawn. We have learned to apply this reality in daily life by simply confessing the Lordship of Jesus in prayer and see what happens to the “leading” or train of thought we just had. If the Spirit of God can lead us to Jesus, He can lead us to anything. It’s not that hard.

Finally, the challenge - as well as the commonness - of following the Spirit’s leading can be seen in the testimony of Acts. Chapter 15:37-39 refers to a dispute between Paul and Barnabas that resulted in their going different ways. They were not seeing the same thing as to who should travel with them. In the end, Paul eventually saw the *fruit* of Barnabas’ decision to part ways and keep investing in John-Mark, as the Lord gave him grace to do so. (2Tim. 4:11)

Other disputes reach more to the core of the community of believers, like what should be required of new Gentile believers. (Acts 15:1-35) The witness of Scripture here shows a process - where the direction of God is seen, *not in a democratic process of counting votes*, but a collaborative dialogue where several spoke and all recognized the leading of the Holy Spirit, as *consistent* with the witness of Scripture.

So every believer needs to work through the implications of what it means to be “led by the Spirit”, because while the institutional church offers other options: following the Statement of Faith; following rules from the Bible; following a certain teacher..., the record of Scripture actually *condemns all of these practices*, and directs us back to being led by the One who led us to Jesus - The Living Spirit of God.

5.3 Vulnerability.

(How we establish flow of power to others)

We often see leaders around us guard their power by resisting vulnerability. When questions come as to whether these leaders have our best intentions in mind, they tell their followers to “trust me”. This demand for trust establishes the flow of power toward the leader rather than toward those being led.

(see the illustration on page 13)

Jesus’ leadership culture established the flow of power away from the leader, (Luke 6:19, Mark 5:27ff). He was the first to entrust Himself to **others**, not naively, but knowing what the price would be. This culminated in the ultimate act of entrusting himself to death on a cross, which empowered the whole human race to be reconciled to God. Jesus walked in “the light”, and He requires the same of us, knowing our humiliation and that we are sinners. Yet, the power of our “testimony” as leaders is not how well we are doing, but how long is the arm of God (His grace) that He could not only reach me at my lowest point, but use me to bring grace to others.

One who is sent needs to have established the flow of spiritual power away from them, to others, through vulnerability and the maintenance of the flow of God's grace in his or her life..

6.0 Implications of Jesus' Leadership

If we are going to establish our Messiah's leadership culture, we have to recognize our gifts and strengths as being packaged in 'jars of clay', not pretending to be shinier than we are, but allowing God to be the perfect One in the leadership equation. We also cannot look to a certain personality type, gender, race or life story as a qualifier for leadership. It is God who raises up leaders, and uses them in ways that may often baffle us. For us, our job is to continue following Jesus' lead, and learn to recognize the empowerment of God in our lives and the lives of others. As it is written:

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves" 2 Corinthians 4:7-8

7.0 A Word About Titles.

We see in Jesus' Leadership style a persistent aversion to titles. When asked if He was King of the Jews, He answered, "That's what you say...my Kingdom is not of this world..." John 18:33-36; and, when asked if He was the Son of God, it was the same answer: "You say that I am..." Luke 22:70. He even pushed back on being called "Good teacher", in Luke 18:18. He said, "No one is good but God alone", and so refused to even accept that designation.

We, on the other hand, hang our titles on the wall, or on a desk plaque for all to see, and care greatly if someone is called "pastor" or "elder" or "director", clinging to this as it gives us some right to be respected.

In the organic church movement, we are intentional about this part of Jesus' leadership culture. The one title he referred to Himself with is "Son of Man", which at once put Him on the same level with the rest of us and gave him standing to recover "dominion" on earth (Genesis 1:26ff).

* * *

Practical Applications

Followership is seen in the acceptance of existing roles that other leaders may have, and to see them not as obstacles but as God's divine provision for our own development.

John Maxwell, in several of his books citing the “Law of the Lid”, observes the attitude of David toward Saul: He viewed even this murderous King as “The Lord’s Anointed”, and refused to harm him, even to defend his own life. Jesus Himself viewed his cousin John as the Lord’s prophet, and submitted to being baptized by him “...to fulfill all righteousness”. We are directed in the New Testament to come under the authority, not only of leaders in the Church (Hebrews 13:17), but secular authorities as well (Romans 13:1-7, 1Peter 2:13). Being willing to come *under* earthly authority demonstrates the true source of one’s own authority to lead - that it does not come from men, but from God. Being content to let that be self-evident, aside from title or position, allows the grace of God to show forth.

Recognizing leadership at an “organic” level removes the limitations on people’s development as leaders because it recognizes the influence we have without regard to title or position. Here is a key concept in organic church:

Our part is to do our best to notice how God is raising people up and equipping them in the Body of Christ.

When we see those who are content to allow the influence of God’s Spirit in their lives be their ultimate guide, while honoring those who are in their lives as leaders, then we see the quality of Followership.

Alignment is demonstrated by an intuitive ability to apply the “three C’s” in the context of daily life and ministry.

Alignment with the vision of Jesus Christ involves clarity on the core values, the leadership culture, and the priority of the commission of disciple-making. These have priority over the traditional customs of the institutional church, and are distinguished by the very standards that are used to evaluate what we are doing. For example: the house churches that were part of The Journey are truly discipling groups, not mere gatherings of people who are interested in the concept of missional church. While our larger gatherings are open to everyone, at the home church level we are committed to inviting people into *discipleship*, not just to show up to a meeting. This means that, like Jesus, we commit to focusing our investment to a limited number of people in a discipleship relationship.

When we see that someone has a high “get it” factor, who has personal buy-in on our common rhythms and values, and who has a readiness to let go of old paradigms in order build a more biblical and effective culture for the expanding of the Kingdom, we see the alignment that is needed.

Vulnerability is seen in those who establish a flow of personal power away from themselves to others, combining good boundaries with a disregard for the prestige they carry among others, whether by way of title or personal reputation.

Jesus exhibited this characteristic by eating with tax-collectors and sinners, sustaining a reputation as a “drunkard and a glutton”, and maintaining friendships with prostitutes. He did not try to impress others who wanted to follow him, admitting he was a vagabond with no “place to lay his head”. (Matthew 8:20)

Paul, the one who murdered Christians, expressed this quality when he called himself the “foremost” of sinners in 1Timothy 1:15 (and this was admitted to a *pastor in training!*)

For us it has played out in our leadership development process when we share the high and low points of our lives, and in our discipling groups when we admit our deepest needs for healing and grace. This is another radical part of Jesus upside-down Kingdom.

When we see this kind of vulnerability in those among us, we recognize them as having what is needed to take the leadership culture of The Journey to new places.

These qualities are held up as before us in the way that Jesus modeled them, and in so doing became the most effective leader in history. By His grace we seek to let Him walk these out through us.

SECTION II. FIVE RHYTHMS OF FOLLOWERSHIP

As we went forward in trying to walk out the discipleship culture we saw in the Testimony of Jesus' life and ministry in Scripture, we kept having people ask us about our "statement of faith". Having come from an Evangelical background, we knew why they were asking this, but for some reason it didn't settle well. We talked about "alignment" enough, but this was in the context of the *leading* of our living Savior, not a statement of doctrine.

If number "9" in our core values (page 13) was true, then our "statement of faith" had to be our *lives*. But how were we interpreting our lifestyle as our "statement of faith"? This was a fair question...and not primarily for the purpose of answering to those outside our fellowship, but one to be asking ourselves and each other.

The "Five Rhythms" is a mapping out of our discipleship culture as we began to learn how to be led by the living Spirit of Jesus Christ among us. It has changed and will continue to be adapted as we continue listening and putting into practice what we learn about following the "Wild Messiah".

The following are five rhythms that have been used to describe the bare essentials of following Jesus in an organic, missional fellowship...in real time:

Rhythm 1. Personal Followership. This is about our *daily* walk with Jesus as we learn to be "led by the Spirit" (Rom. 8:14), and learning the "daily offering" described in Romans 12:1, 2. While we are guided personally in this by God's Spirit, we are also intentional about staying accountable.

Rhythm 2. Covenant Relationship. Covenant can be defined as: "*a promise and commitment of attention, time, or resources in someone or something that is not conditioned on the performance of the other*". Covenant relationships in families can be seen as those that are life-long: Our spouse, children, parents, and siblings. Scripture speaks in terms of honoring these relationships, without condition. We give attention to these, and build patterns of honoring them.

Rhythm 3. Accountable Discipleship. Here we bravely bring our daily walk with Jesus to the table with others who are doing the same to share victories and defeats, receive prayer, grace and truth from one another, and listen for the direction of God's Spirit through others in the group.

Rhythm 4. Grace-full Fellowship. Hebrews 10:25 describes this need in terms of encouragement, and not to "forsake" it. We see it modeled in the twelve disciples – and in Acts 5:42 – "in the temple and from house to house". We establish a rhythm around this part of life as the Bride of Christ.

Rhythm 5. Public Witness. We see that Jesus calls us to “let your light shine before men”, (Mk 5:16) and so not to become ingrown or counter-cultural. It is the idea behind “missional” that we keep on *translating* Jesus to our community. We look for ways to intentionally engage and bring the witness of Jesus to the community and its culture.

Rhythm 1: Personal Followership

“By this we know that we are in Him (Jesus): The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.” 1 John 2:5-6

Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. John 5:19-20

Offering * Armor * PCI

Establishing “worship” in our own lives – placing **God in the most treasured place** = requires both a crisis and a process. The crisis comes when we “see” God as we have never seen Him before. The process is one of rejecting all that has occupied His place in our lives, and allowing Him to “redecorate” our soul: that is, our thoughts, our passions, our plans, and our physical selves. As we come to understand His leading in our daily lives, we need to replace old patterns with new. As **Romans 12:1&2** states – while Jesus was the Lamb of God offered once and for all, we still have a *daily offering* to make...ourselves. This tool is to help establish that rhythm.

We consider our daily “followership” of Jesus to be personal, and yet also the most *important* of the Rhythms. In order to grow in our ability to follow Jesus, we need to be able to share this process with each other in the **2nd rhythm** (Triads) how our daily walk is going. *What follows are some scriptural applications for our daily walk that have proven valuable for many.*

Here a sample...

S Morning Offering – “Heavenly Father, I come to You in the Name and Authority of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; and I offer my mind, will, emotions, and my body to You. I ask you to cleanse me from all sin by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you for making me new today, and for seating me with Jesus Christ at your right hand in heavenly places; Today I place You ‘at my right hand’ (Psalm 16:8) so I can walk this day out with you in that place of honor in my life.”

ARMOR - “I receive your heavenly armor for today’s battle, and the weapons of our warfare - not of flesh, but divinely powerful for the tearing down of strongholds, so that I will stand firm against the adversary and his schemes;

I put on **Truth** as a belt, for You are the Truth, and I desire the light of truth to flood my entire being;

I put on Your **Righteousness** as a breastplate, covering the treasures of my heart: Your Word, Your supply,

and Your Authority in my Life;
I prepare my feet with the urgency of the **Good News of Victory** over Satan and the bondage of sin; and that there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus!;
I take up **Faith** as a shield against every fiery dart of the adversary; faith in Your authority and Your presence in me;
I put on **Salvation** as a helmet; protection from the deceiver who would come against even the mind of Christ in me; and marking my head with the precious blood that cancels all sin;
And finally, I lift up the sword of the **Spirit**, the living “Word of God” – sharper than any two-edged sword and able to divide soul from spirit..., and judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. Amen.”

STATEMENT OF BINDING - *Satan, I bind you and command you to flee now; You will not have influence over my thoughts, passions, decisions, or my body; I loose myself from every stronghold and all bondage. I bind every spirit assigned against me and my house, and order those assignments cancelled and all spirits be sent to the pit of hell, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen* [From Matt. 12:29 and James 4:7]

FINAL PRAYER – “Father, thank You for the victory that is mine today. I invite Your Holy Spirit to fill me, to guide me and guard me in all I do; Help me see your divine appointments at every turn, and there let Your Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. In the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.” *

Paying attention to our “ATM” - On the personal level, worship can be seen in how we use three things in life: our **Attention**, our **Time**, and our **Money**. We look at these honestly and in depth to find what our real treasure is. For most of us, the Holy Spirit has a lot of work to do!

Rhythm 2: Covenant Relationships

*“When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, ‘Woman, behold, your son!’ Then He said to the disciple, ‘Behold, your mother!’ From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.
John 19:26-27*

The Love of Christ is not seen in the relationships that we maintain merely to benefit ourselves, but in those where we give what we have without measuring the return – these we call “Covenant Relationships”

What is a Covenant?

The word “Covenant” is not well understood in our culture. To put it bluntly, we have become far too self-centered to value the meaning of the word today. But if we are going to make Jesus Christ our center – our source of life – in place of ourselves and all the false gods we arrange in our lives which ultimately control us, we desperately need to learn the meaning of this word; “Covenant”. Here is why:

God’s relationship with us is a covenant;
First with Noah – Gen. 6:18 & Ch. 9
Abraham – Gen. 15:18 & Ch. 17

Us and Jesus Christ – Mat 26:28

We cannot follow His example in our lives without establishing covenant relationships; Gen. 21:27, Mal 2:14

The entire 8th and 9th chapters of Hebrews walk us through the Covenant made through Christ.

Essentially, if God is Lord in our life, then everything and everyone else becomes *less* responsible to make us happy, and our relationships can be built on a different level: that of a covenant...

[003]

The reason we tend to avoid covenant relationships is because we are not sure about God... that He will provide for us. It's a faith issue. So, instead we make deals with people:

I will clean the garage if you do the dishes;

I will make this widget if you pay me \$30;

I will pay the rent if you sleep with me;

I will go to family gatherings if you let me deal drugs from the house...

...and on, and on. Yet even when this deal-making approach takes over relationships, there is often a secret hope that the other person might somehow think we are worth doing his or her part *even if we don't do ours*. But in the end, we reap what we sow; and it all breaks down...except with Jesus.

Covenants and Families

Covenant relationships are still most often found in families. Families that reflect covenants are built around **marriages** that are covenants. This is one person promising to love and care for the other until they die. Who would really do that? Many today see that for most around them, this is just romantic talk, - and so they avoid the sham altogether and make deals with everyone. They haven't seen how to *complete* a covenant, and so the duration of every relationship is determined by the person's limit - their "relational conflict threshold" or "RCT" - when this threshold is met, the person leaves.

Covenant relationships in families can be seen as those that we understand are not supposed to end while we are alive: Our spouse, children, parents, and siblings. Scripture comments on these relationships in terms of life-long relationships:

"But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." 1 Tim 5:8

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER', (which is the first commandment with a promise), 'SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH'. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord." Eph 6:1-4

Covenant in Marriage

Paul wrote this to the believers in Corinth about marriage:

“But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, if he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is put in the presence of Jesus through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is in the presence through her believing husband, for otherwise your children are without this influence, but now they are set apart by it. Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace.

For, how do you know as a wife whether you will ever “save” your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? Only, as the Lord has assigned to each one, as God has called each, in this manner let him walk. 1 Cor. 7:10-17

It is clear in this instruction how the purpose for the believing spouse to stay in the relationship is different – it’s not selfish, but for the realization of what he or she is bringing to the home for the benefit of others. This cannot be expected of those who do have Christ as their source of life. The man or woman without God is left to use the relationships they have with those around them to get *all* their needs met, because there is no resource *within*. The follower of Jesus Christ has the witness and resource of God’s Spirit within, and the worship of the true living God means we are *free* to care for those God has given us without demanding they measure up to the God-sized place in *our* lives - that is, meet or fulfill needs that can really only be met by God. In this way, covenant relationships in our lives prove the freedom we have because of Jesus Christ in us.

When Believers Deny Covenant

Even people who have God in their lives can get stuck doing relationships in terms of contracts. The prophet Malachi makes this hard statement:

☐☐☐

Notice how even in the Old Testament, the presence of the Spirit of God helped people avoid this problem. Who is being led by the Spirit today? Peter said it Acts 5:32 – It is still our willingness to come under God’s authority that brings the filling and leading of His Spirit.

Over the many years I have walked in the midst of relational conflicts with others as a counselor, mediator or advocate, it has become clear to me that “covenant” truly means only one thing:

“I am choosing to allow all of who you are - whether seen or unseen by me - all your assets, strengths, and qualities - all your hang-ups, dysfunctions and issues, to *shape the person I will become...for the rest of my life.*”

The astounding this here is that God became the Author of “covenant” by making this

very commitment with us: He was and is forever shaped by our strengths - and our sins, and to prove this He allowed His own Son to be killed ...by us.

Finally, much about the first Rhythm is about our “offering” – the offering of our selves to God as described in Romans 12:1. The thing is, we are more likely to deceive ourselves when it comes to this offering,.. but if we are mistreating those in our “first ring”, (illustration), we are most likely to get “feedback”, which will reveal the heart issue that we need to pay attention to most. The bottom line is this:

[08]

The “rhythm” of covenant relationships in our life is set by the attention, time and resources we put into these relationships that is not based on “pay-off”, but on our covenant. In order to do this, it is expected that we will need the help and support of our “Third Ring” discipleship relationships (next section) to grow in this rhythm.

Rhythm 3:

Accountable Discipleship

*"For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst."
Matthew 18:20*

Every Follower Discipled by Jesus Himself, through one another

The word “triad” describes the way Jesus modeled discipleship for us. We could say He had *twelve* disciples...but, if we look carefully at the record of His life there were actually **three** with whom

He shared a **closer relationship**: Peter, James & John. There were things He did with them that were unique, like bringing them to a meeting with Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17), and to the raising of a little girl from the dead (Luke 8:51-56). It was also a place where confrontation and affirmation could happen - (Matthew 16:17, 23, Luke 9:55). And in the end, when Jesus had to face His Cross, the company of these three was what He asked for. (Matthew 26:37) We follow Jesus in this example by sharing in **groups of three or four** that we call “**Triads**”.

As we were applying the rhythm of Jesus’ example with Peter, James & John, we incorporate the following into our triad meetings:

*(Remember that this sample structure is not to **be served** by people, but to **serve them** in the context of their communities! If there is a consensus that the Spirit of God is leading the group to spend more or less time on something, LISTEN!)*

TRIAD FORMAT

Suggested Time]

5 min. **Someone Prays – 5 minutes**

Agreeing that Jesus is Lord and submitting ourselves and the time to Him

Putting on the Armor of God and binding the enemy (see rhythm 1)

Inviting the Spirit of God to guide your time together

Asking for courage to be vulnerable and grace-full with each other

30 min. **How did God speak this week? – 10 min each** *Whatever* book or passage your Triad has chosen for a study focus, go around and have each person share for five minutes what he or she found in the passage or chapter for that week. Take another **five minutes** after each person shares to dialogue on the observations, and bring in other scripture & life experience.

24 min. Check in Personally – 8 min. each

“Triumphs & Trials” - Check in with the hard stuff and the victories that you have had this week. Vulnerability is key here;

Personal Rhythm – Share how your daily “offering” (Romans 12:1,2) is going, and encourage one another not to give up!;

If anyone has a PCI, share how those are going, or other personal goals, etc.

[OBJ]

15 min. **Confirm & Confront – 5 min. each** Ask a question or two, and then share what you see in the others, **both** things that show growth, and also what things seem to be a blind spot in his or her **life**:

[OBJ]

15 min. **Pray For Ourselves, then in agreement - 5 min. each -**

With Jesus’ example, we just tell God in prayer what we need, and then agree with other’s requests so that we have the “two or more” in agreement mentioned in Matthew 18:18. You may be led to minister healing or stand with another in spiritual warfare. (See sample “submit-resist” pattern in Rhythm 1)

[OBJ]

001:30 Finish. The Triads are designed to be a safe place for ultimate growth, spiritually and personally. Respect one another’s time by keeping an end point so those who need to go aren’t kept from receiving ministry.

TIME & PLACE WE WILL MEET:

BOOKS AND READING WE AGREE TO DISCU _____

Rhythm 4: Grace-full Fellowship

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”

Hebrews 10:23-25

Fellowship in Homes & Smaller Gatherings

Hebrews 10:25 describes the need for “fellowship” in terms of encouragement, and tells us not to forsake it. We see it modeled in the twelve disciples – and in Acts 5:42 – “in the temple and from house to house”. From the basics of Acts 2:42 – We meet in homes to share a meal, worship, get into the Scriptures together and minister in God’s power to the needs that are present.

Meeting in Homes: The “house church meeting” is a semi-open meeting where people who are new come as guests of those who are not. The purpose of meeting together where we live is to bring Jesus to our table - our inner life, together. What follows is our typical evening rhythm, and a word about why we do it this way.

HOUSE MEETING FORMAT

(20 min. before the meeting)

HOST TEAM PRAYS AND BINDS THE ENEMY BEFORE THE MEETING, establishing a good environment for Kingdom work.

5:00 PEOPLE ARRIVE WITH FOOD. All contribute to the meal as they are able, owning the event and meeting needs.

5:15 (45 min.) SHARING THE MEAL (May or may not pray, depending on guests and leading of the host).

Communion - We may have communion to begin or end the meal, following Jesus’ model at the last supper. Someone may quote from the various Bible passages on the meaning of the Bread and Cup, as the person assigned is led. We do explain that this act is a gesture of personal faith in Jesus Christ, and a person should know that they have received Jesus as Lord and Savior – We may invite anyone who feels the need to settle this question to do so then and there.

6:00 (30 min.) INFORMAL WORSHIP.

This is a time of singing with instruments or without, depending on the talents and gifting in the group. Some use DVDs for worship time.

Testimonies. There is an opportunity during worship for sharing stories and words of

gratitude for what God has done in our lives. Those who are hosting would lead out in this if others are hesitant.

6:30 (15 min.) VISION TALK & THINGS TO KNOW.

A host shares a word about the fellowship and its rhythms, as appropriate based on who is present, We would mention the call to be and make disciples, and how that looks in our fellowship. We have a “sign up” for those looking for triads.

The Rhythm of Giving. Included here is an update from the resource management person in the group on what resources are available, and how giving works in the fellowship - Different baskets are explained and fund balances given.

Giving is guided by 2Corinthians 9:7,

“Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

This is our “model” - not with percentages, but by the leading of God in our hearts. We recognize that where our treasure is, our hearts are also there.

1. Giving in the House Church– [BASKET #1]

*As needs are shared each week after the worship time in the house churches, an **ENVELOPE** is designated for each person in need. People put gifts into each envelope as they feel led by God. If people give by check, they make it out **to the person in need**, or as otherwise designated.*

*At the end of the evening, the envelopes are given to the appropriate people. In order to avoid the legal requirements of corporate book keeping, these offerings are “gifts” to the ones receiving them, and are **NOT** a part of giving to a non-profit organization.*

2. Giving to a Non-profit - [BASKET #2]

If the fellowship is connected with a non-profit ministry which supports fellowships with a common mission and leadership culture, gifts to this should be managed separately so people know they are deductible donations. Gifts to a central ministry may for things like:

***The development of Biblical leadership for expanding the work;**
Facility rental and expenses for gatherings;
Community projects.*

Checks issued to this fund are made out to the non-profit ministry.

6:45 (45 min.) SCRIPTURE STUDY. We first **pray for the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to the meaning of the passage** (see Rhythm 3) We may or may not break out in groups of about three each for 15 minutes or so to study the Scripture section for the week.

We try to make tools available to study the text and context of the passage. Depending

of the set up and number of people, we have each person contribute, while the facilitator/teacher will do a wrap up at the end.

What follows is a format we have used for studying Scripture in a house church setting:

4 Principles of Bible Study

"All Scripture is God-Breathed..." 2Timothy 3:16

We Pray and ask God to open the eyes of our hearts...

"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come." John 16:13-14 (see also, 1 Co 2:12-13)

What is the living *Spirit* of God saying to us about the passage?

The meaning of God is not primarily understood through the powers of the mind, but the Spirit of God, who is given to every believer.

2. We Consider the Context of the Passage...

The Bible is its own best commentary. We use tools like the Treasury of Scripture Knowledge and Bible handbooks to find the comment of history, culture, and **especially** Scripture, on Scripture.

"But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." 2 Peter 1:20-21

3. We Dig into the Original Text...

The Scriptures have infinite depth. We use tools for digging into the original languages like Vine's Expository Dictionary and Strong's Concordance to discover deeper application my life.

"Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You." (See also, Ps 119:11)

4. We Ask ourselves: "How do I need to commit to walking out what I have seen by the power of His Spirit?"

If we study the Scriptures **only** with our minds, we are likely to be deceived.

"But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves." James 1:22-23

7:30 (30 min.) **MINISTRY TIME.** We do this informally, asking people to find someone they are comfortable with to pray or minister with them. Or we may break up into groups, possibly dividing men and women, as the Spirit leads. People may be led to minister through healing, or stand to with the person in spiritual warfare.

Spiritual Gifts. We recognize the need for all the gifts that the Holy Spirit wants to give us for ministry. We receive them all, but also test them – based on 1John 4:1-3 and what is outlined on page 16, under **"Alignment."** This means we look for application that is

consistent with Biblical instruction about the purpose, and the Spiritual Source of gifts.

8:00 End Time. We have an end time so that those who need to leave will not feel they have to cut out before the end of the meeting. Some may stay longer if the host can accommodate, but we don't assume.

Remember that this is how *our* community worked out the Rhythm of Fellowship—The Spirit of God may lead your community very differently.

Rhythm 5: Public Witness

"Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lamp-stand, so that those who come in may see the light." Luke 8:16

Integrating into the Community around us, and avoiding a "protectionist" counterculture

Like Peter...who wanted to build Moses, Elijah and Jesus three dwellings so he could sit and enjoy their company a while longer (Luke 9:33), we recognize that it is a part of our human weakness to want to package God for our own comfort and convenience. It seems every movement of God among us has ended up being institutionalized, and as soon as that happened it stopped moving - because its "culture" became isolated from the communities it needed to reach.

It requires intentionality to stay "missional" - In our understanding that means we remain standing in the tension between the community of *faith* and the not-yet-reached community around us. We have tried to do this mainly through three strategies:

GATHERINGS

Our Gathering happen in an open public forum, possibly outdoors, and include worship and public testimony of the ways God has shown up among us. One advantage of not meeting in a privately owned building is that we continue to engage with those outside our fellowship to arrange for our meeting spaces. By meeting in public places, we have also seen God connect us with people who would not have gone to a private meeting, and ultimately transform their lives through this relationship.

BAPTISM

Baptisms are also a part of the 5th Rhythm, and are a powerful testimony of one's faith in Jesus Christ. This way of following Jesus goes back to His own example, and that of His first disciples in the book of Acts. (Matthew 5:1,2, Acts 3:11) Water **baptism – an outward symbol of our spiritual baptism into the Body of Christ.**

We recognize the “immersion” of every believer into the Body of Christ at the time they are born again as being accomplished by spiritual baptism, and we *celebrate this* with water baptism as individuals becomes ready, and as supported by someone in their Triad (Rhythm 3) or a “sponsor” - a witness of their faith.

“OPEN HOUSE MONTH”

Another way we can walk out public witness in the community is to host “open houses”, creating “space” in our meetings for people to check out what we are doing. During the open houses we share our usual house church rhythms (see Third Rhythm) in a way that first-time people won't feel like they are walking into “someone else's party”. The use of yard signs for this and our other meetings let's others know that the fellowship is open to the community.

Also, on a Gathering night before the open houses, we may set that evening aside to go out in our community to personally invite people to our open house.

A typical pattern for an **open house** is as follows:

OPEN HOUSE FORMAT

(20 min before, pray and bind - *see Rhythm 4*)

5:00 Be ready to welcome guests with food out, “Your Spiritual Journey” material, music going, etc. (We keep it unstructured)

6:00 Invite those present to join in some music, if they seem open to it. (Fun stuff)

6:30 Share the vision, the Scriptural basis for the Five Rhythms, and how you have seen God at work in your life -

7:00 Talk about how we listen for the Spirit's voice in Scripture in Bible Study. Pray and share a Bible passage and have people around the room comment on what they think it means.

7:30 Open it up for questions - go back to informal discussion and invite people to talk more one-on-one.

SERVING THE COMMUNITY

A third way we engage with the community is to look for real needs around us that we can provide for. Some ways we have done this are:

- asking people to bring food and clothing to a gathering for distributing through local channels;
- providing laundry vouchers for people in need;
- helping people move;
- volunteering to teach and minister at other local organizations

Think up more creative ways to expand your engagement after the example of Jesus who is known for combining lunches with public teaching sessions.

In our culture, the risk of developing tight discipling relationships is always that we end up isolating from the community around us in “holy huddles”. When this happens, we force anyone who would become a part of our faith community to be “extracted” from their current culture, and to lose their connection and relevance to the community that surrounds us. We strongly believe that “Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world,” so there is never any reason to go into “protection mode”. The flow of influence goes from us, to those around us, not the other way around.

SECTION III FOLLOWING OUR SAVIOR INTO BATTLE

There is a wealth of teaching on spiritual warfare coming out of ‘Lighthouse Ministry International’,

[www.lighthouseministryintl.org]

for the purpose of this manual, the basics will be covered.

Since the time of the Second Great Awakening, and the later Welsh Revival in the early 1900’s, there has been very little teaching done in the evangelical church on the subject of deliverance, or spiritual warfare. It has been almost a century since Jesse Penn Lewis wrote the comprehensive publication on the subject from a practitioner’s point of view, “War on the Saints”. One of the greatest losses from the lack of teaching on this is the sizeable blind spot when it comes the ways the enemy has “normalized” sin in our culture.

Possibly the most devastating normalization of sin has been our own passivity in the spiritual battle. The scenes in the New Testament that reveal involvement of Satan or evil spirits sound like they are from another world - not ours, because the writers could see the battle, and we cannot. We know Luke was not with Jesus on His 40 day fast, yet he writes about Him sparring with Satan over the issue of waling under God’s authority.

I truly believe that our only hope to stand against the strategies of the devil to derail the work of the Kingdom in our day, and in our own lives, is to first be

reintroduced to “This Jesus” as He is referred to in Acts, for who He *really is*, and then to understand the three “bridges” that carry us from Old Covenant to New, and translate the mean of the Old Testament for us.

“THIS JESUS”

Luke’s witness of the Acts of the Holy Spirit in the early Church included a phrase that is used several times - “*this Jesus*”. It’s not another Jesus, but *this* Jesus.

Acts 1:11 - “They also said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? **This Jesus**, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.”

Acts 2:31-32 - “...he (King David) looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. **This Jesus** God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

Acts 2:36 - “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ — **this Jesus** whom you crucified.”

Acts 17:3 - “...explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “**This Jesus** whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ.”

This Jesus, the one who was crucified like a criminal, the One who is despised and referenced as a curse word, the One King David was actually talking about...He is the Savior. If those who had seen Jesus walking on the earth needed the words of King David to understand who He was, how much more do we need the witness of Scripture today?

In the book “REJESUS” by Frost & Hirsch, these brothers put forth well the idea that the Church needs to regularly refresh its vision and perception of Jesus Christ Himself. This is true especially when the example and teaching of the clear witness of Scripture begins to hit cultural roadblocks *in the church*.

There are several things about the account of Jesus’ life and ministry we have today that not only *normalize* spiritual warfare for His followers, but place it at the center of our awareness and intentions:

The Meaning of Jesus’ Name. When Becky and I had our two girls, Esther and Charissa, using a “name your baby” book was very popular. The really good name books gave you the gutsy, non-flattering version of the meaning of almost any name you could think of. Jesus’ name is from the Hebrew “Jehoshuah”, a compound of “Yahweh” the name of God, and “Yasha”, meaning to set free or deliver. Literally, Jesus name is a statement, that God will deliver us! There also do not seem to be any names in the Scriptures that *don’t* say something about the destiny or character of the one they designate. Jesus was all about setting us free.

Jesus’ Self-introduction. In Luke Chapter 4, we find Jesus coming to “church” (His synagogue) after returning from the dessert “in the power of the Spirit”, and taking a turn reading the Scripture passage for the week. His reading drew attention to Him, and it said, “THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET

FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, 19 TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD." **Luke 4:18-19** Two brief verses and they mention both the "release of captives", and setting free the "oppressed". As everyone there stared at Him Jesus basically said, "This is ME!" The passage had been *fulfilled* as they heard Him read it. So not only was Jesus' name about deliverance, He had introduced His entire purpose in those terms. As one of Jesus' closest friends while He was here puts it, "*The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.*" 1 John 3:8.

About 1/3 of Jesus' Ministry was Deliverance. Roughly one third of Jesus' ministry accounts in the Gospels record encounters with Satan or evil spirits. Aside from his own continuing battle against the strategies of Satan to derail His mission and that of His disciples (especially Peter, James and John - *see Matt. 16:23 and Luke 9:55*), the Gospels record fourteen accounts of Him coming against evil spirits or Satan. The "norm" of doing spiritual battle was evident in Jesus' name, His mission, and in the activity of His ministry.

Jesus Directly Delegated this Ministry. When Jesus chose the twelve to do what He had been modeling before them as the "Kingdom of God" coming upon the world, He gave very consistent and repeated instructions:

When He first appointed the twelve it says the reason He chose them was "*...so that they would be with Him and that He could send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out the demons.*" Mark 3:14, 15. (*cp. Luke 6:12, 13*);

Probably six months later when he sent the twelve out in pairs, Luke records, "*And He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing.*" Luke 9:1,2 (*See also Mark 6:7, Matt. 10:1*);

In the third year of Jesus' public ministry, a year after designating the twelve, Jesus gathers a group of seventy - We don't even know their names. To this group He says, "*Whatever city you enter and they receive you, eat what is set before you; and heal those in it who are sick, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'*" Luke 10:8-9. When they come back they are excited, and report, saying, "*Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.*" For Jesus and those who follow him, spiritual battle is not extra credit. It's part of the Kingdom life.

The Great Commission Tied this All to Us! What authorization do we have to do anything that Jesus did or talked about? The answer to this is found in what most refer to as the "Great Commission", where Jesus gives His final instructions to His remaining eleven disciples, "*All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*" Matthew 28:18-20. The key here is the directive to teach those who believe "*to observe all that I commanded you.*" What did Jesus command them to do? Well, many things, but shouldn't we really start with the clear, repeated instructions about ministry? The point is, He did not tell them to build buildings or have Sunday School. He said, "preach, heal, and cast out demons," and for us now, "Make disciples, and

teach them to do everything I told *you* to do". Simply, if we are not under this directive, we have no business identifying ourselves with *this Jesus*.

3.1 THREE BRIDGES

I have had, among other courses of study since then, four years of college in a program called a "Bachelor of Arts in Ministries". It included ninety credit hours of Bible, and many other studies in the area of pasturing and preaching, but never once did I encounter instruction on the keys to understanding the Old Testament and apply it to my life today. After all, it was the only "Scripture" ever referred to by Jesus or any of the disciples in the Bible.

One thing my study of spiritual warfare has brought to light over the last 19 years is that there are at least three concepts, or "bridges" that are witnessed to in the New Testament which are needed to translate the meaning of the Old Testament for us today:

3.1.1. The Bridge to Our New Position.

The third and most dramatic Bridge built by the work of Christ on the Cross is that of our status of "sons" of God. Throughout the Gospels, the only person ever referred to as a "son" (*huios* in the Greek, referring to the heir) of God is Jesus Himself. After His completed work of redemption, the disciples witness of this work in believers was to refer to Jesus disciples with this very same word used only of Jesus. This is in contrast to the references during Jesus' ministry to believers as "*teknon*", or "offspring". Paul wrote this:

"But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God."
Gal 4:4-7

As a true heir, upon adoption by God, our status in the Universe was immediately transformed. As one who has brought adoption petitions in court, I have seen first hand how this works. Perhaps the most striking thing is how the adopted child has no clue how about how drastically or her life is being changed - and in the case of a royal family, adoption means ruler-ship in a kingdom! Look how Paul describes this in Ephesians 1:18-2:6.

"I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and

power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...”

There are several earth-shaking truths in this passage that shatter the paradigm of mankind's relationship to God and transport us as through a worm-hole into another dimension. The first is the intended audience. The statements of Paul that relate his passionate desire are directed to *believers*. It is clear that even though these truths seem at first to be basic to knowing Christ at all, they were not obvious to the first century disciples of Paul, and it is no wonder that they are less than obvious to us - nor are they a marginal doctrine. Paul spent approximately two years in Ephesus on his third journey from 54 to 56 A.D., and wrote to them some six years later from prison in Rome. The point is that while we must be drawn to Jesus Christ by the Father's witness of His identity, the nature of our resulting transformation defies all that the world teaches us about our nature. Yet, after being born of God through our heart's agreement with God's witness of His Son, it is the understanding of the words in this very passage that empower us to then walk in freedom. This passage is addressing believers who not only were disciple by Paul for two years, but had been following Christ for *eight*. So here is Paul, just *praying* that their eyes would be open to:

Know the hope of God's calling. Believers who cannot yet see what they have been given and where they are seated are prone to *loose hope* - not necessarily in their heavenly destiny, but rather their power to overcome the world in this life. Hopelessness concerning the Kingdom of God has condemned so many churches to the bondage of religion - that is, centering their identity around what *God used to do* instead of what is doing today - that they have become completely impotent when it comes to making passionate disciples of the Messiah. Most do not see the hope of God's calling in action around them, and as a result, the only joy they have is to lose themselves in future images of heaven in order to endure their current bondage to what amounts to an "Old Covenant" existence. They desperately need to see the Bridge of their new inheritance.

Experience resurrection power. The "*surpassing greatness of His power*" is not said to have been given to apostles, or prophets, or pastors or missionaries...but *to us who believe!* Do you believe this? Paul goes on to testify that this power is that which God used to raise Christ from the dead. This is outrageous. "Us who believe"? Really? Most of us who call ourselves Christians simply do not believe that resurrection

power is for us. But this was Paul's prayer, and as he continues, we find that this power not only raised Christ from the grave but placed him above *every spiritual enemy in the universe*. This is the position of authority at the right hand of God the Father. Notice the words, *"far above all rule and authority ..."*. Jesus was not seated just barely above Satan and the hosts of hell, but far above them. In the spiritual battle, it's not a close fight, it's an easy knock-out - and not with just some, but *all* of them. And as though Paul was anticipating the eventual error of the hyper dispensationalists, he adds, *"not only in this age, but also in the one to come."*

See their position of Authority in Christ. The position of Christ at the right hand of God is not only for Him, but in a statement that defies our belief today Paul testifies that we, yes WE, *"...were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus..."* This is the absolute punch line of the Bridge of Inheritance: that we have been seated with Jesus Christ at God's right hand, far above all rule and authority...and because of this, in truth, there is no room for the slightest fear in the battle against the "Ephesians 6" enemies - no possible reason to shrink back from the battle for freedom.

So what do we do - If we have seen what Paul had prayed the eyes of our hearts would be illuminated to see? It is a joy to know that our equipping is applied with simplicity.

3.1.2 Bridge to the New Tabernacle

Consider the witness of the Scripture:

John 2:19-21 Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple , and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body."

Acts 7:48 "However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands."

1 Cor 3:16-17 "Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are."

1 Cor 6:19-20, "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? "

It is a tragedy and a stumbling block that so many who today call themselves followers of Jesus still insist on referring to a church building as "The House of God". This is not tragic because it is nostalgic, but because of how it offends the One who died to change it.

I grew up the oldest of five children to a Papa who came from a large Catholic family. My papa's siblings were characters, and among them was my aunt Ruth. Her gesture of affection toward me was to always refer to me as a first-grader. Now, I had worked hard to finish the first grade and go on to second, third, fourth, and so on, but this didn't seem to phase her. Ever since the first time she got it wrong, she became deaf to my protests and continued to praise me for being such a wonderful "first grader". In my aunt Ruth's mind, I had frozen in time, and though I took it as affectionate, over time I came to recognize that she really wasn't that interested in what had happened in my life *since* the first grade.

When a person has gone to great lengths to achieve something, we usually don't consider it amusing to continue to speak as though the attempt had failed. And if they did, it wouldn't be unfair us to assume the person had somehow rejected the results. The transforming of our bodies into the "temple of God" was a miraculous accomplishment that brought us closeness and intimacy with our Creator - so much that it allows us to now call Him "Papa". (Romans 8:15, Gal. 4:6)

In the spiritual battle that is a reality for every believer in Christ, the fact that our body is now the temple of God means that we now live in the cross hairs of the enemy. It's not the church building or the clergy that Satan now sits up at night considering how to bring down - It's us. While all of the gruesome, bloody wars of the Old Testament were focused on establishing the place where God would live among us (the promised land), and thereafter to defend it from enemy invasion, Jesus' bloody war on the cross worked to make us the "dwelling place of God". Having finally and fully cleansed these flesh-and blood tabernacles, He tore the Jerusalem temple curtain in two, and ushered God into our hearts.

But Christians have been getting this wrong for centuries, and as Jesus once observed, we have strained out so many theological "gnats", while swallowing the "camel" of continuing to treat buildings as God's "house" instead of believers. There is no speculation about whether this has affected how we treat one another. Peter gave us good instruction:

"...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence." 1 Peter 3:15

Set Christ apart in our hearts - our "Holy of Holies" - and speak to each other with "reverence", as speaking to the dwelling place of God. Isn't this how Jesus said we would be known as His disciples - by how we treat one another? (John 13:35) Look at the reverence Jesus shows for the sanctuary of our soul in Revelation 3:20:

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me."

Did you ever wonder why the Son of God who made us, bought us, and saved us has to knock? What could this be but reverence for the temple of God? Jesus Himself believes we are the temple of God because He died to make us this! Will we agree with Him? If we do, we will treat ourselves and others differently - like a "treasure".

I have observed that we can only find out what our **greatest treasure** is by answering this question:

What are we willing to protect?

We answer this question not with words, but with our *lives* - our affections, our schedules, and our checkbooks. The reality of our bodies being the dwelling place of God is the result not only of Jesus' sacrifice, but our own coming to "treasure" God's presence. If we are ready to protect the fullness of His presence, then we will *enjoy* the same. But we all tend to have to learn the hard way that if we do not protect the fullness of God's presence in us, the god of this world will be quick to "steal, kill and destroy" the temple treasures - the love, joy, peace, etc. that are our birthright.

We must find that the passion of our Savior for the temple in His days on earth, as he violently drove out those who did not belong, (*John 2:13-22*) now is directed toward our own bodies as His Father's temple. If we are to walk with Him, we need to identify with this intolerance for the presence of thieves, and awaken to the real battle

3.1.3. The Bridge to our New Battleground.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. 11 Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. 13 Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. 14 Stand firm therefore, HAVING GIRDED YOUR LOINS WITH TRUTH, and HAVING PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, 15 and having shod YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE; 16 in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. 17 And take THE HELMET OF SALVATION, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Eph 6:10-17

The witness of the Old Testament is full of battle stories. Have you ever felt uncomfortable reading the Psalms for "inspiration"? You know, you are reading along with all of the "Praise the Lords" and suddenly without warning you stumble onto "*How blessed will be the one who seizes and dashes your little ones against the rock.*" (Ps 137:9) What have you done with that one as you try to start your day feeling close to God? The point is that we have to recognize the second bridge - built by the cross of Jesus - into a **new battleground**. Psalm 137 is uncomfortable because it violates our conscience—and it should. Why? Because of what is proclaimed in Ephesians 6.

The first thing to note about this passage is that it tells who our struggle/battle is *not* against. It is not a flesh and blood battle ground anymore. People (flesh & blood) are not our enemy. Not liberals or non-Christians, or down-and-outers or criminals. Our enemy is in the spiritual realm. That's what the passage says. Jesus said "love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you", and then is says in 1John 3:8 that He

came to **“destroy the works of the devil”**. One of the ways we get this wrong is when we try to rule others. Control. Instinctively we know this is wrong, yet we buy into the suggestion that the price of not controlling people is too high. Now I am not taking about people who are a constant risk of harming themselves or others. There is a compassionate restraint imposed by society. But when we justify lying and deceiving otherwise intelligent people in order make something go our way, we are attempting to “rule” over them.

Remember what God said to Cain,

Gen 4:7-8 - “And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.”

He said, “You must master it”. This word is the same one translated “dominion” in Chapter 1. The “sin”, or as it may also be translated, “offender”, was crouching at his door. This is in contrast to the instruction of God about sin which comes from us—for that God says things like “repent”, or “turn from your wickedness”, or “forsake it”. But here Cain was told to assert dominion over it—something Eve had **not** done in chapter 3 of Genesis, and the result was disastrous.

Back to the identity of this enemy. The list of offenders in Ephesians 6 begins with two key words: *arche* and *Exousia*. These are most often translated “rulers and authorities”, and the word *arche* means a ruler who was first in time—the *original* ones. So, “*arch angel*” would imply an angel who was among the first created. The word “*Exousia*”, sometimes translated “magistrate”, implies one who governs with delegated authority.

There are at least seven listings of these spiritual “ranks” (*Gal 4:3,9 “stoicheía”*) in the New Testament, all of them beginning with “*arche*” and “*Exousia*”:

Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ:

1. He Created them - Colossians 1:16 *Created beings, subject to God’s purpose*
2. He is Head Over Them – Col. 2:10 – *Ultimately “head” over them all*
3. He Disarmed Them – Col. 2:15 – *Disarmed by Jesus’, and made a “public display”!*
(See Eph. 4:8)

Concerning Believers:

4. We are Seated FAR above them – Ephesians 1:21 – *We are seated with Christ (2:6) who is seated “far above” them all!*
5. We are to prove God’s Wisdom to them -Ephesians 3:10 – *The eternal purpose of the Church: to show them the manifold wisdom of God!*
6. We are to Wage War Against them - Ephesians 6:12 – *They are our adversaries, led by the devil! (v.11)*

Concerning Their Final Destiny:

7. We will put the last one under the Lord’s feet! - 1Corinthians 15:24 – *They will be abolished when the last of them is under Jesus’ feet, and He delivers the Kingdom to our Father in heaven*

These are the true enemies of the Body of Christ - They target Christian believers - not because they are unspiritual, but because it is the believers who are a **threat** to them! Some argue that believers shouldn't be experiencing "spiritual warfare", or be in need of "deliverance", but the testimony of Scripture accounts for the fact that **every** example and instruction on Spiritual Warfare in the New Testament involves **believers!**

2 Cor. 2:10, 11 No advantage to Satan – not ignorant...

2 Cor.10:3, 4, "We do not war according to the flesh..."

Gal. 4:8, 9, We were slaves to "stoikia" or 'ranks';

*Eph. 1:18 - 2:6, "...far above all rule and authority..." (us too!)**

Eph. 3:8-12, "...made known to rulers and authorities..."

Eph.4:26, 27 "Do not give the devil an opportunity."

Eph. 6:10 – 20, "Our struggle against rulers, powers..."

1 Tim. 4:1 "Doctrines of demons";

James 4:7, "Therefore submit to God and resist..."

1 Peter 5:8, 9, "Your adversary, the devil, prowls – resist him!"

The application of this Bridge from the Old Testament battle field to the New is profound and sweeping, and by the same token the lack of applying it has resulted in everything from the Crusades of the Middle Ages, to the kind of alienation within the Body of believers that has splintered us into countless "denominations" and factions - flying in the face our Savior's prayer in John Chapter 17 where He prayed it three times: "That they may be one..." .

The other extreme is that we completely ignore the battle altogether, not realizing that we cannot see the Kingdom of God advance without violence on the spiritual battlefield: ***"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force."*** (Matt 11:12-13) We cannot charm our way into heaven. New birth requires a decisive "NO" toward other gods in our life. As it is written,

"But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the preserving of the soul." Heb 10:39

Given the reality of the battlefield for every Christian believer, we must expect the hardships of war on the spiritual front from the moment we decide to follow Christ. This is what the spiritual armor is for, and we need each day to receive that day's armor for that day's battle. (see page 36)

3.2 TWO STEPS

When we as believers are being targeted by our enemy in our thoughts, passions, decisions or flesh, it is of great encouragement to realize God has not given us twelve steps, ten principles, or even seven steps to remember in order to gain our freedom. It is put simply in James 4:7 -

“Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”

This simple description is modeled over and over in Jesus’ ministry, and the ministry of the disciples. Yet the witness of Scripture about deliverance in the church is not reflected in much of what we see today in two ways: Simplicity and Authority.

The simplicity of Jesus ministry to those in spiritual bondage was seen in that he never preached to people in bondage, He simply told the enemy to leave. So where was the first “step” of submission to God? Jesus told us this in John 5:19,

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner."

Jesus walked in submission to God. The only step need was to “resist”. This was not verbal message, but a simple statement - of authority.

The authority of Jesus came from the fact that He walked in submission, but also in that when He resisted the enemy, it was **never** a prayer. It was verbally and with authority, rebuking, renouncing, commanding, saying, “Be gone!”, or “Come out!” As we doubt our authority in Christ we are tempted to avoid telling the enemy to leave, and instead ask God to do it for us in prayer. Most simply have not crossed the Bridges out of the Old Covenant. I have personally ministered to many believers who had been through prayer ministry and multiple steps to “freedom” who never experienced freedom until finally they were helped to apply the command to “resist”, and **told** the enemy to leave.

The following application of the simple example and teaching of our Savior on this is modeled in what has come to be simply referred to as...

THE CARD

DAILY PREPARATION

James 4:7 “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.”(Romans 12:1, Eph. 6: 10-18, Matt. 12:29)(Do #1-3, & 6 daily!)

1. Prayer of submission.

“Heavenly Father, I offer up to you my body as a living sacrifice, and ask You to forgive all my sins. I invite you to be Lord over my mind, will and emotions, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

2. Prayer to put on the armor of God.

“Lord, I put on your provision of armor: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the preparation of the Gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.”

3. Statement of binding and loosing. .

“Satan, I bind you. You will not have control of my mind, emotions, will or body. I loose myself from every stronghold and all bondage in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.” (On to #6)

[OR]

IF YOU HAVE GIVEN GROUND TO THE ENEMY

4. Prayer of confession:

“Father, I come to you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have given place to spirits of _____. They are not from you and I do not want them in my life. I confess the sin I have committed in this area of my life. Forgive me for allowing these spirits to have control in my life. Thank you for forgiving me, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

5. Statement to the enemy in resistance and rebuke:

“Spirits of _____ I take authority over you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have submitted myself to

God and you cannot stay. I command you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to leave me now. You will not have my soul or my body. I take back every area that I have given you in my life. I loose myself from all bondage to _____. I rebuke you and command you to go to the pit of hell right now in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

6. Prayer for filling.

“Heavenly Father, I ask you to fill and control every area of my life, and to guide me and guard me by your Holy Spirit, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

I can tell you that for the past fifteen years my wife and I have verbally walked through #s 1,2,3, and 6 of this rhythm almost every single morning. We have seen how it changes our day - and when we couldn't see it, our children could tell, because by the time dinner rolled around one of them would muster the courage to ask us if we had neglected to “put on our armor”, and invariably they were right on money.

3.3 THE MYSTERY OF THE GOSPEL

There is one other observation that has to be pointed out - the most important thing. It is the reason that the disciples were unable to minister freedom to the boy in Matthew 17. Jesus said it was the “littleness of your faith”. Even though the disciples had been given Jesus' authority to cast out evil spirits some time before this (see Mark 3:15), their “faith”, or ability to perceive what God was doing, was lacking in this case. When it comes to walking in the Kingdom, there is no more important question than the one Jesus implied in John 5:19...*What is the Father doing?* It is our ability to understand this that determines whether we are walking in His strengths or ours.

The ability of the disciples, like ours, to accomplish “greater things” even than Jesus did, was still based on Jesus power, not their own. The Lord's power is not given to our will to do with as we please. It comes *through us*, not *from us*. And it only comes through us when it is *Jesus* that is acting. Even though the disciples had been given the authority to free captives, it was still Jesus acting through them that got it done. When they were acting on their own, they did not see results, **even though they were trying to do that which Jesus generally told them to do** . It is not our power, it is His. And so it must be Jesus who acts through us and is then “glorified”, or made to be the big deal.

All of this comes down to the one essential thing in being a follower of Jesus. It is not our knowledge of the Bible, how long we have been a Christian, what good deeds we do, or what spiritual gifts we think we “have”, but *Christ in us, the “hope of glory,”* (Col. 1:27) that brings heaven to earth. This was a mystery even the angels never saw coming: that the Word of God would not just come in the flesh and leave again, but *that He would remain* in His body the Church to continue advancing the Kingdom of God on earth until He returned.

3.4 APPLICATION

Joining our Messiah in the war to advance the Kingdom of God is what we were made for - and until we fully engage in this with Him, not only will we be denied the only thing that can complete our partnership with Him in this life, but we will also suffer bondage ourselves. The spiritual battle is not first engaged in to free others, but ourselves. We say that “Free people free people”, or “You cannot give what you don’t have,” in terms of freedom.

The immediate , non merit-based equipping of the believer with authority is not only seen as a birthright of the Church, but is illustrated in the story of the Prodigal son as being *immediate* for all who return to followership with Christ. **Luke 15:1-24** is annoying to most of us for this reason: When this guy who demanded his inheritance before its time and blew it all on his lusts dragged himself back to the mercy of his father, before he could even get the right words out, his father gave him...a ring. Now this was not for looks. A ring in that context would have been the signet ring of the family, given him immediate authority and access to what remained of the family estate. The Father seemed unable to listen to any other options that to treat him as a full son and heir with no regard to his actions.

We must not be disabled by the enemy’s lies concerning the basis for our authority in Christ. Either the blood of Christ works or it doesn’t. And if it does, the moment we confess our sin it is cleansed from us and it is gone. The enemy is known by his accusations of the those who are washed in the blood of Christ - it is he alone who would gain something if he can convince us that the blood of Christ has not worked to immediately restore our active authority. In walking in weekly rhythm of standing with others in the battle there are many weeks when I almost couldn’t make it because I just didn’t feel like I should have any authority - like the prodigal, my idea was to clean toilets for a while until I earned back my “privileges” with God. But then I remember...I never earned these in the first place!

THE FINAL ARGUMENT

My ministry team along with several others recently sponsored a showing of “Nefarious: Merchant of Souls”. This is a documentary on the global human trafficking problem. It is a powerful exposé of how this goes on in several cultures and settings around the world and what contributes to it. it reminded me of what is still a raging argument in our world today over the value of a human life. What am I worth, and what are the lives of others worth? This is the question that we and others answer every day, particularly when we decide whether to:

Tell the truth or not;

Forgive ourselves or others;

Accommodate abortion;

End the life of someone on life support;

Make healthy choices;

Exploit or empower a vulnerable person.

How we respond to vulnerability explains a lot about our heart and what we value. Most of us would put our benefit over the security of others. Jesus put this question on display in John 8:3-11 with the woman caught in adultery.

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of the court, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. "Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, " He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, " I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."

The argument here was over the value of a life over the value of a law. They brought her to Him. This was an issue that drive them crazy about Jesus - He valued people more than the Law, in He even said that the Sabbath was made for man - not the other way around. Here, they confronted His "theology" on the Law of Moses. The Law certainly condemned her...but who would carry out the execution? Jesus agreed with the law, but not with their value of the woman - you see she has already been devalued by them, as many others who had no husband were left to scratch out a survival by selling themselves cheap because no one would give them another way to live.

Jesus not only required a reckoning of this in the men who wanted to kill her, but affirmed His own answer to the question of her worth by saying He did not condemn her - and later setting a final price for her life by dying on the cross.

You see, to bring the good news of the cross to others, we cannot give them anything *less* than Jesus did in trading His life for ours. To walk out being the Church - the "organic", living Church - we have to give our lives. It's not just about meeting in houses or avoiding structure. To be the Church, there is no more avoiding our "cross" - the one Jesus said we must take up every day. We cannot sustain a life of making and being disciples without the acceptance of our dying, and the grief that is required for our transformation into the image of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the grace and the life of Christ sustain you as you follow the Living One.