

The Most Important Thing in Life:

Knowing God

Is it actually possible to have a personal relationship with Yahweh Almighty, the Creator and Sovereign Ruler of the whole universe?

God created us for Himself –

So the most important thing in life should be to focus on getting to know Him.

Colin Winters

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~ Knowing God ~

Is it really possible to have a personal relationship with Almighty God, the Creator and Sovereign Ruler of the whole universe, so awesome in His whole being? Is it possible to come into the presence of a Holy God who is so absolutely perfect; separated from humanity because of sin?

Not only is it possible, but The One True God has clearly shown that this is the desire of His heart – it is what He created us for. In the creation account we see the perfect relationship that existed between God and humanity before sin disturbed everything. But God deliberately allowed this to happen for a purpose, and that purpose will become clear if you carefully consider what God reveals about Himself in His Word – the Bible.

Everything we need to know about God and His purposes for humanity will be revealed as we humble ourselves before Almighty God, and spend time diligently seeking to know Him.

God created us for Himself – so the most important thing in life should be to focus on getting to know Him. Let's keep the first thing first!

For from him and through him and for him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. Romans 11:36

Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. John 17:3

And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him. Hebrews 11:6

By Colin Winters as motivated by God. Apart from him I can do nothing! (*John 15:5*)

BUT – ‘I can do all things through him who strengthens me.’ (*Philippians 4:13*)

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Preface to this revised version, June 2023

This booklet is the first of a series which are focussed on the importance of truly knowing God and His purposes for humanity. The next theme in the series is 'What an Awesome God We Have', followed by 'God's Purposes for Humanity'. Each of these two themes will consist of several booklets, all of which are accessible on the internet at awesomegod.site

A vital part of my personal testimony is that God has clearly drawn my heart towards seeking to know Him more intimately; and coupled with growing in my personal relationship with God, has been the awareness of the lack of a true knowledge of God and His purposes in the lives of many Christians. This is why I believe God has motivated me to write these booklets for the purpose of encouraging God's people to truly know Him and walk in His ways.

Scripture versions

Unless otherwise noted, scriptures are from the ESV (English Standard Version). Other versions used are NIV (New International Version); ISV (International Standard Version); and NASB (New American Standard Bible).

But please note that I will be using God's personal name 'Yahweh' in all Scripture quotations where it normally appears as 'LORD' in capitals. My reason for doing this will be explained in chapter 3, page 9.

In this first booklet of the whole series, I have used the full name of the books of the Bible rather than the abbreviations as normally used. The reason for this is that it may well be used by new Christians who are not yet familiar with the abbreviated names.

In these booklets, '**OT**' refers to Old Testament, and '**NT**' to the New Testament. '**ISBE**' refers to International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.

Take time to praise and worship

Occasionally throughout these booklets I will use the above title to introduce some scriptures or a song which give attention to our awesome God and His Son Jesus, for the purpose of encouraging you to engage in praising and worshipping Him for who He is, and all that He has graciously and lovingly done for us as totally underserving people. God is far more worthy of all glory and honor than we can begin to imagine. He has inspired these scriptures, and has also gifted various songwriters to assist us in giving Him praise and glory.

Introduction

This series of booklets are composed for the purpose of encouraging Christians to grow in their relationship with the God of the Bible and His Son Jesus. This series is a revised version of the full series which I wrote on the same theme – **to know God, and His purposes for us.**

The whole series of booklets stands in the category of devotional, or Bible study booklets. Therefore I would encourage you to give them consistent attention, taking time to carefully read the Scriptures; meditate on what they are saying to us; and also consider what the added notes are saying. **The Bible is God's Word to us, and He has given it to us for the primary purpose of making Himself and His purposes known to us;** and as we will be explaining – **there is nothing more important in life than knowing God.**

In this series of booklets my aim is primarily to give attention to what God reveals about Himself and His purposes through His Word the Bible. There will also be necessary comments and explanations, but I want to encourage you to **primarily focus on the scriptures used**, and also the additional related references. Bear in mind – **it's all about God our Maker and His purposes for us.**

These are some of the very important principles we need to apply.

1. We need to humble ourselves before Almighty God and submit to Him our whole self, and all that we think we know about Him. Take note of what Jesus said about the need to be childlike in our seeking to know the things of God.

Matthew 11:25 *At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.*

2. Ask the 'Spirit of Truth' to reveal the Truth about God and His ways. Without the help of the Holy Spirit, our knowledge of God will be limited to an intellectual understanding. Jesus told his disciples: *'When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...'* **John 16:13.** Please read also **1 Corinthians 2:9-15** where Paul clearly explains that only the Holy Spirit can reveal the deep truths about God that we all need to know. (Read also **Ephesians 1:17; Colossians 1:9**)

3. Make a commitment to give God the time He deserves. Remember – God created us for Himself – therefore we should be giving him top priority in our lives. Life is full of distractions, but God has allowed it to be that way, to see if we will be **faithful** and **obedient** to God, and to see if we will **seek Him with all our heart.** Read **Jeremiah 29:13; Hebrews 11:6; Psalm 14:2**

1. What is True Christianity Really All About?

From what I have observed over many years as a Christian, and as I have grown in my relationship with God, there seems to be, in the majority of churches around the world, a great lack of understanding of what Christianity in its fullest sense is really all about.

The commonplace belief is that Christianity is about accepting Jesus as Saviour and Lord, receiving the gift of eternal life, and going to church. While this is fundamentally true, it is just the entry point into a relationship with God in which He wants us to grow spiritually – to grow in our personal relationship with the Father and the Son, and to know, and live out His purposes for us. Jesus said:

*And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. **John 17:3** i.e. - **the essence of eternal life is to know God.***

In spite of my own ups and downs in my walk with the Lord, God graciously kept drawing me back to the place of diligently seeking Him through His Word and by His Spirit. And as I have spent time drawing near to God, He has assured me of this vital principle – **God has given us His Word – the Bible, for the primary purpose of making Himself known personally to those who diligently seek Him.** And as we grow in that personal knowledge, **we will know His heart, in which are embedded His purposes for humanity.** It is only as we commit ourselves to seeking God with all our heart that we come to appreciate how awesome God really is, and that we will seek to live our lives for His glory.

God is our Maker, and He created us for a purpose. Even though that 'purpose' has been stained by sin, God has made a way to fix that by going to extreme lengths through His Son Jesus to make a way for us to be restored to the relationship with Himself that He created us for; and He has given us His Word and His Holy Spirit to assist us in every way to live according to His purposes.

To truly know God – in the sense of 'personal relationship knowledge' – **and to know and apply His purposes for us, is in a nutshell what true Christianity is all about.** There is of course a large volume of such knowledge contained in that 'nutshell', and the purpose of these booklets is to seek to expand on that 'knowledge' – even though our Awesome God is beyond our full comprehension.

To rightly understand the entry point to becoming a true Christian, we need to have a sound understanding of the Gospel message, which is the way for us to enter into a personal relationship with God and His Son Jesus. This is what the next chapter is committed to.

2. The Gospel – The Good News About Jesus

Heaven – Not What You Know, But Who You Know!

In the beginning God created the whole universe, including the earth and everything in it. Then He made the first people – Adam and Eve – who lived in the beautiful Garden of Eden where God had planted the '*tree of the knowledge of good and evil*'. God had told them that they were not to eat the fruit of that tree – because if they did, they would surely die.

But God left it up to them to make the right choice.

One day Satan made himself look like a snake and he tempted Adam and Eve to eat the forbidden fruit. He said '*you will not die, but you will be like God, knowing good and evil.*' They really liked the sound of that because they could make their own decisions about what was right and wrong, and in that way they would be a more like God. But when they ate the fruit, they suddenly felt really bad. They realised that they were naked and tried to cover themselves with leaves. Then they heard God calling to them in the Garden, and in fear they tried to hide; because they knew they had disobeyed Him.

God said to Adam and Eve, '*what is this you have done?*' Eve said: '*the snake tricked me, and I ate the fruit.*' So God told them that they were going to have to leave the wonderful Garden of Eden; that life on earth was not going to be so easy for them; and that eventually they would die.

Adam and Eve's disobedience is called 'sin', and every human being has inherited the same sinful nature which results in 'death'. The Bible says:

'When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.' **Romans 5:12**

The worst thing about sin is that it **separates us from God**, because **God is holy and righteous**. That means he is **totally perfect in His whole being**, and everything around him must be perfect. That is why Adam and Eve had to leave the place where God lived.

What about us – what are some of the things that show us that we have a sinful nature? How many of the following sins are you guilty of: lying; stealing; pride; greed; selfishness; watching pornography; sex outside marriage; etc?

When we disobey God's laws it shows that we are living to please our own selfish nature, rather than living to please God. But if our selfish behaviour continues until we die there are serious eternal results.

The Bible makes it clear that because God is holy and righteous, He cannot overlook our sinfulness or leave it unpunished. If He did, He would be like a judge who would let criminals go free. To a holy God, our sin is so serious that He cannot, and will not let it enter his perfect heaven. The most serious result of sin is that:

'...those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus... will be punished with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from His glorious power.' **2 Thessalonians 1:8-9.**

This will happen in that place known as hell.

Going to hell is an atrocious thought which many people struggle to accept. The question they ask is, "**How could a perfect, loving God send people to hell?**"

But wait – God doesn't want anyone to go to hell, and He has gone to **extreme lengths** to make a way for us to become part of His family so that we don't have to go to hell. So really, **it's our choice** whether we end up going to heaven or hell.

The '**extreme lengths**' is where we get to see the incredible mercy, love, and grace of God. He is the high and mighty God – holy and righteous; creator of all things; and the sovereign ruler over the whole universe. And yet He chose to send **His only Son Jesus** to earth as a man; in order **to show His amazing love and grace to the world, by suffering the punishment for our sins as He endured the cruellest of deaths on the cross.**

'But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.' **Romans 5:8**

But why did Jesus need to die for us?

Firstly, apart from Jesus we have no hope; we are separated from God, and will one day face eternal judgement:

'Before you believed in Christ, you were separated from him. ... You were without hope and without God in the world.' **Ephesians 2:12**

Secondly, Romans 6:23 says:

'For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.'

That is saying that death is what we deserve for being sinners – not only physical death of our bodies, but also spiritual death – which is separation from God. We are not just physical beings. We also have a spiritual side to us.

For example – have you ever wondered about your thoughts? You can't touch them or see them. What about your feelings or emotions? These are some of the things that make up the spiritual part of our being which is the most important part of us, because it will live forever – for all eternity. One day our body will die, but the spiritual part of us will remain. **And that will be either in heaven or in hell.**

Hell is the place we will go to if we are still separated from God when we die. That's where spiritual death will take us.

Heaven is the place where we will live with God forever – **but only if we make the right choices.**

Going back to **Romans 6:23**, the second part says: '*...but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*' Now we have come to the exciting **Good News**, which is that **God freely gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ.**

When Jesus was hanging on that cross, his Father God laid all **our sins** on him, and He **was punished for our sins**. This was the worst part of what Jesus suffered, and it separated him from His Father God for a short time.

Jesus was buried in a grave, but on the third day God raised Him back to life again; and over the next 40 days He appeared to all his followers many times. Then He was taken back to heaven, and now God and Jesus are patiently waiting for us to come to Him. They get so excited when anyone really wants to receive the free gift of eternal life, and become a child of God.

What do we have to do to receive this free gift?

1. Believe with all your heart that what the Bible tells us about Jesus is really true, and also that your sins have separated you from a holy God: '*For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*' **Romans 3:23.**

2. Accept that you can only be saved by God's grace, and also through your faith: '*God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It is God's gift.*' **Ephesians 2:8**

3. Confess that you are a sinner. Talk to God in prayer and tell Him that you are really sorry for all your wrong attitudes and actions. Ask Him to forgive you and to make you clean inside.

4. Repent – which means that you make the decision to turn away from anything that offends God.

5. Count the cost. Jesus advised us to count the cost before deciding to follow him: '*Then He said to the crowd, "If any of you wants to be My follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross daily, and follow Me. If*

you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for My sake, you will save it." **Luke 9:23-24**

6. If you have believed, accepted, confessed, repented, and counted the cost - then as you pray, **receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour**

When you have sincerely done all of the above, you will be restored to the family relationship with God that He created us for; and you will receive the gift of eternal life. You will also receive the **gift of God's Holy Spirit** who will come to live within you, to help you **live as God wants you to – not as you want**.

If you have made this life-changing decision to become a child of God and escape the eternal destruction of hell, you have made the first step in a new life which is primarily about building your personal relationship with God – getting to know Him more intimately, and living your life according to His purposes for us.

In conclusion – this is **the Good News** about the extravagant love and grace of God for sinful humanity, and the way that God has made for us to be restored to the relationship with Himself that had been broken by sin, and to give us eternal life. And as noted in chapter one, Jesus said:

'And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.' **John 17:3**

The fuller significance of 'knowing God' will be developed in chapter four.

Whether you have just become a Christian, or are a relatively new Christian, or even if you have been a believer in Jesus for quite some time, then I urge you to continue through these booklets with the view to growing in your relationship with our Maker – God Almighty and his Son Jesus. There is nothing more important in life than truly knowing God and His purposes for us. This is what He has created us for, and more particularly, what He has saved us for. This will become clearer as you carefully meditate your way through these booklets.

All praise be to our God who has drawn us to Himself, and has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 1:3-8 (NIV) *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸that he lavished on us...*

3. God's personal name 'Yahweh'

Before delving into the importance of knowing God, I would like to briefly explain the reason for using God's personal name '**Yahweh**' in these booklets.

The original Hebrew word for God's name is rendered as YHWH in English capital letters, and is most commonly pronounced as 'Yahweh', or sometimes 'Jehovah'. But for reasons which are certainly not convincing enough for many Christians, Bible translators have been influenced by the Jews who considered God's personal name too holy to be spoken orally, and have instead used 'LORD' in capitals. But 'LORD' is **not a personal name** – it is an **impersonal title** which **implies God's majesty and His position of authority as Sovereign Ruler of all things**. Now this is absolutely relevant and true in relation to God, but it fails to communicate the significance of God's personal name '**Yahweh**'.

Its significance is in part recognised because '**Yahweh**' appears over **6,500 times in the OT**, including compound names of Yahweh conveying different attributes of God. This will be addressed in the next booklet.

It is also important, because in the Bible names often have a significant meaning. **For God, His names are always particularly significant, conveying important aspects of God's character, or the outworking of His authority or power.**

So essentially, the name '**Yahweh**' is the manifestation of His character.

The declaration by God of the significance of His personal name occurred when God appeared to Moses at the burning bush, calling him to go and deliver God's chosen people Israel from slavery in Egypt. He said to Moses:

*"Say this to the people of Israel, 'The LORD (**Yahweh**), the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations." Exodus 3:15*

'**Yahweh**' is His name forever – so it is still **Yahweh**. And it is the name by which He is to be **remembered throughout all generations**. This is an emphatic statement by God, and we should absorb its significance, and familiarise ourselves with the use of **Yahweh**, especially as we read the Word of God. Some other verses which also emphasise the importance of His name are:

Hosea 12:5 *Yahweh, the God of hosts, Yahweh is his memorial name.*

Isaiah 42:8 *I am Yahweh; that is my name; my glory I give to no other...*

Please also read **Exodus 6:2-3; 15:3; Psalm 68:4; 83:18; 99:3; 135:13; Isaiah 47:4;**

48:4; 51:15; Jeremiah 50:34; Amos 4:13

Because of the clear emphasis that God has placed on the significance of His 'Name' in the Scriptures, I feel obligated to use His personal name 'Yahweh' wherever it normally appears as 'LORD' in the Scriptures.

Take time to praise and worship (Refer to the note at the bottom of page 2)

Psalm 96:1 Sing to Yahweh a new song; sing to Yahweh, all the earth.

²*Sing to Yahweh, praise his name; proclaim his salvation day after day.*

³*Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples.*

⁴*For great is Yahweh and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods.*

⁵*For all the gods of the nations are idols, but Yahweh made the heavens.*

⁶*Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and glory are in his sanctuary.*

⁷*Ascribe to Yahweh, all you families of nations, ascribe to Yahweh glory and strength.*

⁸*Ascribe to Yahweh the glory due his name; bring an offering and come into his courts.*

⁹*Worship Yahweh in the splendor of his holiness; tremble before him, all the earth.*

¹⁰*Say among the nations, "Yahweh reigns." The world is firmly established, it cannot be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity.*

¹¹*Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let the sea resound, and all that is in it.*

¹²*Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy.*

¹³*Let all creation rejoice before Yahweh, for he comes, he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness.*

Psalm 89:5-8 Let the heavens praise your wonders, O Yahweh, your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones!

⁶*For who in the skies can be compared to Yahweh? Who among the heavenly beings is like Yahweh,*

⁷*a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him?*

⁸*O Yahweh God of hosts, who is mighty as you are, O Yahweh, with your faithfulness all around you?*

4. The Most Important Thing in Life – Knowing God

The Bible has a lot to say about the vital concept of '**Knowing God**', and it is interrelated with other concepts such as '**seeking God**'; '**the fear of the Lord**'; '**walking with God**' (or 'walking in His ways'); and '**loving the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.**'

But why should we make 'Knowing God' the most important thing in our lives? The short answer is **because God is our Maker – He created us for Himself that we might have a personal relationship with Him, and be transformed into the likeness of His Son Jesus – and He has given us His Word and His Holy Spirit for the primary purpose of making Himself known to people.** Surely those are convincing enough reasons for making 'Knowing God' a high priority in our lives.

Know that Yahweh is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Psalm 100:3 (NIV)

... for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea. Isa 11:9b (NIV)

a. Knowing God

-- Means much more than knowing information about God. There are many who believe in 'God', but don't really know the One True God.

The word 'know' is used in different senses in the Bible, but curiously, the most intimate application of 'know', is to the intimate relationship between a husband and wife (**Genesis 4:1; Matthew 1:25**). But then interestingly, the same Hebrew and Greek words for 'know' are also used for knowing God (**Hosea 2:20; 6:3; Jeremiah 24:7; John 17:3; Philippians 3:8-10**).

The implication though, is certainly not that we have a husband/wife kind of union with God, but rather that God wants us to '**know**' Him in a **close personal relationship, in which we continually grow to know His awesome nature, His heart, and His purposes for our lives.** This is the real meaning of 'knowing God'. A personal relationship with God **begins** when by faith we accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord, and from there on, God wants us to **grow in our 'acquaintance-knowledge'** of Him and His Son Jesus.

b. Seeking God

-- Means to diligently search for Him through His Word and prayer. It is a heart attitude that longs to know God more intimately; or – maybe to restore the relationship with God that you realise you have 'put on the back seat'.

Seeking God is an absolutely crucial aspect of growing in our relationship with God. It is not possible to know God beyond a shallow level **if we are not earnestly seeking Him**. This is what God has determined.

Hebrews 11:6 (NIV) *...anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

Psalms 14:2. *Yahweh looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.*

Proverbs 8:17. *I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.*

As you read the following passage, take note of the increasing intensity of seeking, with the result – ‘...then you will...’ (**v.5**)

Proverbs 2:1-6. *My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, ²making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; ³yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, ⁴if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, ⁵then you will understand the fear of Yahweh and find the knowledge of God. ⁶For Yahweh gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding...*

Read also **Deuteronomy 4:29; 1 Chronicles 16:11; Psalm 9:10**

c. The Fear of the Lord

-- means to have the utmost respect and reverence for Yahweh Almighty, and to stand in awe of Him who is so much more worthy of all glory and honour than we can even imagine.

It is Yahweh Himself who has clearly spoken about the importance of 'fearing' Him. The 'fear of the LORD' is what God requires of His people because He wants us to realise how important it is for us to know how worthy He is of our total respect and reverence. And when we do, we will stand in awe of Him.

The fear of the LORD (Yahweh) is not grasped by the mind – it is imprinted in our hearts. God will disclose it to the hearts of those who earnestly seek Him, as is seen in **Proverbs 2:1-6** above, and of course elsewhere in the Scriptures.

The 'Fear of the LORD' is a subject of greater importance than many Christians seem to realise. Yahweh is the One True God – the self-existing One – the High and Mighty God who inhabits eternity – the Creator and Sovereign Ruler of the whole universe – the Holy One, so majestic and glorious; so perfect in every part of His being – the God who made all things for Himself and who is

worthy of all glory, honour, and praise for who He is and all that He has done for sinful humanity – the One who is so worthy of our utmost respect and reverence – the One whom we should stand in awe of – **He is the one we should 'fear'.**

'The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.' **Proverbs 9:10 (Also Psalm 111:10; Job 28:28; Proverbs 1:7)**

These two phrases – '**the fear of the LORD**' and '**knowledge of the Holy One**', are an example of Hebrew 'synonymous parallelism' in poetical writings; which is a repetition of the same thought expressed with different words. It is crucial in the context of these booklets that we understand this connection. **A true knowledge of God will naturally develop within us a true fear of the LORD.**

i. What does God say about the importance of fearing Him?

While there are many scriptures on this subject, we will look at just a few of them in this section, beginning with Yahweh's instructions to His chosen people Israel as they were being prepared to enter the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 10:12-21 *"And now, Israel, what does Yahweh your God require of you, but to fear Yahweh your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³and to keep the commandments and statutes of Yahweh, which I am commanding you today for your good?*

¹⁴*Behold, to Yahweh your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. ¹⁵Yet Yahweh set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.*

¹⁶*Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn. ¹⁷For Yahweh your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. ¹⁸He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.*

¹⁹*Love the sojourner, therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.*

²⁰*You shall fear Yahweh your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear. ²¹He is your praise. He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen.*

Also **Deuteronomy 5:29; 6:1-2, 13, 24; 13:4; 28:58; 31:12-13**

In the book of Deuteronomy, Yahweh is certainly putting a strong emphasis on the importance of His people fearing Him. Even though God was speaking to Israel at that time, He was speaking about what was extremely important **for all His people at all times – this is the very heart of God revealed to all of us.**

ii. The fear of the Lord in the NT

Although most of the scriptures speaking of the fear of the Lord are in the OT, it does continue in the NT, showing us that we should cultivate a true fear of Yahweh in our lives. And let me repeat – that cultivation only occurs as we consistently seek His face for the purpose of growing in our personal relationship knowledge of Yahweh and His Son Jesus.

2 Corinthians 7:1 *Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.*

Philippians 2:12-13 *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

Revelation 15:4 *Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."*

Have all these scriptures relating to the fear of the LORD given you a greater appreciation of the importance of fearing Yahweh? I trust that it will motivate you to spend more time seeking to know God in a more personal way, in order to appreciate His worthiness of all glory and honor, and of our utmost respect and reverence.

iii. More on God's encouragement for us to fear Him

Adding to the verses about the **importance** of fearing God, are others where we find real **encouragement** to grow in our fear of Yahweh.

Psalms 25:12-14 *Who is the man who fears Yahweh? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. ¹³His soul shall abide in well-being, and his offspring shall inherit the land. ¹⁴The friendship of Yahweh is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.*

Psalms 34:7-11 *The angel of Yahweh encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. ⁸Oh, taste and see that Yahweh is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! ⁹Oh, fear Yahweh, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack! ¹⁰The young lions suffer want and hunger; but those who seek Yahweh lack no good thing. ¹¹Come, O children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of Yahweh.*

Apparently there are over 150 references to the fear of the LORD, mostly in the OT; and I would encourage you to read at least some of these: ***Psalms 22:23; 31:19; 33:8-22; 89:5-8; 103:11-18; 112; 115:11-13; 128:1-4; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Jeremiah 32:39-40; Matthew 10:28; Hebrews 12:28,29; Revelation 14:7***

Because there is much more to be said about 'the fear of the LORD' we will enlarge on it in the third theme in this series – 'God's Purposes for Humanity'. But for now the main thing to bear in mind is that it is God's requirement that we have **the utmost reverence for Yahweh Almighty, and stand in awe of Him who is so much more worthy of all glory and honour than we can even imagine**. This will only transpire as we grow in our personal knowledge of Yahweh Almighty.

d. Walking with God

--Means to live in continual, unbroken fellowship with God; to know His heart, and make a deliberate choice to live our lives daily as He desires. Remember – God is our Maker and He knows what is best for us.

Walking with God is what God intends for us as we develop our personal relationship with Him through seeking Him with all our heart. The concept of 'walking with God' appears a number of times in the Scriptures.

➤ Enoch

'Enoch walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away.' **Genesis 5:24 (NIV)**

The implication here is that God was so pleased with Enoch's faithful relationship with Himself that He did not allow Enoch to experience death. This is clearly backed up in **Heb 11:5** '*...he was commended as one who pleased God.*'

➤ Noah

Genesis 6:8. *'But Noah found favor in the eyes of Yahweh.'* And **v.9:** *'Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God.'*

In spite of the massive task that God had given Noah, he was faithful to carry it out. And without question: *'Noah did everything just as God commanded him.'* (**Genesis 6:22;** and **ch7:5, 9 & 16**) Here is an example of a righteous, blameless, and faithful man, who 'walked with God'.

➤ Abraham

Following God's promise to Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation, he faced challenges over many years before the process even began. But Yahweh confirmed His promise with this command:

"I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly." **Genesis 17:1b-2**

Walking faithfully with God and being blameless was challenging, but Abraham's faith in Yahweh grew to the point that he was even willing to sacrifice his only son Isaac as God commanded. As he was about to kill his son, the angel of the Lord stopped him, and provided a lamb for the sacrifice. This scenario was a God-given test for Abraham; and the results are evidence of his growing faith in Yahweh and his closer 'walk' with Him.

➤ **Others who walked with God**

There were of course many others whose lives were evidence of the fact that they 'walked with God', including a number of those who were leaders of Israel, and also the prophets. For example: Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David and some of the other kings of Israel, Daniel, and the true prophets of God.

Psalm 84:11-12 *For Yahweh God is a sun and shield; Yahweh bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.*

¹²*O Yahweh of hosts, blessed is the one who trusts in you!*

➤ **Jesus is our ultimate example of walking with God**

The real challenge for us is that: '...whoever says he abides in him (Jesus) ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.' **1 John 2:6.**

Also ***Hebrews 12:1b-2a***

The conclusion from these verses is that Jesus is our ultimate example, and we should be 'walking' as He walked. The leading principle which Jesus applied, enabling Him to live His life as the Father had purposed, was to be in constant communion with His Father – He only spoke or acted as the Father led Him.

John 5:19-20 *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel.*

Read also: ***John 4:34; 5:30; 7:16; 8:28f; 10:36f; 12:49f; 14:31; 15:10,15; 17:4 & 8***

This is the way that Jesus '**walked with God**'; and you're probably also aware of the many verses referring to Jesus departing on His own to pray; and it was through His communication with the Father; and also through the leading of the Spirit of God who dwelt in him; that Jesus knew what He was to do and say.

The question is – are we walking in the same way as Jesus walked?

e. Loving the LORD our God with our whole being

This is God's highest requirement for His people, and as such should be a very high priority in our lives. It was first given to the nation of Israel through Moses as they were being prepared to enter the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 6:5 *You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*

Throughout the book of Deuteronomy there is a repeated emphasis on loving Yahweh, sometimes coupled with fearing Him; walking in His ways; obeying Him; and serving Him with all their heart:

Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 7:9; 10:12-22; 11:13-15; 13:3-4; 30:15-16 & 19-20

Then in the NT Jesus also affirmed the command to love God, calling it the 'first and greatest commandment'.

³⁷*Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'* ³⁸*This is the first and greatest commandment."* **Matthew 22:37-38**

In Mark's record of this conversation he adds – '*...and with all your strength.*'

➤ **What does it mean 'to love...'?**

There are two main word's used in the Greek New Testament for 'love'. One is '*Phileo*' which more closely means "natural human affection". **'Phileo' is never used in biblical language when referring to man's love for God - but 'Agape' is.**

Following are some edited comments taken from Bible Dictionaries on '**Agape**': '*Love can be known only from the actions it inspires. God's love is seen in the gift of his Son, (1 John 4:9-10). Self-will, that is, self-pleasing, is the opposite of love to God.*' '*Agape love, whether used of God or man includes: a strong desire, and an active and generous interest in the well-being of the person loved.*'

These comments are not suggesting that there are no emotional feelings in our love for God. In fact, when we really come to appreciate the awesome greatness of God, and **most importantly His extravagant love; mercy; and grace** – **then we should be affected emotionally.** And also, as we will see shortly, there are emotional aspects in loving God with all our **heart, soul, and mind.**

➤ **John clarifies the true nature of agape love in his epistles.**

1 John 3:16 & 18 (NIV) *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters....* ¹⁸*Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.* Also **1 John 4:9-10**

These scriptures highlight the practical outworking of God's agape love; a love that inspires Him to take action, as seen in the crucifixion of His Beloved Son Jesus Christ, on behalf of sinful humanity. And notice that the practical aspect of agape love is emphasised for us in the above verse: '*...let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*'

So we can say that if we are not showing our love to God in heartfelt; consistent; and practical ways, then we do not love Him as He requires.

What are the meanings of heart, soul, mind, and strength?

We are to love the Lord our God with all our heart , all our soul, all our mind and with all our strength. The following explanations, which present an intermingling of these aspects, are taken from various Bible commentators.

i. Our heart

The heart is the seat of our emotions; affections; conscience; moral character – including our sense of condemnation or guilt when we've done something wrong. It is the driving force behind decision making, and therefore linked to the soul and our will.

ii. Our soul

The soul consists of mind; emotions and will. It is the personal life of an individual – he is a living being (soul). The soul is the source of a person's desires, passions, and appetites. In the soul lies individuality, personality, and ego.

iii. Our mind

The mind, being a function of the soul, is principally the faculty of knowing – i.e. the intellect. It is the source of understanding, perception, thought, design.

iv. Our strength

Our strength refers to the energies with which we practically work out our agape love for God in service to Him and for His Kingdom. When our heart is consumed with passion for our awesome God then we will determine in our minds to serve Him with our whole being. ***Romans 12:1***

So we can say that there shouldn't be any area of our lives that isn't touched by this command. We are to commit everything to God, and bring everything under His control, giving ourselves to Him entirely for the rest of our lives.

➤ **We are to deny ourselves; even be willing to lose our life for His sake**

Luke 9:23-24 *And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. (Note that it is 'daily' that we need to take up our cross)*

Also **Matthew 10:38-39; 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-38; Luke 14:27-33; John 12:25-26**

➤ **We are to love Jesus more than anything or anyone else**

Matthew 10:37-39 *Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. ³⁸And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.*

Then in **Luke 14:26**. Jesus uses the more challenging word 'hate'; but He is not literally meaning 'hate' as we normally use it, but to emphasize that the degree of our love for Jesus should be so much greater than for family or friends.

➤ **We are to hate the things of the world**

1 John 2:15-17 *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, **the love of the Father is not in him.** ¹⁶For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions--is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

1 John 5:19 *We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. (Also **Titus 2:11-14**)*

James 4:4 *You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore **whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.***

That last line should be a serious challenge for us. No Christian would dream of making himself an enemy of God. But maybe we are completely unaware of the things of the world that we are engaged in – like worldly movies; TV programs; much of social media; and maybe the lifestyle we have chosen to live!

It would be fair to say that a lack of love on our part only goes to show that we don't really know Him – we don't really appreciate His awesome greatness, His holiness, love, mercy, and grace towards such totally undeserving people as we all are. A true personal knowledge of God will open our spiritual eyes to more of His glorious wonders, motivating us to truly love Him with our whole being.

f. Why is it so important to know God?

As stated near the beginning of chapter 4:

'So why should we make 'Knowing God' the most important thing in our lives? The short answer is **because God is our Maker – He created us for Himself so that we might have a personal relationship with Him and His Son Jesus. And God has given us His Word and His Holy Spirit for the primary purpose of making Himself known to people.** Surely those are convincing reasons for making 'Knowing God' the highest priority in our lives.'

We have also covered some of the reasons why it is so important to know God within the clarification of concepts up to this point. But next we will be looking more into **the expressions that Yahweh makes through His prophets, revealing Himself and His desire for His people to truly know Him.**

i. Moses

Moses was chosen by God for a special task – to deliver God's people Israel from slavery in Egypt and return them to the land of their inheritance. In the course of doing so, Moses got to know God and trust Him as he saw the powerful works that He did. It came to the point where God told Moses that He was pleased with him, (**Exodus 33:12-17**) prompting Moses to make this bold request: *Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, **that I may know you** in order to find favor in your sight. **Exodus 33:13***

As a result of Moses faithfulness, and his request to know the Lord to a deeper level, God gave a special revelation of Himself to Moses.

Exodus 34:6-8 *And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "Yahweh, Yahweh, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,⁷ maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation." ⁸Moses bowed to the ground at once and worshiped.*

This was a powerful revelation given to Moses at that time because he **feared the Lord; walked in His ways; and wanted to know Him more.** It was also a **revelation of Yahweh's nature**, including the most appreciated aspects of God's holiness. It has become a classic description of God that is often referred to elsewhere in the Old Testament. (e.g. **Numbers 14:18; Psalm 86:15; Joel 2:3**)

ii. The prophet Isaiah

As through most of the prophets, Yahweh expressed the grief of His heart over Israel's rebelliousness, and their failure to acknowledge Yahweh for who He really was. Rather, they displayed the inherent self-centred nature that we are all born with; and as is all too common today – **the people did not know the LORD!**

***Isaiah 1:2-4** Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Yahweh has spoken: "Children have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. ³The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master's crib, but **Israel does not know, my people do not understand.**" ⁴Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, offspring of evildoers, children who deal corruptly! They have forsaken Yahweh, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are utterly estranged.*

But despite Israel's rejection of their God, He continued to show His heart of compassion for His people; calling them to come to Him; to listen; and to seek Him. If they did, God would bless them as He had promised.

***Isaiah 55:6-9** "Seek Yahweh while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; ⁷let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to Yahweh, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares Yahweh. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

iii. The prophet Jeremiah

Jeremiah also voiced the grief of God's heart over His people's ignorance.

***Jeremiah 4:22** "For my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. They are 'wise'--in doing evil! But how to do good they know not." (Read also **ch. 2:12-13 & 5:21-22a**)*

But as with Isaiah, Yahweh also spoke many words of encouragement through Jeremiah to His people about what He would do for them if they would truly return to Him and seek Him with all their heart.

***Jeremiah 24:6-7** I will set my eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not uproot them. ⁷I will give them a heart to know that I am Yahweh, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.*

Jeremiah 29:11-13 *For I know the plans I have for you, declares Yahweh, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹²Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. ¹³You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.*

Such is the importance of seeking God with all our heart so that we will truly know Him, and will glorify and worship Him who is so worthy.

iv. The prophet Ezekiel

The most predominant phrase in the book of Ezekiel – repeated **72 times** – “***...and they shall know that I am Yahweh***”, thus powerfully revealing the desire of Yahweh's heart that His people would truly know Him. This was God's intended outcome for His people when they returned to Him following the judgements that He had to execute on them due to their rebelliousness against Him.

v. The prophet Hosea

The theme of 'knowing God' is predominant in the book of Hosea, with the cry of God's heart that His people would know Him. As through all of the prophets, God switches from expressing His judgements upon the people for their rejection of Him; to conveying His love and compassion for them, with promises of restoration.

Hosea 4:1 *Hear the word of Yahweh, O children of Israel, for Yahweh has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land. There is no faithfulness or steadfast love, and no knowledge of God in the land;*

Hosea 4:6 *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.*

But then:

Hosea 5:15 *I will return again to my place, until they acknowledge their guilt and seek my face, and in their distress earnestly seek me.*

Hosea 6:1-3 *"Come, let us return to Yahweh; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. ²After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. ³Let us know; let us press on to know Yahweh; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth." (Also **v.6**)*

Through these prophets Yahweh is strongly expressing His deep disappointment at His people's lack of a true knowledge of God; and their failure

to do all that He required of them – not only because Yahweh was worthy of their love and commitment to Him and His ways; but also because of the blessings they would receive if they truly knew Him and walked in His ways.

It breaks my heart to see through most of the OT; that in spite of the open display of God's power to deliver and protect His chosen people; in spite of His miraculous provisions; and His call for His people to fear Him, to love Him, and to obey all his requirements; the people of Israel, for the most part, still failed to submit to Yahweh's requirements, and instead they did pretty much everything he told them not to. It's no wonder that they stirred up God's anger!

All the scriptures we have been looking at are **God's Word** for His chosen people, **expressing the heart of God for all time. And this can be summarized as – 'I want my people to know me!'** God's ongoing encouragement, and a clearer understanding of what it means to 'know God' is found in the NT.

g. 'Knowing God' in the New Testament

When we come to the New Testament we find the same encouragement for God's people to truly know God and His Son Jesus. In this section we will be explaining verses relating specifically to 'knowing God', given by Jesus, Paul, and Peter.

➤ Jesus

As part of Jesus' final prayer with His disciples before His arrest and crucifixion, He made a very significant statement about eternal life:

*Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. **John 17:3***

Bear with me for the repetition, but 'Knowing God' from a biblical perspective means much more than knowing information about God. It means knowing God in the sense of **personal relationship knowledge**; and the more time we spend seeking Him, the more intimately we will get to know Him and His purposes for us.

The above verse is a particularly crucial statement by Jesus, where He is emphasising that **the most important thing about eternal life is having a personal relationship with God our Maker and His Son Jesus. To know 'the only true God, and Jesus Christ', is the essence of eternal life** – it is the real substance of what eternal life is all about.

➤ The Apostle Paul

Paul places a strong emphasis on the importance of knowing God when he expresses his passion to know Christ:

Philippians 3:7-8, 10-12, 14-15 ⁷*But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ.... ¹⁰I want to know Christ--yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. ¹²Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me... ¹⁴I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things.*

Paul's life was amazingly transformed when Jesus encountered him as he was on the road to Damascus to persecute the followers of Jesus. But by the grace of God, Jesus dramatically revealed Himself to Paul and chose him to be a key messenger of the Gospel to the Gentiles; and of the 'surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus...' He was now a passionate proclaimer of Jesus.

In some of Paul's other letters he expresses his prayerful concern, together with encouragement, that those whom he had discipled might grasp the importance of knowing God.

Ephesians 1:15; 17 *For this reason ... ¹⁷I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.*

Colossians 1:9-10 *For this reason ... We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, ¹⁰so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God...*

➤ The Apostle Peter

One of the key passages highlighting the importance of knowing God is found in Peter's second letter.

2 Peter 1:2-8 (ISV) *May grace and peace be yours in abundance through full knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord! ³His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through the full knowledge of the one*

who called us by his own glory and excellence. ⁴Through these he has given us his precious and wonderful promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, seeing that you have escaped the corruption that is in the world caused by evil desires. ⁵For this very reason, you must make every effort to supplement your faith with moral character, your moral character with knowledge, ⁶your knowledge with self-control, your self-control with endurance, your endurance with godliness, ⁷your godliness with brotherly kindness, and your brotherly kindness with love. ⁸For if you possess these qualities, and if they continue to increase among you, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in attaining a full knowledge of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah.

2 Peter 3:18 *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

➤ **The main things we learn from these verses in 2 Peter are:**

- 1.** As we grow in the fullness of our personal relationship knowledge of God and Jesus, we will abound in our experience of God's grace and peace (**v.2**).
- 2.** The full knowledge of God is the means by which He grants us all that we need for life and godliness. As our personal relationship knowledge of God increases – we will experience more of all that we need to live a godly life; and our faith will increase to the point where we have the confidence that God will provide (**v.3**).

Also: **Romans 8:32** *He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?*

- 3.** God is our provider, but we have a part to play as we work out God's purposes in our lives – '*...make every effort...*' (**2 Peter 1:5**) – including adding to our knowledge. There is no end to knowing God. He longs for us to seek Him with all our heart, and when we do, He will make Himself known in increasing measure.

Conclusion to 'Why is it so important to know God?'

I trust that you have seen from God's Word that **the longing of His heart is that His people would know Him in a close personal relationship**, and that we work towards this goal by **seeking God with all our heart**; by developing a **biblical fear of the Lord**; and by **walking in His ways**. If we make a sincere commitment to all of these aspects of our relationship with God, then we will truly **be loving Him with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind**.

Have you come to appreciate what God is graciously conveying to us? Maybe you are now wondering what you can do to grow in your relationship with God!

h. How do we grow in our personal relationship with God?

➤ 1. By diligently seeking God through His Word; by asking the Spirit of Truth to reveal God to us; and communicating with Him in prayer.

Because God has given us His Word for the primary purpose of revealing Himself and His ways to us, we should highly value God's Word, and prioritize our time to get to know Him in increasing measure. And as we are spending that time attentively seeking to know God, we also need to be submitting ourselves to the Spirit of Truth as noted in the Introduction on page 3.

Then coupled with those two vital aspects of growing in personal relationship with God is the personal communication we are to have with God in prayer. What an awesome privilege to be able to speak face to face with God Almighty.

Remember – **there is simply nothing more important in life than to be continually growing in your personal knowledge of God and Jesus.**

➤ 2. By having the right motivation in seeking to know God.

The right motivation will come from the realization – even if only to a basic level – of **who God is**, and of the fact that **He created us to have a personal relationship with Him which will only grow as we diligently seek to know Him and walk in His ways.**

➤ 3. By making a real commitment to seek Him with ALL our heart.

Please read these verses: ***Deuteronomy 4:29; 2 Chronicles 15:12; Psalm 105:3-4; Jeremiah 29:11-14; Joel 2:12-13; Hebrews 11:6.***

This commitment will require consistency with the time you spend seeking to know God. This is not always easy, because life is busy, and full of distractions – including distractions by the devil who will do all he can to distract us and to lead us astray from the things of God. But **God allows these things to happen to test us** – to see if we will **be faithful in seeking Him with all our heart.**

James 1:3-4 ...for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

⁴And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (Also: 1 Peter 1:6-7)

So let me encourage you – be consistent; be persistent; and meditate; contemplate; ponder; reflect; consider what God reveals about Himself; and pray. Have the right heart attitude – don't do it as a 'rule' that you have to follow – don't pretend that you are seeking God. Rather, **be genuinely diligent** as you take time in your pursuit of knowing God more intimately.

j. The blessings of knowing God more personally

Some of these blessings have already been cited elsewhere, but it's worth mentioning them again to remind us of the benefits of growing in our personal relationship with the Father and the Son.

➤ 1. God will provide everything we need for a godly life

2 Peter 1:2-8 as per page 24, and **Romans 8:32** on p.25. This really summarises the blessings of knowing God. The more intimately we get to know God, the richer will be our understanding of all that He desires to provide for us.

➤ 2. Our faith in Him and His Word will grow as we consistently spend time seeking God through His Word and prayer

Romans 10:17 *...faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

Colossians 1:4 & 9,10 *...since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints ...⁹And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.*

This faith is the confidence that God will fulfil His promises and provide everything we need for a godly life.

Hebrews 11:1 *Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*

Hebrews 11:6 *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.*

➤ 3. 'Knowing God' will result in our being changed into the likeness of Christ.

This seems to be God's ultimate goal for us. God's purpose is to restore in us the likeness in which He created mankind, but which was disturbed by sin. And the ultimate example of that 'image' is Jesus Himself.

2 Corinthians 3:18 *And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

Read also **Romans 8:29; 13:14; Ephesians 4:24; Galatians 4:19 & Colossians 3:10**

- 4. As we grow in our relationship with God we will become more aware of His purposes for our lives.

This is always worth repeating again – **God has given us His Word for the primary purpose of making Himself and His purposes known to humanity. The most important thing in life is to know God**; and as we get to know His heart, not only will our genuine fear of the Lord become more real to us, but **we will also know His purposes for us, and be diligent to apply them in our lives.**

- 5. We will become more aware of the fullness of God's blessings

Ephesians 1:3-4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.*

This is just the introduction to a most encouraging and praiseworthy passage; and I would encourage you read all of Ephesians chapter One. In fact it is a passage we all need to refer to regularly to remind ourselves of the God-given blessings that are ours in Christ Jesus, and to employ it as instrument of praise.

- 6. The 'hope' of eternal life will become more heartfelt for us.

Philippians 3:20-21 *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

Romans 8:24-25 *For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.*

1Peter 1:3-4 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you,*

- Do you have a growing passion to know God more intimately?

Having seen the emphasis that the Scriptures place on knowing God, has it been a challenge for you personally? We are talking about Yahweh – God Almighty; the Sovereign Ruler of the whole universe; absolutely perfect in his whole being; and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who sacrificed His life for our sins. Should we not therefore have a growing passion to build our personal

relationship with Him, and to discover what His purposes are for our lives, so that we can live our lives for His glory?

The psalmists are encouraging examples of this strong passion to pursue God. In fact this passion should be stronger in us because we have a more 'personal' relationship with God than what the Israelites had – because of what Christ has done to bring us into union with Himself.

Psalm 27:4 *One thing I ask from Yahweh, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of Yahweh all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of Yahweh and to seek him in his temple.*

Finally – Let me encourage you to take to heart A. W. Tozer's encouragement to passionately pursue God with all your heart and in simplicity. Tozer was a man of God who - *'seemed to burn the midnight oil in pursuit of God. His book is a theology, not of the head, but of the heart.'* (Samuel Zwemer)

➤ **Extracts from A. W. Tozer's 'The Pursuit of God':**

'...it is not mere words that nourish the soul, but God Himself, and unless, and until the hearers find God in personal experience, they are not the better for having heard the truth. The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to bring men to an intimate and satisfying knowledge of God, that they may enter into Him, that they may delight in His presence, may taste and know the inner sweetness of the very God Himself in the core and centre of their hearts.' (pp. 9-10)

The impulse to pursue God originates with God, but the outworking of that impulse is our following hard after Him... 'As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?' (Psalm 42:1-2) (pp. 11f)

Moses used the fact that he knew God as an argument for knowing Him better. 'Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight... I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. (Exodus 33:13; 18)

David's life was a torrent of spiritual desire, and his psalms ring with a cry of the seeker and the glad shout of the finder. Paul confessed the mainspring of his life to be his burning desire after Christ. "That I may know Him..." was the goal of his heart, and to this he sacrificed everything. "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may gain Christ. And be found in Him..." (Philippians 3:8-9a) (pp.15-16)

If we would find God amid all the religious externals we must first determine to find Him, and then proceed the way of simplicity. Now, as always, God discovers Himself to “babes” and hides Himself in thick darkness from the wise and prudent. We must simplify our approach to Him. We must strip down to essentials... We must put away all effort to impress, and come with the guileless candor of childhood. If we do this, without doubt God will quickly respond. (p. 18)

Take time to praise and worship

Psalm 42:1-2 *As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, my God.*

²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

Psalm 84:1-12 *How lovely is your dwelling place, Yahweh Almighty!*

²My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of Yahweh; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

³Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young— a place near your altar, Yahweh Almighty, my King and my God.

⁴Blessed are those who dwell in your house; they are ever praising you.

⁵Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.

⁶As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools.

⁷They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion.

⁸Hear my prayer, Yahweh God Almighty; listen to me, God of Jacob.

⁹Look on our shield, O God; look with favor on your anointed one.

¹⁰Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

¹¹For Yahweh God is a sun and shield; Yahweh bestows favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from those whose walk is blameless.

¹²Yahweh Almighty, blessed is the one who trusts in you.

Isa 12:2-5 *Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. Yahweh, Yahweh himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation."*

³With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

⁴In that day you will say: "Give praise to Yahweh, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted.

⁵Sing to Yahweh, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world.

5. Knowing Jesus

While the focus of chapter four has been on knowing 'God' in the general sense of the name, it goes without saying that the familiar title 'God' includes Jesus as such a vital part of the Godhead. Apart from Jesus we cannot have the personal relationship with God which has been the primary focus of this booklet so far, and which is available to all who accept Jesus as their Saviour and Lord.

Jesus Christ is truly awesome, and the Holy Spirit will reveal more of His awesomeness to us personally as we make our own commitment to diligently seek Him with all our heart through the Bible. The apostle Paul made such a commitment as a result of Jesus encountering him when he was on the road to Damascus to persecute Jesus' followers. It appears that Paul then spent three years, mostly in isolation, searching the Scriptures to gain a true biblical perspective on Jesus; and also as one would presume, spending much of his time in personal communion with Jesus.

This all led Paul to grow in his appreciation of what he called '*the unsearchable riches of Christ...*' (**Ephesians 3:8**). The riches of Christ are beyond human comprehension; they are immeasurable, boundless, and profound. Paul's wonderful expression of his passion to know Christ has already been cited on p.24, but it is well worth repeating here as an encouragement for us to develop the same passion. For the sake of Christ, Paul deliberately counted everything as a loss, even rubbish, for the sake of truly knowing Jesus.

*But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith--¹⁰that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death... **Philippians 3:7-10***

In spite of the riches of Christ being 'unsearchable', Jesus most assuredly wants us to know Him in increasing measure; and my prayer is that as I attempt to proclaim some of those riches in this booklet, you will engage your own heart in the process of knowing Jesus to a deeper level than you currently do.

In addition to what we address in this chapter, there will be more written under the title 'The Unsearchable Riches of Christ' in Part Three of the next theme in this series – 'What an Awesome God We Have'.

a. Jesus – the fulfilment of the Scriptures

Even before God created the whole universe, He knew that the first people He would create were going to be tempted by Satan and fall into sin. For this reason God planned ahead of time to provide a Saviour for mankind – all because of His great love, compassion, and grace. And that Saviour was His Son Jesus.

The evidence of God's overall plan of salvation through His Son Jesus is found throughout the Bible, beginning in Genesis. Following Adam and Eve's sin, God spoke to Satan:

Genesis 3:15 *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*"

Broadly speaking, the implication here is the ongoing hostility that would exist between the satanic forces of evil and sinful humanity. But in the second part of the verse the inference is primarily to Jesus and Satan. The 'he' is referring to Jesus when He had the victory over the devil through the cross; and the bruising of Jesus' 'heel' is a figurative indication of His sufferings on the cross.

Then in **Deuteronomy 18:18-19**, Yahweh speaks through Moses about future prophets, with the ultimate one being Jesus who will speak the words that Yahweh will put in His mouth.

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.

This scripture was referred to by Peter in **Acts 3:22-23** as he was speaking to the Jews in Solomon's Portico, with an added comment:

Acts 3:24 *And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days.*

Even though the name 'Jesus' does not appear in the OT, there are many prophecies foretelling the coming of an anointed One, using a variety of titles. And it became very clear through His earthly ministry that this was in fact Jesus. Even His suffering on the cross was graphically portrayed in **Isaiah 53**; written by Isaiah some 710 years or more before Jesus crucifixion.

i. Additional OT scriptures referring to Jesus

Psalms 110:1-4 *A Psalm of David. Yahweh says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." Yahweh sends forth from Zion your*

mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! ³Your people will offer themselves freely on the day of your power, in holy garments; from the womb of the morning, the dew of your youth will be yours. ⁴Yahweh has sworn and will not change his mind, "You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

Isaiah 11:1-5 There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. ²And the Spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of Yahweh. ³And his delight shall be in the fear of Yahweh. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

Isaiah 42:1-4 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. ²He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ³a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. ⁴He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.

Isaiah 61:1-3 The Spirit of the Sovereign Yahweh is on me, because Yahweh has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, ²to proclaim the year of Yahweh's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, ³and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of Yahweh for the display of his splendor.

Zechariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Also: **Isaiah 40:3-5; 50:4-7; 52:13-15; Ch.53; Zechariah 6:12-13; Malachi 3:1-4**

These are some of the fairly well known and wonderful scriptures speaking of Jesus as the One who would come to fulfil the purposes of God for the salvation of mankind; to reveal the glory of Yahweh; and to exercise justice and

righteousness. Then **in the NT** we find many comments by those who knew the OT Scriptures, recalling what was written by the prophets concerning Jesus.

John 1:45 *Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph."*

Acts 10:42-43 *And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."*

Also: **Acts 3:18; 26:22-23; Romans 1:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 Peter 1:10-12**

Even Jesus referred to the Scriptures as bearing witness to Him:

John 5:39 *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me... (Also **Luke 24:44-47**)*

ii. Titles for 'Jesus' found in the OT

There are a number of titles referring to Jesus in the OT, but I've only included here those which are of greatest significance in terms of either affirming our knowledge of who Jesus really is; or gaining a greater appreciation of Him.

➤ **God's Son**

This is just an introduction to what the OT Scriptures say about Jesus as God's forthcoming Son, but there is much more to say, as is revealed in the NT, and which will be addressed in section c.

Psalms 2:6-7 *"As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." ⁷I will tell of the decree: Yahweh said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you.*

Isaiah 9:6-7 *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will do this.*

➤ **Immanuel**

'Immanuel' means – 'God with us', attesting that He was more than just a man. Jesus came to be 'with us' to display the very nature of God.

Isa 7:14 *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (**Matthew 1:22-23**)*

➤ Messiah

'Messiah' means 'the Anointed One', which is the expression used in the OT. The Jews were expecting the Messiah to come and deliver Israel from the control of the Roman Empire, but their expectations were false and totally limited as to what the Messiah would do for God's chosen people Israel.

Psalms 2:2 *The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh and against his Anointed, saying...*

Compare ***Acts 4:25-27*** which quotes this verse. Also ***Psalms 89*** (especially **v.20**) & ***Isaiah 61:1-3***

From what we have seen, albeit somewhat briefly, Jesus, and His part in God's plan of salvation for mankind, are a central theme of the Bible.

What an awesome Saviour we have!

Moving on from here we will be giving attention to the essential characteristics of Jesus – who He is in His nature; what He has done as God's one and only Son; and who He is now for all true believers. Jesus is truly awe-inspiring; so don't ever become complacent about your relationship with Him. My prayer is that as you meditate your way through this chapter, you will grow in your personal knowledge of Jesus and of all that He has done for such undeserving people as we all are.

b. Jesus – the meaning of His personal name

'Jesus' was the **personal name** given to Jesus before His birth. It occurs over 900 times in the NT – and no wonder, because the NT is primarily about Jesus and His institution of the New Covenant through His crucifixion and resurrection.

Interestingly, the name 'Jesus' means "Yahweh is salvation", or "- is the Saviour". It was a divinely appointed name, revealed by the angel Gabriel to Joseph following his betrothal to Mary, and after she was found to be pregnant. But the baby was conceived by the Holy Spirit, not by Joseph. When the angel spoke, he revealed the significance of Jesus' name: *'He will save His people from their sins.'* This is who Jesus is – **He is the Saviour of all who come to him.**

Matthew 1:20-21 *But as he (Joseph) considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."*

There were other names or titles applied to Jesus, also revealed before His birth, adding more significance to His name and His relationship with God: '*Immanuel*'; '*Son of the Most High God*'; and '*holy—the Son of God*'. (See **Matthew 1:22-23; Luke 1:30-32 & 35**)

The fact that these titles were attributed to Jesus before He was even born is of real significance; and there are also other titles applied to Jesus, both in the Old and New Testaments, each with their own implication. In this section we will list most of them, giving primary attention to the more significant ones.

c. Jesus – other titles ascribed to Him in the NT

i. Son of God

As noted in section a. God's Son is referred to in the OT, but the New Testament abounds with verses declaring that Jesus is '*the Son of God*' – that is – He is the Son of Yahweh Almighty. Mark begins his gospel with: '*The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*' (**Mark 1:1**) And there are many other verses in addition to this one, even those where the devil and demons, are calling Jesus the 'Son of God'. (See **Matthew 4:3, 6; 8:29**)

The first direct reference to the 'Son of God' was when the angel Gabriel was revealing to Mary that the child in her womb was conceived of the Holy Spirit, and was to be called 'the Son of God'

Luke 1:35 *And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy--the Son of God.*

Then next it was John the Baptist who prophetically spoke of the Son of God;
John 1:34 *And I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God."*

– and then Nathanael:

John 1:49 *Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"*

Following are just a few more of the 40 or so references to 'the Son of God' in the NT:

John 3:18 *Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.*

John 11:4 *But when Jesus heard it he said, "This illness does not lead to death. It is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it."*

John 11:27 *She said to him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world."*

Acts 9:20 *And immediately he proclaimed Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God."*

When Jesus began His earthly ministry He often referred to Himself as the 'Son of God' – as well as the 'Son', and the 'Son of Man'; which we will address shortly. In all these references it is without doubt that Jesus was the 'Son' of Yahweh. In fact He also refers to Himself as God's 'only Begotten Son'

ii. Only Begotten Son

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. **John 3:16** (NASB)*

In the Scriptures, 'begotten' means either: 'to be born of...' or in a metaphorical sense: '...the absolutely unique relation of the Son to the Father in His divine nature.' Both appear to be applicable to Jesus.

It is undeniably true that Jesus relation to the Father as His Son is absolutely unique; and that Jesus is divine in His nature. And as already noted, Jesus is consistently declared to be 'the Son of God' – even by Jesus Himself; who also refers to God as His Father many times.

It's also interesting to note that **Hebrews 1:5-6** points to three aspects of Jesus as – God's begotten Son – the Son of the Father – and the firstborn into the world: '*...today I have begotten you" ... "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son" ...when he brings the firstborn into the world...*

There are interpretative challenges raised by some biblical commentators with regards to Jesus being 'begotten' of God, and being the 'firstborn into the world'; but the sonship of Jesus to the Father is abundantly clear. So why is it so difficult to accept that Jesus somehow proceeded from the Father? There is no way we can know how He proceeded, but the scriptural evidence that He did is very clear from all the references to the Father and the Son.

It should also be noted that in most of the apostolic letters, the 'Father' and the 'Lord Jesus Christ' are addressed as two identities within the Godhead.

Romans 1:7b *...Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

The same, or very similar phrase, is used in the introduction to 13 of the NT letters, with John giving a particular emphasis on Jesus being the Father's Son.

2 John 1:3 *Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love.*

These verses make it clear that the Father and the Son; and elsewhere – the Holy Spirit; are three identities within the Godhead. This is not in the least to deny the '**oneness**' within the Godhead, but rather, that we need to recognize **the distinctive aspects and roles of these three persons**. While there is some difficulty in understanding the meaning of 'Trinity' (The word is not found in the Bible), one thing is clear – there is only **one true God** who consists of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and they are '**equal**' in that they are of **one essence in terms of their nature, as the One True God**. But the Father, as the Head, still determined that each would have their distinctive functions, with Jesus being the Son.

But the question arises: Why did God need to have a Son?

➤ **Firstly, He wanted to display His glory to the world in the person of His Son**

John 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

Hebrews 1:3 (NIV) *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

➤ **Secondly, He wanted to demonstrate His extravagant love and grace in such a powerful way that people would take notice.**

John 3:16 (NASB) *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.*

1 John 4:9-10 *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

(Also John 15:13; Romans 5:8 & Ephesians 2:4-8)

What would grab our attention more than this: Jesus – the Son of Yahweh our Maker; the Lord Almighty; holy and majestic – laid down His life for our sake? He humbled Himself; left His throne in His perfect heaven; came to this sin-filled world as a simple human being; and served humanity. And then, on the cross He suffered the wrath of God as He was being punished for our sins. But He was

raised again from the dead by God's mighty power; and returned to His rightful place in heaven as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Herein we see on full display the extravagant love of God; beyond our capacity to fully grasp. In fact '*God is love*' (**1 John 4:8**). It's not simply that God is loving – He IS LOVE. God and love are synonymous. God's love as seen in the crucifixion of His Son Jesus, should lead us to stand in awe of His love and grace.

➤ **Thirdly, He wanted to provide a Saviour and Redeemer for mankind**

These aspects (plus others) of God's resolve to have a Son will be expanded on as we proceed through this chapter. But before we go there, there is another vital aspect of Jesus being a 'Son':

iii. Son of Man

This was the title that Jesus applied to Himself more so than 'Son of God'. The latter was used mostly by other people. 'Son of Man' appears over 80 times in the gospels, where it was used only once by someone other than Jesus.

'The Son of Man' emphasises Jesus' manhood; although of a unique order in comparison to mankind in general, as He was not born by human generation alone, but by the Spirit of God, and was declared to be of heaven:

John 3:13 *No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.* (See also **1 Corinthians 15:47**)

There are a number of categories where scriptures show the relevance of 'the Son of Man':

➤ **Christ's humanity, and His earthly work**

Jesus lived as a man, being raised in a normal family life, and working as a carpenter with his father Joseph up until the day that his earthly ministry began. From then on He generally referred to Himself as 'the Son of Man'.

Luke 2:7 *And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.*

Matthew 13:55 *Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother called Mary? And are not his brothers James and Joseph and Simon and Judas?*

Also **Matthew 8:20**

➤ **He displayed the nature of God His Father**

Although Jesus was born as a man, His seed came from God Himself (**Matt 1:20**); who sent Him for the purpose of revealing the very nature of God through His earthly work.

John 14:9-10 *Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works.*

Colossians 1:15 *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.*

➤ He lived in total submission to his Father

As a man, being indwelt by the Spirit of God, the glory of Jesus' Manhood was displayed in His absolute obedience and submission to the will of the Father; and He only acted or spoke as the Father led Him.

John 5:19-20 *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. (Also **John 5:30; 8:28f; 12:49f** etc.)*

➤ His sufferings and death

As Jesus progressed in His ministry, He suffered serious criticism by the Jewish religious leaders of the day because of the miraculous things He did, and the powerful words He spoke – all because of the power of the Spirit of God who lived within Jesus. The persecution He suffered from the Jews continued right up to His crucifixion, when as the Son of Man He bore our sins on the cross.

Matthew 20:18-19 *"See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death ¹⁹and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day."*

Also **Romans 5:6-8**

➤ His God given authority

Matthew 9:6 *But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"--he then said to the paralytic--"Rise, pick up your bed and go home."*

John 5:26-27 *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.*

Also **Matthew 11:27; 28:18; John 5:21-23; 17:1-2**

➤ His resurrection, and His second coming

Matthew 17:22-23 *As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men, ²³and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were greatly distressed.*

Matthew 16:27-28 *For the Son of Man is going to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay each person according to what he has done. ²⁸Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."*

Also **Matthew 10:23; 13:41; 24:27-31; 24:36-44; Mark 8:38**

iv. The Word

This sounds like an odd sort of a name, but it has very special significance. In the first chapter of John's gospel, he makes these profound statements:

John 1:1-2 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God.*

John 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

There is no doubt that 'the Word' was Jesus, as is verified in the **Revelation 19:13**; but the question is – 'Why was He called 'the Word'?' There has been much discussion about this, but the most acceptable explanation includes:

1. A 'word' is the means of communicating thoughts, concepts, and feelings; and as such, words, in the manner in which they are expressed, display something of a persons' character.

2. The Son of God was called 'the Word' because He was the medium through whom God the Father manifested Himself, and declared His purposes to the world. This is conveyed in verse 14 above, and also in verse 18:

John 1:18 (NIV) *No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

The author of Hebrews confirms this in his first few verses where he refers to God speaking to us by His Son, and that Jesus '*...radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God*', as the NLT version puts it in v.3

Hebrews 1:1-3 *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.*

Jesus – the Word – certainly communicated the nature of His Father God, and confirmed what God had already revealed of Himself and His purposes, including His means of salvation for humanity throughout the OT Scriptures. In fact this name for Jesus is of such significance that it is declared again in the last days before the return of Christ.

Revelation 19:11-13 *Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. ¹²His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and **the name by which he is called is The Word of God.***

v. Other titles applied to Jesus

So far we have addressed the most significant titles which the Scriptures apply to Jesus. And even though there are more, I won't give explanations as with the preceding titles; but rather just list some brief notes and scriptures for the readers to delve into.

➤ **The son of David**

Matthew 1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 22:42-45

➤ **My Servant David**

Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25

➤ **Jesus of Nazareth**

Jesus wasn't born in Nazareth, but He was raised there as a child, and was therefore recognized as coming from Nazareth – hence this title.

Mark 16:6; John 19:19-20; Acts 2:22-23; 10:38-40

➤ **The Great High Priest**

Hebrews 4:14-16; 6:20; 7:26; 8:1; 10:19-22

➤ **The Good Shepherd**

John 10:11-16; Hebrews 13:20-21; 1 Peter 5:4; Revelation 7:17

➤ **King of the Jews**

Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 2:2; Luke 23:3, 38; John 1:49; 19:12-15

➤ **King of kings and Lord of lords**

This title is used of both the Father (**1 Timothy 6:15**) and Jesus in **Revelations 17:14; 19:16**, where it speaks of the last days before Jesus return.

➤ The Branch

The 'Branch' who would sprout forth from Yahweh; bearing the fruit of righteousness; and coming to reign as king; executing justice and righteousness.

Isaiah 4:2; 11:1-5; Jeremiah 23:5; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12-13

vi. Conclusion to the range of titles applied to Jesus

There are many titles applied to Jesus, each having their own significance. And it is from these titles that we learn so much about Jesus – who He is, and what He has done for lost humanity – all because of His great love, compassion, and grace for such undeserving creatures – as I will often say, and as we all need to know. As we continue on, we will learn so much more about Jesus.

Take time to praise and worship

Hebrews 1:1-13 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

⁵For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"?

⁶And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

⁷Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire."

⁸But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom."

⁹ You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

¹⁰And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ¹¹they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, ¹²like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end."

¹³And to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?

d. Jesus – the Exact Representation of God's Being

Jesus was the image of the invisible God, presented in human form. One of the reasons why God sent His Son into the world was so that He could openly display His glory – although only to a limited degree – and also some of the essential aspects of His nature, even though only in human form.

Colossians 1:15 (NIV) *The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation.*

Colossians 1:19 *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell...*

Hebrews 1:3 *The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.*

2 Corinthians 4:4-6 *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

➤ **Jesus displayed the essential aspects of God's nature**

Because God's Holiness is so prevalent in the Scriptures, it is recognized as the most important aspect of God's whole being. Hence the subject of Yahweh's Holiness will be addressed in the next theme – 'What an Awesome God We Have'. Essentially, God's Holiness encompasses His Absoluteness and Majesty, and His absolute moral perfection which makes Him so distinct from all created things.

The moral perfection side of His Holiness includes His mercy, grace, steadfast love, faithfulness, forgiveness, etc. These aspects were initially conveyed personally to Moses when God revealed the significance of His name 'Yahweh'

Exodus 34:6-7a *Yahweh passed before him and proclaimed, "Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, ⁷keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty..."*

Then when Jesus came into the world, He openly displayed those wonderful aspects of God's Holiness to the world, as is seen in the scriptures below.

➤ **Mercy**

An equivalent word for 'mercy' is 'compassion'; also expressed as 'moved with pity', or similar. Jesus compassion is on full display in the Gospels – for those who were sick; demon possessed; lepers; paralytics; and the dead or dying.

Matthew 9:36 *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

(Also **Matthew 14:14 & 15:32; Mark 5:19; Philippians 2:7-8; Hebrews 2:17-18**)

The full extravagance of Jesus' compassion and love was displayed when He humbled Himself, came to earth, and suffered the punishment for our sins on the cross.

➤ Grace

'Grace' is the unmerited favour of God towards totally unworthy human beings; and was certainly exhibited in Jesus' life, and in His crucifixion.

John 1:14 & 17 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...*

¹⁷*For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

Luke 4:22 *And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth. And they said, "Is not this Joseph's son?"*

➤ Love

This is 'agape' love, the true meaning of which was explained in section e, p.17. 'Love' is such a major aspect of God's nature – 'God **is** love' (**1 John 4:8, 16**), and Jesus, the Son of God, because of His great love for lost humanity, gave up His all, and sacrificed His life for sinners such as you and me.

John 3:16 *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*

John 15:13 *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*

➤ Faithfulness

Jesus was totally faithful in doing all that His Father asked him to do, even to the extremity of suffering for our sins on the cross.

Hebrews 3:1-2 (NIV) *Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, whom we acknowledge as our apostle and high priest. ²He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. (Also **2:17 & 3:5**)*

Revelation 1:5 *...and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

➤ Forgiveness

One of the reasons for Jesus' suffering on the cross was to provide forgiveness for our sins. In the OT the blood of animals was shed for the forgiveness of sins, but now it is by the blood of Jesus.

1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (Also v.7)*

In addition to Jesus exhibiting these wonderful characteristics of God as revealed to Moses, Jesus also reflected other characteristics of God.

➤ Jesus displayed the power of God

Jesus performed many miracles in the sight of the people as a testimony that He came from God; and as a result many believed in Him.

John 2:11 *This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.*

Acts 2:22 *"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know*

Read also **John 3:2; 5:36; 14:11; 20:30-31**

There was a wide range of powerful things that Jesus did, and these will be addressed in 'What an Awesome God We Have, Part Three'.

➤ Jesus expressed the wrath of God against the self-righteousness and hypocrisy of the religious leaders

Mark 7:6-8 *And he said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, "'This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; ⁷in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' ⁸You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men."*

In Matthew chapter 23 Jesus was speaking strongly to the crowds and His disciples about the hypocrisy of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. Jesus pronounces seven 'woes' against them, repeatedly calling them 'hypocrites', and even 'snakes' and a 'brood of vipers'. These were serious condemnations against those who were supposed to be leading God's people according to the truth of His laws. But because of their self-righteousness and hypocrisy they suffered the wrath of God. Sadly, the craving for personal respect and honor from ordinary people has been a temptation for so-called 'ministers' in every age. But – would God not still be angry with such so-called 'ministers'?

e. Jesus – our Saviour

Every person born into this world has the need of a Saviour. We were all born in sin; separated from God and without hope; destined for an eternity in hell. **But** – because of God's great compassion for fallen humanity, He sent His only Son Jesus to be the Saviour for the world.

John 3:16-17 *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.*

1 John 4:9-10 & 14 (NIV) *This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. ---¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. (Also **Acts 4:12**)*

➤ **Jesus suffered the punishment for our sins on the cross, in order to save us.**

1 Peter 2:22-24 *He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

1 Peter 3:18 *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit...*

Read also **Mark 8:31**

The book of Isaiah contains a number of references to Jesus' suffering for the sins of mankind, especially chapter 53. I have included just a few of those verses here, as I will be addressing it more fully in section h. – 'The Suffering Servant'.

Isaiah 53:5-8 (NIV) *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and Yahweh has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ⁸By oppression and judgment he was taken away. Yet who of his*

generation protested? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was punished.

➤ **Jesus was made to be sin for us**

We simply cannot comprehend the level of suffering that Jesus endured. As the Son of God He was without sin and totally perfect in His whole being – and yet he Humbled Himself; took our sins upon Himself; and suffered the wrath of God on our behalf – He became 'sin' for us to make the way for us to enter into a right relationship with God. But praise God, the tragedy of Jesus being made 'sin' for us, became a blessing for all who receive His salvation.

2 Corinthians 5:21 *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Galatians 3:13 *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us--for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"--There is salvation in no one else.*

➤ **But death could not hold Him – God raised Him back to life**

Luke 24:6-7 *He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise."*

➤ **We are now saved by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus**

These most vital aspects of our salvation are emphasised by the apostle Paul in the book of Romans, and also Ephesians.

Romans 3:21-24 *But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it-- ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus... (Also **Romans 5:2 & Ephesians 2:8-9**)*

Praise God for the wonderful gift of salvation that He freely offers us because of His amazing grace; His compassion for lost humanity; and the extravagance of His 'agape' love for us. All of these fundamental aspects of God's nature were put on full display in Jesus, God's Beloved Son – throughout his time of ministry on earth, and most particularly as He suffered the punishment for the sins of all of us as He endured His crucifixion on the cross.

Take time to praise and worship

Glorious Day. A song of praise by Casting Crowns.

One day when Heaven was filled with His praises
 One day when sin was as black as could be
 Jesus came forth to be born of a Virgin
 Dwelt among men, my example is He
 Word became flesh and the light shined among us
 His glory revealed

Living, He loved me, dying, He saved me
 Buried, He carried my sins far away
 Rising, He justified freely forever
 One day He's coming, oh, glorious day, oh, glorious day

One day they led Him up Calvary's mountain
 One day they nailed Him to die on a tree
 Suffering anguish, despised and rejected
 Bearing our sins, my Redeemer is He
 Hands that healed nations, stretched out on a tree
 And took the nails for me

One day the grave could conceal Him no longer
 One day the stone rolled away from the door
 Then He arose, over death He had conquered
 Now is ascended, my Lord evermore
 Death could not hold Him, the grave could not keep Him
 From rising again

One day the trumpet will sound for His coming
 One day the skies with His glories will shine
 Wonderful day, my beloved one, bringing
 My Savior, Jesus, is mine

f. Jesus – our Redeemer

To 'redeem' means to restore; or to reconcile a broken relationship; to make acceptable something which was unacceptable; to give one's life as a ransom. Redemption normally involves a cost.

We were all sinners separated from God and without hope. But God sent His Son Jesus to make a way to restore us back to the relationship with God that He created us for, but which was broken by the sin of Adam and Eve. The price that

Jesus paid for our redemption was the punishment He endured for our sins on the cross. And by faith in Him, and repentance of our sins, we are redeemed.

Romans 3:23-24 *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...*

'Salvation' and 'redemption' are inseparably linked. Salvation saves us from our sins, and redemption restores us to our relationship with God. In the following verses the three main words applying to redemption are highlighted.

Ephesians 1:7-8a *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight...*

Matthew 20:28 *"...even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Colossians 1:21-22 *And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, ²²he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him...*

Also **Galatians 3:13-14; Ephesians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:13-14; Hebrews 9:12; etc.**

Praise God for His amazing mercy, love, and grace – that through His precious Son He should save us; redeem us; and make us alive in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:4-5 *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved...*

➤ **Jesus was the propitiation for our sins**

Romans 3:23-25 *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.*

Also **1 John 4:10; 1 John 2:2**

'Propitiation' is a word which is not understood by so many Christians. The short explanation of propitiation is – the appeasement, or turning away the wrath of God against sin which is an offense to Him, and thus removing the cause of alienation between man and God. You should see here the interconnection of 'propitiation' with the definition of 'redeem' at the beginning of this section on 'Jesus – our Redeemer'. It is also very much connected with this next section.

g. Jesus – The Sacrificial Lamb of God

A major part of the Old Covenant was the sacrifice of lambs for a variety of reasons, including food offerings as a pleasing aroma to Yahweh; peace offerings; sin or guilt offerings; and the Passover lamb.

These sacrificial lambs were symbolic of the ultimate One – Jesus Christ. The first mention of a sacrificial lamb was when God tested Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his only son Isaac whom he loved, and who was his only heir who would fulfil God's promise to make of Abraham a great nation. Abraham obeyed God, and as they were on their way to make the sacrifice, Isaac asked his father: *'... where is the lamb for a burnt offering?'* (**Genesis 22:7**) Abraham responded: *"God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."* (**Genesis 22:8**)

The ultimate fulfilment of God providing for Himself a Lamb, was as we know – not the son of Abraham, but the Son of God. Early on in the ministry of John the Baptist, he saw Jesus coming on the scene and prophetically announced:

"Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (**John 1:29**).

And the next day, *'...and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!"* (**John 1:36**)

As a result of hearing this, two of John's disciples turned to follow Jesus. One of them was Peter, who wrote in his letter:

*...knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. **1 Peter 1:18f***

Then in the Book of Revelation, the 'Lamb' who had been slain comes to the forefront and is worshipped – firstly by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders, then by innumerable multitudes of angels, and then by every creature in heaven and earth.

Revelation 5:6-14 *And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. ⁷And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. ⁸And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. ⁹And they sang a new song, saying,*

"Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

¹¹Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" ¹³And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, "To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" ¹⁴And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

The Lamb of God is truly worthy of such worship. He sacrificed His life for totally undeserving sinners as we all are, and suffered the punishment for our sins, as the Father laid all our iniquities on Him.

*⁵But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and Yahweh has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ⁷He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth. **Isaiah 53:5-6 (NIV)***

Oh the wonder of the love and grace of God and the Lamb!

h. Jesus – the Suffering Servant

The book of Isaiah contains a number of passages known as 'The Servant Songs', referring to Jesus' suffering for the sins of mankind: **Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-7 (or -13); 50:4-11; 52:13 through to the end of ch.53.**

These scriptures are of particular significance – in part because they were prophesied some 710 years or so before Jesus' crucifixion; but more importantly because of their striking portrayal of Jesus suffering on the cross as He endured the punishment for the sins of the world. I have included a few selections below, including all of chapter 53.

Isaiah 50:6-7 *I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting. ⁷But the Lord*

GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.

Isaiah 52:13-14 *Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up, and shall be exalted. ¹⁴As many were astonished at you-- his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind.*

Many Christians are aware of Isaiah 53 and its emphasis on the sufferings of Christ. But no matter how familiar we have become with this chapter, we need to refer back to it regularly, as it is a powerful illustration of what Jesus suffered on our behalf. Take time to meditate your way through this chapter, and let it sink more deeply into your heart.

Isaiah 53:1-12 *Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed?*

²*For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.*

³*He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

⁴*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

⁵*But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.*

⁶*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and Yahweh has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

⁷*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.*

⁸*By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?*

⁹*And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.*

¹⁰*Yet it was the will of Yahweh to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of Yahweh shall prosper in his hand.*

¹¹*Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.*

¹²*Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.*

This prophetic passage is very explicit and very humbling, considering what Jesus suffered on behalf of each one of us. Jesus himself knew that His mission was to serve; to give up His life as a ransom for many; and to suffer rejection by the Jewish religious leaders.

Matthew 20:28 *...even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Mark 8:31 *And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes and be killed, and after three days rise again. (Also **Mark 10:33-34; Luke 18:31-33**)*

The apostles also verified Jesus' humility and His willingness to suffer.

1 Peter 2:21-24 *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. (Also **Acts 17:2-3; 1 Peter 3:18**)*

Oh the extravagant mercy, love, and grace of Yahweh and His Son Jesus. The Suffering Servant was willing to go to such extreme lengths and suffer so much. But praise God that because of Jesus' submission to His Father; His willingness to become a servant to mankind; and to suffer the wrath of God on our behalf; He has been raised back to heaven to be seated at the right hand of the Father.

Ephesians 1:20-23 *...that he (God) worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

j. Jesus – The Way, the Truth, and the Life

John 14:6 *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*

Jesus is the only **Way** to be reconciled to the Father; He is the living **Truth** – he only spoke what is true, and everything about Him displays the truth about God and His ways; and He is the source and giver of **Life** – true spiritual life that comes only from God.

➤ He is the only **Way** that we can be saved from our sins and be reconciled to God our Creator

Acts 4:12 *And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*

1 Timothy 2:5-6 *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.*

➤ **Jesus is The Way into the Most Holy Place**

Not only is Jesus the only 'Way' by which we can be forgiven of all our sins and reconciled to God, but He is the 'Way' by which we enter the Most Holy Place – the presence of Yahweh Almighty; Maker and sustainer of all created things; Sovereign Lord of the whole universe; the Holy One who inhabits eternity. What an absolutely awesome privilege we have as a result of being united with Christ – we can come into the very presence of Yahweh Almighty!

Hebrews 10:19-22 (NIV) *Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.*

Under the Old Covenant, only the High Priest could enter through the curtain into Most Holy Place of the tabernacle, and he could do that only once a year to offer blood for the forgiveness of the sins of himself and the people. But that earthly tabernacle was only a temporary copy and shadow of the true heavenly tabernacle, which is the presence of God Himself. And by Jesus crucifixion '*...the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.*' (**Mark 15:38**)

Praise God for His amazing grace; that by the blood of Jesus we now have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place, and we can draw near to God with sincerity and confidence of faith.

Hebrews 4:16 (NIV) *Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

Ephesians 3:12 (NIV) *In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.*

Jesus is the 'Way' by which we can enter into the very presence of Yahweh; but when we do, we must still come with reverence and awe. Yahweh has not changed – He is still the same awesome God before whom we must humble ourselves as we approach His throne of grace.

All praise be to Jesus for laying down His life and suffering the wrath of God for our sins, in order to open the gates of heaven for us to enter in. And as I will say now and then, don't let your familiarity with the cross of Christ lead you to complacency. We unceasingly need to focus our attention on the Father and the Son as we consistently read God's Word and come to them in prayer.

➤ He is the Truth

'**The Truth** – the life, the purity, and the teaching of Jesus Christ was the most complete and perfect representation of the things of the eternal world that has been, or can be presented to man' (Quoted from Albert Barnes Commentary)

John 1:14 *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

1 John 5:20 *And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.*

(Also **John 18:37b; Revelation 3:7 & 14**)

Jesus frequently emphasized that He was speaking the Truth by prefacing His statements with: '*Truly, truly, I say to you...*' (For example **John 1:51**)

➤ He is the Life

John 1:4 *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*

John 5:26 *For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself.*

Also **John 11:25**

This 'life' is not referring to the natural life that we all possess from our birth; rather it is the spiritual life which comes from God through faith in Jesus Christ, and which is also called 'eternal life'.

1 John 1:2 (ISV) *This life was revealed to us, and we have seen it and testify about it. We declare to you this eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us.*

Jesus concisely explained the real significance of eternal life when He was praying with His disciples shortly before He was arrested.

John 17:3 *And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.*

As previously stated – what Jesus is saying here is that **'eternal life' is primarily about knowing God and His Son Jesus** – in the sense of personal relationship knowledge – this is the essence of eternal life; and anyone can have that 'life' by being united with Jesus.

1 John 5:11-12 *And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. (See also 1 John 5:20 on p.56)*

➤ Jesus is the Bread of Life

Jesus' dialogue about himself being the 'Bread of Life' is quite lengthy, and if you are not familiar with it I would suggest that you read **John 6:25-63**. But to highlight the main point of His message, I have included a few verses here.

John 6:48-51 *"I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. ⁵⁰This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."*

These words were somewhat confusing to the crowd of Jewish hearers, but Jesus went on to explain to his disciples: *'It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life'. John 6:63*

In other words, it was not Jesus physical body that we are to eat – rather there is a spiritual implication in what He was saying. Jesus said: *"...the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."* (**v.51**) Jesus sacrificed His body (His flesh) on the cross as He was being crucified for our sins. This is the 'bread' that Jesus gave, and now by faith we can 'eat' that bread – in other words, **we can partake of the life of Jesus**. There are two aspects of this partaking – **firstly**, by

faith in the sacrifice He made for our sins, and by receiving Him into our lives; and **secondly**; by 'feeding' on Him on a daily basis through His Word and prayer. In other words – we are '**partaking**' of Him as **the source of true Life**.

As with every aspect of Jesus' nature, we need to absorb the full significance of Jesus being the 'Way, the Truth, and the Life', and partaking of Him as the source of true life; and we should also be consistently giving Him the praise and honor due to Him for all that He has done.

k. Jesus – The Vine

Before Jesus was arrested for his crucifixion, He spent time with His disciples conveying many important truths to them, including the disclosure that He was the 'True Vine'.

John 15:1-8 *"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.*

⁵I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples.

While part of his message about the branches of the vine is somewhat confronting, the main point here is that as the Vine, **Jesus is the source of life and nourishment for the branches, which enable us to bear much fruit**. Jesus is the Vine, and we, as true believers, are the branches – grafted into the vine, and abiding in Him.

➤ Abiding in Jesus

To 'abide' means to remain in constant communion with Jesus; to remain united to Him by living faith; and to live in total dependence on Him. Jesus wants us to know that even though we cannot see Him, we are as closely connected to Him as the branches of a vine are connected to its stem. Our desire to know and love Him, and the energy to serve Him, will keep flowing into and through us as long as we 'abide' in Him.

One of the essential aspects of Jesus message about the vine was our abiding in Him, and He in us. The apostles had a lot more to say on this subject, phrasing the two sides of this union with us being 'in Christ', and Christ being 'in us'.

When by faith in Jesus we accepted him as Saviour and Lord, we were united with Christ – we were '*baptised into Christ*' (**Romans 6:3-4**); '*It is because of him (God) that you are in Christ Jesus*' (**1 Corinthians 1:30**).

In our being united with Christ, there is both a 'positional' and a 'life-giving spiritual' aspect:

➤ The positional aspect

Before we came to Christ, we were 'in Adam', who was God's first created being as the **representative of all humanity**. From a biblical perspective all humanity is considered to be 'in Adam', and it was because Adam sinned that all humanity have inherited that sinful nature resulting in 'death' – not just physical death, but more significantly, spiritual death, which is separation from God.

Romans 5:12 *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.*

But now, for all true believers in Jesus, **Christ is our new representative**. We are no longer 'in Adam' – we are now 'in Christ'; justified, made righteous in God's sight, and alive in Christ Jesus. That's our new position!

1 Corinthians 15:21-22 *For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Romans 6:23 *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

For Paul's more extensive explanation please read **Romans 5:12-21**

➤ The life-giving spiritual aspect

1 Corinthians 15:45-49 *Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.*

The 'last Adam' is of course Jesus Christ who was born of Mary – a descendant of Adam. But He was also born of the Spirit of God, and was

therefore without sin. And not only was He called the '*last Adam*', but also '*the second man*'. These phrases show us the intimate connection Jesus had with humanity. And what is of special significance there, is that as our 'representative', Christ was also the '*last Adam*' because He was crucified on behalf of all humanity **to bring an end to the power of sin** for all who believe in Him as their Saviour and Lord. (See **Romans 6:1-14**)

Hence He is the '*life-giving spirit*'; and because we were united with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, His life is now in all true believers, and in Christ we are a new creation.

2 Corinthians 5:17 *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.*

➤ **As we abide in Him, He will enable us to 'bear fruit'**

'...the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. (John 15:4)

We cannot bear fruit by ourselves – apart from Him we can do nothing – that is, nothing of spiritual value, or for the Kingdom of God.

'Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.' (John 15:5)

By the grace of God, all true believers are united with Jesus, and He provides us with everything we need to bear fruit, but we have to determine that we will remain in close communion with Him, and be true followers of Jesus. If we do, Jesus will remain in us to enable us to walk in His ways and bear much fruit.

There are a number of things that could be listed under the category of 'bearing fruit', and most of them will be addressed under the third title in this series of booklets – 'God's Purposes for Humanity'. But the most commonly known aspect of 'fruit' is the 'fruit of the Spirit'.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV) *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

These 'fruits' are the visible evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit in us as we commit ourselves to being led by Him. Praise the Lord that through the Spirit of Jesus who abides in us, He enables us to bear fruit that will bring glory to Him.

'I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.' (**Philippians 4:13**)

I. Jesus – our Wisdom, Righteousness, and Sanctification

1 Corinthians 1:30 *And because of him (God) you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption...*

By the grace of God He has provided His Son Jesus as the agency – the source within us – of true wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, – and also redemption, which we have already addressed in section f. of this chapter.

➤ Wisdom

'Wisdom' is an attribute of God that is so awesome. It is even personified in the book of Proverbs – perhaps especially in chapter 8. By His wisdom, and His unlimited power, God created the heavens and the earth, right down to the minutest detail. All of creation should cause us to stand in awe of the wisdom of God, and we ought to take time on a regular basis to pause, observe, and contemplate the wonders of God's creation.

Psalms 19:1-2 (NIV) *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. ²Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.*

Psalms 33:6-9 *By the word of Yahweh the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host.*

⁷*He gathers the waters of the sea as a heap; he puts the deeps in storehouses.*

⁸*Let all the earth fear Yahweh; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him!*

⁹*For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm.*

Proverbs 3:19 *Yahweh by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens...*

Also **Jeremiah 10:12**

In consideration of the above verses, along with the 'Wisdom' that is personified in Proverbs, it has been suggested that this 'Wisdom' is in fact Jesus. But what can be said with absolute certainty is that just as 'Wisdom' is a key aspect of Yahweh's very being, so it is with Jesus. **He is the Wisdom of God, and He possesses all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.**

1 Corinthians 1:24 *...but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*

Colossians 2:3 (Christ) *...in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.*

As the source of wisdom, Jesus guides us in the way of truth; and leads us in the path of true knowledge. And by His grace, God has united us with Christ who is the source of the true wisdom of God that we need to be drawing on continuously. Unfortunately we tend to rely on our own wisdom far too much, and therefore miss out on so much of what Jesus wants to convey to us, especially the true knowledge of God.

Praise God that Jesus has become to us the Wisdom of God!

Following Paul's statement in **1 Corinthians 1:30** about Jesus becoming wisdom for us, he adds that Christ has also become our '*righteousness and sanctification and redemption*'. Some Bible commentators suggest that the wisdom of Christ embraces those three characteristics, while others see them as added to the wisdom which Christ is for us because of our union with Him. But we can certainly say that it is by the wisdom of God that He has graciously granted to us righteousness, sanctification, and redemption as a result of being united with Christ. So let us glory in the Lord for what He has done for us through Christ – let us give all the praise and glory to Him who is so worthy!

➤ **Righteousness**

'...in Christ Jesus, who became to us ... righteousness...' **1 Corinthians 1:30**

The simple explanation of 'righteousness' is 'being in a right standing with God.' And because it is such a vital part of the Gospel, the book of Romans abounds with references to 'righteousness'. For example:

Romans 1:16-17 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*

¹⁷*For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."*

Not only did God reveal His righteousness through the Gospel, but He credits righteousness to those who believe in Jesus Christ. Whereas prior to believing in Jesus we were sinners, separated from God; now by faith in Jesus we are united with Christ who is the righteous Son of God, and who now abides in us. Linked to this is the fact that God has credited us with righteousness; placing us in a right standing with Him. Faith is of vital importance to God in this transaction, and must endure as we '*live by faith and not by sight*' (**2 Corinthians 5:7**)

Romans 4:4-5 (NIV) *Now to the one who works, wages are not credited as a gift but as an obligation. ⁵However, to the one who does not work but trusts God who justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness.*

Read also **Romans 3:21-22; 4:23-24; 2 Corinthians 5:21 & Philippians 3:9**

Oh the amazing grace of God, that He would credit us with a right standing with Himself when by faith we receive Jesus as our Saviour and become united with Him. But don't become complacent about this – as with everything that God graciously provides us with, we have to apply it to our daily lives as we 'walk *not* according to the flesh but *according to the Spirit*' (**Romans 8:4**), and we are to '*work out our salvation with fear and trembling*' (**Philippians 2:12**)

➤ Sanctification

'...in Christ Jesus, who became to us ... sanctification...' **1 Corinthians 1:30**

There are two aspects to sanctification:

1. The 'formal' aspect, signifying to consecrate; to set apart for, or to someone or something.
2. The 'ethical' aspect, signifying to make holy; to purify; to be morally blameless.

The words 'sanctification'; 'sanctify'; or 'saint'; are all derived from the root word for 'holy'.

So perhaps we could summarize a definition by saying that sanctification is being '**consecrated**' to God for the purpose **of serving him, conforming our lives to His purposes, and being made holy**.

And as with righteousness, so also sanctification becomes ours through our union with Christ, which is the result of having a genuine faith in Jesus Christ and all that He achieved for us through His crucifixion.

1 Corinthians 6:11 (NIV) *And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

All of those who have been sanctified in Christ are called to be 'saints'.

1 Corinthians 1:2 *To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:*

The implication from 'called to be...' is that there is a developing; or growing aspect of sainthood, which fits with the call to be holy as He is holy.

1 Peter 1:14-16 *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."*

1 Thessalonians 4:7 *For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness.*

Praise God for his great compassion, love, and grace; for it is '*...because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption...*' (**1 Corinthians 1:30**)

These are awesome aspects of the spiritual relationship we have with Yahweh through His Son Jesus, and we should never become complacent about them. God has gone to extreme lengths to redeem totally undeserving sinners back to Himself. It is all of Him! He is truly worthy of all glory and honor, and of our devotion to serve Him wholeheartedly with our whole being.

Romans 12:1 (NIV) *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*

m. Jesus – the Author and Perfecter of faith

Hebrews 12:1-2 *Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²fixing our eyes on Jesus, **the author and perfecter of faith**, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

The introductory 'Therefore' directly links these encouragements to the many inspiring examples of men and women of faith as seen in the previous chapter. This is why the writer encourages us to follow them as examples; to lay aside our burdens and the sin that so easily ensnares us; and to '*run with endurance the race set before us*'. And that 'race' primarily involves fixing our eyes on Jesus, because He is our ultimate example of a true godly life of faith. In fact He is '**the author and perfecter of faith**'.

In line with what the writer of Hebrews is saying, John also points to Jesus as the ultimate example of what our lives as Christians should look like.

1 John 2:6 *Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did.*

Jesus is the author; the founder, the initiator, and consummator of true faith. He is the One who lived a perfect life of faith in God, and is therefore our perfect example. The following examples are the very things we ought to be imitating:

➤ **Jesus knew the Word of God**

This became very apparent when Jesus frequently quoted the Scriptures in His conversations with His disciples and the crowds that followed Him; and in His confrontations with the Jewish religious leaders.

➤ Jesus was totally dependent on His Father to lead him by His Spirit

This is one of the most important aspects of Jesus' ministry, and is highlighted in the Gospel of John when Jesus points out a number of times that He only did or spoke as the Father led Him.

John 5:19 (NIV) *Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."*

John 5:30 (NIV) *"I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me."*

Read also: **John 7:16; 8:28-29; 12:49-50; 14:24,31; 15:10,15**

Jesus is our perfect example of always being dependent on God for all that we need to live a godly life. And after all – *'His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.'* (**2 Peter 1:3**)

The difficulty that we often face as we are learning to be dependent on God is that often we have to 'wait' for the Lord to respond to our requests or our needs. But we want things to happen in our own time, and that is so often – NOW! But the 'waiting' that God requires of us is often a test of our faithfulness to be dependent on him.

Isaiah 40:31 *...but they who wait for Yahweh shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.*

➤ Jesus prayed regularly

It is sometimes noted that Jesus spent all night praying; or that He left His disciples and went off to a remote place to pray (**Matthew 14:23; 26:36-46; Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12**)

➤ Jesus – Humbled Himself

Even though Jesus was the Son of Yahweh Almighty, and ruled the universe at the right hand of the Father, He was willing to humble Himself and come to earth for the primary purpose of being crucified for the sins of all humanity. Paul urged the Philippians to:

^{5b}*...have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸And being found in appearance as a*

*man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross! **Philippians 2:5b-8** (NIV)*

Jesus is truly worthy of all praise and honor for what He did for sinful humanity. It is all by the love and grace of God that He sent him in humble form to become the Saviour of mankind, and also to be an example for us to serve one another, as He encouraged his disciples.

Matthew 20:27-28 *...and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Read also **John 13:1-14; Hebrews 2:9-18**

➤ Jesus endured such opposition from sinners

Hebrews 12:3 (NIV) *Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Here we find another example of Jesus that we should follow as the 'perfecter of faith'. Jesus certainly suffered so much opposition, especially from the Pharisees and the Sadducees – the religious leaders of that time. Then the apostles of the early Church also suffered persecution.

Acts 5:41 *Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name.*

Read also **Acts 16:19-24; 13:49-50; 2 Timothy 1:8-12; 2:8-13**

Jesus, and the early Church leaders, are examples for us to follow:

2 Timothy 3:12 *Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted...*

Then in the Book of Revelation we read:

Revelation 6:9 *When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.*

Jesus is the author and perfecter of the faith; the One whose life example we should be following – by knowing the Word of God; by being dependent on the Father and the leading of His Spirit; by praying consistently; by humbling ourselves and serving others; and by enduring opposition and persecution from sinners. These are the main things that stand out in terms of following Jesus as our example, and no doubt there are other aspects of this as well. So let us keep these things in mind and continue to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith.

n. Jesus – The performer of miracles

One of the outstanding features of Jesus' earthly ministry was the numerous and diverse miracles that He performed; and there were two primary reasons for Him doing so.

➤ 1. To reveal His glory as the Son of God

John 2:11 (NIV) *What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.*

John 5:36 *But the testimony that I have is greater than that of John. For the works that the Father has given me to accomplish, the very works that I am doing, bear witness about me that the Father has sent me.*

See also **John 3:2; 6:14; 7:31; 9:1-3; 10:25; 14:11** etc.

The signs and miracles that Jesus performed displayed the power of God at work in Him in ways not seen before; thus revealing His glory as the Son of God.

In addition to the miracles He performed on many people, was His power over the forces of nature. He calmed the storm while He was in a boat with the disciples (**Luke 8:22-25**); He walked on the water approaching the disciples who again were in a boat crossing over the lake (**Mark 6:45-51**). When He got into the boat with them the wind ceased, and the disciples were utterly astounded.

➤ 2. To show His compassion for the needy in many ways

Matthew 9:35-36 (NIV) *Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

Matthew 14:14 *When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick.*

Matthew 15:32 *Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way."*

Jesus performed many miracles, and you may be familiar with them. But for your interest I have listed below, most, if not all, of the references to His miracles in the Gospel of Matthew.

Matthew 4:23-24; 8:1-3; 8:5-17; 8:23-33; 9:1-8; 9:18-33; 12:9-13; 14:14-33; 14:34-36; 15:21-39; 17:14-21; 20:29-34; 21:14.

Jesus' miracles openly displayed the power and compassion of God. They were certainly amazing and they captivated the attention of many people, some of whom acknowledged that He was from God. Jesus Himself confirmed that the miracles He performed bore witness that He was from God.

John 10:25 *Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name bear witness about me..."*

John 10:37-38 *If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me; ³⁸but if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."*

Perhaps we become so familiar with the stories of Jesus miracles that they don't have the impact on us that they should. Try to imagine what it would be like to be there at the time when Jesus instantly healed the lame and the sick, including lepers; and cast out demons. What about Jesus providing an abundance of food for thousands of people from five or seven loaves of bread and few fish. (**Matthew 14:13-21 & 15:29-39**) There is certainly a 'wow factor' about all the miraculous things that Jesus did. And this was the same Jesus who out of His compassion for lost humanity, totally humbled Himself, and suffered the punishment for all our sins on the cross, so that we as absolutely undeserving mortals could be saved from our sins and receive the gift of eternal life.

o. Jesus – our Strength, our Refuge, and our Deliverer

There are many scriptures pointing to God as our strength, our refuge, and our deliverer; and they can be applied to Jesus who is God in essence. This theme will be addressed more broadly in the 'Awesome God' booklets, but we are addressing it briefly here because it is a vital aspect of Jesus nature.

As the children of God we all have enemies – the flesh (our natural self-life), the world, and the devil. It is a major purpose of God for us to be overcomers of these enemies. This is also a topic that will also be addressed in the 'God's Purposes' booklets. But for now, this is just one of the well-known OT Scriptures speaking of God's power to deliver those who put their trust in Him.

Psalms 18:1b-3 *I love you, O Yahweh, my strength. ²Yahweh is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. ³ I call upon Yahweh, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies.*

➤ Jesus was given authority over every other power and authority

Ephesians 1:20-22 ...that (God) worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church...

Also **Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14-15 & 1 John 3:8b**

➤ He is our strength and provider of all that we need to be overcomers

Ephesians 6:10 (NIV) Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. ¹¹Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (Read right through to **v.18** in your Bible)

Romans 8:31-39 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? ³³Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died--more than that, who was raised--who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Read also **Ephesians 3:20-21; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5**

➤ Jesus is our strength in serving and in ministry

Not only is Jesus our strength over our enemies, but He also provides us with the strength we need to serve Him successfully in the ministry He calls us to.

2 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Also **2 Peter 1:3-11**

➤ What an awesome Saviour we have!

Not only has Jesus gone to such extreme lengths to save us from our sins and bring us into a personal relationship with Himself and His Father – Yahweh Almighty; but He has delivered us out of the hand of the enemy; He has provided us with everything we need for life and godliness, and He has provided us with the strength we need to be overcomers through the power of the Holy Spirit

p. Jesus – The Hope of Glory

Colossians 1:3-5 & 27 *We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, ⁴since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, ⁵because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel...*

²⁷*To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

'Hope' in this context is not a 'wishful thinking' hope – rather it is the certain expectation of the appointed day when God will take us to be with Himself for all eternity in His perfect heavenly kingdom.

'Glory' is the outstanding splendor of God's kingdom that we will one day experience – more glorious than we can even begin to imagine, and where God *'... will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.'* **Revelation 21:4**

Back in section k. we wrote about being united with Christ – He is in us, and we are in Him, and as we abide in Him we will bear fruit that will last. One aspect of that 'fruit' is the experience of the life of Jesus within us as we walk in close communion with Him – an experience that should consistently remind us of the 'hope of glory' – we have been born again to a living hope!

1 Peter 1:3-5 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

But as we all know, until that day appears, we will continue to suffer the temporary afflictions of life as an essential part of God's purposes for our lives.

1 Peter 5:10 *And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*

2 Corinthians 4:17-18 *For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

Titus 2:11-14 *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, ¹²training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, ¹³waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, ¹⁴who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

See also **Romans 8:16-19; Ephesians 1:15-18; Titus 1:1-2**

Hallelujah, what an awesome hope we have when the troubles of this world are over and done, and we go to spend eternity in God's glorious heaven.

q. Jesus is Worthy of all glory and honor

From all that we have observed up to this point in chapter 5, we should appreciate why Jesus has been highly exalted, and why He is certainly worthy of all glory and honor – for who He is as the Son of Yahweh Almighty; and for all that He has done in humbling Himself, coming to earth as a man, serving humanity, and suffering the wrath of God on behalf of all sinners as He was being crucified. But death could not hold Him – He was raised from the dead by the power of God, and has been highly exalted. Jesus is now seated at the right hand of the Father with authority over every other authority.

Hebrews 2:9 (NIV) *But we do see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

Also **Ephesians 1:20-22**

Philippians 2:8-11 *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Revelation 5:11-14 *Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, ¹²saying with a loud voice,*

"Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!"

¹³*And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,*

"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!"

¹⁴*And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

What a glorious day it will be when Jesus returns to bring history to a close, and every human being who has existed will see Jesus face to face. Then even those who have not believed in Him will know that Jesus is the One whom the Bible and all true believers claim Him to be. Every heavenly being will give glory to the Lamb who was slain; and every creature in heaven and earth will be humbled, and will also acknowledge the worthiness of Yahweh and the Lamb to receive all blessing, honor, glory, and might, forever and ever!

➤ **What an awesome Saviour we have**

Jesus – the Son of Yahweh Almighty, creator of heaven and earth, and everything that exists – the very image of God in human flesh – who came as the Word and the Light to reveal God to fallen humanity – our Saviour and Redeemer – the Lamb of God who was sacrificed for the sins of all of us – the Suffering Servant – He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life – the only 'way' that we can be redeemed – the only way by which we can now enter into the very presence of Yahweh Almighty – He is the Vine – the source of true life for us – He is our wisdom, our righteousness, and our sanctification – He is the author and perfecter of faith – the performer of powerful miracles – He is our strength, our refuge, and our deliver from the hand of the enemy – He is the hope of a glorious future for all eternity in the very presence of God. Jesus has been highly exalted as King of kings and Lord of lords, and is truly worthy of all glory and honor.

What an awesome day it will be when He returns to take us to be with Himself. What an incredible 'hope of glory' we have as children of God. Until that glorious day, all believers have been appointed by Jesus to proclaim the Gospel to the whole world and make disciples.

6. Proclaim the Gospel and make Disciples

a. Proclaim the Gospel

Surely, one would think that truly knowing God and His Son Jesus would motivate us to share the Gospel – the Good News about God and Jesus. It's the most wonderful message of salvation that we can pass on to others whenever we can. In fact – Jesus commissioned His disciples to preach the 'Good News'.

Mark 16:15-16 (NLT) *And then He told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone. ¹⁶Anyone who believes and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe will be condemned.*

The 'Gospel' message has been clearly explained in chapter 2, and is central to God's plan of salvation for mankind. It is a vital purpose of God for us that we share the Gospel with those we come in contact with, whatever part of the world we are in; and praise God that He enables us to do this by the power of His Spirit.

Acts 1:8 (NIV) *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

1Thessalonians 1:4-5 *For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction.*

As you share the Gospel with people, remember to share the wonderful blessings of becoming a Christian:

- We are saved from our sins
Acts 4:12; Romans 3:23-24; Ephesians 2:4-5 & 8; Titus 3:5-6
- We are redeemed – restored to a personal relationship with God
Colossians 1:13-14; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 3:18
- We receive eternal life
John 3:16; 6:40; 17:2-3; Romans 5:21; 6:23; 1 John 5:11-12
- We have a hope of a glorious future with Jesus for all eternity
Colossians 1:3-5 & 27; Ephesians 1:18; 1 Peter 1:3-4
- We have been filled with the Holy Spirit
Acts 2:4 & 38-39; 4:31
- The Gospel is the power of God for salvation
Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18-24; 1 Thessalonians 1:5

b. Make Disciples

Closely linked with sharing the Gospel, is **making disciples**. Matthew's record of Jesus' commission adds some important words to Mark's record (as on p.73)

Matthew 28:18-20 (NIV) *Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

The basic meaning of 'disciple' is one who is a follower of the one leading, or teaching them. More broadly speaking it involves believing the doctrines being taught; applying them to one's life; and imitating the example of the disciple-maker.

It also involves encouraging new disciples to be growing daily in their personal relationship with the Father and the Son by seeking God through His Word, with our hearts open to the Holy Spirit who will reveal the Truth; also by praying; sharing the Gospel with others; and of course making disciples.

One of the most challenging aspects of being a true disciple was given by Jesus to His disciples as He was teaching them:

➤ **A true disciple will deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Jesus**

Jesus emphasized this a number of times, and it occurs in all four of the Gospels; with the most perplexing statement being that we are to 'hate' family members if we are to be followers of Jesus.

Luke 9:23-24 ... *"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. ²⁴For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. (See also **Matthew 10:34-39; 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-38; John 12:24-26; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15**)*

Luke 14:26-27 & 33 *"If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.*

³³*So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.*

To 'hate' family members – even our own life, doesn't mean that we have a hateful attitude towards people, but rather that we are willing to abandon all the

things of life which can become a distraction from serving Jesus as His disciples – even close friends or family members. Please read through the above verses again and meditate on the seriousness of what Jesus is saying. Consider what it means to deny yourself; bear your own cross; and renounce all that you have!

➤ **Disciples will make disciples, and the Church will grow**

Jesus commission to make disciples is God's plan for the extension of his Kingdom on earth which is primarily the growth of the Church – 'the Body of Christ'. This is the 'Church' in the fullest sense of the word, and includes all true believers in Jesus Christ, no matter what part of the world they are in, or what denomination they belong to. Unfortunately, at least in western society, the 'Church' has become more of a religious organization with its own formats or traditions; depending on which denomination one belongs to.

However, we can praise God that in many countries, including those under persecution or poverty, the Church is growing rapidly. This is often happening in disciple-making or church-planting missions which usually result in smaller church meetings in people's homes.

Some of these organizations that I am aware of are: Heaven's Family; Appleseed Ministries; Amazima Ministries Uganda; Iris Global; and World Challenge. I would recommend that you look up these establishments on the internet to see what they are up to, and even give them financial support; which in fact is another way for you to actually be involved in the spread of the Gospel.

My prayer is that as we grow in our intimacy with the Father and the Son, we will appreciate His compassion for the lost; including the orphans, widows, the poor and needy; and we will make the right response by laying down our lives; taking up our cross; proclaiming the Good News of Jesus to the world; making disciples, who in turn will make disciples; and also giving to the poor and needy.

In conclusion, I would like to make the following recommendations:

1. Because of the huge importance of knowing God, I would suggest that you review this booklet again to absorb more deeply its significance.
2. Please continue with the next booklets in the series titled 'What an Awesome God We Have'.

All the booklets are accessible on the internet at - [**awesomemegod.site**](http://awesomemegod.site)

Please feel free to make comments or ask questions.

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