

**HOW THE DEVIL
DESTROYED
THE
YOUTH GROUP**

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Do You Want To Be Set Free? (John 8:31-36)

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INTRODUCTION

‘Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, “I find no pleasure in them” (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

THE IMPORTANCE OF TODAY

The older you get the faster time flies. When you are young you think you have plenty of time, but once time has gone you can't get it back. Therefore you need to live for God while you have the chance. Tomorrow is promised to no one. If you are not saved today, you are not saved. Only God knows how many chances He will give each person to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. Obviously, every person in this world comes to the point where it is their last chance. We never know when the “days of trouble” may come. We may get a sudden sickness or be caught in some terrible accident before the end of the week (Psalm 88:15). Today is the day of salvation!

Youth especially need to have a revelation of God as their Creator. As David was gazing up into the night sky, he was struck by the fact that the heavens declare the glory of God and the skies proclaim the work of His hands. This knowledge is available to every language and to all peoples of the earth, no matter what country they come from (Psalm 19:1-4). God's invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made (Romans 1:20). There is a Supreme Mind and an Intelligent Designer who caused the formation of the universe. You were created by God for a greater purpose and you need to know the Lord to walk in that purpose.

You will be blessed if you hunger for the things of God while you are still young. Don't wait until you are old and grey to become serious in prayer or in studying the Bible. Jesus was only twelve years old when He could amaze the religious leaders by His understanding (Luke 2:42-47). Those who are born into a Christian family have the example of Jesus to follow

even during their childhood. Christian parents are to teach their children the Scriptures (Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 3:14-17), so by the time they get to their teenage years they already have a solid foundation. If you are not from a Christian family, God's abundant grace is with you and now is your time to grow in the Lord.

START YOUNG AND GO FURTHER IN GOD

The best time to begin serving the Lord is in one's youth. Joshua was Moses' aid from his youth and ultimately he became Moses' successor (Number 11:28). Samuel was dedicated to God from his childhood and from a young age he developed into a powerful prophet and leader (1 Samuel 12:1-2). David killed Goliath while he was still a young shepherd (1 Samuel 17:33). Obadiah was a fervent worshipper of the Lord from his youth and he was the one who saved the lives of many prophets from the evil woman, Jezebel (1 Kings 18:12). Jeremiah felt that he was only a child when God called him, but God gave him the words to say (Jeremiah 1:4-10). Timothy was a young man set apart for ministry (1 Timothy 4:12).

Unfortunately, just as young people can become on fire for God, they can also be lead astray. Those who harbour bitter resentment in their hearts and refuse to cry out to God are warned that they can die during the time of their youth (Job 26:12-14). If a young person curses his father and mother, he is in great danger of dying while he or she is still young (Proverbs 30:17). Solomon saw a young man, possibly still in his latter teenage years, who was being seduced by a prostitute (Proverbs 7:7). The sins of a person's youth will catch up with them if they don't make peace with God (Job 13:26; Psalm 27:5).

Every person has to make the choice: to be for God or against Him. Those who last the distance in their walk with Christ are those who develop a solid and intimate friendship with God. It is as if their hearts are united with His and their eyes are opened to see the world as He sees it. From a young age I wanted to go far in my walk with the Lord and that is one reason why I am now encouraging all youth to do the same.

Young men and young women are to see visions, have dreams and to prophesy (Genesis 37:1-11; Acts 2:17-18). My hope and prayer for you is that the word of God will become like a burning fire in your heart and that you will become a bright shining light. Go for the high call of God!

'I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, O Sovereign LORD; I will proclaim your righteousness, yours alone. Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvellous deeds' (Psalm 71:16-17).

PART I

**THE
PROBLEM**

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A YOUTH GROUP THAT WAS ALIVE!

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

OVERCOMING PEER PRESSURE

I went through a period when I was fifteen years old where I started to read the Bible a lot more seriously. For some months God had been stirring my heart to get closer to Him. A short time later my parents sold our farm in the countryside so we could move into a large town called Whangarei. Since the sale of our farm would be settled in the middle of the year (1990), at the beginning of that year I went to live with my grandparents for schooling in a smaller town called Dargaville. Mid-way through the year everything was finalized and my parents shifted to Whangarei. They tried out a few churches and found one they really liked. It was meeting in Forum North, in the Captain Bougainville theatre of the local town council building. God was moving mightily there, especially among the youth.

I had been involved in other youth groups, mainly the one in the farming community where I was brought up. That place was called Ararua. My local church had sought to provide fun and games and a Christian witness. The non-Christian children would come along and frequently there would be a short salvation message. There was also a Christian witness in the local primary school through a Bible-in-schools class once a

week. From my observation the children from the non-Christian families didn't seem to be able to open their hearts fully to God, but the seed was sown. You never know how later in life that seed can bear fruit.

My teenage years were in the late eighties and the early nineties. Even then the peer pressure was tough. I had a desire in my heart to live for God and there were certain things I knew were evil, yet the majority of my age group seemed to blindly follow the crowd. They started smoking on the bus or behind the sheds at school. One of the girls said to me, "You don't smoke now, but as soon as you get a girlfriend who smokes you'll start smoking." I couldn't stand smoking at all. There was no way I was going to start that bad habit, even if the most beautiful girl in the world handed me a cigarette. Then the boys started bringing pornography on the bus and that was when I had to really go in a totally different direction. I chose to go for God and for that I did face some times of loneliness.

I will make a comment about smoking: never start! I have a good friend who has helped me a lot and joined with me in ministry. His biggest problem is that he smokes like a chimney. He came to me saying, "I had a dream where I saw a white sheet with a black spot on it." I replied to him, "That's not very hard to interpret. The white sheet is your life and the black spot is your cigarette smoking. God is telling you to give up smoking." Realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), so take care of your health and don't turn your lungs into a greasy, slimy, polluted, vacuum cleaner bag. There is a saying, "Smoking doesn't take people to Hell; it just makes them smell like they have been there." Unfortunately, there are probably people who have never turned to Christ because smoking was their idol and consuming addiction. Therefore smoking has taken them to Hell.

Even though I was pursuing God, the devil had chains of darkness wrapped around me and I had been under spiritual attack for a long time. As a youth I couldn't comprehend the spiritual battle I was in. In my early teenage years I had been very suicidal and through this the devil had almost destroyed

me. It was as if a stronghold of death had been built up in my mind. Whenever I then faced a problem I felt like taking my life. I was so close to committing suicide that it is only by the grace of God that I am alive today. At my worst point I held a gun in the middle of my forehead and pulled the trigger, thinking it was the end. Thankfully I was spared and a couple of years later I discovered there was a greater mission and purpose for my life.

ENCOUNTERING GOD

The breakthrough for me in my walk with the Lord didn't come until I was sixteen years old, but for some time before then I was hungering for God deep in my heart. I was on a different path than the youth around me, but I didn't know how to breakthrough. It was God's provision and God's blessing that my parents sold their farm. At times they have had second thoughts about it because they could have become financially better off if they had not sold at that time, but for me the spiritual benefits have far outweighed any financial loss. Sometimes a change of environment is what enables us to have a change of heart and to become more open to the Lord.

I used to go to be with my parents most weekends and going with them on Sunday morning it was church like I had never experienced before. It seemed as if the church was in a state of revival and especially the youth group. Many people were being touched by God. The presence of the Lord was mighty and in July 27th, 1990, I truly encountered the Living God. My life was turned around and changed. It seemed so sudden that I was in this new church and then I was at their youth group camp, crying and crying the most I had ever cried at the front of the first night's meeting. Unexpectedly a wave of God's power went through my whole body like an electric shock. This was the breakthrough I had so desperately needed. It was as if I had now found my true purpose, which was to know God and to make Him known.

I experienced something of the glory of Jesus and for the first time came into a personal knowledge of the reality of the

Holy Spirit. My mind was awakened and my heart was overwhelmed. I then had a greater desire to continue seeking God with all my heart and to find more of Him. I would rush home from school to read the Bible and then I couldn't wait that long, I had to take my Bible to school. I could sit down and pray for hours no problem. God became so real. I had never doubted the existence of God in my whole life, but now I had come into a far greater awareness of His reality. I began to tell a few people about how God's power had touched me and step by step God was able to lead me into His work.

I was blessed that God set me apart for Himself. Going to a youth group that was alive and was having a move of the Holy Spirit played a great part in bringing me into God's will and calling for my life. I don't know what God would have done to reach me if my parents hadn't shifted and I hadn't joined that youth group. Maybe we will get to discuss these things about our earthly lives in the kingdom of Heaven, or maybe we'll be too occupied in sharing the happiness of our Heavenly Father. God is so great! He is such an awesome and wonderful being! What a blessing it is to know Him!

Around this time there was a small Christian group of about five to six students in the school. We had a science teacher who was trying to do something and one time I remember he played some videos about the reliability of the Bible, but not many people came. God has His small remnant of faithful followers even when the majority are too busy to be concerned. We would meet together once a week at lunch time and then three of us started to have some prayer meetings for the salvation of the school. That's the way to go. Even if you are only two or three, Jesus will be there with you (Matthew 18:20). Find a few believers and pray for your school.

A PERSONAL "RELATIONSHIP" WITH JESUS

I well remember the time when an older lady stood up at our school assembly and said to all the students, "You need a personal relationship with Jesus Christ." Most of the students started laughing because they took the word "relationship" in

the wrong way. They didn't have any idea what it means to have a relationship with Jesus. If the lady had quickly explained why it was wrong to lie, steal, swear, fight, smoke cigarettes or drugs, drink alcohol or disregard the holiness of marriage, the students may have come to realize why they needed God to save them. They laughed at the gospel because they weren't under any conviction of sin. Once a person feels they are lost in their sins and drawing near to the gates of Hell, then the death of Jesus upon the cross for their salvation will make sense.

You don't get true conversions without conviction of sin. One problem can be that many who are brought up in Christian families pretend to be good when they are not. Instead of having a powerful conversion to Christ, they go to church to appease their parents. If the youth group has good music and good looking girls, there will be guys who go around just to look at the girls. They will hear the word of God being preached and they may be persuaded to raise their hands to give their lives to Jesus, but unless the rocky ground of their hearts is broken up they will eventually be overcome by temptation and go back to the world. Unfortunately they might take a nice Christian girl down with them. Do you know the Lord? It's very easy to say, "Yes." But do you truly know Him?

OVERCOMING THE DEVIL IN ONE'S TEENAGE YEARS

I was blessed to have Christian parents and I was blessed to have had a breakthrough when I most needed it. But I was also serious to make my walk with the Lord a life-long commitment. I haven't been perfect and I have failed God here and there, but overall I have sought to walk the talk and to pursue God's righteousness. I know that my character is not up to the amazing standard of Jesus and I have a long way to go, but I am never turning away from such a wonderful path. Sad to say, I know so many who have started the Christian life and were touched by God, possibly more powerfully than I was, received more spiritual gifts and in the natural were more talented, but they never went on with the Lord. The teenage years are a

crucial time and that is why it is so important that youth overcome peer pressure and get the victory over the devil.

Youth will drift away from God as they grew older if there is no depth in their walk with the Lord. At a certain age (13-18 years) they can look like on fire Christians. Then the real test will come. What kind of conversion have they really had and what are they really committed to? Will they go on with God or drift away? What are their true colours? I'll be talking about people who were my friends, some of them I was closer to than others, but unfortunately so many hardened their hearts. One by one, the devil picked people off like an expert marksman and sniper. That is why we have to hold up our shield of faith in the right position and then we will not be hit by the devil's precision shooting (Ephesians 6:16). Perseverance through difficult times is a necessity.

I joined the youth group in a time of revival. Miracles were happening, gifts of the Holy Spirit were flowing and demons were coming out of people. How could it be that with all this going on, so many would later fall away? You would think there was no problem. This is where the danger lies, especially when things are going so well outwardly. Where God is moving and people are being saved, that place becomes the devil's number one target. The forces of evil are real and so is the battle for our souls. We have to prepare the believers while they are still believers, because after they fall away it can become twice as hard to get them to come back. We cannot take the salvation of anyone in the youth group for granted, no matter how wonderful a Christian family they come from. Each person needs to develop their own personal walk with the Lord.

WALKING IN THE HIGH CALL OF GOD

After God's power touched me I began to witness and share the gospel, mainly on the streets on Fridays nights. The call of God burned in my heart. It took me a little while, but not long, to realize that God was actually calling me to be an evangelist. In 1991 I felt God speak to me that I was to leave school and begin travelling around New Zealand preaching the gospel. I

was seventeen years old and God went before me, opening the way. Pretty much I've been a full-time evangelist since that time. I did have times of having to work in secular employment but even then I had a constant ongoing ministry. From starting with nothing, God has taken me around the world to preach the gospel to hundreds of thousands of people in many nations.

I was doing missionary work in Pakistan when I actually got the burden to write this book. I couldn't sleep one night until the early hours of the morning. It was if God had taken me back to this period in my life between 1990 and 1994, and then He was showing me person after person who had begun the Christian life but they had fallen back. I was shocked and that morning I started writing. I felt such a burden that I also sent emails to a couple of youth pastors about this concern. In my youth group days the devil was able to gain victory over too many and this should not happen. There are many obstacles and temptations that cause people to be pulled off the path of righteousness, but we must train, equip and encourage believers to overcome.

The devil's work in destroying youth groups is very subtle. It doesn't happen suddenly, but over time the true depth of a person's walk with God will become evident and so often the foundation of their spiritual life is not on the rock but on the sand (Matthew 7:24-27). Hopefully many come back to the Lord later in life, but we can never be assured of that unless we have prevailed in intercessory prayer, and even then how God answers our prayer can be totally different to what we expect. The problem is that people can look like strong believers while there are areas of darkness in their hearts that they are not willing to deal with. Every believer has a high call from God, yet many tragically turn away. Are you willing to let God do a deeper work in your life?

'See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. As has just been said:

“Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion” (Hebrews 3:12-15).

2

WHAT WAS GOING ON BEHIND THE SCENES?

'Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body' (1 Corinthians 6:18-20).

GUITAR BUDDY

By the time I was eighteen I felt God calling me to give up playing the guitar. Before that time I had been a guitar fanatic. I then realized that I was not called to be a worship leader, but I was called to be an evangelist. My first friends in the youth group were a couple of guitar players and we used to meet together to jam away and make a lot of noise. One of them was a Maori guy who had a smile a bit like that of David Tua (famous New Zealand boxer). For a couple of years he was my very good friend, until we drifted apart and he started living with a girl outside of marriage. He joined the army and had this ongoing relationship outside of God's perfect will.

One time when our youth group went down to Auckland to a big youth rally and the preacher was proclaiming the world of God, my guitar friend looked at me and said, "One day we'll be up there doing that." I agreed with him because the call of God was mighty upon our lives. He had been touched supernaturally by God just as I had. In those days we used to

have outreach meetings with a Scottish evangelist called Tony Walker. I loved those meeting because he moved in the word of knowledge and in the gifts of healing. As people were being prayed for they were falling to the ground. My friend said, "There is no way I'm going to let anyone push me over. I won't fall down." He went forward for prayer and God knocked him flat. He was determined not to fall, but God was there.

I bumped into my old friend sometime later out of the blue. He was doing some training and he happened to run past the back area behind our house. There was a park there and some back roads. I happened to be walking home that way and saw him, so I called out to him and he stopped and talked. Knowing that he was backslidden, I immediately reminded him about how God's power had touched him so mightily and about how Jesus had called both of us to be preachers. I could tell he wasn't interested. His mind was with the army and his heart was with his girlfriend, who I think was probably by then pregnant. He should have got married, done things right and continued walking with the Lord. Too often people leave God behind because they want to go their own way.

HANDSOME GUY

Right from the beginning when I joined the youth group there was a handsome guy and one of the really beautiful looking girls who were boyfriend and girlfriend. They always seemed to be together. I didn't know them so much then, but I bumped into the guy many years later while I was doing witnessing late one Friday night. He was partly drunk, but he remembered me and wanted to talk. We went and sat beside a shop and talked for quite a long time. I straight away started mentioning the miracles we had seen and why was it he had become backslidden? I also asked him if he ever married that girl he was always with and if he was still with her? His attitude totally surprised me. He said, "I went to the youth group to look at all the girls. I broke up with that girl and we were never married."

I tried to call him to come back to Christ. He was a nice person in many ways, but he was totally deceived and full of

the wrong attitudes of the world. Again, here was a person who never went on with God because he would not honour the covenant of marriage. He was a handsome looking guy and he could attract very good looking girls, but he thought he could do whatever he wanted. I gave him a few tracts to put in his pocket and then we went our separate ways. Since then I've never seen him again, so I don't know where he's at. I do know that without deep repentance he won't return to a true walk with God.

NICE TALKER

There was a guy who I found really nice to talk to. He was a good talker and you could have good conversations with him. He was softly spoken and was coming to the church for a long, long time before he committed his life to Christ. He was actually in the church before our family arrived, so I thought he must have already been a believer. I remember the day he gave his life to the Lord. Normally there were quite a few people making commitments to Christ every week, but this particular Sunday morning he was the only one. The pastor acknowledged how he had been coming to church for a long time and what a great thing it was that today he was taking the step of faith to be "born again" and to enter the kingdom of God.

I was thinking in my mind, "This is a going to be a real, strong, lasting commitment to Christ. He has really counted the cost and thought over things deeply. He has taken the word of God into his heart and today is the day of his salvation." I was happy for him. Sad to say, this ideal conversion was not to be. He started dating one of the girls in the youth group and they started spending more and more time together. Eventually they left the church and were living together outside of marriage. I spoke to him some time after that and he didn't care that he had dropped his walk with God.

SEEKING BUT NOT FINDING

Towards the beginning of 1992 I had spent about two and a half months at a prayer school, which was a bit like a Bible College, but it was devoted to prayer. We had an around-the-clock 24 hours a day prayer chain, as well as our classes and our group prayer meetings. There were not many students so each prayer slot was for two hours. My time was often 1-3 in the morning or 3-5 in the morning. That place taught me to pray and I was doing a lot of prayer. When I came back to Whangarei I had my own little prayer meeting on Sunday afternoons and a few young men joined. A number of young men would come to the house to pray with me at different times.

One day a person came to me and said, "I want to have an all night prayer meeting with you. I need to breakthrough with God." I knew he was having some struggles with his faith but I didn't know the cause. At that time I was living in a caravan and he came and we had an all night prayer meeting, just the two of us. At some point he shared with me that he was so thankful that he did not run off with a certain married woman in the church, as she had wanted him to go with her. She was a lady in the church who always wore short dresses. Her husband was one of the helpers in the church and he seemed to me to be a good man of God, but who knows what was going on behind the scenes in the family. But then my friend admitted that he had been committing fornication with one of the girls in the youth group, whom he had been dating for some time.

We prayed and we prayed. I was still in my teenage years and while I was on fire for God and witnessing all over the place, looking back I have to say that at that time I did not have sufficient wisdom to be able to counsel those who were older than me who were fornicating. I don't think he was coming to me for any counsel anyway. He just wanted to pray. He seemed to go through a time of struggle and then he joined a big Christian outreach team and I thought he was going to get the breakthrough in his walk with God. Unfortunately that outreach team was having sins at the top, which I will mention later. The last time I saw my friend his heart was hardened. He

said to me, "You have your beliefs and I have mine." He had let go of Christ.

THE DEMONS BEHIND THE WOMAN

There was a big combined church outreach coming to my city and I volunteered to be one of the prayer counsellors. We were then going to have separate prayer rooms for those who responded to the call of salvation, those who needed healing, those who needed deliverance from demons, and those who were seeking to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. I ended up being a prayer counsellor in the area of deliverance. Miracles had taken place in the meeting, an evangelistic message had been preached and many people responded. The room for those who needed deliverance from demons was full so I, along with other counsellors, started praying for people.

The first person in front of me said, "I have all these demons attacking me. They're attacking my mind and they're attacking my head." He sounded serious. A couple of us started praying for him. He took a few deep breathes and claimed that he was feeling a bit better. I didn't feel very satisfied but there were so many other people in the room we just had to move on and pray for someone else. It must have only been two weeks later that I found out that this young man ran off with the married lady from our church who always wore the short dresses, that is, the woman who had almost seduced my other friend. I couldn't believe it. He knew the demons were attacking him, but he ran off with that adulterous, demonized woman.

THE PRESSURE BEHIND THE SCENES

My friend was one of the actors in a big outreach team that was travelling throughout the country. I went to the show and I was impressed. It was professional. I thought, "Wow, so many people are going to come to the Lord through this. This is what we need to save the country. It is excellent for reaching the Maori young people, and those with no Christian background are going to be touched." I was at the first show and the young

people flocked to the altar. I saw the show a second time further down the country and again many young people were seemingly coming to the Lord. But there were some serious things that were not right that eventually showed up. Many on the team were having all kinds of relationship problems. We have to respond by constantly teaching young people the wisdom of God.

When the show ended, so did the marriage of the head couple who were running the outreach. They had come to our place for dinner and seemed like they were set to save the world. The devil attacks those on the front lines, but sometimes people give in to the devil too easily. One of the main actors on the team was also doing the main salvation message and the altar call at the end of the show. After the show ended he became a bit of a hit singer in the secular world, but one of his hit songs was seductive with all these dancing bikini women. He compromised with the world. My friend, as I have already said, turned away from the Lord. We can share with people, but we can't change them. Our only hope is deep conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11). The outreach team crumbled because they still needed to save themselves.

SOME THOUGHTS ON WHAT WAS GOING WRONG

My personal opinion is that there was something lacking in my home church, causing us to produce shallow converts. There were manifestations of the Holy Spirit. There was a revival going on in the youth group where the power of the God was at times undeniable. There were incredible deliverances from demons where the forces of evil were being exposed. The preaching in the church was evangelistic, entertaining and lively. The love of Jesus was there and Christ's arms were open to seek and to save the lost. What was missing then? People were coming to the cross to get forgiven of their sins but they were not getting on the cross and being crucified with Christ so they could overcome their sins. There was a lack of ongoing repentance that could bring people into the real

purposes of God for their lives. Instead there was compromise and a lack of depth in God's word.

Preachers often mentioned sin generally in their messages, without giving a clear cut explanation of what sin is so that the bondages could be really broken. There was a quick "put up your hand and accept Jesus" without a deep charge of heart in regard to the wickedness and evil that was still within the person's heart. New converts were not coming into a true fear of God where they could shake and tremble at the reality of eternal judgment. I heard one preacher say, "To fear God means to love God." I didn't think that sounded right, so I did a Bible study on what it means to fear God. It means to literally tremble before God's awesome holiness and to be afraid of the One who has the power to throw you into Hell (Isaiah 8:13; Luke 12:4-5). Hell is a literal place of fire and torment (Revelation 20:10,15), yet many refuse to believe it.

God's love and God's wrath are completely different attributes of God and we need to understand both in order to have a balanced walk with the Lord. Those who fear God depart from evil (Proverbs 8:13; 16:6). The person who doesn't fear God sins away and doesn't feel the enormity of their danger. There is a lack of the fear of God in any church that continues to have even a hint of sexual immorality going on (Ephesians 5:3). One lady who was living a sinful life would frequently tell me that she loves God, but she would never tell me that she fears God. She had accepted a false version of Christianity that meant she didn't have to be crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20). Believers do need to learn about the terror of God's wrath, but very few preachers seem to be willing to teach this.

People would easily get saved in the church meetings and a few years later you would see they had easily fallen away. There was a lack of depth in the conversions. An unsaved person could sit in church week after week until finally being moved to acknowledge that he needed Jesus. Then, when he gets a girlfriend, instead of waiting for marriage he would run off with her and leave the church. What kind of conversion is that? The Bible says that everyone who confesses the name of

the Lord must turn away from wickedness (2 Timothy 2:19). A person cannot be saved without repentance. That includes repentance from sexual sins. It seems that the sin of fornication and adultery was never properly broken from the people's hearts. Outwardly it was, but inwardly it wasn't.

'Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off' (Romans 11:22).

DEMONS IN THE CHURCH

'Put on the full armour of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms' (Ephesians 6:11-12).

TROUBLE IN THE WORSHIP TEAM

One of the older guys had been away at Bible College, so I had not seen him for some time. He had been one of the key musicians in the worship team. After church Sunday morning he suddenly came up to me and began talking. He mentioned that God had given him a major deliverance and victory from hardcore pornography. I presumed that throughout the early days when he was on the worship team he was carrying that addiction. Praise God for His mercy and grace to deliver and save. I know that God is very patient, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Yet we do have to be careful what is going on in people's lives when they are standing week after week at the front of church leading worship.

I had another friend on the worship team. I was not so close to him, but I did stay at his place once or twice. He was a nice guy and I remember seeing him many times holding a big Bible in his hand. While on the worship team, it was discovered that he had got a girl pregnant. They were quickly married and then they quickly left my hometown. I hoped they went on with God, but while writing this I received news from someone who had recently met up with him, telling me that he was away from the

Lord and he was also away from his wife. People can easily walk away from God for the next twenty years because of what they did in their youth.

You would be shocked how many worship team members and leaders are fornicating or committing adultery while standing at the front of the church. Sometimes it is that they have been in a fornicating relationship quite recently, had some shallow repentance, but they are right back at the front of the church because they are a good singer. Remember that there is something going on in any girl's life if she is wearing very skimpy clothes. What I'm concerned about is how often do demonic spirits stand with these people in the front of the church? Yes, God has one of His angelic beings over every church, yet if there is a foothold for the devil then very often you can find an angel on one side and a demon on the other.

Not so long ago I visited a big church in Auckland. It would be considered to be one of the most alive, happening churches of the nation; top music, top lighting and top musicians. As I came to the entrance door to the foyer, a group of teenage girls walked past me with their skimpy singlets on and their partly showing breasts. As I went into the church I saw more of the same. My first impression of the church was that there was a spirit of lust in the place and this is what is considered to be one of New Zealand's top churches. The speaker for the day was a top youth preacher. He was an excellent comedian, but no call to repent and walk in moral purity. This is why many New Zealand churches are outwardly alive but spiritually dead (Revelation 3:1).

In my youth group days I saw a star singer only three times: The first time was when I visited a church in Auckland and he was leading the worship there. I thought, "Wow, what a powerful voice he has!" His singing was impressive. The second time I saw him was at a big youth rally which our youth group went to. Again he was the main worship leader and it was a great concert. The third time I saw him was on the TV in a talent show competition. He was singing a secular song about an irresistible woman and my opinion of him instantly dropped. He was travelling around singing praise and worship

songs at youth rallies, but when given an opportunity to sing on television he chose a worldly rubbish song. That's what people do when they're after worldly fame. If I was his pastor I would have called him to step down from being a worship leader until he decided whether or not he is really going to follow Jesus.

DEMONS SNEAKING BACK IN THROUGH THE WINDOWS

One of my favourite worship leaders in those days was a young guy from the youth group and he used to often lead the main worship on Sunday also. He was an anointed worship leader, but on the other hand I have never seen someone with so many demonic manifestations and need of long ongoing deliverance sessions. He was from a non-Christian family. One time he fell to the ground and while the demons were twisting his body, he was foaming at the mouth. The most evil demonic voices were speaking through him as the frothy saliva was going all over the place. Demon manifestations like that are due either to the fact that the person has been molested as a child or there are major ancestral curses of witchcraft, or Freemasonry, or some other occultic power.

I didn't know what was going on in this person's life, but it was obviously serious. Sometimes he would go into some kind of heaviness and hardly be able to stand. Again the youth leaders would be rebuking the devil. This seemed to go on week after week. I found it strange that one moment he could be the anointed worship leader of the whole church and the next a seriously demonized man. What was going on in the spiritual realm? What were the church leaders permitting to happen in the spiritual realm? What I feel overall was that the demons were being kicked out the front door, but they were sneaking back in through the windows. There was a definite move of the Holy Spirit and an anointing for deliverance, but the demons continued to keep coming back seven times worse (Matthew 12:43-45).

MORE DELIVERANCE NEEDED

One time I needed a lift home after a youth service. A young lady offered to drop me off and I thought there would be no problem. When we got to the house, she started pouring out all this flattery about me. I felt like I was being attacked by a demon spirit. I knew that before becoming a Christian she had been involved in witchcraft and was used to seeing demonic visions. When she became a Christian she continued to have visions. Were they from God? Maybe, but you've got to have discernment. Never follow someone blindly because they claim to have visions, dreams and an open heaven for hearing God's voice. I was so relieved to get out of her car.

There was a guy from my class at school who started coming to the youth group, so that would have been late 1990 or early 1991 just before I left school to join a ministry team. He was another person who would go into a state of heaviness and many times the youth carried him off to a separate room so he could have more intensive deliverance prayer. I'm not saying that he was a homosexual, but he had a few tendencies that made him act towards that way. When I tried to talk to him at school he didn't seem overly interested to speak to me. I was glad that he was slowly being delivered, but a short time later he stopped coming to our church.

A young guy who had been a Jehovah's Witness started coming to the youth group. He was full of demons and they came out of him with a roar. He needed a number of deliverance sessions. Anyway, I was very impressed with his testimony of how God had delivered him from the spiritual deceptions of a false cult. I had to preach in a certain church, so I took him with me and gave him an opportunity to share his testimony before I gave the main message. After that I was away from my hometown for evangelistic purposes. When I returned I found that he had totally backslidden due to meeting a girl and moving in to live with her without marriage. Another disaster!

I had another friend from the youth group who I tried hard to help. He would come to church for a while and then I wouldn't see him for some months. Then he would be back again. Then he was living with his Jehovah's Witness girlfriend. My aim in

writing this book is not to knock people but to save them. My prayer for some backsliders is that God will grant them, in His mercy, an opportunity to repent on their death-beds. Otherwise their chances of getting into Heaven could be slim. It seems that so many people refuse to walk the path of righteousness and instead choose the wide road to destruction.

HEALED PHYSICALLY BUT NOT SPIRITUALLY

At a certain period, the youth pastor was also running a weekly healing meeting. One lady came into the church through being healed. I knew her already because I had seen her while doing my nightclub evangelism. She became a Christian and outwardly she was on fire in the early days, but slowly her true colours were seen. She went to nightclubs to get men. She went to pubs to get men and now she went to church to get men. Where did she find a man? In the church!

I knew the young man who was her victim. He was relatively new to our fellowship. He had a Christian background but had backslidden before due to drinking alcohol. It wasn't too long before he was having a relationship with this lady. The relationship didn't last long but both of them left the church. I still bump into her occasionally. She always says, "Hi," and then she's in a hurry to go in case I start witnessing to her. Recently I gave her a copy of one of my earlier books, so I am still believing for her salvation.

HALF-HEARTED REPENTANCE

An elder brother was a good Christian and he was coming to our youth group. He brought along his younger brother a few times but he was uncommitted. He was another handsome guy who was a womanizer and I would often see this younger brother around the nightclubs. Whenever I shared with him he was open and he listened well, but his problem was women. He had a couple of girlfriends and then he seemed to find the one he really wanted to settle down with. I didn't see him for a few months and then he came up to me outside the nightclub

saying, "I've started going back to church and my fiancée and I are going to get married." He was not going to my home church but to another one.

When I asked him about his situation he said to me, "The pastor said it doesn't matter if I live with my girlfriend because we are going to get married very soon." I told him straight away that I don't agree with that. He had lived an immoral, sinful life and following Jesus is not about half-hearted repentance. It's about making Jesus your Lord! I don't think he listened to me. He wanted a compromised version of Christianity where he could stay living with his girlfriend because he was looking at getting married.

We have to be careful that we don't give wrong advice. The church the younger brother was willing to go to had some teenage pregnancies going on and one of the youth I often bumped into was having huge, emotional, moral and spiritual problems and she needed some major deliverance. Nevertheless, I saw a vision of Jesus over their church, so that's why I don't want to be overly judgmental. God showed me that He was at work among them and I rejoice in the patience and mercy of God to give His people time to repent. There are times when God extends His love and gives people more chances to be saved. Praise God for His eternal love. Yet we also have to be clear that if a person is living in sexual sin we cannot compromise the truth; they have to repent and refrain from all sexual contact until they are married.

I had another friend who was going to that same church. He came from a totally non-Christian background and seemed to get solidly saved. I had known him at school in my early teenage years, but unfortunately we didn't get along so closely back then. When he became a Christian we immediately had a link. He was working as a security guard, so I would go and spend some time with him while he was on the job and we would discuss the word of God together. I gave him my Bible studies on the subject of Hell and they helped to put the fear of God into him. We also had to discuss the sin of fornication because he had a girlfriend who was going along to church

with him. They were eventually married in the church and shifted to Australia. I trust that they are both going on for God.

COMING TO THE PLACE WHERE JESUS IS REALLY YOUR LORD

My work is that of an evangelist, which is to get people saved. This is not an easy job because I want fruit that will last the test of time (John 15:16). It's one thing to convince a person to accept Jesus as their Saviour; it's another thing for them to come to the place where Jesus is really their Lord. Quick decisions for Christ are often unripened fruit and therefore they are in desperate need of strong teaching and discipleship. What we want is powerful, life-changing, deep conversions from which there is no backsliding. The new believer needs to go from strength to strength (Psalm 84:7). It is not just how a person starts a race that counts but how they finish. There is no victory in the Christian life unless you run with perseverance. Every person who quits the race is disqualified.

The reality of this life is that there are many obstacles, many dangers and many traps that can easily cause believers to fall away from God (Hebrews 12:1-3). If they keep their eyes fixed on Jesus they will get up from where they have fallen and keep running towards the finish line. But if the person grows weary and loses heart they will lose sight of the cross and give up in defeat. They will say that the Christian life is too tough for them and they will seek an easier path. They will leave the straight and narrow road and instead they will take the broad road that accommodates their sin. They will not be willing to accept the Lord's loving correction and rebuke. They will harden their hearts and refuse to listen to His voice. Yet even then Jesus will still be standing at the door of their hearts knocking.

'Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me' (Revelation 3:19-20).

4

NEEDED: TRUE PROPHETS!

‘If a liar and deceiver comes and says, “I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer,” he would be just the prophet for this people! (Micah 2:11)

A TOTAL HATRED OF BEER

I was very serious about my evangelism work. I would never touch even the slightest drop of alcohol. My personal opinion is that if a believer wants to drink alcohol they can be a nominal believer and they might just make it somewhere near the back of Heaven, but they cannot enter the Most Holy Place – the Holy of Holies (Ezekiel 44:21). Social drinking is the way of the world and the way of backsliders who have been affected by the sinful culture of their nation. Many Christians will disagree with my stand against social drinking, but if your spiritual eyes were opened and you could see into Hell, you would see millions upon millions of people who are in eternal torment because of alcohol. Do you want to appease the world by holding a beer in your hand? Beer is totally out if you want to go deeper in God. Beer is for those who are perishing (Proverbs 31:6).

You might be wondering why you are not making more progress in your spiritual life. This could be the reason: you are thinking that it is alright to drink now and again at social or family gatherings. Have you read what the Bible says about drinking beer? My advice to anyone who wants to go to a deeper level of intimacy with God is that they should totally give up all drinking of alcohol. In the Old Testament this is what the Nazarite vow was about, so that a person could draw

closer to the LORD (Number 6:2-3). To enter the Holy of Holies alcohol has to go. Throw your beers away and be free of it.

People in the church my brother goes to in Auckland will probably laugh at me for preaching against alcohol. After the Sunday evening service they can go down to the pub to have a pizza and a beer. I was staying with my brother and I went along with them. One of the believers saw that I didn't have a beer in my hand, so I told him that I don't drink. He looked at me and said, "What? You don't drink beer?" The way he said it sounded as if you're a big sinner if you don't drink beer. Show me one verse in the Bible that allows you to drink beer (if you can) and I'll show you ten that show you have been deceived by the world. For many years I have called non-Christians to give up drinking beer, so shouldn't I also call Christians to give it up?

BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS

Now I'll share the story of one of my special friends, who for a while was staying with me in our caravan. He was backwards and forwards between the church and the world. His downfall was alcohol and his worldly friends who supplied him with lots of it. A number of times he was at the front of the church crying out to God for salvation, but it didn't seem as if God was answering his prayer. There are many people in the Bible who confessed that they had sinned but the LORD did not save them because they went straight back to the same sin (Exodus 9:27; Number 22:34; 1 Samuel 26:21; Matthew 27:4). People can pray for forgiveness and still go to Hell. God knows those who are coming to true repentance and those who are not.

I used to beg and plead with him to give his life to the Lord. I played cassette tapes to him about a person who had seen the torments of lost souls in Hell to try and awaken him out of his deep slumber. I used to pray with him and tried to teach him how to pray. While he was staying with us he couldn't drink, but the drinking demons were calling him. He left our place and over the years he continued to have some months in the world drinking and then some time with different believers.

Sometimes he was praising the Lord and speaking words from the Bible; other times he was a staggering drunk.

I went to visit him one evening and he was listening to blatantly satanic, heavy metal music; he was drinking alcohol and he was worshipping Satan. He might have been too drunk to understand the extent of what he was saying, but he was in the devil's grip and that is what alcohol does. He would stagger around outside the nightclubs and he seemed to enjoy the attention that he gained from his friends. I really wanted to see him saved, so I wasn't about to give up. I kept praying. Looking at his life I saw what a battle it is against Satan for the salvation of one person's soul.

I had to go to another town for evangelism work and I was living right beside the church, so I would often go into the church to pray. I was really crying out to God for my friend for some time and suddenly I felt a release and that God had answered my prayer. More than sixteen years later and I'm still trusting God for the complete answer to the prayer of that day. Most of the Maori young men who came to the Lord never fully repented from drinking alcohol and therefore they were soon pulled back into this sin. These Maori boys preferred to come to church than to have much involvement with the youth group, but maybe that was because they were still going to parties. Alcohol is followed by immorality. Without repentance they will start having partners with no thought of marriage, so fornication becomes their way of life and they destine themselves to Hell.

WASTED SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Coming back to my nightclub evangelism, I would often count the number of Christians I had seen in church last Sunday who were going out to party and to have a good time. They certainly weren't going out to be a Christian witness. Sometimes I would count five believers, sometimes seven believers. Sometimes there would be none, so I wondered who was preaching last week. Anyway, there was a girl in the youth group who God used to speak to me in a powerful way. She probably had no idea, but she gave me a word of knowledge

and prophecy that was an answer to something that no one could know about except God. She was one of the young ladies who was frequently giving prophesies and I held her in high esteem as a woman of God.

One time I was talking to her about her gift of prophecy and she said, "Yeah, God has also given me the gifts of healing. Many people I lay my hands on get healed." And she started telling me some healing stories. She was another person that I then didn't see for a long time. I presume she went off to university. When I next saw her she was with her non-Christian friends going to the nightclubs to party. Their thinking is that you have to party, you have to drink alcohol and you can't live without it. I only had a short time to talk to her before she went off with these friends, but she spoke as if she was backslidden. I tried to encourage her to get back to God because she had been such a great blessing to my own life. I tried to encourage her not to let the devil rob her of her spiritual gifts.

I don't think anything I said had any effect. The next time I heard something about her was that she was married (that's a good thing), with three kids, but was going nowhere spiritually. Whether that story was true or not, I don't know. I hope that God will give her another chance when she is older and wiser to once again minister in the power of the Holy Spirit and to speak powerful words on His behalf. Those who have been in youth groups from the ages of 13-18 can find that suddenly so many things change when they hit 18. Maybe they're about to go to university or into the work place. This is when their true colours are going to start to show. Are they going to take a stand for God, even if it means some opposition, or are they going to drift? The next generation faces the same challenge.

DISCIPLINED IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH

There was a guy in the church who was a bit older than myself, but I had talked to him quite a bit over the years. There was a girl in the youth group and she was among the older girls, so I didn't have much to do with her. She got pregnant before marriage and now it was openly known what these two

had been up to. The head pastor, fearing that this would have bad repercussions among the youth, decided to have some kind of repentance and disciplinary action before the whole church. The young couple were quickly married, but they had to come to the front of the church and be led in an open repentance prayer. Did it work? No it didn't! Talking to the man some years later he said he was able to accept it, but the girl wasn't able to handle it at all. Their marriage soon fell apart.

Shortly after this the youth pastor's daughter was found to be pregnant before marriage. This couple were also quickly married, but they didn't have to make a confession of sin before the whole church. Maybe the leaders realized that it doesn't work or she was given leniency because she was the pastor's daughter. My opinion is that a public confession has to come from a person's heart, not from any leader's request, otherwise the person will later on become bitter about how the situation was handled. The youth pastor's family were a good and true Christian family and I'm sure their daughter and her husband got the help needed to bring them through to true repentance.

DELUDED FALSE BELIEVERS

I was at a youth meeting where there was a guest youth pastor from Auckland. It was held in our church offices, which were at the time on the same street as the nightclubs (Vine Street). He gave a really good message and his youth group was on fire. They were outreaching all over the place. Fifteen years later I made enquires about what this youth pastor was up to and you're not going to believe it, but he was out of ministry due to sexual misbehaviour. But in this meeting his message was gripping. I can't remember what the message was about but it got me stirred up at the time.

After the meeting three girls in front of me were chatting away. One of the girls began to say, "When I was a non-Christian I never committed any sexual sins, but after I became a Christian that is when I first committed fornication." I couldn't believe what she was willing to say with no appearance of

shame after such a powerful meeting. But was it a powerful meeting? Or was it all hype? All this great “rah, rah” singing for the youth and then a passionate preacher, but where was the repentance? I thought to myself, “What kind of Christian has she become?” A totally deluded, false one! People have got to realize that they can’t fool around like this and think that they are Christians. We are living among a wicked generation.

Later, when contemplating the situation of the youth group, I came to the conclusion that Satan had stationed a big demon over the church. The Holy Spirit was constantly casting the smaller demons out, but the main stronghold over the church was not being pulled down because the church was a Sardis church. Jesus said to the church in Sardis, “I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but you are dead” (Revelation 3:1). A pastor is going to find it very hard to listen to any person who will try to say this when supposed revival is going on, the church is growing in numbers and manifestations of the Holy Spirit are taking place. But that can be the very time when Satan has his biggest foothold in the church because of a lack of true and deep repentance.

IMPROVE THE PREACHING

The church leaders were true, sincere men of God, seeking to do their best. I did hear that the head pastor had said to the youth pastor, when the youth group was at its peak, that they have to be so careful because Satan will try to destroy this great work. What they didn’t realize was how Satan had long ago infiltrated their ranks. It’s easier to look back and learn from our mistakes than to realize what mistakes we are making today, but somehow we have to learn. It’s very easy for a youth ministry to become a music and social scene rather than laying down the right foundations through the word of God. But on the other hand the word of God is being preached and it’s up to the individual person to apply it to their life and actually live for Christ. On the Day of Judgment no one will be able to blame their youth pastor for their place in the lake of fire.

We have got to continue to work on finding ways to lead the young people into true and deep repentance, so they can encounter God and have a close personal friendship with Him. Just mentioning the word “sin” during the sermon is not enough to bring the needed conviction. You have to be specific about what sin is otherwise people are confused. Is it a sin to have sex before marriage or not? The problem is that many Christians are not studying the Bible. They don’t know what the Bible says about many subjects unless it is being preached from the pulpit. I had one backslidden Christian say to me, “Where in the Bible does it say that we can’t have sex before marriage?” When I gave some answers he said, “Where does it say that Adam and Eve were married?”

We as preachers need to be constantly improving our preaching. We need to be able to give the youth the answers they need. There was a guy in the youth group who went off to university. When he came back in the holidays he was given an opportunity to share. He spoke of how he had stood for Christ in one of his classes, even though most of the class had laughed and ridiculed him. When I had an opportunity to talk to him a few years later I found that he had completely backslidden. At what point he fell away I don’t know. But many believers haven’t been properly equipped to move out of a Christian environment and into a world that wants to tear Christians to pieces. All the singing and clapping and fun times doesn’t prepare them. We’ve got to have preachers who can expose the dangers of alcohol and sexual sins. What we need in this land are the true prophets who can rebuke sin with power and authority.

‘Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart’ (2 Timothy 2:21).

5

RESTORATION OF THE BACKSLIDER

“Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you. Consider then and realize how evil and bitter it is for you when you forsake the LORD your God and have no awe of me,” declares the Lord, the LORD Almighty’ (Jeremiah 2:19).

A FELLOW EVANGELIST

I now come to the story that involves my first evangelism partner. I met him in God’s perfect timing shortly after the power of the Holy Spirit transformed my life in 1990. He was not from my hometown but from further up north in a place called Kerikeri. His family were non-Christians. Most weekends he would come down to Whangarei and he was attending the same youth group. He was around the same age as myself and he had the heart of an evangelist. He played a very crucial role in helping me enter the ministry of street evangelism.

Near to the centre of town there was a park with some flower gardens and a small man-made waterfall. We would meet there for a time of prayer and then we would go into town to witness to whoever we would meet. There was also a Christian drop-in centre at that time called “Final Faze,” where the gospel was being shared. When I first started witnessing to people I was terrified, nervous and often felt weak. I needed someone to go with who could help me overcome that initial fear of man. It didn’t take long and I was into it, and have never looked back. I found with this young evangelist that he really sought to step out in God and operate in the word of knowledge. The words he gave seemed to be correct. There

were times when we prayed for people and demons manifested.

I then joined a Christian team which took me around both the North and South Islands of New Zealand. Whenever I came back to my hometown I tried to meet up with my friend again so that we could continue our street witnessing; a couple of times we opened our Bibles to try and do some street preaching. One time I can remember reading from Romans chapter one about the wrath of God (Romans 1:18-32). I thought the only passages that would get anyone's attention outside a nightclub would be the hard Scriptures about God's coming judgment upon the world.

I think my fellow evangelist was still having family problems at this time and I remember him going for counselling. He came from that saying, "They showed me that I've been doing witnessing with wrong motives." I was thinking, "Oh no, is he going to stop evangelizing?" We don't need less evangelism; we need more evangelism. Very few are willing to do it. For my part, I never had to question if I had the right motives. Jesus commanded me to do it so I was doing it. The only time I really questioned my motives was when it was reported to me that the pastor had said these words: "The way Matthew is going he could run off and start a cult." That hit me hard, so that Friday evening I sat under a tree and prayed about what to do. I didn't get any word from God, but I walked straight into town and had an incredible night of witnessing to people. I felt assured that God was with me.

Sometime later I went to the pastor in his office for prayer because of my next mission. He prayed and said he had seen a vision of a rugby scrum. I was putting the ball into the middle of the scrum and I was a leader. I didn't ask him where the rumour of me being a cult leader came from. I just left it. I admired him as a great man of God and false rumours soon fade away. But when you preach certain messages you're going to get people speak against you. Recently I had a phone call and the person was saying on the phone, "People are going to hate you." When I was doing evangelism outside the nightclubs I often heard of non-believers who were speaking

behind my back. More often they would just do it straight to my face. It is harder though when it comes from Christians and I had a stage when a small group of believers were openly saying that I was wrong in the way I was doing my evangelism.

DO NOT LET DRIFTING AWAY FROM GOD TO SET IN

At some point my friend from Kerikeri went to live down in Auckland and I began to see less of him. When I did see him and asked him about his walk with the Lord he talked as if things were a bit up and down. It was as if he was in defeat mode and only just hanging in there. Around this time I began to do a number of outreaches in Auckland, on Queen Street, because that was the busiest place. On one of these trips I had spoken with quite a lot of people and given out my tracts and booklets, and then I came across my old evangelism partner. Talking to him he sounded as if he was in a backslidden way. Then a young lady walked past and he was watching her every step. When she had gone a little bit past us, all he could talk about was girls and I could see that he was really slipping. It seemed that evangelism was being replaced with girl-chasing.

Around this time I was standing outside McDonalds and out came a man from my home church. He was holding hands with a younger girl who was not his wife. He was shocked to see me. I gave him a quick little word from God before he walked off. Thankfully he broke up with that girl and his marriage seemed to remain intact. I continued to do different evangelism things and I totally lost contact with my friend. I had no idea where he was until 2008 when I had to go to Kerikeri to try and organize an outreach meeting for evangelist Bill Subritzky. That meeting never eventuated, but I did meet my friend's son, and his father and step mother, who were now full-on committed Christians. They told me where he was. He was in the Gold Coast of Australia and he had recently been released from prison. They gave me his phone number and that is how I renewed our contact.

There was a tragic side to this story, but the good news is that my friend has been restored to God. He got married after

his release from prison and his heart is back with the Lord. The bad news is that for almost fifteen years a promising young evangelist was himself backslidden and pulled deeper into the darkness. The Bible says that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10). One lie that appears to be a quick and easy way of making money is to sell drugs. This young preacher had fallen so low and became so deceived that he had been on the streets selling drugs.

Far, far away from God, he began to pull in a lot of money through the drug scene. I was told that when he was picked up by the police he had \$15,000 Australian dollars on him. He had started to live a lavish lifestyle but it all came crumbing down with a seven year prison sentence. He only served less than half that time, but thankfully, like Jonah in the belly of the large fish, my friend cried out to God in repentance and found that God gave him a second chance (Jonah 2:1-3:1). When the prodigal son found himself in utter desperation in a pig pen, eating the pods of the pig food, he came to his senses and thought of returning to his father (Luke 15:15-18). The pig pen experience is a good thing, for it gives a person a chance to repent. Thankfully, my friend repented, but there are still multitudes of backslidden believers who are out there in the world, eating the muck of the pig food.

WHAT CAUSES CHRISTIANS TO BACKSLIDE

There was a guy and girl in the youth group who both seemed to be very spiritual and strong in prayer. They eventually married and had a couple of children, but their relationship didn't last; the young lady having now remarried a number of times. As a young couple there was a mighty call of God upon their lives. What went wrong? It seemed that the guy put the pursuit of money ahead of his family and his thinking became focused on how to get rich. It is written, 'People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.

Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs' (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

The love of the world and the love of money have caused many people to fall, but sexual sins are the most dangerous temptations that cause people to backslide. As visionless, lukewarm, non-developing, prayerless Christians get older, many of them will face relationship problems and opportunities to compromise, even though they may appear to be happily married. In this book I have been focusing on how sexual immorality, particularly the sin of fornication, causes young Christians to backslide as they leave their teenage years and move into their early to mid twenties. The attitudes they have developed are taken with them into adulthood and areas of compromise that may have started small quickly enlarge.

In 1994 I concentrated on evangelism in a particular town, as well as doing other outreaches. A young married couple with young children appeared to be developing a wonderful Christian family at that time. Sixteen years later I bumped into the man. He was no longer with his wife or children and his heart was hardened towards anything that related to the word of God. I sought to share with him and offered him a powerful testimony to read, but he refused. He had not allowed the Lord to deal with the wrong attitudes and issues in his life that were blocking him from partaking of God's holiness. The end result was that he became another bitter backslider, lost and unteachable.

I bumped into another man from that same town. His marriage was on the rocks and he was off to the nightclubs; I suppose to drink away his sorrows or to look around for another woman. His heart was still somewhat open to God. Around that time I was visiting a small Pentecostal fellowship that was meeting in a local hall. The previous "fill-in" minister was a sincere believer, an overworked businessman and a Sunday morning pastor. Taking on the responsibility of being the pastor of this small fellowship almost caused him to have a burnout. The new pastor seemed to be a very prayerful man and I joined with them for a short time because I wanted to

pray. We had some good prayer meetings and there seemed to be a heart for revival.

One Sunday morning the struggling Christian with the broken marriage happened to come to this same church. I was praying for him and hoping that through this morning's message there would be a breakthrough in his life. The pastor stood up and began preaching on "tithing." During his message the pastor literally said these words to the congregation, "You should be giving your money to me!" That was the heart of his message and I thought, "How sad to be preaching the wrong message at the wrong time."

The end result was that within a short period of time that small fellowship closed down and is no more. My personal opinion is that the church was destroyed and the people were scattered because the pastor wanted more money for his own ambitions and needs. A man who was at the crossroads of his life and was settling his eternal destiny heard a message about how the pastor wants your money. When I next saw him he was no longer attending church. I hope he is walking with the Lord today, but it is essential that there is powerful preaching from the pulpit every week. The three "g"s that cause men to backslide are gold, glory and girls. We have to overcome.

WHAT CAUSES BACKSLIDERS TO RETURN TO GOD

Just as there are many ways in which an unbeliever can be first brought to the Lord, there are a variety of means by which the heart of a backslider can be awakened to the error of his or her ways. Crying out to God for His mercy upon those who have fallen does have a tremendous effect. Intercessory prayer has saved many lives. Moses' prayers spared a whole backslidden nation from God's righteous judgment and this gave them another opportunity to walk with the Lord (Exodus 32:9-14). Sad to say, they continued to provoke God to anger and were ultimately destroyed, yet God is very patient before judging the backslider, especially when they are being upheld in prayer.

To come back to God those who drifted often need to accept God's disciplinary action. King David was forgiven of the terrible sins of adultery and murder, yet he had to pay a high price as God disciplined him with many judgments (2 Samuel 12:10-12). God raised up a great fish to deal with Jonah's attempt to flee from the LORD (Jonah 1:17). The prodigal son found himself dirty, smelly, rejected by the world and forgotten, but not forgotten by his father (Luke 15:20). Backslidden believers need to recognize the discipline of God in their lives. Problems and difficulties are often God's warning signs. Backsliders often come back to the Lord because they realize that God's love and forgiveness is still available to them. God wants them to be saved and He continues to draw their hearts back to Himself. Backsliders need to accept God's love.

We have to know Jesus as our Saviour, but also as our Restorer, who can restore the backslider to a right relationship with Him. We must learn from our mistakes, but it is even wiser to learn from other people's mistake so that we don't go off the right path. The backslider must humble himself before the Lord and acknowledge that he has been wrong. He must refuse to blame anyone else and he must take responsibility for his own actions. Adam tried to blame his wife and Eve tried to blame the devil (Genesis 3:12-13), but they were soon removed from God's presence. We must be honest before God and not seek to cover up our sins with our own filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). We must plead with God for mercy, receive His love and continue to build a deep and eternal friendship with the Saviour of the world.

REPENT AND RETURN TO THE LORD

No matter how far you have fallen, you can be restored. That is why I have written this book. I don't want to see anyone lost. I want to see people saved, healed and transformed from within, so they can press on to victory. My friend ended up in prison and from there he came back to the Lord. Jonah met with the Lord while praying from within the belly of the large fish. King David wrote some of his greatest Psalms and prayed

some of his greatest prayers as he was under the strong hand of God's discipline due to his sin. A person encounters the Lord in proportion to their level of repentance and faith. Many people try to fill their emptiness with other things and that is why they are not filled with God's Spirit, yet those who truly repent are filled with God's love.

A person doesn't stay in their youth for very long. There is nothing that we can do to hold back time and the years will soon tick away. Whatever problems, wrong attitudes and besetting sins a person has in their youth will be taken with them into adulthood. Unless they are willing to let God deal with these faults they will carry them into their old age. It is so important to let God deal with you while you are young and then you will gain stability. Many backslide because they lack stability in their home life and in their devotional life. They are up and down, up and down. It is so important that new Christians learn how to pray and become strong in prayer for the rest of their lives.

The way of wisdom is to never leave the Lord's path, yet if you have fallen and in stubbornness have gone your own way, please repent and return to the Lord right now. No matter what mess you are in, please cry out to the Lord for mercy and grace. Ask God to make the reality of Heaven and Hell real to you. I don't know how anyone could ever backslide if they had a full understanding of our eternal destiny. The apostle Paul never backslid and by God's grace neither should we. You don't enter a race to pull out half-way. In the Christian life you must cross the finish line in order to win the prize. The high call of God is to walk with Christ intimately. Remember that you can't go to Heaven unless you remain in Christ (John 15:6). Renew your walk with the Lord today!

'Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O LORD. Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways. He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way' (Psalm 25:7).

PART II

**THE
ANSWER**

6

THE IMPORTANCE OF MARRIAGE

In this Bible study we're going to be looking at how God established the covenant of marriage and why this is so important for us as individuals, families and the society as a whole. Strong communities are built on strong families. Where you have marriages ending in divorce or partners living together without the commitment of marriage, there you have a people who do not fear God and there you will find a growing number of sins and social problems.

Some people, especially in the western culture, seem to think, "I'm having a good relationship with my girlfriend, we've been together for a long time and we don't need to get married." The issue then becomes, "Do you believe that God is the creator of man or do you believe that there is no life after death, no final accountability for our actions and that man is his own master?" If people don't believe in God, they are not going to walk in obedience to Him and they will see no virtue in having God's blessing upon their relationship. They are unbelievers. These Bible studies are aimed for those who do believe in God and can see the virtue of walking in God's ways.

If you are having doubts about your faith and you are even questioning the most basic fundamentals of Christianity, then I do have other studies that would be suitable for you. First and foremost you need to settle the issue that God is real and He is the Creator of the universe; there is a battle between good and evil, and demons are real also; there is a narrow path of righteousness and a wide path of wickedness, and all of mankind is on one of those two paths. A godly marriage will keep a person on the path of righteousness. Denial of the

marriage covenant will take a person off course and down the path that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14).

ESTABLISHED BY GOD FROM THE BEGINNING

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame' (Genesis 2:18-25).

Ultimately mankind was created for God, but man was not to be alone in his walk with his Creator, but rather he was to have a whole family and a line of generations who would know the LORD. God created within man a need for companionship and a level of relationship that would fulfil his need. It was as if God let Adam feel his loneliness so that he would be ready for his wife. It has been well said that, "Woman was taken out of man; not out of his head to be above him, nor out of his feet to be below him; but out of his side to be equal to him, under his arm to be protected and near his heart to be loved."

When God created Eve for Adam, God declared the covenant of marriage. The male and the female were created in such a way that they needed each other. Adam and Eve were united as husband and wife, and they became one flesh. God never made Adam and Eve boyfriend and girlfriend to see if they were suitable for each other. There is a level of commitment that enables a man to be forever faithful when he is truly united to his wife. It has also been well said that “God created Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.” Homosexuality was not possible. There was no second wife as a backup for Adam, so polygamy was also out of the question. Their marriage was pure and they felt no shame in being naked, but the first thing that happened when they sinned was that they had to cover themselves (Genesis 3:7-10).

The sexual relationship was created by God for those who are united in marriage. This is something that is private and special between the husband and the wife. The husband and wife being one is not just about the physical level, but also at the emotional and the spiritual level too. There is to be a real bonding of hearts and minds. From the first marriage we can conclude that marriages are supposed to be made in Heaven, in that God’s guiding hand should be upon a couple in bringing them together. If a couple enter a sexual relationship without the blessing of God and without the deeper commitment of marriage they are failing to realize why God created marriage in the first place. The husband and wife weren’t only to walk together; they were to walk with God. They were to grow together in their relationship with the Lord and this is where the attack of the devil begins.

THE DEVIL HATES MARRIAGES AND SEEKS TO TEAR THEM APART

‘Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife’s body does not

belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control' (1 Corinthians 7:1-5).

When a husband and wife are not having a healthy sexual relationship the devil can come in with other temptations. The evil one constantly seeks to attack marriages and pull them apart. During special times of prayer and seeking God, a couple should refrain from sexual relations, but that should only be for a time. Unfortunately there are many Christian couples who don't know how to pray and they have never entered that deeper level of devotion to God. If a husband and wife can talk to each other every day then they should be able to talk to God together every day. God came to visit Adam and Eve in the cool of the day, so the three of them could have fellowship (Genesis 3:8). My personal opinion is that it was the pre-incarnate Christ who appeared to Adam and Eve because we were created by Jesus and for Jesus (Colossians 1:16).

The Bible teaches us that the ancient serpent is in fact the devil, or Satan (Revelation 12:9; 20:2). What the serpent really wants to break is our relationship with God (2 Corinthians 11:3). The devil first of all went for the woman and once he got her it was quite easy to get the man. The serpent persuaded Eve to disobey God. The devil uses the flattery of words to entice the woman into sin. When Eve called, Adam went like a duck to water and their face-to-face relationship with God was broken. Only through Christ has this been restored for those who build and develop their walk with the Lord (Revelation 22:4). There would be enmity between the serpent and the woman (Genesis 3:15). Husbands need to realize that the devil is still seeking to destroy their wives today and that is why they must succeed where Adam failed.

Adam failed to bring His wife into a deeper walk with the LORD because Adam himself had not put God first in his life. What kind of marriage do you want to have? One where you

both get closer to God or one that has many cracks and footholds for the devil? Marriage is so important because it has higher spiritual significance than just the human level. It symbolizes the relationship of Christ and the Church. The life of Christ symbolizes how a husband must love His wife and the perfecting of holiness in the Church symbolizes how a wife must submit to her husband (Ephesians 5:22-33). The devil hates marriage because of this.

CAN A CHRISTIAN MARRY AN UNBELIEVER?

The answer is “No!” The reason Christians do occasionally marry unbelievers is because they either do not abide in the word of God or they have drifted from God’s perfect will for their lives. The temptation can be hard, especially for a woman as she gets older and the only person showing interest in her is an unbeliever. Often Christians backslide and marry prematurely during that time. When they come back to the Lord they find their marriage becomes a struggle because they want to go on with God and their partner doesn’t. Spiritual unity is lacking and they are unequally yoked (2 Corinthians 6:14-15). The believing partner either builds their own walk with the Lord or again they will begin to drift and become spiritually stagnant. This can be particularly tough when children are involved and one partner wants to bring them up in the ways of the Lord and the other doesn’t.

An unbeliever is still under the dominion of Satan’s kingdom (Ephesians 2:2; Colossians 1:13). You should never seek to marry with such a person. They must come to deep repentance and open confession of Christ before considering engagement or you should say to them, “Goodbye.” Only marry someone who belongs to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:39). When a believer runs off to marry an unbeliever, it is because the devil has been at work behind the scenes (1 Timothy 5:14-15). God can forgive them and save them, but there are always consequences to our actions.

To walk in God’s highest will for your life you need to have it settled in your heart that you will only marry a strong, true Christian who knows how to pray, actually does read the Bible,

and is going somewhere in their walk with the Lord. You don't want to marry a lukewarm believer because they can at any moment be spat out of Jesus' mouth (Revelation 3:16). Cry out to God, "Oh Lord, who is my companion for life?" You will probably have to wait for a period of time before God will show you, but He will provide the one who is chosen for you; a person who has God's favour. Marry someone who is solid in their faith and has a high degree of godly character.

WHAT IF GOD CALLS ME TO REMAIN SINGLE?

You are only called to remain single if God has given you that desire and it is what you want to accept; otherwise you are free to marry. After talking about the sin of divorce, the disciples said to Jesus, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry." Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it" (Matthew 19:10-12).

God does call some believers to remain single for a time. For example, a young person may choose to go to the mission field and not marry during their twenties or thirties, but after that time God may open the way for them to marry. Or a person may remain single for a lot shorter period in order to do something specific for the kingdom of God. Angels do not marry and in the kingdom of God, when the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage (Mark 12:24-25). If you want to have children you'll have to have them in this lifetime, so marriage is for you. If you want to be a radical missionary who is constantly on the move like the apostle Paul, you'll probably need to remain single for a long time. The choice is yours as you seek God for His perfect will.

GET MORE ADVICE FROM YOUR YOUTH PASTOR

There are many other issues that relate to marriage that we don't have time to cover here. That is why you need to be in a good youth group that is studying the Bible. There are many youth pastors who have answers to the needs of today's young people. Make sure you're not just going to the fun times and missing out the Bible studies. Are you building your life on the rock or the sand? This is all about what you do with God's word (Matthew 7:24-27).

'He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favour from the LORD' (Proverbs 18:22).

7

ARE YOU DEVELOPING GODLY CHARACTER?

If a husband and wife developed the fruit of the Holy Spirit there would never be any marriage breakdowns or divorce. But unfortunately people, including Christians, can harden their hearts against God and against one another. They become unwilling to confess their sins and they end up holding onto grudges and wrong attitudes. All of us have some kind of wrong attitude that we need to allow God to cleanse us from and replace with the righteous characteristics that come through the fruit of God's Spirit.

DEVELOP THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

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

There are nine godly virtues that we must allow God to grow and develop in our lives. This means an acceptance of godly discipline. If you are not willing to be corrected and to change, you will eventually reap a lot of bad fruit. If you allow God to cleanse your heart and to smooth your rough edges, you will produce the fruit of righteousness and you will stand before Christ pure and blameless (Philippians 1:9-11). We will now look at the importance of developing a godly character and the fruit of the Spirit in light of marriage:

1) Love – The foundation of any marriage must be love. God is love and true love comes from God (1 John 4:8). Isaac loved

his wife right from the beginning, even though it was an arranged marriage (Genesis 24:67). A man called Amnon, who supposedly was in love with a very beautiful girl, slept with her and then he hated her more than he had ever loved her, such was the wickedness in his heart (2 Samuel 13:15). For human love to become like God's love it has to be purified. True love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres and this is the kind of love that never fails (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). Marriages fail because there is a lack of love.

Love is not based on feelings. There is a sense in which we can put on love or we can take it off (Colossians 3:14). A husband must choose to love his wife and the wife must choose to love her husband. Love is revealed by sacrifice and by giving (Ephesians 5:2). This is how God demonstrated His love: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). The husband has a high standard to live up to because he is to love his wife in the same way that Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25). Everything a husband says to his wife must be spoken out of love. When a husband loves his wife like this he will have a great marriage. Selfishness is conquered by love.

2) Joy – A person's wedding day is to be a time of great joy. There will be some nervousness involved, but the joy of the LORD is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10). In the Law of Moses it is written: 'If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married' (Deuteronomy 24:5). A man should enter marriage with this goal in mind: he is to bring happiness and joy to his wife. Building a strong marriage is a priority so that God's blessing can be upon the family and so there will be godly offspring (Malachi 2:15). The arrival of newborn babies will bring great happiness to a couple who are walking with God.

3) Peace – The home should be a place of peace and that peace will only exist if the husband and wife are at peace with God and at peace with one another. We must choose to let the

peace of Christ rule in our hearts (Colossians 3:15). Peace will remain in a marriage where there is good communication. The wife wants someone to talk to; not someone who is running off with his friends, too busy with work or makes her feel like she is being neglected. On the other hand, a husband will find it very difficult if his wife is nagging him all the time. The book of Proverbs addresses this issue quite strongly:

‘Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife’ (Proverbs 21:9). ‘Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife’ (Proverbs 21:19). ‘A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day; restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand’ (Proverbs 27:15-16). If you have this tendency to argue and your temper gets the better of you, you need to come before God and allow Him to work on your character. You need to focus on changing yourself before you try to change your partner.

4) Patience – Husbands and wives must have patience with one another. There are going to be times when things are not going your way. ‘A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense’ (Proverbs 19:11). To live a life worthy of the Lord and to please Him in every way, you must have great endurance and patience (Colossians 1:10-11). These virtues are very precious in the sight of God. Marriage is a test. Are you going to endure the mundane reality of life and continue to grow in God with your marriage partner or are you going to drift apart over time due to your lack of discipline? It is written: ‘Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love’ (Ephesians 4:2). As a husband and wife learn to develop these godly virtues towards each other their relationship will become stronger and stronger.

5) Kindness – It is written: ‘A kindhearted woman gains respect, but ruthless men gain only wealth. A kind man benefits himself, but a cruel man brings trouble on himself. The wicked man earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness reaps a sure reward. The truly righteous man attains life, but

he who pursues evil goes to his death. The LORD detests men of perverse heart but he delights in those whose ways are blameless. Be sure of this: The wicked will not go unpunished, but those who are righteous will go free' (Proverbs 11:16-21). Those who do horrible things to other people are those who are classified as the wicked. We cannot claim to be righteous if we have no desire to be kind. Kindness needs to come out of the heart and that is why we need to keep our hearts pure. A husband and wife must always try to be kind to each other (1 Thessalonians 5:15).

6) Goodness – This can speak of helpfulness. The husband needs to say to his wife from time to time, "Sweetheart, what can I do to help you? What would you like me to do around the house?" Jesus came not to be served but to serve (Matthew 20:28), so while the wife is to be a suitable helper for her husband, the husband is to also serve his wife in order to be like Christ. Jesus said, "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). If your own marriage partner can't see the light of Christ shining through you then you need to make some improvements in your walk with the Lord. To do good deeds and to share with others you will have to make sacrifices, but these are the sacrifices in life that are pleasing to God (Hebrews 13:16).

7) Faithfulness – A husband will never flirt with other women and be overcome by the sin of adultery if he has a faithful heart. Love and faithfulness go together (Psalm 85:10). Faithfulness to one's wife includes refusing to look at pornography (Matthew 5:28; 1 Timothy 1:9-11). If you are having a problem in this area you are going to need to come to a place of deep repentance. You will need to cry out to God as King David did: 'Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me' (Psalm 51:10-12).

We are called to be trustworthy, reliable and sincere. Our God is a faithful God and He keeps His promises (Deuteronomy 7:9; 1 Kings 8:56). It is impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18). Jesus Christ is called Faithful and True (Revelation 19:11). Are you true to your words? Will your marriage last till the end? People fall into the sin of adultery because there is no faithfulness, no love, and no true acknowledgment of God (Hosea 4:1-2). God is faithful to help His people find the right marriage partner, if they trust and seek after Him (Genesis 24:1-27). Every Christian marriage should be a strong and faithful marriage. We cannot make excuses for any failure, but rather we must walk in repentance.

8) Gentleness – Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). The nature of Christ is one of gentleness and humility. That is the nature every husband needs to have outworked in his heart. A husband should not put unnecessary burdens upon his wife but rather they should both find rest. A domineering or controlling husband needs to make sure he improves in this area of gentleness.

A woman’s true beauty does not come from her outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of her inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight (1 Peter 3:3-4). ‘Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised’ (Proverbs 31:30). Are you most concerned about temporary beauty or eternal beauty? Are you looking for a partner by looking at their outward appearance or do you have the wisdom to perceive that greater treasures are found in those who have godly character. ‘A wife of noble character is her husband’s crown, but a disgraceful wife is like decay in his bones’ (Proverbs 12:4).

9) Self-control – The Bible tells us that the part of our body that can get most out of control is our tongue (James 3:2-12). There is a children’s saying, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me.” In reality this is not true and certainly not in the case of marriage. If a husband has learnt self-control he will never verbally abuse his wife and children. There can be moments of frustration but he will have learnt how to overcome that. We have to choose our words carefully because the tongue has the power of life and death (Proverbs 18:21). You can tear down your marriage or build it up by what you say. A husband and wife should never argue over what each other would prefer to do, but rather walk with God and seek the Lord to find out what He wants them to do. A husband and wife who pray together stay together.

BUILD YOUR CHARACTER!

Some people are worried about how they are going to be able to find the right partner. They should not worry about that, but rather they should be concerned about becoming the right kind of person who is suitable for marriage. They should concentrate on allowing the Lord to cleanse them of any character faults, to purify their hearts and to develop the godly attributes that are pleasing in the sight of God. Until then you are not ready to be married. If a couple entered marriage with an onward vision of walking with God there would never be any divorce. Somewhere along the way people lose sight of developing the fruit of the Spirit. They compromise with their character and they do not become like Christ. This is why we need to impart to believers the onward vision of allowing God to really work in their lives.

‘A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies. Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life’ (Proverbs 31:10-12).

8

DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS?

Most Christians can quote at least a few Bible verses off by heart, but often they don't memorize the right verses that can really help them to overcome their sin. Right now I will be focusing on the area of sexual purity, but no matter what you are struggling with you should know what the Bible says about it. Some issues that we have today were not around in the Bible days, but you will always find principles of God's righteousness that relate to anything that is going on today. A major weakness of many who claim to be believers is that they simply don't know what the Bible says because they don't give sufficient time for reading and studying the Scriptures.

King David is known as a man after God's own heart, but he had a certain weakness. He used to meditate upon the Scriptures day and night, but I think there was one Scripture he conveniently chose not to meditate upon. This Scripture would have saved him from a lot of heartache and shame. He must have read this verse many times but he did not let it sink into his heart. In the law of Moses it was written specifically for kings: 'He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray' (Deuteronomy 17:17). David took at least eight wives in direct disobedience to the word of God. It was this lifestyle of compromise that weakened David to then commit adultery and murder. God forgave him but David reaped what he had sown and the disciplinary punishments were very severe (2 Samuel 11-12).

If you are committing sexual sins and think that you are still a Christian, read what the Bible says about that. If you are claiming that you can be a Christian even though you are gay,

read what the Bible says about that. If you are being tempted by a spirit of prostitution and pornography, read what the Bible says to you. If you are contemplating getting a divorce and leaving your wife, read the Bible before you take another step. Maybe you are like King David; you don't want to meditate upon the Scriptures that could actually save you because you don't want to change your heart and repent. But if you want to be set free, if you want to be saved from eternal torment and shame, deal to your besetting sin and come into a true fear of God. Have you read the Scriptures that could save you or have you conveniently avoided them?

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT FORNICATION AND ADULTERY

'While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the LORD's anger burned against them' (Numbers 25:1-3).

'For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean'' (Matthew 15:19-20).

'Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature' (Romans 13:13-14).

'It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this?' (1 Corinthians 5:1-2)

'The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God' (Galatians 5:19-21).

'But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them' (Ephesians 5:3-7).

'Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming' (Colossians 3:5-6).

'It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life. Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit' (1 Thessalonians 4:3-8).

'See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son' (Hebrews 12:16).

'Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral' (Hebrews 13:4).

'But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death' (Revelation 21:8).

'Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood' (Revelation 22:14-15).

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY AND PROSTITUTION

'Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable' (Leviticus 18:22).

'Do not degrade your daughter by making her a prostitute, or the land will turn to prostitution and be filled with wickedness' (Leviticus 19:29).

'No Israelite man or woman is to become a shrine prostitute. You must not bring the earnings of a female prostitute or of a male prostitute into the house of the LORD your God to pay any vow, because the LORD your God detests them both' (Deuteronomy 23:17-18).

'For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life, keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife. Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes, for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life. Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being

burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? So is he who sleeps with another man's wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished' (Proverbs 6:23-29).

'My son, give me your heart and let your eyes keep to my ways, for a prostitute is a deep pit and a wayward wife is a narrow well. Like a bandit she lies in wait, and multiplies the unfaithful among men' (Proverbs 23:26-28).

'Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion' (Romans 1:26-27).

'Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God' (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

'Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body' (1 Corinthians 6:15-20).

'In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and

perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire' (Jude 7).

From the Bible we have clearly seen that sexual immorality includes fornication, adultery, prostitution, homosexuality, sodomy and lesbianism. The people of the world will say things like this: "If a person wants to be a homosexual then it is alright for them." They call darkness light and they tolerate evil. In one sense there is no difference between adultery and homosexuality. They are both driven by lust. If a man lusts after a married woman or lusts after another man, he must make the choice; will he follow his own mind or will he submit to the will of God? People are gripped by demons of lust because they refuse to listen to the Lord. Those who refuse to repent of following their own sinful mind are destined for eternal damnation.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT DIVORCE

'You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty.

So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith' (Malachi 2:14-16).

"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew 5:31-32).

‘Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”

“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

“Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”

Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery” (Matthew 19:3-9).

‘To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife’ (1 Corinthians 7:10-11).

Divorce, in order to marry with someone else, was condemned by the Lord Jesus. King Henry VIII of England (1491-1547 AD) is known for his six wives, two of whom he beheaded so that he could remarry. He was an evil man. While divorce is not the unforgivable sin, there must be true repentance. In fact, divorce is not beyond the grace of God that is available to us through the tremendous price that Jesus paid in dying for us. The blood of Jesus can wash away the scars of divorce and fully restore those who have gone through great hardships and disappointments. The love and mercy of God needs to fill our hearts and be our guiding light.

YOU CAN OVERCOME!

If you have fallen into any of these sexual sins, don’t think that it’s all over for you and you’re finished. Realize that God

can fill you with His love and make you into a brand new person. If you are feeling guilty, confess your sins to God and be restored to Him. No slimy pit of sin on this earth is too deep from which the hand of Christ can pull you out and set you free. You can get back to the narrow path of salvation, bring the fruit of the Spirit to maturity in your life and become a role model for others. Please continue with the next Bible studies and come to a place of victory.

'Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!' (Ezekiel 18:31-32)

TOTALLY ABSTAIN FROM DRINKING ALCOHOL!

My message to all youth, Christian and non-Christian alike, is to totally abstain from all alcohol and don't even begin to touch it. Once the devil can get you among people holding alcohol in your hands, you are on a slippery slope. Eve knew that she shouldn't touch the forbidden fruit. When the serpent told her that her eyes would be opened and she would be like God, she was enticed and she took the dazzling fruit into her hand (Genesis 3:2-6). Don't try and test out your weaknesses. I'm going to show you that alcohol is the devil's poison and you should never touch it.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT DRINKING BEER AND WINE

'Hannah was praying in her heart, and her lips were moving but her voice was not heard. Eli thought she was drunk and said to her, "How long will you keep on getting drunk? Get rid of your wine."

"Not so, my lord," Hannah replied, "I am a woman who is deeply troubled. I have not been drinking wine or beer; I was pouring out my soul to the LORD. Do not take your servant for a wicked woman; I have been praying here out of my great anguish and grief" (1 Samuel 1:13-16).

'Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise' (Proverbs 20:1).

'Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaints? Who has needless bruises? Who has bloodshot

eyes? Those who linger over wine, who go to sample bowls of mixed wine. Do not gaze at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it goes down smoothly! In the end it bites like a snake and poisons like a viper’ (Proverbs 23:29-32).

‘It is not for kings, O Lemuel – not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer, lest they drink and forget what the law decrees, and deprive all the oppressed of their rights. Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish’ (Proverbs 31:4-6).

‘Woe to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night till they are inflamed with wine. They have harps and lyres at their banquets, tambourines and flutes and wine, but they have no regard for the deeds of the LORD, no respect for the work of his hands’ (Isaiah 5:11-12).

‘Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks’ (Isaiah 5:22).

‘They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain. “Come,” each one cries, “let me get wine! Let us drink our fill of beer! And tomorrow will be like today, or even far better” (Isaiah 56:11-12).

“Say to them: ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Every wineskin should be filled with wine.’ And if they say to you, ‘Don’t we know that every wineskin should be filled with wine?’ then tell them, ‘This is what the LORD says: I am going to fill with drunkenness all who live in this land, including the kings who sit on David’s throne, the priests, the prophets and all those living in Jerusalem. I will smash them one against the other, fathers and sons alike, declares the LORD. I will allow no pity or mercy or compassion to keep me from destroying them”’ (Jeremiah 13:12-14).

'Wake up, you drunkards, and weep! Wail, all you drinkers of wine; wail because of the new wine, for it has been snatched from your lips' (Joel 1:5).

"Get up, go away! For this is not your resting place, because it is defiled, it is ruined, beyond all remedy. If a liar and deceiver comes and says, 'I will prophesy for you plenty of wine and beer,' he would be just the prophet for this people!" (Micah 2:10-11)

HOW ALCOHOLIC DRINKS FIRST CAME ABOUT

There was no alcohol in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were not drunk when they ate from the forbidden tree. Actually there was no possibility of fermentation at that time because there was no breakdown of molecules in God's original creation. Organic molecules could not split into simpler substances, such as the conversion of sugar to alcohol. After Adam and Eve sinned there was still no alcohol on the earth, yet the way was then opened for that to eventually happen. Death had entered the world. To begin with this process of death was rather slow and the earth was still a lot better than it is today. Men could easily live to be eight or nine hundred years old. Wickedness on the earth became very great, but still there was no alcohol.

What brought a sudden change to the earth was the judgment of God through the great flood in the time of Noah. All the springs of the ocean burst forth and the floodgates of the heavens were opened. Rain fell on the earth for forty days and forty nights. Only Noah and his family were saved. The waters rose and covered the mountains and the earth remained flooded for a hundred and fifty days. The waters began to steadily recede and eventually the earth became dry. God blessed Noah and his sons, saying to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth" (Genesis 6-9). After Noah's flood we find some drastic changes. The lifespan of mankind began to be dramatically reduced. Abraham lived to be 175 (Genesis 25:7). Joseph lived to be 110 (Genesis 50:26) and

from then on the age of man was pretty much the same as it is today.

One of the most dramatic changes after the flood was that it was then possible to produce alcohol and unfortunately Noah discovered this in quite a terrible way. Noah was the first person to plant a vineyard. When he drank some of its wine, he became drunk and lay uncovered inside his tent. One of his sons saw his father's nakedness and he was cursed, while two of the sons covered their father's nakedness and they were blessed (Genesis 9:20-27). Through the sin of man all of creation was subjected to frustration, bondage and decay (Romans 8:20-22). This decay is what has made the production of alcohol possible.

What Christians need to realize is that the wine of Heaven is non-alcoholic. When God creates the new heaven and the new earth, it will be like the Garden of Eden and there will be no alcohol. My personal opinion is that when Jesus turned the water into wine, He did not turn it into earthly wine but heavenly wine, and that is why it tasted the best (John 2:1-11). Many a drunkard has twisted the Scriptures and referred to the first miracle of Christ as an excuse for their drunkenness. Jesus didn't create a scene of rolling around drunks. It is impossible to get drunk on the heavenly wine. Alcohol is due to man's sin and God gives people over to the consumption of alcohol so that He has to destroy them.

THE SIN OF THE LAST DAYS

The last days leading up to the return of Christ are going to be like the days of Noah, where people have rejected God and are living lives of great debauchery and sin. The Bible is very clear that God gives people and nations over to the sin of drunkenness so that He has to judge that nation (Jeremiah 13:12-14). When the people of Israel were totally backslidden and had forsaken the LORD by turning to idols, God gave them over to the sinful desires of their hearts. Kings, unfaithful priests, false prophets, fathers and sons all sat around drinking. It became the culture of the nation. When a nation is being handed over

to the sin of drunkenness you know that judgment is not too far away. In many places alcohol is so ingrained in the culture that even the Christians can't give it up. You will find there are terrible spiritual blockages in those nations.

The Bible says, 'Give beer to those who are perishing' (Proverbs 31:6). If you want to perish and die in your sins, then drink all the beer you want, but realize there are no parties in Hell (Mark 9:42-48). A marijuana smoker will claim that God created all the herbs, not realizing that he is blowing his brain and destroying his soul. There were no drugs and no alcohol in the Garden of Eden. Drugs and alcohol are due to the affects of the curse that is upon this world. There are many examples in the Bible of how wicked men were in great danger of judgment, but instead of seeking God they went and got drunk (1 Samuel 25:36-38; 1 Kings 16:8-13; Daniel 5:1-31). Drinking alcohol is what destroys people.

TOTAL ABSTINENCE IS THE WAY TO GO

There are times when God specifically commands total abstinence from all strong drink. Men of God had to follow these principles:

Required Of The Priests – *'You and your sons are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come'* (Leviticus 10:9).

Law For The Nazirites – *'The LORD said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: 'If a man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of separation to the LORD as a Nazirite, he must abstain from wine and other fermented drink and must not drink vinegar made from wine or from other fermented drink. He must not drink grape juice or eat grapes or raisins'* (Numbers 6:1-3).

Required Of Israel During Their Wilderness Journey – *'During the forty years that I led you through the desert, your*

clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet. You ate no bread and drank no wine or other fermented drink. I did this so that you might know that I am the LORD your God' (Deuteronomy 29:5-6).

Wisdom For Rulers – *'It is not for kings, O Lemuel – not for kings to drink wine, not for rulers to crave beer' (Proverbs 31:4).*

The Law Of The Recabites – *'Then I set bowls full of wine and some cups before the men of the Recabite family and said to them, "Drink some wine." But they replied, "We do not drink wine, because our forefather Jonadab son of Recab gave us this command: 'Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine'" (Jeremiah 35:5-6).*

The Prophet Daniel – *'But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself in this way' (Daniel 1:8).*

John The Baptist – *'He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth' (Luke 1:14-15).*

All Believers In Certain Circumstances – *'It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall' (Romans 14:21).*

Drinking alcohol is the culture of the world. You are not called to follow the world. You are called to deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus (Matthew 16:24-27).

NOT RECEIVING FROM THE LORD

Many Christians take it for granted that they can drink alcohol on a social level. They are not getting drunk and

therefore there is no sin in their own mind. The fact is that to go on further with God you can't take anything like that for granted. You need to realize that to receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit it is a very high calling. It is not for nominal believers who don't want to enter a deeper walk with the Lord. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is so that you can be an anointed witness for Christ (Acts 1:8). If you are having difficulty in receiving the baptism in the Holy Spirit and the gift in speaking in other tongues, even though you have been prayed for many times, it could be that you have not repented of drinking alcohol.

I will repeat the verses about John the Baptist and bring to your attention how it relates to being filled with the Holy Spirit: 'He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth' (Luke 1:14-15). It is also written: 'Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit' (Ephesians 5:18). If you are drinking alcohol there will be blockages that hinder you from receiving the fullness of the Spirit. If you want to receive a deeper call of God upon your life, I suggest you give up drinking even on a social level.

TO BE OR NOT TO BE A MIGHTY WARRIOR FOR GOD

The world has enough nominal Christians already to fill the back region of Heaven. If you want to be closer to God and right up the front of the throne room, you've got to be serious in how you seek after the Lord. You can't drink alcohol and then expect to walk into God's holy presence. Many Christians are not aware of the deeper principles of God's word. They'll read a Scripture about drinking wine and take it for granted that they can drink socially without really seeking the Lord as to His call upon their lives. Do you want to be a nation shaker for God or do you want to remain a nominal believer? Every verse in the Bible about beer is in the negative. Never touch it.

Other stronger drinks like whisky, bourbon, gin, brandy, rum, tequila and vodka have to be totally forbidden.

It is time to make a clean start and take the call of God more seriously than ever before. The older generations never completed the Great Commission. If my generation were more committed and united for the cause of Christ we would be doing a better job. If the next generation is not more serious for the Lord, your generation will also fall short of God's perfect will. Nominal Christians are a dime a dozen. What we need are those who press on into the deeper things of God. What type of Christians are we developing today? Where are the mighty warriors for God? Where are those who will stand against the tide of sin and prevail for the salvation of souls?

The Recabites reaped the reward of their faithfulness (Jeremiah 35:18-19). God promised that they would always have a man before Him, meaning that in every generation there would be a special servant raised up by the LORD. This happened because they listened to their forefather who commanded them not to drink alcohol. That is what we need today. What do you want for the future generations of your family? Our beer drinking culture is headed for damnation. God will have a people who are fully committed to Him and He will raise up mighty men and women who can do great exploits. They will be those who have overcome the world, the flesh (the sinful nature) and the devil. Consecrate yourself to the Lord.

“Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

FORGIVENESS OF SINS

To come to a place of true repentance and salvation, you need to have allowed God to have performed a process in your heart where you have really been cleansed and delivered from your sins. A little prayer, “God, forgive me,” doesn’t mean that you are automatically granted a place in Heaven unless the work of the Holy Spirit has taken place in your life. Jesus said, “You must be born again” (John 3:3-7). A real spiritual birth has to take place that causes you to become a new person. Just as the birth of a child in the natural has a set process, so does the conversion of a person into the kingdom of God.

WHAT KIND OF CONVERSION DID YOU HAVE?

When a person comes to the place of deep repentance, knowing that they were lost in their sins, then they can meet with God and have a real turning point that changes their life forever. Jesus said that ‘he who has been forgiven little loves little’ (Luke 7:47), meaning that the deeper a person receives forgiveness from Christ the more deeply they will love Jesus in return. I was brought up in a Christian family. I was taught not to swear and not to do certain bad things. During my childhood I tried to live a righteous life, yet I knew that I was a sinner. I knew that my so called “small sins” were just as bad as the “bigger sins” of the children who were more outwardly rebellious. I loved Jesus much because I knew I had been forgiven much.

Every person in this world needs to be forgiven of much sin, but the problem is that most of the time people don’t realize what their sin is. In their own eyes they’re a good person. They don’t hurt anyone. They might not pray much and reading the

Bible isn't very high on their priorities list, but they know God is always there for them. In their own eyes they are not evil and wicked, but without deep conviction of sin they will not realize their poor spiritual condition. As they get older they will think to themselves, "I want to enjoy the world now. I want to have a good time." Slowly whatever spiritual life they had fades away, but the problem in the first place was that they never had a deep conversion or salvation experience with the Lord. They are on the highway to Hell.

STEPS TO PEACE WITH GOD

1) Realize How Lost You Are Without Christ – *'Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him'* (John 3:36).

The wrath of God is just as real and just as eternal as His love. God has demonstrated His love by allowing Jesus to die upon the cross for the sins of the world. Salvation is being offered to all nations. Those who reject this will die in their sins and go to a place of eternal punishment and unceasing torment (Matthew 25:41,46; Revelation 20:10). I notice that when Christians backslide one of the first things they start to deny is the reality of Hell. It doesn't matter who you are, if you forsake the Lord then God will reject you forever (1 Chronicles 28:9). You need to tremble at the thought of being lost.

2) God Does Not Save You Unless You Repent – *'Surely the arm of the LORD is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear'* (Isaiah 59:1-2).

You must come to God on His terms and not your own terms. I saw an article in a magazine of how a prostitute would go out every night and sleep with men to earn her living, come home and pray for forgiveness. Those who are worldly minded will say that God should forgive her because she needs a way to financially support herself and her family. They've got the wrong idea of God. God is the perfection of holiness and

righteousness. Living a life that does not glorify the Lord leaves you lost in your sins. To be saved you actually have to repent and live for God. It doesn't matter how many times you pray for forgiveness, unless you turn away from your sins, you will perish (Luke 13:1-5).

3) God Does Not Accept Hypocritical Prayers – *“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’*

But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:10-14).

The Pharisee had no relationship with God. His prayer was based on religious pride. The tax collector was under deep conviction and begged God for mercy. To be accepted by God you can't continue on as a hypocrite. You have to let God change you. Don't watch things on the TV or internet that you shouldn't be looking at. Turn it off or walk out. Clean up your act by making right decisions. Then God will accept your prayer.

4) Let Your Heart Be Broken Over Your Wicked Ways – *‘Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me... Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity... The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise’ (Psalm 51:1-3,9,17).*

King David had one of the most tragic falls, yet he was restored by God because he went through an incredibly deep process of repentance. He completely humbled himself before the Lord and he was a broken man; broken in spirit and contrite in heart so that he could walk with God. A person can either harden their heart towards God or soften their heart and this is what determines a person's spiritual progress. Worldly sorrow leads to death, but godly sorrow leads to repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10-11).

5) Come Clean With Honest Confession – *'If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives'* (1 John 1:8-10).

No matter what you have done wrong, be honest about it. There was a man who was in spiritual torment for many years because he had hidden the fact that he had committed rape and murder. There was no peace for him until he handed himself over to the police. Then inside the prison he found that he was free and his relationship with God was restored. The worst sins can be washed away if people come to God in true repentance.

6) Forgive Other People – *'For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins'* (Matthew 6:14-15).

Check your heart now to see if there is anyone you need to forgive. Maybe someone did something wrong to you and you have held a grudge against them for a long time. You cannot expect God to forgive you if you are unwilling to forgive other people. This is one of the conditions of salvation. A person who is "born again" by the Spirit of God will be led by the Holy Spirit to do what is right. If you are not forgiving other people it shows that you do not belong to Christ.

7) Overcome Sexual Sins – *‘The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group...*

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin” (John 8:3,11).

Jesus gave this woman a second chance, but is she in Heaven? That depends on her response to Jesus’ words, “Go now and leave your life of sin.” If she went straight back to her old lifestyle she would be lost, but I think this woman was so touched by Christ’s love that day that she became a new person, completely giving up her immoral lifestyle. Jesus set her free and if you are caught in the bondage of sexual sins, Jesus can set you free also. Addictions to pornography can be instantly broken, but you also have to make right choices.

8) The Spiritually Mature Can Help You To Be Restored – *‘Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted’ (Galatians 6:1).*

Each person must continue to watch and guard their own heart, for we can all be tempted. The duty of those who are mature in Christ is to restore the fallen believer back to a right relationship with the Lord. When a believer backslides and falls into certain sins, they are in danger of being cast into the lake of fire (James 5:19-20; Revelation 21:8). This is why restoring fallen believers is so important.

9) Know The Power Of The Blood Of Jesus – *‘But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin’ (1 John 1:7).*

‘He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed’ (1 Peter 2:24).

To receive salvation we need a clear revelation of the fact that Jesus bore our filthy sins in His body. He shed His holy righteous blood upon the cross to atone for our wickedness and He died in our place (Ephesians 1:7; Hebrews 13:12). We would

never backslide if we realized the enormity of this fact. The problem today is the same as two thousand years ago. Many people stood around the cross watching Jesus hang there, but they were not saved because they didn't have the right understanding. They saw Jesus dying for them, but they did not benefit from this because they did not believe (Mark 15:25-32). You must believe that Jesus died for you and that in Christ you have been crucified to sin.

10) Receive God's Love – *'And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us. You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us'* (Romans 5:5-8).

No matter what sins you have done in the past, God the Father is calling you home. Jesus stands with arms opened wide for you and those hands still bear the wounds of the nails that held Him to the cross. The Holy Spirit wants to pour God's love into your heart, but you must have an open heart and be willing to receive. I've spoken to people and when I've told them that I'm a Christian they haven't wanted to speak to me anymore. If you treat God like that you will remain outside of His love. You will remain a lost soul until you make peace with your Creator.

Once you are willing to get your heart right with God and truly make peace with Him, only then are you ready to say the sinner's prayer to receive eternal salvation. Too often people put up their hands to accept Christ in a Christian meeting when they have never come to the point of true repentance. Has God shown you any areas of your life that have been in rebellion and disobedience towards Him? Please put your life in order. Only say the following prayer if you are willing to love Jesus more than your own family and you are ready to take up your cross and follow the Lord wholeheartedly (Matthew 10:37-38):

THE PRAYER OF A LOST SINNER FOR SALVATION

“Lord Jesus, I need You to save me. I know that I have sinned, but I don’t want to be lost. Thank You for dying on the cross and paying the penalty for my wicked ways. I confess these sins to You now..... (name those sins).

I turn from them and I look for You to help me to walk the path of righteousness. I realize that my evil deeds are to blame for Your painful crucifixion, so I am truly sorry and I ask You to forgive me.

I believe the good news that You rose from the dead and that You are alive forever. I believe that You are watching me at this very moment, so I open the door of my life to receive You as my Lord and Saviour.

Come into my heart, take away my sins, and make me the kind of person You want me to be. I want to be Your friend. Fill me with the power of the Holy Spirit and let me overcome all the works of the devil. Come Holy Spirit.

Thank You for saving me and giving me assurance of a place in Heaven. I give all praise, honour and glory to Your holy name. Amen.”

**I have decided to follow Jesus
all the days of my life!**

Yes

No

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever (your name)

believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

Date of birthday into God’s family:

(The day you accepted Jesus as your Saviour)

DO YOU HAVE AN ASSURANCE OF ETERNAL LIFE?

When you are saved you should know it. You should know that God has accepted your prayer and that your sins have been forgiven. When you have a true relationship with God you can call Him “Abba, Father,” and the Holy Spirit will testify with your spirit that you are one of His children (Romans 8:15-16). You are saved if you have true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:30-31). We don’t want to stand before God on the Day of Judgment still waiting to find out whether or not we can enter God’s kingdom. We need to know the certainty of our salvation now. When you pass from death to life you will know it (John 5:24). You will know that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

Complete Salvation – *‘Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them’ (Hebrews 7:23-25).*

Jesus wants to give you complete victory over the world, the flesh and the devil. The key to having this salvation is to continually walk with Christ. We must uphold youth in prayer and believe for powerful, life changing conversions. We must believe for a deep work of God in their hearts so they are saved for eternity. On the Day of Judgment we will be able to look into God’s beautiful face, satisfied that we served the Lord wholeheartedly and walked in obedience to His will. Jesus gives us complete salvation.

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

When a person is cleansed of their sins their heart will feel clean and at peace. Your guilt is gone. God is no longer holding your sins against you. He has removed your transgressions as far as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12). God has crushed your sins under His feet and hurled them into the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). You are forgiven!

Living A New Life As A New Creation – *‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!’ (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

Your old life is gone. You are a “born again” Christian in that you have been made alive in Christ. You are no longer dead in your sins, but you have been saved by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:1-9). God has rescued you from the dominion of darkness and brought you into the kingdom of the Son He loves, in whom you have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:13-14). You are a new person!

‘I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name’ (1 John 2:12).

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DELIVERANCE FROM DEMONS

In this Bible study we will be looking at the reality of Satan and the forces of darkness. We live in a world that, for the time being, is under the devil's domain (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19). God permitted this to happen in order to test the human race. Will you walk with God the Father or Satan the Prince of Demons? Will you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour or will you be deceived by the Antichrist? Will you be led and guided by the Holy Spirit or will you allow evil spirits to deceive you? The devil counterfeits everything that God is doing. Thankfully, Jesus has given His followers authority to drive out demons and to set people free.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT SATAN AND DEMONS

Satan Is Our Enemy – *‘Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings’* (1 Peter 5:8-9).

The devil is frequently referred to as the enemy (Matthew 13:27-28,39; Luke 10:17-20; 1 Timothy 5:14-15). He was a created being who became corrupt and fell from Heaven (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-19). An enemy is someone who is totally against you and wants to destroy you. The devil is the master thief who comes to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). He is a murderer, a liar and the father of all who tell lies (John 8:44). He is filled with an uncontrollable anger and he seeks to accuse and condemn all people, especially Christians (Revelation 12:10-12).

The Angels That Followed Satan– *‘And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him’ (Revelation 12:7-9).*

Sad to say, there were a multitude of angels who submitted themselves to the devil’s authority and joined the rebellion against God. These fallen angels belong to the devil (Matthew 25:41). In the book of Revelation it says that the dragon swept a third of the stars out of the sky with his tail and flung them to the earth (Revelation 12:4). Prophetically, stars speak of angels, the dragon speaks of the devil, and that is why many believe that the devil caused one-third of the angels to fall from Heaven.

Demons Are Spirit Beings Who Have Given Themselves Over To Evil – *‘In the synagogue there was a man possessed by a demon, an evil spirit. He cried out at the top of his voice, “Ha! What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God!”*

“Be quiet!” Jesus said sternly. “Come out of him!” Then the demon threw the man down before them all and came out without injuring him.

All the people were amazed and said to each other, “What is this teaching? With authority and power he gives orders to evil spirits and they come out!” (Luke 4:33-36)

Within the demonic realm there is a wide variety of evil spirits; different types and different levels of authority (Ephesians 6:11-12). A demon is an evil spirit and in the Bible these words can be used interchangeably (Mark 5:13-15; 7:25,30; Luke 9:42). There have been many strange theories claiming that demons and evil spirits are a totally different species, but that is not true! Evil spirits are personalities without human bodies. Therefore, they want to enter a person so they can live inside of them and gain more control to bring about their evil nature in

the person (Matthew 12:43-45). Satan himself also seeks to enter people (Luke 22:3).

Demons have the ability to speak (Mark 1:23-26; 5:7-12). They have emotions (James 2:19) and make decisions (Matthew 12:44). They entice (James 1:14), deceive (1 Timothy 4:1-2), enslave (Romans 8:15), drive or compel (Luke 8:29), and torment (2 Timothy 1:7). Demon powers are the cause of much sickness (Matthew 17:18; Acts 10:38) and mental problems (Mark 5:15-16). Evil spirits can reside in haunted houses (Revelation 18:2).

Unbelievers Are In The Devil's Kingdom – *'As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient'* (Ephesians 2:1-2).

Those who follow the ways of the world are blinded by a spirit that is at work in them. The apostle Paul was called by Christ to open people's spiritual eyes and turn them from the darkness to light, from the power of Satan to the power of God (Acts 26:18). Only those who believe the gospel and turn to Christ are rescued from the dominion of darkness (Colossians 1:13). Those who oppose the preaching of God's word need gentle instruction in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will (2 Timothy 2:25-26). The world is truly in the grip of the devil.

The Tempter Into Sin – *'For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter might have tempted you and our efforts might have been useless'* (1 Thessalonians 3:4).

The apostle Paul was getting extremely concerned for the Thessalonian church because he was afraid that the devil may have come and tempted them. Paul was thinking like this because whenever he wanted to go and visit them he realized that Satan was stopping him (1 Thessalonians 2:18). Satan's main

attack is against the church. The good news is that where Adam failed, Jesus has conquered.

After being anointed with the Holy Spirit, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. The tempter came to Him and a series of temptations followed (Matthew 4:1-11). To overcome temptation we should cry out to our Heavenly Father: “Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:13). Like Jesus, we should be able to correctly quote the word of God.

The Devil’s Work – *‘The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus’ (John 13:2).*

The people of the world, who are in the devil’s grip, cannot discern if an evil thought is from their own mind or from an evil power. If a person is trying to live a reasonably upright life, they will reject most evil thoughts because it is not what they want to be. Yet a person who loses his temper may be tempted to strike out or even murder the person who angered him. This anger is beyond his normal anger and is actually a prompting of the devil through evil spirits. Those who do commit the atrocious sin of murder have carried out the devil’s desire (John 8:44; 1 John 3:12). Satan was able to fill Ananias’ heart and lead him to lie to God (Acts 5:3). Satan was able to enter Judas when he refused to repent of his intent to betray Christ (Luke 22:3). Evil thoughts that lead to evil actions are the work of Satan.

MAJOR ENTRY POINTS FOR DEMONIC POWERS

Pursuing The Following Sins Can Cause People To Have A Demon – *‘He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work’ (1 John 3:8).*

1) Sexual Immorality (1 Corinthians 7:5; Revelation 2:13-15,20-25).

2) Witchcraft (Acts 13:10; 16:16-18; Galatians 3:1).

- 3) Idol Worship** (Deuteronomy 32:16-17; 1 Corinthians 10:20-21).
- 4) Cultic Heresies And False Religions** (2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 1 Timothy 4:1).
- 5) Unforgiveness** (Matthew 18:23-35).
- 6) Dishonouring One's Parents** (Deuteronomy 27:16; Proverbs 30:17).
- 7) Fear** (Romans 8:15; 2 Timothy 1:7).
- 8) Lying** (John 8:44; Acts 5:3-4).
- 9) Hatred And Murder** (1 Samuel 18:10-11; 1 John 3:12,15).
- 10) Greed** (John 12:6; 13:2; Matthew 26:14-16).
- 11) Backsliding** (1 Samuel 16:14-16).
- 12) Failing To Understand The Gospel** (Matthew 13:4,19).

Through these and other sins, people willingly give the devil a foothold in their lives (Ephesians 4:27). Until they are willing to repent of these sins they will not be completely set free. They may have a partial deliverance through prayer, but due to areas in their lives that they are not willing to submit to God, they will not be able to fully resist the devil (James 4:8).

Many People Are In Need Of Deliverance – *‘When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick’ (Matthew 8:16).*

There were many who needed deliverance when Jesus walked this earth and now, two thousand years later, the situation is probably worse. When a mighty angel proclaimed that Babylon is a place for demons and every unclean spirit, another voice from Heaven said, “Come out of her My people” (Revelation 18:2-4). This is why so many Christians are still in need of deliverance: they have one foot in the church and one foot in the world. They believe in God but they have not put Him first in their lives. If many Christians are still in need of deliverance, how much more so the people of the world!

HOW TO BE SET FREE

One word from Jesus can set a person free (Mark 7:29-30). The issue is whether a person is really willing to repent of their sins, turn from darkness and turn from the devil's power. The need for true repentance has been covered in the previous chapter, "Forgiveness Of Sins." I suggest that the person needing deliverance should have gone through that chapter before entering serious prayer for them. When a person goes through a process of deep repentance they can be set free quite easily.

If you encounter someone who is in such a state of demon-possession that they are not in their right mind, you will need to do extra prayer and fasting for them (Matthew 17:21). Preferably this should be done by an entire prayer team. When they are in their right mind you should lead them to forgive those who have hurt them or to repent of whatever sin they are holding onto.

Power Over The Enemy – *“The seventy-two returned with joy and said, “Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.”*

He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:17-20).

There is power in the name of Jesus to cast out demons. We must know that power when praying for people to be set free. Jesus has conquered the kingdom of darkness (John 12:31; 14:30; Colossians 2:15) and He has given us authority to trample on snakes and scorpions. Demonic beings are likened to locusts, scorpions and other creatures (Revelation 9:1-11). The devil is likened to a snake (Revelation 20:2). Jesus prayed that His people would have divine protection (John 17:15; 2 Thessalonians 3:3), but we must also take up the shield of faith, with which we can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one (Ephesians 6:16). We must actively resist the devil (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9) and command the demons to come out in Jesus' name (Acts 16:18).

If a person knows they are in need of deliverance, because they have something driving, compelling and tormenting them, you can lead them in the following prayer:

DELIVERANCE PRAYER

“Dear Heavenly Father, I come to You in the name of Jesus Christ to confess all my sins. I specifically renounce the following sins..... (name your sins). I confess I have been wrong and I now turn from all that is evil. I ask You, Father, to forgive me, to give me discernment when temptation arises and the strength to resist it. I confess that in my own strength I have been unable to defeat the attacks of the enemy, but by the grace of God I will overcome the works of the devil.

I also renounce any other sins such as rejection and unforgiveness. I especially forgive the following persons..... (name any person you need to forgive). I honour my parents and forgive them, and I renounce the sins of my ancestors. I especially renounce all idolatry, witchcraft, everything of the occult and all the hidden things of darkness.

Thank You, Father, for Your love for me. I believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead. I believe that through His precious blood I have been redeemed out of the hand of the devil, all my sins have been forgiven and I have been made holy unto God. I confess that Jesus is my Lord and my Saviour.

I call upon You, Lord Jesus, to set me free from every demonic power that has affected me. I renounce Satan and all his works. I loosen myself from every demonic spirit, from every evil influence and satanic bondage, and from any spirit in me or upon me that is not of God. I command every demonic power that has lived within me or oppressed me to leave me now in the name of Jesus Christ. Go from me now in the name of Jesus.

I declare that I am a child of the Living God and that Satan has no right to inhabit any part of me or to oppress me. By faith in Jesus I put on the armour of God and I am made strong by the Lord and His mighty power. Thank You, Heavenly Father, for Your work in my life. I give You all the glory and praise in Jesus' wonderful name. Amen."

When the person is delivered they will feel free from some kind of oppression. The peace of God will then come into the person's heart and they will rejoice for their breakthrough. God's love will be with them. Pray that the Holy Spirit will fill every area of their life (Ephesians 5:18). They should receive ongoing discipleship and be trained more fully to become a strong Christian through prayer, Bible study and Christian fellowship.

'She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone' (Mark 7:30).

RECEIVE THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

This Bible study is for being baptized in the Holy Spirit and for receiving the power of God. My prayer is that you will come into this experience and that your walk with the Lord will go to another level.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Jesus Is The Baptizer – *‘And this was his message: “After me will come one more powerful than I, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Mark 1:7-8).*

All four Gospels emphasize the truth that Jesus has come to baptize people with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8 Luke 3:16; John 1:33). Therefore, we must frequently present Christ in this role of ministry.

The Spirit Descended Upon Christ – *‘When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased” (Luke 3:21-22).*

John the Baptist saw Heaven being torn open (Mark 1:10) and the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the bodily form of a dove. The dove remained on Jesus (John 1:32-34), yet not in a materialized bodily form, showing an incredible attribute of

God's Spirit; He can manifest Himself in amazing ways. We should believe for manifestations of the Holy Spirit whenever we gather in Jesus' name.

Empowered For Ministry – *‘Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside’ (Luke 4:14).*

We should expect the Holy Spirit to be upon us so that we can fulfil the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-20). God wants to empower you to preach the gospel with signs and wonders following. Once you have received the baptism with the Holy Spirit, you have the same power that the early apostles had and you are empowered for ministry.

The Anointing Of God – *‘You know what has happened throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached – how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him’ (Acts 10:37-38).*

The anointing is being aware of God's presence with us. At times we will feel a warm presence or glow of the Holy Spirit upon our body. With the anointing comes the power to heal the sick and to perform other miracles (Luke 5:17; Mark 5:25-34). The anointing breaks the yoke of sickness and demonic activity. God has anointed His people (2 Corinthians 1:21; 1 John 2:20,27).

The World Doesn't Know The Holy Spirit But You Can Know Him – *“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you” (John 14:16-17).*

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Holy Trinity (Matthew 28:19). He is a divine being who speaks to us (Acts 8:29). Therefore, we must listen for His voice (Revelation 2:7). Those who know the Holy Spirit can have fellowship with Him (2 Corinthians 12:13).

The Promised Empowering – *“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49).*

“Wait for the gift my Father promised, which you heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:4-5).

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is likened to being clothed with the power of Heaven. It is the gift promised by God the Father.

Power To Be A Witness For Jesus – *“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” (Acts 1:8).*

There is a spiritual battle for the salvation of lost souls. The Holy Spirit comes upon the followers of Christ for the sake of the harvest and to send us forth as powerful witnesses for the kingdom of God. As we share our faith we should expect God to move.

The Coming Of The Holy Spirit – *‘When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them’ (Acts 2:1-4).*

John the Baptist saw a dove that came to rest upon Christ, but now we see the Holy Spirit manifesting Himself as tongues of fire that are able to separate and come to rest upon each believer. I want to emphasize the point that on the day of Pentecost, ‘All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues.’ All believers should lay hold of God for this gift.

This Promise Is For You – *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of*

your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39).

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is for every person who is called to follow the Lord. That means if you are a Christian, the power and anointing of God is for you.

For All People – *‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy’ (Acts 2:17-18).*

A mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit will result in a release of visions, dreams and the gift of prophecy. Revivals will take place throughout the world.

Receive The Holy Spirit – *‘When they arrived, they prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit, because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon any of them; they had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 8:15-17).*

Once a person has received Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, they then need to be taken a step further to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-2). Those who are baptized in the Holy Spirit find a greater release in their spiritual life and a wonderful openness in their relationship with the Lord.

The Gift Of Tongues – *‘While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles. For they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God. Then Peter said, “Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have” (Acts 10:44-47).*

The believers recognized that the people had received the gift of the Holy Spirit when they heard them speaking in unknown languages. When the apostle Paul placed his hands on a group of believers in Ephesus, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied (Acts 19:6).

Praying In Tongues – *‘Dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit’ (Jude 20).*

There is a difference between praying in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:14-15,18), which is between you and God alone, and giving a message of prophecy in tongues, which needs an interpretation otherwise no one will understand it (1 Corinthians 14:1-5,13). It is important to realize these two different aspects so that people are not confused by what is going on. Giving a prophecy by the use of tongues needs an interpretation, but praying in tongues does not, because God already understands what you are saying.

An Ongoing Experience – *‘I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being’ (Ephesians 3:16).*

These believers of the Ephesians church had already received the baptism in the Holy Spirit with the gifts of prophecy and speaking in other tongues (Acts 19:6). Therefore the apostle Paul is speaking about an on-going experience of a further infilling, where you are strengthened in your inner being with the power of the Holy Spirit. This should be our prayer for all believers so that they continue to get closer and closer to God. ‘Be filled with the Spirit’ is an on-going experience (Ephesians 5:18). We can have fresh encounters with the Lord and receive further empowering (Acts 4:31).

Receive The Holy Spirit By Faith – *‘He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit’ (Galatians 3:14).*

Jesus taught His followers to ask God the Father for the Holy Spirit with the promise that we will receive (Luke 11:9-13).

Therefore this should be one of our frequent prayers. It is not by works or self-effort that we receive answers to our prayers, but rather through faith as we trust in God. We have to believe in Jesus in order to be saved; likewise we can believe to be baptized with Holy Spirit and receive the gift of speaking in other tongues. Salvation is a gift from God and so is the baptism with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-5; 11:15-17).

Turn Away From Your Sins – *‘God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him’ (Acts 5:31-32).*

Repentance is necessary because God will only give the Spirit to those who obey the Lord Jesus. A person who is baptized in the Holy Spirit then needs to continue in obedience to God, otherwise the time will come when the Spirit will depart from them (1 Samuel 16:14; Psalm 51:11). Open your heart to God by removing any blockages, such as:

1) Unconfessed sin; 2) Unforgiveness and wrong attitudes towards others; 3) Involvement with witchcraft or the occult; 4) Drinking alcohol; 5) Dishonesty; 6) Wrong doctrines; 7) Unbelief or doubt; 8) Fear; 9) Pride; 10) An unwillingness to witness for Christ.

Confess all your sins to God, receive forgiveness and acknowledge Jesus as your Lord and Saviour. An attitude of repentance towards God enables Him to anoint us afresh. If we turn wholeheartedly from our sins, God will pour out His Spirit and grant a time of refreshing (Acts 3:19). Believe that the word of God is absolutely true and that God has promised to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Believe for the power of Jesus Christ to be manifested right where you are. If your heart is right towards God, He can give this experience to you right now. Wait upon the Lord and allow Him to move. Please pray the following suggested prayer:

PRAYER TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

“Heavenly Father, I ask You to cleanse me of all sin by the precious blood of Your Son, Jesus Christ. I renounce any involvement in witchcraft or the occult on my part or that of my ancestors. I renounce all fear and unbelief and any blockage of my mind. Now I ask You to fill me with the Holy Spirit.

I acknowledge that this promise is for me (and for my children) and for all who are called to follow Christ. I know that You have called me to serve You, so I request the fulfillment of Your promise. I believe that Jesus Christ is the One who baptizes me, so I open my heart to receive the power of Your Spirit.

I ask for Your anointing to come upon me right now. I receive this infilling and the baptism of the Holy Spirit by faith. I ask for the gift of speaking in other tongues and for the gift of prophecy. I give You all praise, thanks, glory and honour. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

Continue to wait quietly upon the Lord. Close your eyes and think of Jesus standing at the right hand of God the Father. As you focus upon the Lord you will begin to sense the peace of God. Allow the Holy Spirit to give you a new language and release to you the gift of tongues. Expect to speak in a heavenly language immediately as you receive this gift from God. Open your mouth and let God fill it. Speak out any words that you are receiving. As you do so you will find that God will give you a beautiful language. Those who have already received the baptism in the Holy Spirit can lay hands on those who are seeking God for this experience and impart to them this spiritual gift.

Once you have received this blessing, set aside time with the Lord each day to speak in tongues. There is no reason why you cannot be prayed for several times if you did not receive the full gift of tongues the first time, but have a believing heart

and act in faith. Believe the word of God and allow Jesus to come closer to you. The Lord is with you and you can become more aware of His presence. At times it is good to go away on your own to wait upon the Lord. Believe the Scriptures that we have gone through and know that God's promises will be fulfilled in your life.

'The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit'
(Acts 13:52).

CONCLUSION

‘When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:36-38).

MORE YOUTH WORKERS ARE NEEDED AROUND THE WORLD!

As an evangelist and a missionary I have been blessed to have been able to preach the gospel in many parts of the world. We need more workers to reach Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Communists, nominal believers who are only Christian in name, and all types of unbelievers, but we especially need more workers for the youth. We need more youth pastors; evangelists who are trained and equipped to reach the youth of different cultures; teachers who can take them deeper in God’s word and prophets who can bring specific messages from the throne of Heaven. We need spiritual fathers and mothers who continue to pray for the youth that they come to maturity and overcome all the attacks of the enemy. Ask the Lord of the Harvest to gather the youth and to establish them in His kingdom.

The writing of this book came out of a deep burden God laid upon my heart. It is therefore my expectation that God will use these messages to save many lives and to restore many who are backslidden. I rejoice now by faith for every person who will return to the Lord. My hope is that every person who was in a backslidden position at the beginning of reading this book is now back on track with God. If you still haven’t given your heart to the Lord, why? Maybe you should contact me and tell me. There is nothing as important as the eternal salvation of your soul and whatever problem or barrier there is in your mind,

don't let that stop you from pursuing God in prayer. Don't let anything stop you from being saved.

Jesus loves all people but He doesn't want lukewarm followers. Many who were born in Christian families become lukewarm because they do not have a progressive vision of the call of God upon their lives. They go to church out of ritual instead of purpose and eventually they drop off. Boring preaching sends them to sleep. Youth don't need a half-hearted message. They need reality and they need strong and powerful preaching that inspires them to live wholeheartedly for the Lord. They need godly goals and a greater purpose in life. This is why every believer needs an onward vision for spiritual growth. They need to know that God has a work for them to do and they are in the battle for the salvation of souls.

CONTINUE TO GO DEEPER IN GOD'S WORD

We need to let the word of God dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16). That is why I suggest you go through the Bible studies a number of times. There may be some Scriptures that you should memorize. For example, if you are being tempted to drink alcohol, memorize some verses on that subject. If you are being tempted to commit sexual sin, and have already learnt an appropriate Scripture, that verse will help you to overcome. Jesus overcame the temptations of the devil by constantly quoting the word of God. The devil twisted the Scriptures but Jesus could immediately respond with the truth because the word of God dwelt in Him richly (Matthew 4:1-11). If you are a leader of a weekly Bible study group, you are welcome to use these Bible study lessons.

This book was written with the goal of keeping the youth on the right path, so that as they get older they will overcome temptation and do things right. We are fighting for young people's lives. There is a tremendous force of evil that is trying to take them away from the path of righteousness. The spiritual battle is intense. You are the one who determines the level of your relationship with God. It is essential that you read and study the word of God. That will inspire you and teach you how

to maintain your walk with the Lord. You need to pray: “Lord Jesus, I want to be closer to You than ever before. I want to be able to live for You and to fulfil Your plans and purposes for my life.”

I have a saying, which is: “Why do things wrong when you can do things right?” You don’t need to backslide and run off with some person of the opposite sex to have a good time. Do things right, get married at the proper time and in a proper way, and have a good future with your family. You cannot be a saint in church and a devil at home. Unresolved flaws pull people off the path of salvation. I hope that through the testimonies and through the Bible studies you have come into a deeper awareness of God and the importance of living for Him. What you do with your life doesn’t just affect yourself; it continues on and on and on through those who have been influenced by you. This short time on earth determines where you are for all eternity. Generations can be saved or lost by what you do today! May God’s love be with you forever, but you must continue in that love.

Jesus said: *“He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters” (Luke 11:23).*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Matthew Needham is an international evangelist called by God at the age of 16 to begin an evangelistic ministry. He stepped out by faith in 1991 to travel through his home country of New Zealand, witnessing on the streets and working through whichever churches gave him opportunity.

After six years of doing street evangelism he went on his first overseas missions trip to Fiji in 1997, but returned home feeling unprepared. A call to the mission field came a second time in 1999, which led him into evangelism among Muslims in Africa. The third time the Lord called him to leave everything and go at once was in 2003 to preach the gospel to the Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists of India and Nepal. In 2009 Matthew went on his first and second mission to Pakistan.

His testimony booklets have been translated into many languages and over 220,000 copies were given out in street witnessing to share the gospel with those who have never heard the good news of salvation. Thousands of copies of his books have also been distributed to reach unbelievers and to strengthen the church in the work that Christ has given us to do.

Matthew's passion is to reveal the glory of the Lord Jesus to those who are living in spiritual darkness and to press ahead to reach the fullness of Christ for the ministry of the evangelist. This is an evangelistic, literature, crusade ministry, doing large and small outreach meetings, leader's seminars, Bible College teaching and constant street evangelism and witnessing. His love for the Lord and for the salvation of lost souls is bringing many into the kingdom of God.

BOOKS BY MATTHEW G. NEEDHAM

Make Sure Of Your Salvation (2007)

The Awesome Magnificence Of Jesus Christ (2009)

Walking In God's Power (2010)

The Church That Might Save The World (2010)

How The Devil Destroyed The Youth Group (2010)

Muslims Touched By The Love Of Jesus (2010)