

# Capturing God's Heart

## Volumes 41 - 50



a publication of

**Capturing Courage International Ministries**

*Equipping & Encouraging Indigenous Pastors around the World*

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up,  
just as you have been doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

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## Volume Forty-One: Lament

Within our Christian cultures we do not often leave room for lament. The ability to lament may have been lost in our excitement over the saving of our Lord and yet, lament still holds an important place in our daily lives and in our walk with God.

To begin with, lament reminds us that we are hopeless without Jesus Christ.

It brings us to the end of ourselves and it is deliberate validation of the pain in our lives; this is key to a healing and releasing of our lives. In order to loose off the pain of our lives that pain must be acknowledged, recognized and spoken for what it is; only then are we are free to go on to forgiveness and the new things that God would have for us.

We read that Jesus was a man of sorrows, and that he wept.

**“He was despised and rejected – a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief.”  
Isaiah 53:3**

**“Then Jesus Wept” John 11:35**

Lament brings us past being wounded, to being broken.

In order for God to shine through us we must first be broken; broken over our self concern, broken over the hurts of others, and broken over our own hurts. Broken is different than being wounded.

Broken allows the Lord to shine out through our lives. Wounded keeps God from entering. Wounded we build up hardness, scabs, barriers to God’s love. Broken we are opened to the love and touch of God.

For instance, when we are physically wounded our skin builds up scabs and toughens to protect itself; it is the same with our wounded hearts.

The only way beyond our wounded hearts is to invest in lament both on our own behalf and on behalf of others. Lament brings compassion and the oil of the Lord to our wounds. This softens our self-protection to the point that the Lord can break in with His presence and touch. The Lord wants to heal and restore us at our most vulnerable and hurting selves.

**“He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed.” 1 Peter 2:24**

**“They begged him to let the sick touch at least the fringe of his robe, and all who touched him were healed.” Matthew 14:36**

We can in fact differentiate the broken from the wounded by their ability to lament. Wounded we do not have the ability to lament, but when we are broken, lament becomes ease to our hearts.

The Psalmists were powerful in lament. They were in touch with their sorrow and loss and spoke of it freely. We too must have room for this in our own lives and within the body of Christ.

**“Listen to my prayer, O God. Do not ignore my cry for help! Please listen and answer me, for I am overwhelmed by my troubles. My enemies shout at me, making loud and wicked threats. They bring trouble on me and angrily hunt me down. My heart pounds in my chest. The terror of death assaults me. Fear and trembling overwhelm me, and I can’t stop shaking. Oh, that I had the wings like a dove; then I would fly away and rest! I would fly far away to the quiet of the wilderness.” Psalm 55:1-7**

It is part of the ministry of Christ to increase our sensitivity to others and to make space for lament.

While it may be true that God will do great things, heal all things, and make us glad, the person in the midst of great sorrow does not need to hear this, not at first.

To be healing agents of our Lord Jesus Christ our first response to those in great pain is to simply acknowledge the pain, *“Yes, this has been very bad for you.”*

*“I’m so sorry that this has been your experience.”*

As we sit in the pain with them we do not rush them out of the pain nor we do not sweep it away too quickly. To brush away the hurt and pain is to disregard the harsh realities that many have faced; it is to disregard the person.

We do not rush people out of their pain in order to find Jesus, but we in fact enter Jesus into the pain; this is, after all, what He came to do.

He did not come to put on a happy face per se, as though sadness is wrong, just the opposite. He came to enter in and to inhabit our sorrows and to find us as companions in grief and loss. Paul described it this way,

**“To the weak I became weak so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by some means I might save some.” 1 Corinthians 9:22**

There is much in this world to be sad about. Your life and my life, we have things that have gone horribly wrong. Our lives contain things that cannot be fixed. To allow honesty about this is part of the ministry of the saints one to another.

Do we want to rejoice? Yes. Do we want to experience God’s healing and hope? For sure. Do we want our days to be a little lighter and with more gladness? Certainly.

But the path to this is not in putting on a happy face in a false way, but in bringing our honesties and hopelessness to God. It is imperative that we remain in the authentic emotions of sorrow in order to find God tucked in right beside us in the very midst. One of the gifts we give each other is the freedom to lament.

And as we invest in lament our joy increases. This is why Jesus could say,

**“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.” Matthew 5:4**

I was in Mozambique last year to a number of churches over a fairly wide area. In one place the land was hard and the people exhibited a toughness that mirrored the land in which they lived. With heat and a land of scrub-brush, where the people worked double time to eek out a living, I wondered at their resilience and strength in such a place.

I found the answer when we came to worship. While they had the traditional songs of praise, with upbeat tempo and dance, the song they chose to open our teaching time was one of lament; it was a slow, mournful, longing poured out in song.

The women led the way and it is truly one of the most beautiful things I have ever heard. It contained a special fragrance that wafted to our Lord and I learned in an instant the secret of their resilience in such a hard land – they easily and regularly entered into lament.

I don't know why we are afraid of lament. I don't know where we learned to avoid sorrow or to consider it bad and wrong. I don't know why we rush at people's pain with 'God will fix it'. I suspect it is because we cannot bear their sorrow, for we have not yet found God in the midst of our own.

Yet, Jesus lives to intercede for us. We read,

**“Therefore his is able, once and forever to save those who come to God through him. He lives forever to intercede with God on their behalf.” Hebrews 7:25**

We can courageously enter into lament because God is already there.

In contrast, when we are fearful of pain we dismiss one of the most powerful tools by which to reach the lost and to minister to each other for the ability to lament alongside others brings us into immediate fellowship and friendship and into the bonds of peace with both God and each other.

Lament enters us into the holy of holies where intimacy with our Lord increases, where we validate and honour each others stories, and where we find true strength as God comes near to us.

To understand and come alongside the man of sorrows we must come in the honesty of our own sorrows. We must engage them, cry them out, speak the losses, walk through the pain. Lament is holy work.

We must not push people away by too quickly saying, *'but God will heal you,'* for before the healing must come the lamenting.

We must allow the infection of our souls to rise to the surface. As ministers of Jesus Christ this is one of our tasks. We first come into touch with our own lament, finding God richly in our lament, and then we are okay to enter into lament for and beside others.

**“If one member suffers all suffer together.” I Corinthians 12:26**

We cry with others. We sit in silence with others. We sorrow with others.

We need not be afraid of silence of lament. We do not need to rush to soothe it, or rush to throw God at it. A ministry of lament is part of a powerful healing process.

*“Dear God, we bring to you the honesty of our hearts and lives. We carry many sorrows and sometimes the pain of our hearts is too great to bear. I am glad to read that you were also a person of sorrow and that you wept. Today I open my sorrow that it might mingle with your sorrow. Thank you for interceding for me before the throne of God. I bring you my pain, I bring you my loss, I bring you my sadness and I welcome you to carry it with me. I do not hide it from you, but invite you into it’s midst. Teach me how to lament in a way that washes the sorrow from my being; may I acknowledge the pain of this life and be freed from its grasp as I enter into lament. May I find you in the middle of the hardest parts of my life. Thank you Lord that you also give us this same ministry of lament alongside others; please grow me in this ability to sorrow with others and to bring your ministry to them in this way. May we together find your joy. Bless you Jesus, thank you for showing us how to be honest about our lives. Amen and Amen.”*

## 42. Volume Forty-Two: Roots

At Capturing Courage International Ministries we are called to work at the roots of difficulty and despair. Imagine, if you will, a tree. The tree has branches and on these branches there are fruits. The tree has a trunk and connected and below the surface of the soil are the roots of the tree.

Consider that the branches of the tree bear the bad fruit that we see in our communities. There is poverty, sexual abuses, injustice, corruption, educational difficulties, family breakdown, modern slavery, sex trafficking, and more.



Often, we look at these bad fruits and we are drawn to action. Now, action is always good and right and necessary, absolutely necessary. We must enter into these problems and make a better way for everyone involved.

At the same time, we must also begin to learn about the roots that are feeding these bad fruits. We might, after all, spend our entire lifetimes picking the bad fruit only to have it growing back again and again.

It is only in Jesus Christ, by his name, blood, and power, that we can remove the bad roots, that feed these bad fruits. The roots that feed bad fruits are things like selfishness, pride, bitter-root judgments, hatred, lust, idolatry, disobedience, fears, lies we believe, and more.

We read of the time to come in Revelation, **“I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, “Look, God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever. And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” Revelation 21:3-5a**

The entire plan of our Lord is to redeem, restore, and make new. And though there is a final and future reality to this plan of the Lord there is also the bringing of the Kingdom of God to earth here and now.

We can participate in the healing and restoration of our communities and nations; this is, after all, the call of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of Jesus Christ calls us to address the roots of our lives, our communities, and our nations. It is something that begins with us.

In 2 Chronicles we are told, **“Then if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14**

It is imperative, as the body of Christ, that we take the time to wait on the Lord, asking him to reveal to us where we have participated in the roots that lead to our (corporate) bad fruits.

The more we can come in repentance and humility before the Lord, the greater will be the healing of our lands. The Bible is clear, it is the body of Christ, you and I, that are called to be salt and light in the world.

Imagine that you had a big pot of food. And into that pot you put just a bit of salt — it would make all the food taste better.

Imagine that you were looking into a dark room. You are unsure about entering that dark room for it looks scary and ... dark. But imagine that you are wearing the light of the world, imagine that as you enter that dark room that the light you bring with you illuminates the room — the darkness goes away simply because of the presence of the light.

This is the call of Jesus Christ and of his gospel. He is good news to a world brought low by the weight of sin and roots that feed bad fruits. Jesus is the light that we wear as we enter into the difficulties around us. In Jesus we become salt that preserves and makes the whole world a little more glad.

There are many who do not yet know Jesus Christ. There are many who are not yet comfortable with repentance and humility. There are many who have not experienced Christ as the answer to their situations. But you have.

You, as a child of The King, are called to participate in the healing and restoration of this world unto Jesus Christ. And we begin by taking responsibility for what has gone wrong around us.

Consider Daniel who was an amazing man of God. In Daniel chapter 9 we find him taking responsibility for the sins of his people. Now, Daniel had been but a teenager when Judah was taken captive by the Babylonians (he carried no personal responsibility for those sins that had been committed many, many years before he was even born), and yet we find him in humility standing in the gap to declare and intercede and to make a way for both the spiritual and literal freedom of his people.

He was obviously past all blaming and condemnation. He had obviously invested in forgiveness and of trusting his own captivity to the Lord. And then, in great maturity and spiritual authority, he prayed and confessed and repented of the sins that had resulted in their captivity.

**“I prayed to the Lord my God and confessed: O Lord, you are a great and awesome God! You always fulfill your covenant and keep your promises of unfailing love to those who love you and obey your commands. But we have sinned and done wrong. We have rebelled against you and scorned your commands and regulations. We have refused to listen to your servants and prophets, who spoke on your authority to our kings and princes and ancestors and to all the people of the land.” Daniel 9:4-6**

Let me say it again, Daniel confessed to sins that were not personally his. Notice how many times he said ‘We’. He took on the sins of the people in order to bring them before the Lord in confession and repentance. We know today, that this was a participatory act in the heart of the Lord for the freedom of all peoples. We must learn from Daniel’s example.

In fact, the intercession of Daniel was a prophetic act foretelling the ministry of Jesus Christ himself. Jesus came and lived a sinless life and then took on 100% responsibility for the sins of the whole world.

We can also participate in this for our neighbourhoods, our communities, and our nations. As we come before the Lord confessing to our own heart sins, and then the sins of our the areas in which we live, we bring the healing of our Lord. We bring the heart of God to our nations. And we are all healed and made a little more glad. This is the work of the body of Christ. This is the salt and light that we are equipped and empowered to bring. And it all begins with confession and repentance from our heart and lips.

**“The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God.” Psalm 52:17**

So, we look at the roots that feed the bad fruits found in our communities, and we ask the Holy Spirit to begin a deep cleansing and healing work, first and foremost, in our own lives. And as we find the Lord’s freedom and healing deep within our own judgments, our own hurts and hatreds, our own disobedience, and the lies that we have believed, we are then spiritually equipped and called to enter into confession and repentance for our communities and our nations.

In this place we stand in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ declaring freedom over our lands and the Kingdom of God begins to inhabit our lives and our communities here and now.

*“God, we come in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We confess God that we have been believing lies about you and about this world. We have thought God that all the problems are about everyone else. We have not stood in the gap and taken on the responsibility for our lands or our people. We have been glad to let them perish in their sin. God forgive us.*

*Give us eyes to see that we can take responsibility in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and that we can bring our personal and corporate sins to the cross where they are washed away by the blood of The Lamb. Begin to show us the strongholds in our communities and give us courage to take responsibility for these before you. We want to participate in your healing over this whole earth Father. Thank you. We bless your name.”*

Note: to pray through sins to complete freedom and healing in the Lord click on this [LINK](#) to be taken to the healing prayer process that we use at CCIM. Gather as people of God and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the sins and bad roots that can be brought to the cross. Begin to take responsibility and to declare healing to your community. May the Lord bless you and may the Holy Spirit lead you.

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## 43. Volume Forty-Three: Revival

I grew up in the church and often heard about revivals that happened over the years in various places. Yet I never had a working definition for revival. Earlier this year I began asking the Lord to give me a better picture of revival, what it is, how it comes to us, and the impact it leaves in our lives.

To begin, let's define revival. If I had to give a definition to revival it would be when the Kingdom of God breaks in upon our realities; it is when we are touched by the living God and our lives no longer remain the same.

In my study of revival I found out is that Revival requires three necessary ingredients.

- A Hunger for More of God
- Repentance & Humility
- Religious Stronghold Broken

Lets take some time to look at these three key ingredients for revival.

### **I. A HUNGER FOR MORE OF GOD**

When I think of a hunger for God I think of someone who wants God so much that he or she is willing to come to him regardless of what is in their life. We may have sins and regrets but we push past the shame and condemnation of those things to come to God; we may be nervous about being seen by God but we come anyway.

A hunger for more of God brings us beyond ourselves and we seek Him out. We no longer hide and we are ready to reveal our whole hearts to the Lord while we wait expectantly for him to reveal himself to us.

**“For he satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.” Psalm 107:9**

**“God blesses those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” Matthew 5:6**

We must ask ourselves, how hungry are we for God, how thirsty are we for Him?



A hunger for more of God brings us past our need to make things right before we come to him. Instead, we learn to bring ourselves to the Lord even in our sin. We do not hide our sin, cover it up, try to do away with it ourselves, but we become quick to be turned back to the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we fear, doubt, worry, are in dismay and discouragement, a hunger for more of God has us turned to Him even at these times, especially at these times. And as we keep turned toward Jesus we come to be known by him and to know him better.

**“But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord — who is the Spirit — makes us more and more like him as we are changed into this glorious image.” 2 Corinthians 3:16-18**

And as we remain turned to Jesus, hungry for more of God we, by our hearts action, renounce the shame and the condemnation that the enemy would have us under. We, like Jesus (**Hebrews 12:2**) despise the shame and refuse to have it keep us bound to ourselves — we live free unto the Lord.

## **2. REPENTANCE & HUMILITY**

We may think that repentance is only for those people out there. But repentance is a call to the body of Christ to intercede and to lead the way forward on behalf of our communities and nations. As the body of Christ takes the responsibility for the sins of their own lives, but then for the sins of their communities and nations, we become salt and light for this world.

This is an incredible invitation by God himself to participate in the coming of the Kingdom of God to this earth.

**“But if my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and restore their land.” 2 Chronicles 7:14**

We must remain bowed to the Lord in our spirits, hearts, and minds. We must continue to know our need before the Lord. We must live with a heart that is eager to acknowledge our wrong before the Lord.

**“And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. For the new wine would burst the wineskins, spilling the wine and ruining the skins. New wine must be stored in new wineskins. But no one who drink the old wine seems to want the new wine. ‘The old is just fine, they say.’” Luke 5:37-39**

In this passage the new wine is the fresh move of God through the work of Jesus Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit personally and intimately through each person. The wineskins are us as people.

Jesus is saying that if we want to contain this new movement and work of Jesus Christ that we must become new wineskins. We must become new in Him or we will not be able to contain all that God has for us.

**“But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” John 4:23-24**

It is incumbent upon the body of Christ to lead the way in repentance and humility for repentance is the key to our own freedom and is the key to releasing the spirit of the living God into our communities and for the transformation of our nations. As each one of us comes in repentance we do our part and we participate in this coming of the Kingdom of God to earth.

### **3. RELIGIOUS SPIRITS MUST BE BROKEN**

Lastly, religious spirits must be broken. The things of our lives that reflect religion must be renounced and broken off of our own lives and off of our communities and ultimately our nations.

Now, for many of us who have been in church a long time we may not be able to discern the difference between religion and the gospel of Christ. Unfortunately, we have within our churches often taken on elements of religion. So, let's look at the difference between religion and Jesus.

Religion says “Try harder.” — Jesus says, “Enter into my rest.”

Religion says, “Be perfect.” — Jesus says, “I am making all things new.”

Religion says, “You must always and forever more bring a Sacrifice.”

Jesus says, “I AM YOUR SACRIFICE.”

The gospel of Jesus is simple:

- receive Christ
- rest in him
- be the light of Christ

Yet it is so simple that we often complicate it in our quest to be more sophisticated. The gospel needs nothing more added to it and we must be careful that we are not coming back under a spirit of law and condemnation.

Paul in Galatians is strongly warning against this very thing:

**“Rather, I am a sinner if I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down. For when I tried to keep the law it condemned me. So I died to the law — I stopped trying to meet all its requirements — so that I might live for God.” Galatians 2:18-19**

**“But those who depend on the laws to make them right with God are under his curse.” Galatians 3:10**

**“This way of faith is very different from the way of law, which says, ‘It is through obeying the law that a person has life. But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing.’ Galatians 3:12-13**

**“So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don’t get tied up again in slavery to the law.” Galatians 5:1**

To remain in the work of Christ is to be diligent against anything that is of religion. We are called not into a religion of rights and wrongs but into a living relationship with God whereby, by his Spirit and by the power of the blood of Jesus Christ, we are freed unto living.

The world is chock-full of religions, all of which are demanding penance and paying dues and making sacrifices, but Jesus comes and frees us from this.

I am convinced that the wide way (**Matthew 7:13-14**) that Jesus says many will find, is religion, and that the narrow way that few find is this relationship, grace, and freedom with Jesus. We want to be people of the narrow way.

It is hard to rest in the work of Jesus Christ. It is not in our nature to stop trying so hard and to trust someone else and the work they have done. Yet, this is the invitation implicit within the gospel — Jesus says come to me and I will give you rest.

**“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light. Matthew 11:28-30**

Revival is a call and an invitation to every single one of us to enter anew into the rest of the Lord Jesus Christ. Revival is a call to stop trying so hard and to begin resting in Jesus and the work he did on our behalf.

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## Volume 44 - The Wide Road & The Narrow Road

**“You can enter God’s kingdom only through the narrow gate. The [road that leads to destruction]ESV\* is broad, and it’s gate is wide for the many who choose that way. But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.” Matthew 7:13-14 NLT \*[highway to hell] NLT**

I have become convinced that the wide and the narrow roads that Jesus talks about are not in regards to sin per se, but about our response to sin. The Wide Road experiences sin in shame and condemnation and out of that experience works to rid itself of sin.

The Wide Road is where we put in good works and our own efforts to try and make ourselves right with God. The Wide Road is where we participate in religion that appeases the Gods, that focusses on self, that works to come clean.

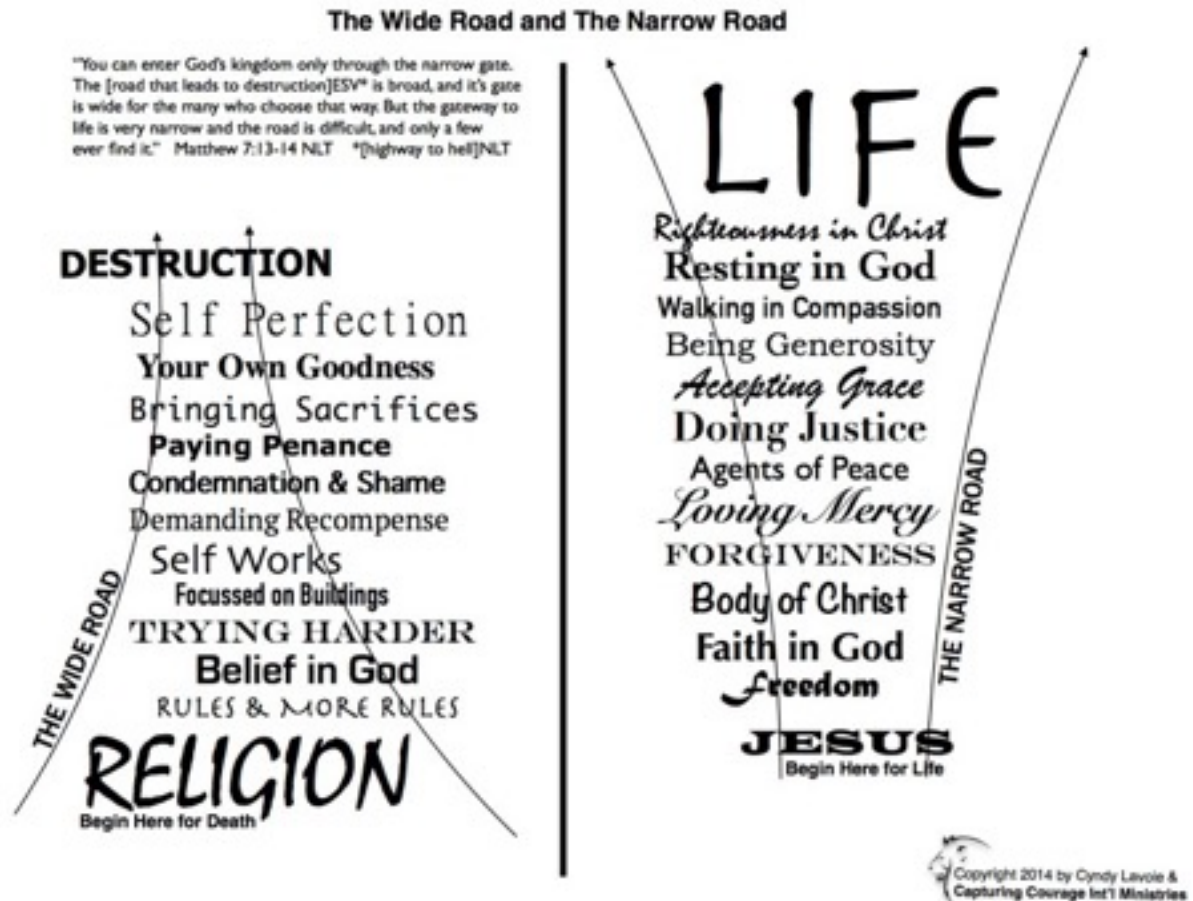
**“If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love.” 1 John 4:18b**

The Narrow Road, on the other hand, does not experience sin as condemnation and shame but as a matter-of-fact part of our humanity and our fallenness. The Narrow Road despises the shame and condemnation and instead remains turned toward Jesus Christ the Saviour of our lives.

**“And we do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.” Hebrews 12:2**

On the Wide Road we continue to bring our sacrifices and our penance.

On the Narrow Road we rest in the work of Jesus Christ who is our sacrifice.



**“The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing.” John 6:63**

**“And as for righteousness, I obeyed the law without fault. I once thought these things were valuable, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done.” Philippians 3:6b,7**

**“Let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ’s blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.” Hebrews 10:22**

On the Wide Road we participate in rituals, we tithe so that we remain in the protection of God, and we do good deeds to outweigh our badness. On the Wide Road we believe in God but we have not yet put our faith in Him.

**“You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me!” John 5:39**

**“Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.” Ephesians 2:9**

On The Narrow Road we stop trying so hard.

We understand that we CANNOT MAKE GOOD on our lives, (**Galatians 2:18**). We die to the law and we begin to live in Christ. We take our focus off of ourselves and whether we are good or bad or right or wrong and we put our focus onto Jesus and we follow closely as His Holy Spirit leads us; we let God guide our steps.

On The Wide Road we demand perfection from ourselves and from others. Because sin is the problem (only on the wide road) we do all we can to cover over, to pretend it isn't there, to fix it, to solve it, to come right in our own strengths.

**“I know what enthusiasm they have for God, but it is misdirected zeal. For they don't understand God's way of making people right with himself. Refusing to accept God's way, they cling to their own way of getting right with God.” Romans 10:2-3a**

**“Make sure that the light you think you have is not actually darkness.” Luke 11:35**

Yet, on The Narrow Road we know that sin is not the problem.

Does sin cause problems? Certainly! Yet, sin is not the problem.

Christ took care of that problem over two-thousand years ago, and so on The Narrow Road we know that we do not focus any longer on our sin or anyone else's sin — rather, we speak words of life and we give hope that, “You too can be free from the death cycles of being focussed on sin by coming into the saving work of Jesus Christ.”

**“So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law.” Galatians 5:1**

On The Wide Road this focus on sin and it's knee-jerk response of being good, has us on a cycle of condemnation and shame and trying harder.

**“But those who depend on the law to make them right with God are under his curse.” Galatians 3:10**

In contrast, those on The Narrow Road find that condemnation and shame no longer have any voice — these are mute in the great and holy, righteous, presence of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Just as Jesus despised the shame, so can we.

On The Narrow Road we rest in Jesus and we find life.

**“Come to me, all of you who are weary carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.”  
Matthew 11:28**

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## Volume 45 - Understanding

Two weeks ago I was meeting with a prayer client. She had been meeting with me for some sessions and was in the midst of facing some hard decisions. As we came before the Lord inquiring of His thoughts it occurred to her that her trouble was that she has been trying to understand every part of what she was facing.

The Lord revealed that the problem was that she wanted to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, how to go forward; she was looking for a surety within her own mind and understanding.

The Holy Spirit brought to her mind this verse:

**“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7 ESV**

**“And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:7 NASB**

“Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:6-7 NLT

Notice the slightly different ways the verse is translated:

ESV says, **“which surpasses all understanding”**

NASB says, **“which surpasses all comprehension”**

NLT says, **“which exceeds anything we can understand”**

The Holy Spirit revealed to her that to follow the peace of Christ would in fact take her places, good places, that her own understanding would not go. It was a moment of revelation for her and in response she quickly and easily put down at the cross her own understanding. She realized the sin of following her own understanding.

When we are faced with difficult decisions and complicated situations it is easy to toss all possible options around and around in our hearts and minds. As we contemplate this idea and that solution, this option and that criteria, we can easily lose sleep at such times. The stress of trying to make a ‘good’ decision can make for bad days and may even ruin our health over the long term.

Yet God is pretty clear that as we bring our concerns and worries to him that he will guide us with His peace. The verse prior reads:

**“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Philippians 4:6 ESV**

**“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.” Philippians 4:6 NLT**

We know that life is not simple. There are complicated situations that are beyond our best thinking and understanding. Sometimes in fact, we are faced with hard decisions that may seem wrong but turn out to be right. It is especially at these times that we must pay close attention to the Lord and to his peace.

I’ve come to see that God guides us with his peace. We may be uncertain about something but God’s peace enters in and we risk to go forward in Him. Or, we may be uncertain about something and God’s peace is *not* found and so we risk to hold back.

God’s peace does indeed surpass our understanding. The peace of God is powerful and by it we are kept by the Lord in a way that doesn’t always make sense to us, a way that ‘surpasses our comprehension and that exceeds anything we can understand’.

My prayer client realized that she had been trying to do life according to her own understanding. She was trying to make the best decision, the right decision, but all in all, after many months of trying to get it ‘right’ she was frazzled and worn and worried and no closer to a solution or answer than she had been before.

One of the things she gave over to Jesus that day was her need to understand.

Instead of trying to understand, she committed herself to paying attention to the Lord and where his peace was for her; as she looked at difficult options to a complicated situation she came to see that only the peace of the Lord could truly guide her. And she caught a glimpse that the peace of God could lead her to good results that her own understanding is unable to produce.

She saw in fact, that her own understanding of right and wrong and of good and bad had been getting in the way of her walking in the peace of Christ. She had been doing what many Christians do, she was following the god of good and bad and right and wrong, rather than the God of peace that surpasses understanding.

Perhaps we are forgetting what the writer of Proverbs tells us:

**“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.”  
Proverbs 3:5**

We must come to realize that our understanding is faulty. We cannot figure it all out. There are pieces to every situation that are not ours to know. Only God sees all the sides and parts and pieces of circumstances, of relationships, of ministry, of our futures, and of our lives.

It is good therefore to learn complete dependence on the Spirit of the Lord for wisdom and ways forward with whatever we may be facing.

And it is as we do this, that true understanding can be ours. *Waiting on the Lord*, turning away from our own understanding and turning towards Him brings us to wisdoms that would not normally be ours.

**“Making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.” Proverbs 2:2-5**

**“The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.”  
Psalm 119:130**

I don't know what situations or decisions you are facing today, but I suggest that you wait on the Lord for his understanding. Learn to hold back, do not act on your understanding, rather, wait on the Lord, see what he has to say and pay attention to his peace.

How is he leading you? What are you sensing from him?

The peace of the Lord does surpass our understanding. The Lord often leads us in ways that may not make sense to us, but if there is the peace of Christ leading you then you best follow.

Coming into His peace we find ourselves surrendering to the Lord our own best understanding. We come out of agreement with what makes sense to us (in our own best thinking) and we come into agreement with the leading and direction of the Lord.

Give him this. Give him your understanding. Then invite God to lead you and to guide you with his peace.

*“God I come today in the name and the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Father, I have been counting on my own ability to understand and to make sense of things. But I see today that this habit of mine, this central focus on my own thinking, may in fact be keeping me from you, from your leading and from your peace.*

*Today I say ‘No more!’ to my own best understanding and I ask that you enter me into your wisdom and your peace upon my life. Show me the way you would have me go. Enter me into your understanding, teach me, guide me. Thank you that you desire us to live in your peace, thank you for your understanding. Amen.”*

There are many strengths that we like to rely on in this world. But knowing God, understanding him, following his direction, having his peace, are the best kinds of strengths we might have. God will not fail us as we look to him for direction put aside our own best ideas and take on his understanding.

**Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me...” Jeremiah 9:23-24a**



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## Volume 46 - Spirit of The Father

I continue to be caught by the story of the prodigal son.

Let's begin by reading from Luke 15:11-31

**11** To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. **12** The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons.

**13** "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. **14** About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. **15** He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. **16** The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything.

**17** "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! **18** I will go home to my father and say, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, **19** and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.'"

**20** "So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. **21** His son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.'

**22** "But his father said to the servants, 'Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. **23** And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, **24** for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.' So the party began.

**25** "Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, **26** and he asked one of the servants what was going on. **27** 'Your brother is back,' he was told, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.'

**28** "The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, **29** but he replied, 'All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. **30** Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf?'

**31** "His father said to him, 'Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. **32** We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!'"

In this story we have three characters. We have the son, the father, and the older brother. We are most familiar with the son. He is the one who insults his father, takes his inheritance too soon, and then squanders it completely.

We know the son as he comes back to the Father, hoping for a few things. He hopes to have a place to stay and food to eat. He hopes to pay back his father for the offence, (notice in verses 17-19 how he is rationalizing with himself a plan to present to his father once he is home).

And we are familiar with the father. This man has been watching and waiting. Notice how in verse 20 we find that the father began running to meet the son while he was still a long way off.

There are a few things about this story that I have been learning these last years. I've come to understand that the father, in his running, threw off his importance. Important men do not run in the middle east. The father would have also thrown off all propriety, as in his running he would have had to lift his skirts to run with his ankles being exposed. Another taboo in middle eastern culture of the time.

Furthermore, we find that culturally speaking it would have been 'proper' and 'right' for the villagers, the townspeople, to intercept the son as he comes home and to avenge the insult to the father by stoning the son to death. Yet we find the father running to intercept this attack and to take the stones onto himself. The father runs to take the punishment in place of his son.

The story goes on. The father embraces his son and rejects all notions for him to become any kind of hired servant, calling out instead for a lavish banquet to be served and for fresh clothes.

In steps the older brother. Now, the older brother was the one who had been doing everything right. He had been faithful. He had been keeping to his work and his responsibilities. He had been making right choices and proving himself worthy. And he was keenly aware of his sacrifice in service to his father.

So, when the older brother hears about the banquet and the lavish welcome the Father is giving the son, the older brother becomes angry. He cannot abide the injustice of this. The son who has done everything wrong is welcomed without reservation.

What I want to point out today, is that all too often within our christian cultures, within our churches, as pastors and leaders and 'good' christians, we have become the older brother.

We are doing all the right things. We are working hard. We are remaining faithful. We are making good choices. We are sacrificing.

And then, all of a sudden, there are those who have been doing everything wrong. They have made wrong choices. They have not worked as they should. They have made big mistakes and have hurt many people. They have failed in so many ways. They have offended God so many times. Yet, one day, they choose the Lord. They come back to the Father.

And The Father welcomes them whole-heartedly! The Father breaks out a celebration for them The Father bestows honour and blessings upon these ones. He advances them forward. The son is accepted, the son is celebrated, the son is received, the son is embraced, the son is welcomed, the son is reestablished in all things.

And we, those who are the older brother, become angry, jealous, incensed, in disbelief.

We wonder, "Where is the justice? Where is the fairness? Where is right and wrong and good and bad and all that comes of these things?!"

Out of our anger, out of our jealousy, out of our self-righteousness, out of our sacrifice, we cannot celebrate this one who has come to the Lord. We cannot embrace his or her newness in Christ. All we

want is for the old to be remembered and made right. We want punishment, not forgiveness. We want recompense, not grace. We want retribution, not celebration.

And we refuse to enter into the celebration. We refuse the feast.

**“But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began... (but) the older brother was angry and wouldn’t go in.” Luke 15:22-24, 28**

**“Jesus also told them other parables. He said, “The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son. When the banquet was ready, he sent his servants to notify those who were invited. But they all refused to come!” Matthew 22:1-2**

It must be noted that in the spirit of the older brother we will have a feeling of rightness and of conscientious goodness about ourselves. We are upholding righteousness after all! We are maintaining standards of good and bad! We are ensuring that people understand the way it is to be! Yet, in the spirit of the older brother our attitude stinks and our manner is offensive.

In our ‘rightness’ we are wrong. In our ‘goodness’ we have missed the point. In our ‘sacrifice’ we miss the heart of the Father. And we miss the feast. We are not prepared for the wedding feast of the Lamb because we have not clothed ourselves in the right clothes.

**“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” Galatians 5:22-23**

We’ve not put on compassion, empathy, humility, kindness, graciousness, or generosity of soul. We are not welcoming, we do not embrace. We maintain exacting measures and the letter of the law. We do not understand the kingdom of the Father from his perspective but only from our own. We miss out on his spirit. We miss out on love. We miss out on forgiveness. We miss out on the feast. We miss the celebration.

The enemy, and our own self importance, our service, and our sacrifice, will whisper to our hearts that we deserve honour and that we deserve to be the ones at the head of the line, first in place, recognized, validated for our rightness and our goodness.

But in this attitude, in our self-righteousness - that has no room for those who haven’t been so perfect - we will find ourselves at the back of the line. And perhaps, rejecting the feast.

Living by the letter of the law we miss out on the spirit of the law. Live by exacting measures and we lose out on life. Contrast this with living by The Spirit where a generosity of heart and soul marks our days.

**“... I am a sinner if I rebuild the old system of law I already tore down. For when I tried to keep the law, it condemned me. So I died to the law—I stopped trying to meet all its requirements—so that I might live for God.” Galatians 2:18-19**

**“Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” Luke 6:38**

The celebration of the Father is happening all around us all the time. Certainly there will be a future feast and celebration in all its fullness, yet the banquet is already beginning, the celebration has already been introduced in the work and person of Jesus Christ.

The moment that Jesus became our sacrifice the wedding began. Now, everyone can come to him. Anyone who wants can receive entrance into the Father’s home, to the celebration, to the feast.

**“Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.” Isaiah 55:1**

I cannot say this strongly enough - we want to ensure that we go forward in ministry and life with the spirit of the Father and not of the older son.

Do not go through life with the spirit of the older brother.

Rather, base your life on the spirit of the Father.

Clothe yourselves in Christ so that you can be ready for the feast.

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

**“Let us be glad and rejoice, and let us give honour to him. For the time has come for the wedding feast of the Lamb, and his bride has prepared herself.” Revelation 19:7**

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## Volume 47 - The Time of Christ

When Jesus Christ came to earth there was a well-established religious system. There were the scribes and pharisees, these were the keepers of the law, the ones schooled in the specifics of the keeping of the law.

These were the leaders of the Jewish religion and the ones that enforced and taught God’s ways. They were the ones living their best to be good and right and perfect and by this managed to appear better than anyone else.

At that same time, when Jesus came to earth, there were the common people like you and I. These common people were living their lives trying to do as God might have them do, trying to be as God might have them be. They were working hard but perhaps, in contrast to the religious leaders, felt inadequate and not quite measuring up.

And then, at the time of Christ there were the outcasts, the people who were both ignored and despised by others, hated for their lifestyles and the choices they had made. These ones were marginalized and scorned by the rest of their society and lived in deep awareness of their failure and condemnation.

Now, I imagine that when the religious leaders, the scribes and pharisees, considered the Messiah coming to earth that they may have imagined the Messiah applauding them for their great goodness and effort of perfection.

I imagine that when the common people considered the Messiah coming to earth they may have imagined that they would have no place in his kingdom. They may have believed that they had little to bring or to offer.

And I imagine that when the outcasts, those living with failure, with sin, with compromised lives, considered the Messiah coming to earth that these ones (who had only known rejection and scorn) may have imagined that the Messiah would not even look in their direction.

But, as we read the gospels we come to find that the Messiah, that Jesus, upset this well-established religious system and any expectations for a Messiah, as he came in a very unexpected way.

Now, when the Messiah came to earth he did NOT applaud the scribes and pharisees, the religious leaders of the day, but he chastised and rebuked them. He called them whitewashed tombs, declaring them to be neat and tidy and clean on the outside but filthy and dead on the inside. And he warned others about them also. They were living seemingly perfect lives but their hearts were not impacted by the love of God; they seemed to have missed the heart of the Lord.

**“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people’s bones and all uncleanness.” Matthew 23:27**

**“Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and love greetings in the marketplaces and the best seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at feasts, who devour widows’ houses and for a pretense make long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.” Luke 20: 46-47**

In addition to this, when the Messiah came to earth the common people were NOT dismissed but they, in fact, found him to be the key to purpose and meaning. Jesus invited them into meaningful and important work within the Kingdom of God and he said that to any who come to Christ are in fact given the keys to the Kingdom of God. Jesus elevated the state of the common person bringing to them participation in the great work of the Kingdom of God.

**“For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:18-22**

**“He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” Matthew 16:15-20**

And, when the Messiah came to earth he did NOT avoid, or shun, or ignore, the ones scorned and hated, but in fact he looked them in the eye and invited himself to eat with them and they with him. To those with sin and failure, with regrets and condemnations, he drew close and became their friend, and their lives in turn, were transformed.

**“He entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him,**

**“Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today.” So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, “He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner.” And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Luke 19:1-10**

The coming of the Messiah turned the entire religious system upside down. Those who thought they were perfect were brought low, those who thought they had nothing of value were made integral to the work of the Lord, and those who had made bad choices and felt condemned, these were brought in close as friends and companions and healed in the presence of Christ.

Jesus is still doing this same work today. And so if we are to know and understand God we must see the world and experience the Messiah in this same way.

The pharisee in each of us, the part of us that believes we are better than others, must be brought to the cross to die. Our self-righteousness, our goodness, our effort, our sacrifice, must be put aside and cast off so that Christ might genuinely live in us and through us not as any kind of outward focus or effort but as a deep transformation from the inside out, pure and clean clear-through.

To the common person in each of us, the part of us that believes we have nothing to offer to the Lord or within his great Kingdom, the part of us that thinks we don't really have a place with him, the part of us that shrinks from work beyond ourselves, we must come into agreement with the meaningful work that God has ordained for each of us. As common people we must take our eyes off of ourselves and allow the Messiah to make us into integral and necessary partners in the Kingdom of God.

**“God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.” Ephesians 2:8-10**

To the outcast in each of us, the part of us that is still in shame or condemnation, perhaps in embarrassment that shrinks back, the failure in us, the regrets in us, we must lift our heads to the Messiah and meet him in the eye. Here we will see that there is now no condemnation in Christ. Here we will find a friend, a companion, and our comforter, the Lord Jesus Christ and we will find our lives profoundly transformed by his very presence.

**“So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus. And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.” Romans 8:1-2**

The Messiah tossed the entire system upside down. To the good people he declared *“Stop trying so hard, you are fooling yourselves, come to me, allow me to remake you.”*

To the common people he declared, *“Stop thinking about your own commonness, enter into my presence with faithfulness and I will give you purpose, deep satisfaction, and significant roles to play in my Kingdom.”*

To those with failure and condemnation he declared, *“Stop shrinking back, stop hiding, and stop sinning, come and sit with me, I’d like to have a meal with you — we can change your life forever”*

Today, who are you? Have you been the pharisee in attitudes of superiority and pride, puffed up by your own effort and goodness? Come to the cross today so that this can die along with Christ.

Have you been the common person doubting your own calling or compelling into work and influence that feels beyond you? Come to Jesus today and let him show you and lead you into the Kingdom work that has been prepared for you from before the beginning of time.

Have you been the outcast, the one with deep regrets, bad choices, with a pervading sense of failure and still carrying shame and condemnation? Today come to Jesus, turn to him, and allow his love and his grace and his friendship to penetrate your heart and life. Let him in, you will not remain the same. He wants to be your friend and your Savior and in him your life will become brand new.

Let me tell you a secret, each one of us are a mix of all these three. Each one of us has opportunity for dying to our own self-importance, for taking up meaningful work and participation in the Kingdom of God, and each one of us must learn to simply sit with Jesus, partaking of a meal laid out by his heart and his hands, bringing our sins and failures to him.

Let’s be faithful to bring to him our whole hearts and find the Lord in a brand new way today.

**“But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.” 2 Corinthians 3:16-18**

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## Capturing God's Heart - Church - Volume 48

We use the word church to indicate the place where we gather. We know church to be the building in which we come for worship, for teaching, and for fellowship in the body of Christ.

When our Bibles tell us to 'care for the church', as we read in Acts 20:29, we may immediately think of taking care of the building, the gatherings, the programs, Sunday service, prayer meetings, and such.

**“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.” Acts 20:28**

In this verse where we read 'church', it should read 'congregation'.

What we have not known is that the original greek word, Ekklesia, that has been translated 'church' (in this verse and many others) means something completely different than how it is has been translated. The Greek word Ekklesia, is to be translated 'congregation', not 'church'.

This term, Ekklesia, is used 115 times in the New Testament and 113 of those times it was mistranslated as 'church'.

(Only two times in the New Testament is the word church used correctly and each time it is referring to buildings used for pagan worship and sacrifice, which is the original meaning of the word church. These two instances of correct translation are in Acts 14:13;Acts 19:37)

(from [http://www.therealchurch.com/articles/the\\_word\\_that\\_changed\\_the\\_world.html](http://www.therealchurch.com/articles/the_word_that_changed_the_world.html) )

The mis-translation came about in 1611 when the King James Bible was published. Those translating the Bible at that time did the translation work in accord with fourteen rules established by the Archbishop of the Anglican church, to keep the translation (the Bible) in line with the purposes and goals of the Anglican church.

This mistranslation, served the purposes of the king, not the people and certainly not God. Along with this mistranslation a paid clergy system of bishops and pastors was created that also secured the king's control of the people and of which King James made himself head (of the church).

*“King James made himself 'head' of the church of England, and he required a translation that would facilitate his control over the church and the people. James understood “no building, no bishop, no king.” ( quoted from <http://therealchurch.com/> )*

Today, four-hundred years later, we gauge our Christianity on whether we attend church or not, whether we pay tithes or not, and whether we support and attend the programs and ordinances of the particular church where we attend, and in some places whether we obey our pastors and bishops!

Today, we have made a system of clergy, pastors who are the big people, the only ones to pray for us, the only ones who heal and the only ones who teach. We have stripped the common person of their God-



ordained opportunity to know God for him or her self, to pray healing for each other (all members of the body being equipped), to operate out of the leading of the Spirit (in obedience to God and not man).

Here we are 400 years later still under this system that was *never* part of the early New Testament church and from what we can tell was *never* a part of God's design for the body of Christ.

The New Testament writers spoke of the Body of Christ as an Ekklesia, a term used to indicate a body of people 'called out or summoned for a particular purpose'.

**“an "ecclesia" was originally a select civil body, summoned or convoked for a particular purpose”** (from <http://www.aggressivechristianity.net/articles/ecclesia.htm>)

When we think about the Kingdom of God this understanding of Ekklesia makes more sense. Jesus did not die a horrible death on a cross so that we might attend church on Sundays, or maintain programs, or become a social center. How absurd would that be?

Rather, Jesus died a horrible death on a cross, to conquer death, to bring us to new life, and to call us into his Kingdom, able and ready to take on tasks and roles alongside our Lord so that the whole world might know the love, grace, freedom, forgiveness, and justice that marks the Kingdom of God; everything is to be brought into redemption and healing, a wholeness of all of creation, a restoration back to the original design and heart's intention of God.

With this broadened understanding we begin to read scriptures much differently. Consider Acts 20:28 with the accurate translation,

**“Take heed, therefore, to yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the assembly of the Lord and God which he purchased with his own blood.” Acts 20:28 WEB**

Other verses too, begin to make more sense. (Why would God call us to build and maintain building? Is this what Christ died for, so that we might become building managers?)

**“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” Ephesians 2:19-20**

We begin to realize that *the body of Christ is the building of the Lord!*

Let me say that again, THE BODY OF CHRIST, the people of GOD, are THE *BUILDING OF THE LORD*.

Jesus himself is the cornerstone, he is the rock that is the foundation of His people.

It should read, **“Upon this rock I will build my *ekklesia*\*.” Matthew 16:18**

*for instance, “Upon this rock (my own self) I will build a body of people called out by my name, summoned for the purposes of the kingdom of God upon this earth” - Jesus -*

We go on to read that those called by God's name are to be in relationship and community with each other in such a way that all the parts, each person, carries their part and edifies (builds up) each other.

**“But speaking truth in love, we may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, Christ; from whom all the body, being fitted and knit together through that which every joint supplies, according to the working in measure of each individual part, makes the body increase to the building up of itself in love.” Ephesians 4:15-16**

We come to understand that the Body of Christ is to be as a living organism, a functioning body of people much like a family, under one headship who is our Lord Jesus Christ, living by the direction of the Holy Spirit through each person.

Our assembling together is for each person to be brought to maturity in Christ with an understanding of his great love and forgiveness and grace to such an extent:

- that families are transformed by this touch of God, where children are cared for, women are honoured, and men live out their strength
- that communities and neighbours are loved on in such a way that people long to know God themselves
- that nations are impacted in such a way that justice and right living filters through every level

We gather in fellowship for encouragement and praise, and for mutual giving and receiving of wisdom and knowledge in the Lord. As the house church movement in India stresses, there are to be “*no special place, no special people, no special time*”, rather a people learning and growing together in love and witness to our Lord, the “*earth getting filled with the glory and the knowledge of her Lord*”.

( find more at [http://www.harvest-now.org/uploads/media/06\\_09\\_05\\_GREETTHEekklesia.pdf](http://www.harvest-now.org/uploads/media/06_09_05_GREETTHEekklesia.pdf) )

Each of us must learn how to share our faith, every single person can know how to pray healing for others, each one is to be equipped and taught how to baptize each other, and everyone is blessed to live and operate out of their particular spiritual gifting in sync with the other gifts around them. We teach the body to obey the voice of Jesus not ourselves.

As grow in the Lord together God is with us, breathing through us, transforming us and every aspect of our lives and as we are transformed our communities become transformed ... if we are in community and not hiding in our churches.

The *people of God* are the dwelling place of God.

A church building is *not* the dwelling place of God.

It may help to think of it this way: Church is not a building, it is people, the people of God.

And so pastors were never meant to be church building managers or program overseers, rather, pastors are called to be shepherds of the people of God, looking at hearts and lives and then nurturing, like a mother with her child, good hearts, easy responses to God, gentle instruction, careful teaching, generous care, all wrapped in the bonds of love that mark the people of God.

As we gather together we, the people of God, become the temple of God. This is why the Bible speaks of the Body of Christ as a dynamic organism that is alive and working in sync with each other and the Holy Spirit.

**“In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”  
Ephesians 2:22**

**“For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.”  
1 Corinthians 3:9**

It is the people of God, joined together in the Spirit, who are the holy dwelling place of the Lord. Buildings are not holy temples or God's dwelling place. Buildings are buildings.

It is profoundly unfortunate that because of this mistranslation we have lived in much confusion. We have put our focus and our efforts on the wrong thing. We focus on the buildings, the programs, the upkeep of that building, and more, and too often we are not paying any attention to the spiritual and emotional health of the people who come to our buildings.

How are you building his people? How are his people building each other?

**“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.” Colossians 3:16**

**“Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.” Romans 12:6-8**

**“Praise the Lord! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart, in the company of the upright, in the congregation.” Psalms 111:1**

**“I will build my assembly, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.”  
Matthew 16:18b WEB**

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## Capturing God's Heart - Surrender - Volume 49

### **Spiritual Authority is:**

- the power of God in our ministry
- the healing of God through our lives
- the Kingdom of God in our experience
- the peace of God over our days

These are found in surrender.

Are deepened in further surrender.

And are ever-present in continued surrender.

Surrender is the process and journey by which God harnesses our entire lives, the good, the bad, and the ugly, for his glory and for our future and delight.

Surrender is our participation in the life of the Spirit in and through our lives.

Only in surrender do we participate in the Kingdom of God on earth.

Only in surrender do we experience the Kingdom of God on this earth.

Most things about our days and experiences are distortions of all that God designed. Yet, in surrender we become increasingly free of the assignments of the enemy over our lives. Our lives become new as we surrender to God.

**“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.” Hebrews 10:22-23**

I. Our first surrender is to turn from our flesh needs and turn to Christ.

### **We Surrender – We GIVE to God:**

#### **A. We GIVE to God – Our Sin**

- turn from sin to Christ
- repentance is deep and true
- we rest in the work of Jesus — he has paid the price

As human beings we tend to like our sin. There is often excitement in what is ‘not allowed’. And yet, to live a life after God we must be ready to turn away from sin and the excitement (this is how it feels). In actual fact, we turn from the dead kind of life that is found there.

When Christ says ‘come to me all who are weary and heavy laden’ he is, in part, talking to those who have become tired of lust that never satisfies, of greed that never ends, of gluttony that just always wants more, and etcetera. Sin leaves us weary and dead inside. But we can turn to Christ and leave all of that behind.

**“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 7:21**

#### B. We GIVE to God – Our Ego Needs

- we give our hurts and harms to Jesus
- we acknowledge our insecurities, inviting God to heal us
- we step away from all pretence
- we refuse all exaggerations of self

Each of us have ego needs of comfort, a sense of value and purpose, as well as needs for identity and security in who we are as people and in the Lord. When we try to fulfill our own ego needs we will continue to run on empty. A deficit of self will always pull us down into our own self-centeredness.

But, when we invite the Lord to be our comfort, when we look to God for our value and purpose, and when we allow the Holy Spirit to heal our insecurities, our ego needs will not over-rule our lives. Our sense of self and value and security will be solid in the person of Jesus Christ.

So, instead of trying to exaggerate ourselves, instead of pretending we are big, instead of falsifying self in order to control how others see us, we can be human, be authentic in our strengths and in our weaknesses, we can invite God’s touch deep into our hurts and harms, and we can put our ego needs into the hands of God — out of this our relationship with God and others becomes honest, pure, holy — we let God minister to us in our deepest needs.

**“Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?” Romans 6:16**

#### C. We GIVE to God – Our Best Ideas

- we surrender our plans
- we no longer run after shiny bright new ideas
- we surrender (give over) our understanding for God’s understanding

When we are zealous for God we will often run ahead of God. In our youth and in our immaturity we can be found doing this thing for God, then this other thing for God, and then this other thing for God too! We love our plans and we have not yet developed the strength to say ‘no’ to things that may be good but not what God would have for us.

Maturity in Christ understands that we cannot do everything and that everything is not for us to do. Surrendering our own best ideas has us leaving space to hear the spirit, to wait on God, to resist moving forward unless we know God is with us. If we are to walk in God’s plans we must surrender our own plans to him. Some plans he may give back to us and some plans he won’t. In surrender we allow him to be boss of our lives, our energy, focus and time. We follow him.

**“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” Proverbs 3:5-6**

D. We GIVE to God – Our Failures & Loss

- we allow God the full ownership of our lives
- we claim all the good, the bad and the ugly for the glory of God
- we renounce shame and condemnation – we find true repentance that frees us

We like to bring to God what is good and right in our life. We like to offer to God our strengths and our successes. But what if God wants to use our failures and our loss just as much as our strengths and successes?

In fact, what if I was to tell you that your failures can be used in mighty ways for God. Would you give him your failures? Would you allow God to work through what has gone so wrong for you?

A surrendered life understands that there is nothing that God cannot use. A surrendered life does not try to pretend or exaggerate the life, or hide parts of one's life, but comes to rest in God who is big enough for all our hurts, harms, failures, and loss.

**“My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways.” Proverbs 23:26**

2. Our second surrender is the journey of obedience, of hearing the spirit and of doing the will of God in our lives.

**We Surrender – We LIVE to God:**

A. We LIVE to God – Wholehearted Lives

- the work of God seals us in Christ
- Jesus enables us to bring our whole selves
- we become open-hearted, whole-hearted

In our natural selves we do not want to open our hearts completely to God, and yet, when we come to Christ the Holy Spirit compels us to come whole-hearted.

Wholehearted we are ready to be seen by God and to see God clearly. We are then led into an intimacy with God, a friendship with Christ, a companionship with the Spirit.

We follow as God leads us into his best plan for our lives. We follow as God asks of us crazy love-driven responses to our fellow mankind. We surrender our idea of good and bad and we take on life in Christ.

We find new innocence as we live to God.

**“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” Deuteronomy 6:5**

## B. We LIVE to God – Balanced Lives

- we are not perfecting ourselves — Jesus is making us new
- we are not trying harder — we rest in Jesus
- we are not fixing lives — we minister in difficulty
- we are not trying to be good Christians — we live to love God

We would like to believe that when God calls us that life will become gloriously easy and simple. But, over time, we come to see that this is not the case. Will life become increasingly clear? Yes. Will life ease out? Yes. Will we find God in the midst of life? Yes.

Yet, we may not find it all as perfect as we believe it will become. In fact, even as we increase in ministry and favour of the Lord we will find a new set of difficulties – even success brings difficulties.

We must stop trying so hard. And we must stop demanding a certain kind of life from the Lord. Rather, we trust Jesus to make us new, we rest in his grace which is the power to live free from sin. We become strengthened to deal with difficulties, and our focus remains on the Lord. We put down our own goodness – we let him be goodness through us.

**“For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak.” John 12:29**

## C. We LIVE To God – Disciplined Lives

- we become Kingdom minded
- we wear the armour of God
- we bear the fruit of the Spirit

Ministering alongside the Lord requires a surrendering of our rights. It requires that we live disciplined, where we put aside the cares and concerns of the common person, and where we come into a higher thinking that looks beyond our own needs and wants.

Disciplined in the Lord is where the chaff of our hearts and minds is blown away. Discipline frees us to be people of integrity, character, decent, with honor and regard for the Lord and for others.

We allow, welcome even, the fiery burning of the Lord. Our false motives become seared. Our selfishness dies. Our eagerness is checked. Our zeal is harnessed in God’s wisdom. We no longer run ahead. We no longer lag behind. We become mature and begin to bear much fruit.

**“But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.” James 1:22**

## D. Resting Lives

- Jesus came to save us from sin and from religion
- we surrender our goodness, self-effort, management of sin
- we enter the rest that Christ promises his people

Our service and ministry will never be a thing of joy if it does not come from a life and heart that is resting in God. Jesus Christ came to relieve us from sin and to relieve us from religion. Self goodness will only exhaust us. Striving will leave us without joy. Ministry outside the leading of God will anger us.

Our souls are meant to rest in God. To find our comfort in the Lord is to return to the original image as God created us and this world to work – to find our life in him, and then and only then, to live out his heart on earth. We do this out of rest and peace in the Lord. Out of this we find our joy.

**“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” Galatians 2:20**

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## Capturing God’s Heart - Healing - Volume 50

God wants to heal our lives. He wants to heal our hearts and minds and bodies.

We know this in the church and for many of us we have made it our habits of church and christianity to declare and pray healing over others.

And yet, we have often made healing a product of church. We have taken what is meant to be a free gift of God to all people and have made it a proprietary (something owned by just a few people) product of the church.

To our great shame, healing has become part of our business plan.

It has taken on this form: Get people to come to church so they can give their tithes so we can pay our bills. Heal people at church so they can tithe and we can pay our bills. Give people a spiritual experience in church and they will tithe so that we can pay our bills.

Test this out in your heart. Would you be willing to take the healing of God to the streets and heal people without even telling them about your church or who you are?

I have been to well over one-hundred village churches in the last four years and what I find is that churches are often fighting over the sheep.

In churches we have made a spectacle of healing and have crafted supernatural encounters with God that may or may not be inhabited by the Holy Spirit.

What if you were healing people where they are, in their homes, in the marketplace, in the field, without ever needing them to come to your church?

What if you were to give away the healing of the Lord Jesus Christ for free?

Well, this is exactly what Christ instructs us to do.



**“Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons. You received without paying; give without pay.” Matthew 10:8**

But of course, we have made even the ability to heal a proprietary product. We teach that only the big people can heal. We gather to exalt the one who heals.

This is idolatry. We have taken advantage of weak people who do not yet know their strength in the Lord and we keep them weak by refusing to teach them that they too can heal.

At CCIM we have learned a healing prayer model from Impact Nations ([impactnations.org](http://impactnations.org)) and we teach this wherever we go. It is a simple model by which Jesus brings healing through anyone.

**“Heal the sick .. and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”  
Luke 10:9**

Everyone can pray healing for others. The work of the Kingdom is for everyone. There is no special anointing, simply the indwelling and power of the Holy Spirit which everyone can have.

Here is how to pray physical healing for people. Anyone can do this, even children.

1. We ask the person, “*Where is your pain?*”
  - the person responds, my shoulder (or hip, knee, stomach, back, etc) has pain
2. We ask the person to rate the pain, “*How bad is the pain from 1 to 10?*”
  - 1 being low, 10 being high pain
3. The person may say, “*The pain is 7 out of 10*”
  - we ask this so that when the pain is removed the person can notice the change
4. We ask, “*May I touch your shoulder?*”
  - the person usually says ‘yes’
  - if the person says ‘no’ then just hold your hand out and over the pain spot
  - note: if the pain is in a modest area you may not want to touch
  - men: do not touch women in a way that is not normal between men and women
5. We touch the shoulder and we pray,

***“I declare that all pain in the (shoulder) must go right now in the name of Jesus.”***

6. Then we ask, “*How is the pain?*”
  - the person will say, “It is still there a bit.”
  - or the person will say, “The pain is gone.”

If the person says, “The pain is gone.” We celebrate, we thank God for his healing.

If the person says, “The pain is still there.” We repeat from step #2

as the person rates the pain again, this helps to build faith that healing can happen

7. We repeat steps #5 and #6 until the pain is gone.

**“I declare that all pain in the \_\_\_\_\_ must go right now in the name of Jesus.”**

8. We teach this to everyone we know. Everyone can pray healing for each other.

We must teach our people to heal.

God is trying to break out of our churches.

**“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.” I Corinthians 4:20**

Healing, the touch and miracle of our Lord that drives pain away, is to be taken to the common person by the common person to every part of your community.

If you do nothing else, do this. Teach others to heal others.

The Holy Spirit is for all people. There are not those who have more anointing than anyone else. There are only those who have had more or less amounts of practice.

This Sunday, teach your congregation to heal each other.

Apologize that you have kept this gift from them. Confess that you have enjoyed all the power. Today set about giving this gift to them.

If you are a school teacher, teach this to your students, (children learn this better than adults!) Imagine if you could send them home to declare healing to their parents and grandparents. Wouldn't that be great and amazing!

Jesus wants to heal you. Jesus wants to heal your neighbour. Jesus wants to heal your enemy. Jesus wants to heal your community.

Press through in pure honest love that wants the best for that other person. Do not yell some healing words in prayer and go on without checking in with that person, “How is the pain? Is it better?”

Pray again. Push through for full healing in the name of Jesus.

**“And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.” James 5:15**

Note: this requires a believing heart full of compassion with self out of the way. It also requires that we as healers take on the responsibility to heal. James is clear, it is our prayers of faith that will heal others.

Be a prayer of faith.

Then, give this gift to everyone you know. Teach it to your children. Teach it to you grandma and grandpa. Teach it to your wife or husband. Teach it to your neighbour.

*“Hello neighbour. I have just learned a really simple way to offer the healing of Jesus to others. Can I practice on you? Do you have any pain right now? Oh, in your knee? Okay, well how bad is the pain on a scale of 1-10? A seven. Okay. May I touch your knee? I declare that all pain in the knee must go right now in the name of Jesus. How is the pain now? Ah, a five? Fantastic. Praise the Lord. Okay, let’s pray again. I declare that all pain in the knee must go right now in the name of Jesus. How is the pain? It is gone?! Amen, fantastic. Thank you Jesus.”*

Try this with others. It is a simple prayer. There are no heroics. No screaming voices. No loud demonstrations. It is not for show. It is not for fame. It is not an advertisement for your church.

It is the simple, profound, heart-felt, gift of God, through you, to others.

**“He sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from their destruction.”  
Psalm 107:20**