



O Mercy Me

Journey Nine

Omniallinfinitude™
begin - return - continue

M. A. Helland

*"**OMNIALINFINITUDE™** builds a bridge on which my head and my heart can shake hands. It combines deep principles with ancient practices, and is a pathway to knowing God in order to love Him. I encourage you to walk the path; cross the bridge."*

*Dr. Jim Altizer
Azusa Pacific University*

O Mercy Me

journey elements

- [What Comes to Your Mind?](#)
- [Remember:](#) Ephesians 1:7
- [Read:](#) Philippians 2-3, Galatians 5, 1 Thessalonians 5
- [Journal 9.1:](#) But Wait, There's More!
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what comes to your mind?

O Mercy Me

From the cop that lets you off with a warning,
To the teacher that lets you hand in your work late,

From the boss who lets you go home early when you're sick,
To the person who lets you go to the front of the restroom line,

We are all thankful for small mercies!

It's uncomfortable being at someone's mercy,
Especially the One sitting on the Mercy Seat.

We throw ourselves on the mercy of the court.
We beg for mercy from our foes when we are out matched.
Invoke the Mercy Rule!
Let us go with our pride in tact.
Don't resort to mercy killing.

We'd rather be in someone's good graces
Instead of at their mercy.
We say Grace before meals and
Address some as "His or Her Grace".
They respond graciously saying,
"Grace be with you".

And maybe even give us a grace period to pay our bills.

Graceful musicians play grace notes,
While others show up late....
Thinking they are gracing us with their presence.
Others prove courage really is grace under pressure
As they fight.....not to fall from grace.

Eventually,
We all realize,
We are in need of Saving Grace.

Amazing Grace,
Grace that is sufficient,
His Grace,
Mercy and Grace,
The Grace of the Almighty God.
Rescue, Life, Forgiveness, Freedom,

Bringing us to the place where we can finally say,
"There but for the Grace of God, go I."

remember



Ephesians 1: 7

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace. NIV

Use the space below to help you memorize the verse above.

For additional background on the *remember* element, see the [appendix](#).

Now write out the verses from:

Journey 1: **Psalm 145:3**

Journey 2: **Exodus 3: 14a**

Journey 3: **Revelation 1:8**

Journey 4: **Jeremiah 29:11**

Journey 5: **Joshua 1:9**

Journey 6: **Psalm 145:8-9**

Journey 7: **Hebrews 7:26**

Journey 8: **Psalm 94:2-3**

read

Philippians 2-3, Galatians 5, 1 Thessalonians 5



Please read all the above chapters through completely on three separate days, once from a **modern translation** such as the *NIV* or *NAS*, once in a **modern paraphrase** such as *The Message*, and then **once again with a pad and pencil** by your side as you record your thoughts and observations. It is also helpful to **read the selections aloud**. As you read, underline words that describe who God is or names He is called.

This element is about **reading what it says** – try to put aside any preconceived ideas about what you think it says, or what you may have concluded based on other studies or classes. We are not saying those ideas are wrong, but for this Element, we just want to read it as if for the first time. Please **read for the storyline** – and see if you can then faithfully retell it in your own words.

First Reading: Modern Translation – which one did you use?

Second Reading: Modern Paraphrase – which one did you use?

Third Reading: Reading Notes

Philippians 2:

Philippians 3:

Galatians 5:

1 Thessalonians 5:

Descriptions of God:

Names used for God:

journal

9.1 But Wait, There's More!

After discovering the very bad news....

The fact that not one of us, on our own, can escape the punishment for our sin,
That the holy, righteous wrath of God must be satisfied,
That evil and sin and all the heartache and suffering they cause must be punished,
Eternally in Hell,
And how horrifying that is...

We now turn our focus to the mercy and grace of God,
Who through His own Son, Jesus, provided the solution to our sin problem.
Jesus came to earth as a man and died in our place on the cross.

The perfect man provided the perfect sacrifice for all mankind, for all time.

Jesus died in our place, paid our ransom, saved us.
He saved us from eternity in Hell without Him and for eternity in Heaven with Him,
Real life, life forever with Him, the Good Life.

This is the Good News, the Gospel. It is our only Hope!

We can only really understand the Gospel when it sinks into our souls that Jesus actually received God's wrath for all the sins ever committed; past, present, and future – including ours – and how horrifying it was for Him.

And getting even more specific, **we deeply understand we are literally saved from Hell.**
And just as the glory of Heaven is beyond our imagination so is the horror of Hell.
While the Justice of a Holy God demands we get what we deserve – Hell,
Thank God, there is more to this story and our journey,
More than we could ever imagine.

The Merciful God, who provided a way for us to escape what we deserve – thru Jesus,
Is also a Gracious God who then adopts us as His children and lavishes us with benefits we could never deserve or imagine.

Our struggle is we have a hard time believing we are that bad.

That we need saving at all.

Our sin blinds us to our need and we try to save ourselves....

We are sure we can do it, we are just that good.

Until we're drowning, helpless, with no way out.

Our self sufficiency cracks wide open

And Jesus has been waiting for us all the while.

He offers us a hand up and then a hand out.

We just have to take His Hand and Believe.

Your turn:

What are some ways people try to save themselves?

Describe a time you needed someone else to help or rescue you.



analyze

Word Study

Pick one of the **Fruit of the Spirit** mentioned in **Galatians 5:22-23** (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control) and answer the following questions. You will need to have access to a Bible Dictionary or Encyclopedia and a Concordance. You can use these online at no charge at www.biblegateway.com or www.biblestudytools.com.

1. What word did you choose?
2. What is the current day definition using a regular dictionary?
3. Are any different words used in other translations for this word in this verse?
4. Look up the word in a concordance, Bible Dictionary, Bible Encyclopedia, or Word Study book and find the original word in its original language (probably Greek in this case). What was the original definition?
5. Where else is this word used in the Bible? How many times, in what books, etc? (You can find this in a Concordance)
6. Look up some of the other verses this word appears in. How is the word used in these verses? Is it similar to our verse above, or different, in what ways, does it expand the definition, give you a greater picture of what the word meant then?
7. Restate the definition of the word with the new information you discovered. Does this give you any more insight into how to apply this to your life today?

This list below gives you a little head start by recapping all the Fruit of the Spirit.

Love: *agape*

- Outgoing love
- Sacrificial actions totally focused on well being of the beloved
- A response – not a feeling

Joy: *chara*

- Delight in discovery of Christ in all situations
- Surprising
- Restorative

Peace: *eirene*

- Tranquility, serenity, at rest
- One – reconciled, in harmony
- Peace of mind
- Peace with God
- Authority brings peace
- Not world peace

Patience: *makrothumia*

- Longsuffering in response to antagonistic persons
- Self restraint before proceeding to action
- Refraining from revenge
- Delaying judgment
- Forbearance
- A different word is used to describe patience in regard to adverse situations and trials not involving people.

Kindness: *chrestotes*

- Compassionate and tenderhearted spirit
- Actions and deeds, not just internal disposition toward others
- Delivery system for goodness

Goodness: *agathosune*

- Concerned with moral good as end product
- Activity on behalf of good of others
- May include rebuke, correction and chastising
- All for greater moral Kingdom good

Faithfulness: *pistis*

- Same word used for faith
- Trustworthy, reliable, true, fully persuaded
- Day to day working out of faith in a sovereign God
- Giving credit where due
- Not referring to saving faith

Gentleness: *praotes*

- Meekness before God
- Acceptance of all He allows to come our way
- Humility, Submission
- Does not fight against God
- All things work together for good...

Self Control: *egkrateia*

- Temperance
- Controlling the power of the will by the Spirit of God
- Restraining passions and appetites given by God so they are not abused
- Matter of mastery, authority and boundaries

journal

9.2 A Hand Up



The Mercy of God decrees we will not receive what we deserve.
When we do wrong – someone else is punished.

Because God sees the sinner as pitiful and in need of saving, He feels sorry for us and seeks to provide assistance, shortening or lessening the severity of our pain and suffering.

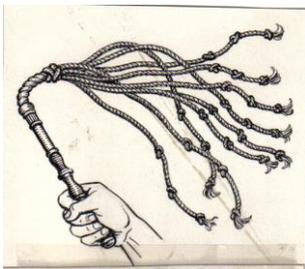
We are a mess, as well as in a mess, and unable to rise above it.
He takes pity on us,
Gives us a Hand Up,
Rescues us even while we are totally undeserving.
He lifts us up out of the mire and sets our feet on solid ground.

Only by looking back do we see what we have been saved from.
We often have no idea how bad it could have been.

We beg for mercy and throw ourselves on the mercy of the court, the mercy rule in sports calls the game when one side gets too far ahead, and heads of state use their prerogative of mercy to grant pardons for convicted felons.

God, in His goodness, mercifully constrains His Wrath and confronts human suffering.

Because of God's tender mercies, Christ was sent to earth, not unlike a whipping boy. A whipping boy, in feudal times, was a boy of the same age, but lower rank, raised with a prince or nobleman as a playmate, who was whipped in his place when the young nobleman (too high in standing to be beaten by anyone below his father, who was often unavailable) misbehaved or slacked in his studies. This was carried out as a psychological indirect punishment, hoping the young nobleman would feel bad his playmate was being hurt and change his ways.



In our case – the status was reversed – the nobleman, Jesus, whose Father is always available, took the punishment for the lowest rank, us, at His Father's bidding.

Jesus is our greatest teacher of mercy.

He commanded his followers to give and forgive,
Walk another mile,
Turn another cheek,
Give another coat.

From the Prodigal Son to the Good Samaritan, to the Woman at the Well, to the Blind, the Lame, the Hungry, and the Demon Possessed, **He alleviated both physical and emotional human suffering.** (Luke 15:11-32, Luke 10:25-37, John 4:7-26, John 9, John 5:1-13, John 6, Mark 5)

Unfortunately, the very sin that calls forth the Mercy of God towards us, will blind us to it, as we begin to take it for granted, expect it, and demand it. But God will not respond to those who presume upon His mercy. To receive mercy you must know that God is merciful. His mercy is boundless, free and available at all times through Jesus, even in our present situations. We've all seen those stories in the movies where the guy is hanging off the balcony, hanging on for dear life. He's just killed someone and while trying to escape out the window, miscalculates and falls off the side of the building.

Someone reaches down and says – "Take my hand, I've got you."

So he reaches up to take the hand with one of his hands but hangs on to the balcony with the other.

What if they aren't strong enough to bring him up?

What if they drop him?

Then he notices his rescuer is the father of the man he has just killed.

What if he drops him on purpose?

At some point he has to let go of either the balcony or his rescuer's hand.

How long can He hang on by himself?

How long can he survive in that situation?

What will his rescuer do to him when He gets him safely inside?

He knows for sure he will eventually fall to his death if he chooses to hang on to the balcony. So, He lets go and clings to the hand.

Mercy is the hand that reaches down.



Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Matthew 5:7

His mercy extends to those who fear him, from generation to generation. Luke 1:50

For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, an acknowledgement of God rather than burnt offerings. Hosea 6:6

Have mercy on me, my God, have mercy on me, for in you I take refuge. I will take refuge in the shadow of your wings until the disaster has passed. Psalm 57:1-2

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

Who is a God like you, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression of the remnant of his inheritance? You do not stay angry forever but delight to show mercy. Micah 9:13

Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. I Tim. 1:13

But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. Titus 3:4-5

Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment. James 2:13

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. I Peter 1:3

Your turn:

Share a time when someone was merciful to you.

Share a time when you acted mercifully toward another person.



investigate

Grace and Mercy

Define: Please write a brief definition next to each of the above words using a regular dictionary, not a Bible dictionary. (Click on any word to link to dictionary.com)

∞ [Grace](#)

∞ [Gift](#)

∞ [Mercy](#)

∞ [Compassion](#)

∞ [Unmerited](#)

∞ [Undeserved](#)

∞ [Kindness](#)

∞ [Relief](#)

∞ [Help](#)

∞ [Assistance](#)

∞ [Aid](#)

∞ [Pardon](#)

∞ [Leniency](#)

∞ [Forgiveness](#)

∞ [Pity](#)

∞ [Absolution](#)

∞ [Blessing](#)

Now write your own definition for O Mercy Me below:

Review:

Read the following verses and answer the questions.

How did God show mercy in the following passages?

Genesis 3: 14-24

Genesis 4: 10-16

Genesis 16 7-16

Nehemiah 9: 16-21

Lamentations 3: 22-26

Hosea 3: 1-5

Micah 7: 18-20

Matthew 15: 22-28

Matthew 20: 24-28

John 8: 3-11

John 11: 33-44

Acts 9: 26-30

Read the following verses and note what you learn about grace.

John 1: 17

Acts 20: 24

Romans 3: 24-25

Romans 5: 15-21

1 Corinthians 15: 10

2 Corinthians 12: 7-10

Ephesians 1: 5-7

Ephesians 2: 8-9

2 Timothy 1: 9-10

Titus 2: 11-12

Titus 3: 7

Conclude:

How do mercy and grace complement each other?

How are they different?

10 things

O Mercy Me

1. **Yahweh Shalom** is the Hebrew name for God that means “the Lord is Peace”. It signifies a relationship with God as the One who brings us back into a harmonious relationship with Himself, a covenant relationship. He then provides for our deepest needs and restores our relationships, allowing all to be well with our souls. ¹
2. **Mercy is not** getting what you do deserve, and grace is getting what you don't deserve.
3. **A. W. Tozer** – “In olden times men looked forward to Christ's redeeming work; in later times they gaze back upon it. But always they come by grace, through faith.” ²
4. **Bruce Shelley** – “Human achievement and pride are forever eliminated from salvation by God's grace, his surprising love for the unlovely.” ³
5. **Phillip Yancey** – “Grace baffles us because it goes against the intuition everyone has that, in the face of injustice, some price must be paid....Paul stressed a price had been paid, by God himself. God gave up his own Son rather than give up on humanity.” ⁴
6. **J. I. Packer** – “The grace of God is love freely shown toward guilty sinners, contrary to their merit and indeed in defiance of their demerit. It is God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity and had no reason to expect anything but severity...To mend our relationship with God is beyond the power of any one of us.” ⁵
7. **A. W. Tozer** – “As mercy is God's goodness confronting human misery and guilt, so grace is His goodness directed toward human debt and demerit. It is by His grace that God imputes merit where non previously existed and declares no debt to be where one had been before.” ⁶
8. **Phillip Yancey** – “Grace costs nothing for the recipients and everything for the giver.” ⁷
9. **Arthur W. Pink** – “It is through or because of the tender mercy of our God that Christ was sent to his people. The merits of Christ make it possible for God to righteously bestow on his elect, justice having been fully satisfied...” ⁸
10. **Stephen Charnock** – “That mercy which makes God ready to embrace sinners, makes him willing to bear with them in their sins, and wait their return.” ⁹

Your turn:

Pick one or two of the above quotes or statements and share any insights or challenges it presents to you.

journal

9.3 A Hand Out



Mercy and Grace are often confused or used interchangeably. In God they are one, but as they reach mankind, they are seen as two. While **Mercy** could be defined as **not receiving what we deserve**, **Grace** would then be **receiving what we don't deserve**. Instead of punishment we get an inheritance, gifts, life – all the benefits and gifts that Jesus deserves, we receive.

If Mercy reaches down to give us a hand up and out of our helpless situation, then **Grace is the hand that gives forgiveness and new life** once we are back safe inside and off the ledge. Grace and Mercy work together, often seamlessly, like two sides of the same coin.

Grace is love freely shown to sinners – that would be you and me - contrary to our merit – we deserve punishment and yet we receive grace. **Mercy provides Calvary as a solution** to our sin problem, **grace then steps in to provide merit** where there was none.

Instead of Hell, which we deserve, we are granted access to Heaven, which we could never earn.

Grace tells us how our Judge turned around and became our Savior,
How He offers us a Hand Out,
Merit where none previously existed,
Undeserved favor, bestowing of heavenly benefits, and forgiveness of human debt.

Grace baffles us because it is free – It costs us absolutely nothing, but it costs the Giver everything. (Eph 2: 8-9) It cannot be earned by good works or claimed as a right. All that is required to receive it is faith.

Just like the Prodigal Son (Luke 15), we return to find a party waiting for us, with presents instead of condemnation and prison. All the Father sees, when He looks at us, is His Son. Not only are we declared Not Guilty (Mercy) but we are also declared Righteous (Grace). We get to move from the line of the condemned, waiting for our terrible death sentence, to the line of an heir, waiting for a fabulous inheritance.

The Grace of God comes to us through the work of Jesus Christ and can only be received by those who have believed or placed their faith in Him. Since Grace can only operate after sin has been dealt with, when Christ rose from the dead the banishment from the garden was removed and access to the Grace Benefits was restored.

What are the Grace Benefits? Here are just a few.

- Become Co-Heirs with Christ – we get what He gets – limitless blessings
- Access to the Father through Christ – right now
- Names are written in the Book of Life – eternal life
- Holy Spirit dwells within us to guide, comfort, convict of sin, strengthen – like having Jesus at our side.
- Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)
- The Armor of God (Eph 6:11-18)
- Spiritual Gifts for Ministry (1 Cor. 12, Rom 12:4-8, Eph 4:11-13)
- Spiritual Eyes – discernment of good and evil, wisdom, eternal perspective (Matt 13:13-17, Mark 8:17-18, Luke 10: 23-24, Acts 26:18)
- Power to love one another (1 John 4)
- Spiritual blessings (Rom 15:27)

- Faith and Hope (I Pet 1:21, James 2, Heb. 11, 1 Pet 1:3-9)
- Promises realized (2 Cor 1:18-22, 7:1, 2 Peter 1:4)
- Process of sanctification begins (John 15:1-8, 1 Pet 2:2, 2 Pet 3:18, Heb 5:12-6:12)

When we accept the Grace of God He moves us from:

- Darkness to light
- Bondage to freedom
- Death to life
- Enemy to friend - Reconciliation
- Evil to Holy- Sanctification
- Condemned to redeemed – Redemption
- Guilty to Not Guilty - Justified
- Sinner to a Child of God
- Punishment to Rewards
- Object of Wrath to Object of Righteousness
- Access Granted – To the Throne of Grace – Now and forever.



Grace imputes merit where there is none, it declares there is no longer a debt where one existed before. That is why we cannot earn our salvation. **There is no other way to be saved except by grace.**

Since Grace destroys self-righteousness, nothing in grace is attractive to fulfilling the requirements of the pride of man. There lies the battle.

The only obvious response is overwhelming gratitude as the fear of punishment disappears along with self-pity and bitterness. We are loved, valued, highly esteemed.

All we need do is accept His Hand Out.

But when grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness. Even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and do not regard the majesty of the LORD. Isaiah 26:10

...to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. Ephesians 1:6-8

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, that no one should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. I Peter 4:10

But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." 2 Corinthians 12:9

In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world – just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace. Colossians 1: 6

Your turn:

Share a time you were the recipient of something you felt you didn't deserve. How did you respond?

Or perhaps, share a time you didn't receive something you thought you deserved. How did you respond?

practice

Community



Living in relationship

From the very beginning, even in the perfection of the Garden of Eden, **God said that it was not good for humans to be alone.** We are not meant to go it alone in this life. If we try, we soon discover the truth that No Man (or Woman) is an Island. We need relationships. We need each other. We were not designed for, nor will we fully develop in, isolation.

The basis for Christian Community comes from the perfect community shared between the three persons of the One and Only Triune God; The Father, The Son/Jesus, and The Holy Spirit. Since God is communal and we are made in His Image, we are also made to be in relationship, with Him and with other people.

God is relational and missional, not just focused on Himself. He is at work restoring all of creation to its original state and every person to a right relationship to Himself through Jesus. He desires to be in relationship with each of us, to commune with us, and for us to commune with other believers.

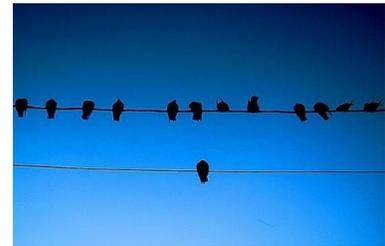
God is all about relationships. But, as we all know, relationships can be messy. Sometimes it seems easier to go out on our own.

On Your Own

What happens when you are on your own?

Isolation, fear, loneliness, depression. We shrink in size, losing our perspective and passion for life.

We stop caring, our basic relational needs go unmet and we become ingrown, focusing completely on ourselves. We stop growing and learning, any hope we had fades away.



Credit to The Visions of Kai, 2008.

People need people. **We only grow through connection, we can't do it by ourselves.** We don't have all the skills, answers, or wisdom necessary for growth. All people have the basic need to be seen and loved, to belong and be brave. Scientists have even discovered our brains actually need three things to work properly; oxygen, glucose and relationship. Societies naturally form into groups, sometimes they come and go, many lasting only for a season of our lives.

Some groups we have no choice in belonging to, from family groups, to work and neighborhood groups. Others, we either choose to join or are asked to join. And some groups reject us altogether.

We group based on common experiences, values, struggles, activities, education, likes and dislikes, fears, and goals. Other groupings revolve around political, racial, religious and community matters, as well as sports, business, charitable and travel endeavors.

Koinonia

Christ Followers are commanded in the Bible to share with and relate to each other. The term used in the New Testament is the Greek word, *koinonia*, which describes a partnership or sharing in something in common. That "something in common" is the Triune God (I John 1:1-4) and sharing in Him creates Christian community.

Community allows us to connect with other Christ Followers in authentic ways that encourage growth in Christ and engage in transparent relationships that cultivate, celebrate and make evident Christ's love for the world.

We need each other for life. We need each other to grow up in Christ.

Wherever two or three are gathered we contain more of God than many scattered. Coals left alone on the hearth die out, while coals together in the fire, burn hotter and brighter, feeding off each other. Members of the Body of Christ, which is all believers, must be in contact with others if they are to sustain each other. Christian life and power are greatly diminished if you are on your own.

God has given each of us gifts and talents for the benefit of others. We have what they need, and they have what we need. (I Cor. 12:7-11)

The local church or Body of Christ becomes our family, providing mission and purpose. (Matt. 18-20, Eccl.4:9-12, Acts 2:44-47)

Christianity cannot be practiced in isolation. Jesus has removed our sin so we can have fellowship with Him and each other. Our reconciliation with Him brings us back together with each other.

Local Church Community Fellowship

The practice of living life together with other Christ Followers as the Church is often called Fellowship as the Community of Believers seek to obey and model the New Testament examples and exhortations. **Jesus lived in Community with others, especially His 12 Disciples.** (Mark 12:33, John 13:34-35, Acts 2:42, Romans 12:10, 1 John 1:7, Heb. 10:25)

In the Local Church Community we engage in the **corporate spiritual practices** of worship, study, prayer, celebration and service. Members of the Body must be in contact with each other if they are to be sustained by God.

The **gifts of the Spirit** are given to believers to benefit the entire Body and cannot be practiced in isolation. The Body is lacking and not as effective as it could be if you are not an active part. A certain level of joyous life is obtained together that is impossible to reach alone.

Our spiritual development is enhanced and encouraged as we **learn to live with others** who are not like us, or on different paths, with different gifts, life stories, struggles, and strengths. We refine each other as we learn to live in unity with humility, putting others needs above our own. Christian communities will not all look the same. The important thing is that they are focused on the mission of Christ to reach out to a world in need, meeting those needs while sharing the gospel message. While accomplishing this, they will fulfill the needs of their members, with the **intention that everyone becomes like Christ** himself.

Fellowship is often confused with social activity – potlucks, and picnics....when in reality it is a relationship. It is sharing together a common life, a devoted alliance between individuals who actively participate in a mutual spiritual heritage. We share the same life source – Jesus.

Benefits of Local Church Community Fellowship:

- The goal of fellowship is to encourage one another towards Christlikeness and spiritual growth. It is God's gracious means of preserving our spiritual lives. We cannot grow alone. (Eph. 4:15-16)
- Keeps us from spiritual malnutrition which leads to apostasy. (Heb. 10: 24-25)
- Fellowship is the lifejacket to weather the storms of life, to talk us back off the ledge. (Jude 23)
- Keeps us from the deceitfulness of sin. (Prov. 15:22, Ps 1)
- Restraining influence so we avoid distorted views and twisted interpretations to justify sin.
- Ministry flows from relationship and relationship flows from Fellowship.

Many think they don't need to participate in a church community to be Christ Follower. If you stop meeting together you will run out of passion.

Stages of Community Development

Community cohesiveness doesn't just happen overnight. It requires intentional application of the One Another commands listed below. Most thriving communities have worked through the following stages.

- **Honeymoon** – Idealistic and committed – bonds are formed, everybody on the same page.
- **Disillusionment** – Problems emerge, Relationships deteriorate, missions and goals conflict.
- **Reality** – Problems worked out, true community begins.

With One Another

The exercise of the "**One Another**" commands is what allows Christ Followers to enter into the Reality of True Community. These are the antidote to our natural sinful human desires that seek only our own good and survival at the expense of all others. Only through the power of the Holy Spirit can we obey them.



A local church is not built by one man, or even a few men, but by every believer being actively involved in ministry through evangelizing the lost people in their lives and serving their fellow Christians. A quick glance at the practice of the New Testament church reveals that they thought *very little* about programs and *very much* about relationships.

Consider the community fellowship that would naturally take place in the life of a local church if **every believer would practice the loving, one-another ministry** that the early churches first read about in the instructions they received from the apostles:

- **Be devoted** to one another ([Rom. 12:10](#)).
- **Give preference** to one another ([Rom. 12:10](#)).
- **Be of the same mind** toward one another ([Rom. 12:16](#)).
- Accept one another by **withholding judgment** ([Rom. 14:1](#)).
- Accept one another by **showing deference** ([Rom. 14:1-5](#); [15:7](#)).

- **Esteem** [highly regard] one another in love ([Rom. 14:5](#); [Phil. 2:3](#)).
- **Build up** one another ([Rom. 14:19](#); [1 Thes. 5:11](#)).
- **Counsel** one another ([Rom. 15:14](#)).
- Serve one another by **showing deference in matters of liberty** ([Gal. 5:13](#)).
- **Bear one another's sin burdens** ([Gal. 6:2](#)) ([Col. 3:13](#)).
- **Be gentle** with one another ([Eph. 4:2](#)).
- **Be kind** to one another so as to preserve unity ([Eph. 4:32](#)).
- **Speak truth** to one another ([Eph. 4:25](#); [Col 3:9](#)).
- **Submit** to one another ([Eph. 5:21](#)).
- **Show compassion** to one another ([Col. 3:12](#)).
- **Forgive** one another ([Col. 3:13](#)).
- Use Spirit-filled, Word-saturated music to **teach and admonish** one another ([Col. 3:16](#); [Eph. 5:19](#)).
- **Comfort** one another with the hope of Christ's return ([1 Thes. 4:18](#)).
- **Encourage** one another ([1 Thes. 5:11](#)).
- **Live in peace** with one another ([1 Thes. 5:13](#)).
- **Seek good** for one another ([1 Thes. 5:15](#)).
- Encourage one another to **forsake unbelief and hardness of heart** ([Heb. 3:13](#)).
- **Stimulate** one another to spiritual growth ([Heb. 10:24](#)).
- **Encourage** one another by faithful participation in your local church ([Heb. 10:25](#)).
- **Confess sins** to one another ([James 5:16](#)).
- **Pray** for one another's spiritual and physical healing ([James 5:16](#)).
- **Be long-suffering and patient** toward one another ([1 Peter 4:8](#); [Eph. 4:2](#)).
- **Be hospitable** to one another without complaint ([1 Peter 4:9](#)).
- **Serve** one another ([1 Peter 4:10](#); [Gal. 5:13](#)).
- **Act in humility** toward one another ([1 Peter 5:5](#)).
- **Show holy affection** to one another ([1 Peter 5:14](#)).
- **Participate in the holy walk in the light** with one another ([1 John 1:7](#)).
- **Refuse to become resentful** toward one another ([1 John 3:11-12](#)).
- **Give sacrificially** to meet one another's needs ([1 John 3:16-17](#)).
- **Fight fear** together by growing in love ([1 John 4:18](#)).
- **Walk in truth** together ([1 John 3:18](#); [2 John 1:5](#)).

The Christian life is all about relationships. It's God's design for our personal growth, which then translates into church growth—the real kind. Loving one another is a powerful evangelistic tool, as Jesus says: "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" ([John 13:35](#)).

Ways to Begin to Practice Community

1. **Pray** for God to lead you.
2. If you are not currently connected to a Community, look for a group of Christ Followers to join: a home group, local church, neighborhood bible study, a campus group. Search online, drive around or ask around.
3. If you are already connected to a Community, or once you find a group, then explore ways to join or interact with other members. Start with a smile and introduce yourself.
4. **Take the initiative, give it time.** Look for groups with easy access and lots of newcomers.
5. Here are some possibilities for entry level community experiences:
 - Small groups or classes
 - Short term service opportunities
 - Seasonal commitments – music, drama, events
 - Practice the Spiritual Practices in a group setting – prayer, study, confession, service
 - Trainings for life situations – recovery, children, family, aging, women, men
 - Retreats
 - **Sign up and Go!**
6. The above options will get you in the door and help you make some initial connections.
7. **It gets messy.** Some communities or small groups may be hard to break into and some groups are open only by invitation – especially leadership groups. Other groups have been together for a long time with lots of history, and although they may welcome you, you still need to prove yourself, earn the right, develop trust.
8. **Manage your expectations** regarding community. Don't romanticize it. It's hard work that requires intentionality, commitment, forgiveness, humility, and time.
9. Remember, a Community of Christ Followers should never let people leave feeling unwelcome, unnoticed, or unloved.
10. Here are some ways to begin to develop Community relationships.
 - **Personal encounter** - say hello, start conversation
 - **Sharing concerns**, joys, feeling understood
 - **Firm friendships** – giving of self to one another
 - **Recognition of common mission**, love for Jesus and each other
 - **Make a friend**, be a friend, get to know one another
 - **Pray together**
 - **Be hospitable** and generous
 - **Be responsible**
 - **Take the initiative**
 - **Follow up**

Spiritual Friendship/Mentoring

One of the most intimate types of community stems from a relationship with a Spiritual Friend or Mentor. This is another Christ Follower you meet with regularly or as needed to discuss spiritual things, your struggles, praises, someone who will hold you accountable, can give mature advice, will pray for you and support you in times of need. This person should be loyal, patient, discrete and spiritually mature.

Every person needs at least one essential friend to share their heart with and to be encouraged by in their relationship with God and in life. This is someone you feel safe enough with that you can share honestly about your struggles and growth, your hurts and your hopes. Companionship can also result, spending time just having fun, hanging out, but that would be an added benefit, not the primary purpose of the relationship.

This may not even be a person from your usual circle of friends, but **someone more mature, a mentor of sorts**. The goal is to have a sounding board, someone to make sure you aren't wandering off, **someone who asks about your spiritual life**, how it is going with you and God. The person may not even be in your immediate area, as much of this fellowship can now be done over the phone or email.

What does a Spiritual Friend or Mentor Look Like?

- Have faith in you
- Believe God is at work in you.
- Empathetic Listeners
- Model openness, honesty, vulnerability
- Regularly spend time, talk, connect in some way with you
- Intentional
- Passes on more than just information
- Farther down the road than you, but going where you want to go and are willing to help you get there.
- Lives will not be perfect, but will be able to provide experience responding in a Christlike way to difficulties and joys of life.

Benefits of the Relationship:

- Push us to be more than a sum of our failures
- Drive us to direct our lives in ways that honor Christ more and more each day
- Show us our blind spots and areas of self deception
- Provide guidance, wisdom, cautionary tales, first hand experiences
- Focus should be to encourage you to depend on God and not the mentoring relationship
- Provide godly input and prayer
- Someone to listen to you
- Confirm what God is doing in your life
- Provide assurance everything will be ok
- Allow you time to take it all in

Ways to Begin to Practice Spiritual Friendship/Mentoring

1. Start praying about who it could be.
2. Pray about your own motives. Pray for an increase in your own desire for spiritual growth, and maturity, vulnerability, humility, respectfulness and responsiveness to a mentor.
3. Look for an older, wiser, believer; a good listener, someone who asks good questions and offers discernment.
4. Approach the person and explain your short and long term needs.
5. Make a commitment.
6. Plan when to meet and what you will do.
7. Evaluate and recommit if an ongoing friendship/relationship is already in place.
8. Aspire to live your life in such a way that others will desire to walk the same path.
9. Desire to use whatever God has given you in your spiritual journey to benefit others.

Personal Reflections on Community:

1. Read the following verses and share what you learn about the practice of Community.

Acts 2: 42-47:

1 Cor. 12: 12-21:

Heb. 10: 24-25:

I Thess 2:5-12:

Phil 2:1-4:

Matt. 7:12:

2 Tim 2:2:

Luke 24:13-35:

2. In which communities or groups do you currently participate? What responsibilities do you have as part of these communities? What benefits do you receive?

3. Developing a spirit of community takes intentionality and time. What forces work against healthy participation in fellowship or community – within or outside the church?

4. Everyone is different. What aspects of community or fellowship are meaningful to you? Which ones cause you to struggle?

5. Biblical communities focus on Living Life together with a focus on Christ. How should Biblical community or fellowship be different from a secular community experience?

6. What are some reasons communities fall apart? Why don't some people want to be part of a community?

7. Because Community is a Spiritual Practice it requires that we must work at it or practice it. What are some ways you can practice Community with other Christ Followers?

why?

Community

John White – “I cannot have true fellowship with you unless both of us have fellowship with God....It is only in making our relationship with Him primary that our relationships with one another will be what they should be.” ¹⁰

David Watson– “The more we live as members of the Body of Christ, the more we shall experience the gifts of the Spirit to edify that body. The manifestation of the Spirit is given only for the common good.” ¹¹

The Hebrew – “And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25 NIV

Solomon – “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” Prov. 27:17 NIV

Spirit led listening is at the heart of the relationship. This is a time set aside for each participant to speak about what's in her or his heart and mind while the other fully listens.

Luke – “They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.” Acts 2:42-47 NIV

Dallas Willard – “The fire of God kindles higher as the brands are heaped together and each is warmed by the other's flame. The members of the body must be in contact if they are to sustain and be sustained by each other.” ¹²

Ray Stedman – “Superficial sharing usually occurs when an individual is afraid to risk anything of great depth.....Since the sharing of personal hurts is apparently risky to many, they find they can still participate by sharing someone else's burden, like Aunt Mary's issues, etc. Although these are legitimate concerns, if this happens too often, there can be no bearing of one another's burdens.” ¹³

Dan Kimball – “Our goal should not be to get people to “go to church’. We should be inviting people to participate in the life of the church community and to participate in the activity of God..... We need to understand the difference between ‘belonging, then believing’ and ‘believing, then belonging’....In today's culture, people don't come to have trust and understanding until they feel they belong.” ¹⁴

Your turn:

Pick one or two of the above quotes or statements and share any insights or challenges it presents to you.

journal

9.4 Ungracious



Grace and Mercy,
Dispensed by an Almighty God
Towards the hopeless human race desperately in need of rescue....
This was a brand new, countercultural idea in the very ungracious Greco Roman world.

And we have the same problem today.

Rebellion is the impetus behind every manifestation of the world spirit.
From the Fall to present day,
From the Flood, to Babel, to Sodom and Gomorrah, to the Red Sea,
Through the Wilderness and the Exile and countless events of history,
The ungracious world system has been rebelling against God's gracious authority.

"We will not have this man rule over us" is the continuous cry of a defiant humanity.

Christians believe man is sinful.
The World believes man is good.

Christians believe God will judge sin and evil.
The World ignores sins, sweeps them under the rug,
And thinks God is just like us and will look the other way.

Christians believe man is spiritually unable to mend this breach in their relationship with God.
The World believes more good deeds than bad makes you respectable enough.

Christians believe God is sovereign and not obliged to save us.
While **the World believes God must forgive, love and help – no matter what.**

The world operates in ungrace.
Everything depends on what we have, what we do, who we know,
what we look like....
We must earn everything we get,
Get to the top at all costs, even if we have to lie, cheat or steal.



We must shine brighter, be better, even if it means sabotaging others for our own self-promotion. Our self-centeredness and pride lead us to oppress others and we either become very bad at breaking the rules (evil) or very good at keeping them (self righteousness).

Tolerance, Pragmatism, Lawlessness, Pride.....
The world is after pleasure, profit, power, and privilege, and so are we!

It's all about performance, and winning, and results, no matter what the cost.
We seek to be our own Savior and Lord – doing what we want to do – living the life we want,
trusting in our own goodness rather than in Jesus standing with God.

Jesus turned the world on its ear by modeling **"The First shall be Last Servanthood."**

Through Him we learn to turn the other cheek, walk another mile, give our last nickel, wash each other's feet, forgive seventy times seven, humble ourselves, and love one another. (Matt 19:30, Mark 9:35, 10:31, 44-45, Luke 7:28, 13:29-30, 22:25-27, Matt 20: 27-28, 1 Cor. 15:9, Rom 12:1-3, Phil. 2:6-8)

The Beatitudes in Matthew 5 describe the lifestyle and character God blesses, while the Woes of Matthew 23 describe the evil and hypocritical character and divine pledge of judgment on those who refuse to recognize and do the full will of God if those lives continue in their wickedness.

Grace looks like humility and repentance, sorrow for sin, hope for the future, gentleness, unselfishness, nonviolence, a desire to be right with God, helpfulness, mercy, forgiveness, pure motives, reconciliation with God, understanding, compassion and sacrifice.

Ungrace looks like arrogance, dissension, scheming, self-righteousness, self-sufficiency, pretense, impurity and blasphemy, preference for power, privilege and possessions, exclusion, pride, rebellion, evil and hatred.

If we don't truly understand the Holiness of God, the depravity of our sin,
And the horror of our judgment – eternity in hell,
We will not be impressed by His mercy and grace.
It will be no big deal, in fact, we will feel entitled to it.

People who know more of God's mercy will be merciful. Christians sometimes think they deserve the grace they have received, and then become intolerant of others, even judgmental. The reality of our own spiritual condition and God's provision must never be forgotten.

God doesn't accept us because of our efforts,
He accepts us because of what Jesus has done.
We do not define ourselves by who we are not, but by Whose we are.
We discover the Gospel takes away our self-issues – the need to compare, to criticize, and correct because now our image management is no longer up to us, but God.

We are all living for something.

And we are all controlled by whatever that is – the true Lord of our Lives.

If it is not God – it will endlessly oppress us.

Grace and Mercy are communicable attributes.
They take away self-pity and bitterness and lead to a life of graciousness towards others.

We not only receive His grace and mercy – we then, in turn, can provide it to others. This is how we become the conduits of his grace and mercy becoming the final example and evidence of His Proof of Life.....

Allowing His Grace and Mercy to continue to shine brightly in a very Ungracious world.

Your turn:

Share some examples of ungrace you notice in your culture.
In what circumstances do you find it hardest to show grace to others? Why do you think that is?
Share one time someone showed grace to you.

**BLESSED ARE THE
POOR IN SPIRIT
MOURNERS
MEEK
HUNGRY
MERCIFUL
PEACEMAKERS
PERSECUTED**

THE BEATITUDES

inventory

Your Money

Do you have too much money? How do you know? How much is enough?

Look at your checkbook or bank account. What would the last items that you spent say about you?

Are you saving up for something right now? What is it? How long will it take to reach your goal?

What one thing would you buy or do if you had enough money?

What one thing do you wish money could buy?

What would move you to give all your money right now if that would make it happen?

Do you find it harder to buy things for others or things for yourself?

What one thing did you work and save and scrimp for and then when you finally got it, it just didn't satisfy?

Have you ever received money out of the blue?

What is the first check you right each month?

To whom do you give money without a thought?

What or to whom would you most likely never give money? Why?



journal

9.5 It's All about the Dash

In Journey One we discovered we are all on an ongoing Spiritual Journey. Wherever we were then, we have now moved on to a new place, experiencing and learning along the way.

What do we know now that we didn't know then?

More about God: Through a variety of methods our understanding and the way we think about God has deepened. This alone changes everything...everything we believe, do and feel. We've learned amongst other things, that God is holy and His Holiness demands He deal with our sin.

More about Ourselves: We've discovered who and where we are in the grand scheme of things. As hard as it is to admit, we now know we are sinners on the road to Hell. We know that wasn't the original plan, but it is the truth about our reality today.

Jesus Paid: In learning about God, we've learned about Jesus, who is God and what He did for us when He voluntarily took our punishment (which is beyond our imagination), died, was buried and rose again on the 3rd Day, just as He promised He would. That is the defining moment.

Jesus = 1 Way: We now know there is only one God and only one way to Him.

Our Choice: We realize we have free will to choose whether to stay on the Road to Hell with its reward of a second death, or to take the nearest off ramp to the Road to Life and its reward of a second birth.

So we have finally come to that point where there is one big question left.

How do we get off the Road to Hell and on to the Road to Life?

How did we get to this point? How do we know what is true?

It always begins, whether we realize it or not, with God in His Love, drawing us to Himself by the Holy Spirit. Often our first response is to run screaming from the building.

It's an incredible spiritual battle for each one of us – and the devil does not let go easily.

Other people challenge and minister to us.

We investigate and study to prove it to ourselves.

The Moral law within us – the soul cravings planted by God, pull us to Him.

Points of crisis in our lives leave us emotionally, physically, materially, psychologically, and spiritually desperate with no way out.

We watch as God works in others' lives. **People pray** for us. **We cry out to God** for help and revelation. In His Faithfulness He matches us step by step – the closer we get, the more He reveals.

Sometimes it takes years – but it takes as long as it needs to take, as God is very patient.

But when we die – there are no more chances.



Our journey is all about the dash; the period of time between our birth and death, the dash on our tombstone. Birth date – Death date

Along the way we've discovered God is very provable – the evidence is everywhere. Not in a scientific way - as it's impossible to reproduce Him or His supernatural processes or events in a controlled environment. Science is actually the study of God's natural laws at work in the universe and there is no way natural science will ever prove the existence of a supernatural God.

But God is provable in a legal way – with evidence, and logic, and testimony and historical experience, with truth tests, the same way a court of law evaluates evidence to come to a verdict beyond a reasonable doubt. They don't recreate the crime multiple times – they look at evidence and testimony, and wisdom from expert witnesses.



God has left evidence of Himself all over the place. If you are really looking you will find it. Thomas still needed to see the holes in Jesus hands and Jesus understood that. He will provide whatever you need to come to Him. We all have different issues and needs, and He deals with us as individuals, where we are.

So back to our question: How do we get off the Road to Hell and on the Road to Life?

First, we must Believe or have Faith that all we have learned about God, Ourselves and Jesus is True. Have you come to a verdict beyond a reasonable doubt?

Nicodemus eventually did.

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

"How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

"How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

"You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. John 3: 1-17

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

If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9

Your turn:

List some ways you place your faith in things you do not understand every day. What is the basis for this faith?

adventuring

Breaking the Ice



Our challenge for this journey is to start a conversation with a stranger. This could be as simple as talking to the person sitting next to you on the subway or plane, or the person standing in line behind you getting lunch or coffee.

It should be natural, friendly, easy; not confrontive, creepy, or suspicious. Our goal is to become graciously friendly in all situations.

Here are some things to remember before you start:

Personal Awareness:

- Make sure you are up on the news, weather, sports, what's going on around you.
- Who's nearby? Monitor their body language. Don't interrupt them if they are busy.
- If you get eye contact, smile.
- Consider how long you will be with them (travel companion, classmate, etc.)
- What do you have in common? On same plane, in same class, restaurant, waiting room, etc.
- Do they have something you can see that you could ask or compliment them about – computer, phone, watch, book, dog, child, etc.

Conversation 101:

- Ask good open ended questions (questions that can't be answered by Yes or No)
- Comment on a topic common to both of you at the moment: the food, the room, the weather, the score, what would they recommend, what did you miss, etc.
- If appropriate, ask how they ended up in your common situation.
- Ask for help, recommendations or directions or ask them if they need help.
- Listen to their answers, keep your responses short.
- Don't brag, try to impress, complain or bring up divisive subjects.
- Don't leave while they are still talking, excuse yourself graciously.
- Follow up on their answers if there's time.
- Say a silent prayer for them when you leave.
- Odds are you may never see them again.
- If you will see them again, make sure to introduce yourself and also get their name.

The easiest way to begin to do this, is to start to say hello to people you see.

Take a walk around your neighborhood and consciously greet everyone you see. Stop and introduce yourself to new neighbors.

If you frequent a coffee house, grocery store, restaurant, office building, hotel, etc., greet the people who work there, as well as other patrons. Smile and acknowledge those in an elevator. Greet those you work with, go to school with, attend church with, live with....

Share your Breaking the Ice experiences and how many strangers you met. By then, being graciously friendly should have become a lovely habit.

journal

9.6 The Crossroads

At some point, as we travel the road of our lifelong spiritual journey we reach the critical crossroads of faith.



We come to the point where we believe:

- We are on the road to Hell and we want to get off it,
- There is a road to Life and we want to get on it.
- We are sinners and there is no way we will ever be good enough for God.
- Jesus has provided a spiritual off ramp (when He died in our place and rose again) and has paid the toll to grant us access.

We already discussed the first step in the process of changing roads....**that we need to Believe or put our Faith in the Truth about God, Ourselves and Jesus.**

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe." Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." John 20: 27-29

But true faith requires action and that leads us to the second step.

We must do one thing, an act of the will and tell Him we want to get off the Road to Hell.

Tell Him you know you are a sinner, but that you believe He died just for you, and that you want a different life, the life only He can provide, eternal life.

Ask Him to forgive you.

Take the off ramp, open the door of your car and invite Him in to drive.

He will now journey with you in the form of the Holy Spirit - your new GPS.
Your new life in and with Christ has begun.

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 that person, and they with me. Rev. 3:20

You are now a Child of God – a Christian, a Believer, a New Creation, Child of the King. It's called a lot of things: You've be Born Again, Saved, Accepted Christ as your Savior or into your Heart, come to Faith.

The Holy Spirit now indwells you, your sins are forgiven, you're washed white as snow.

You have access to the Gifts of Grace and the Throne of Grace.

Your name is written in the Book of Life.

You have power to be victorious over sin.

Your life has purpose and God has given you gifts and power to minister and reflect His light to the world.

It just goes on and on and on.....



But remember, there is a moment when you aren't and then you are a Child of God. You don't just wake up one morning and you are a Christian. Everyone is responsible for his or her own choice. There is no friends and family plan. There are no spiritual grandchildren.

It has nothing to do with joining a church or going to church. Many people come to faith in a church, but walking through the doors of a church does not save you.

And yet many still do not take the off ramp, open the door and let Jesus drive. They don't even think twice and speed right on by.

- Perhaps they need their stereotypes of life on the Road to Life updated or corrected, having **believed the lies** spreading the wrong ideas about living life with Jesus.
- Others don't know about or see the off ramp, they **are unaware** and **aren't even looking** for it.
- Some love the Road to Hell too much – they **are not desperate enough**, blinded to their spiritual demise, think **they're doing fine**, thank you very much.
- Many **postpone or delay**, thinking they have plenty of time and will wait for the next off ramp... however, no one knows how many off ramps are left on their journey.
- Some overachievers **determine to build their own off ramp** and road to Eternal Life – they need to come to the end of themselves and hopefully not too late.
- Finally, there are those who **don't trust the off ramp** – doubt and fear lead them to reject the adventure of letting Jesus drive into the unknown.



Faith is about letting go and letting Jesus.

Every Story is unique
 It will be or has been different for each of us.
 Some come to faith out of great tragedy and needs of all kinds,
 Some from faithful parents and role models,
 Some from great study and reason,
 Some from great boredom and apathy,
 Some early in life and some on their death bed.

The rich and poor, the powerful and weak, the haves and have nots, the old and the young, all races, tribes and peoples, from all over the world, from the beginning of the world – all come through Jesus, drawn by the Holy Spirit, granted access to the Father.

If you know that you are ready to take the plunge, to pray the prayer of salvation, I offer a sample prayer below. **There is no specific prayer to pray as all Jesus taught is that certain elements need to be in place.** During church services, times are offered for anyone in attendance to repeat a prayer the pastor prays. Books and pamphlets include sample prayers as guides, but it always comes down to the following issues.

1. You need to acknowledge your need and agree you are a SINNER.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23

2. You need to believe that Jesus Christ DIED for your sins and was RESURRECTED.

"But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8

"Christ died for our sins and was buried...[and] was raised on the third day." I Corinthians 15:3-4

3. You need to turn in FAITH to Jesus praying a pray like this:

Lord Jesus, Help me! I want to get off the road to Hell. I know I am sinful and need your forgiveness. I believe that you died and rose again to pay the penalty for my sin. I now receive you as my Savior, my Rescuer, my God, my Priest, my King. Thank you for forgiving me and giving me eternal life. Make me the kind of person you want me to be. Journey with me on the Road to Life. Amen

If you prayed this prayer – write down the date!!!

Happy Spiritual Birthday!

And tell someone – Angels are celebrating in heaven right now.

It's important to get connected with other believers who can encourage you and pray for you. Look for a Bible based local church and continue your spiritual practices.

Our enemy will not be pleased you have switched sides.

Never forget, Christ drank from the cup of God's wrath so we could drink from the cup of His Grace.

*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.
Acts 16:31*

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life, whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I John 5:21

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?" John 11: 25-26

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

"The time has come", John the Baptist said, "Repent and believe the good news!" Mark 1: 15

Your turn:

Which road are you currently on?
Who are you traveling with?
Is there an off ramp in your future?



lyrics

You might wonder why lyrics are included in a study like this.

I believe lyrics, or poetry put to music, as well as the accompanying music, have always been used by the Most High to impact our hearts and minds –

either by **our part in its creative process** –
 or through **our participation in its expression** –
 or through **our pleasure as a recipient** of its

sensory benefits.



Please try to access and listen to the musical versions on your own - **iTunes** and **youtube** are great online resources. If you are using the PDF version of this study and are connected to the internet, clicking on the song title will bring up a video of each song. The lyrics presented will not always be spiritual in their original context – but much can still be gained from applying them to how they describe and point to the Most High God.

[Amazing Grace \(My Chains are Gone\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-4NFvI5U9w)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-4NFvI5U9w>

Original Lyrics by John Newton, 1772

Additional Lyrics and Music by John P. Rees , Edwin Othello Excell and Chris Tomlin

Performed by Chris Tomlin

© 2006, EMI Christian Music Group

Youtube video uploaded by *ChrisTomlinVEVO*

Amazing grace
 How sweet the sound
 That saved a wretch like me
 I once was lost, but now I'm found
 Was blind, but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
 And grace my fears relieved
 How precious did that grace appear
 The hour I first believed

My chains are gone
 I've been set free
 My God, my Savior has ransomed me
 And like a flood His mercy rains
 Unending love, Amazing grace

The Lord has promised good to me
 His word my hope secures
 He will my shield and portion be
 As long as life endures

[2x]
 My chains are gone
 I've been set free
 My God, my Savior has ransomed me
 And like a flood His mercy rains
 Unending love, Amazing grace

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
 The sun forbear to shine
 But God, Who called me here below

Will be forever mine
 Will be forever mine
 You are forever mine

Amazing Grace (original lyrics)

© Public Domain

Amazing Grace (How sweet the sound)
 That saved a wretch like me!
 I once was lost, but now am found,
 Was blind, but now I see.

Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
 And grace my fears reliev'd;
 How precious did that grace appear,
 The hour I first believ'd!

Through many dangers, toils and snare,
 I have already come;
 Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
 And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me.
 His word my hope secures;
 He will my shield and portion be,
 As long as life endures.

Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
 And mortal life shall cease;
 I shall profess, within the vail,
 A life of joy and peace.

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
 The sun forbear to shine;
 But God, who called me here below,
 Will be forever mine

When we've been there ten thousand years,
 Bright shining as the sun,
 We've no less days to sing God's praise
 Than when we've first begun.

The melody most often used for this hymn was not original (nor was Newton a composer). As with other hymns of this period, the words were sung to a number of tunes before and after they first became linked to the now familiar variant of the tune "New Britain" in William Walker's shape-note tunebook *Southern Harmony*, 1835. There are several tunes to which these words have been sung. "New Britain" first appears in a shape-note hymnal from 1829 called *Columbian Harmony*.

In her novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Harriet Beecher Stowe includes an extra, final verse which may have been taken from another hymn. The additional verse is part of most hymnals today.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
 Bright shining as the sun,
 We've no less days to sing God's praise
 Than when we've first begun.

Whereas the original lyrics were penned by John Newton in 1772 (stanzas 1-6), this additional verse (stanza 7) was written in the nineteenth century, and is credited by some to John P. Rees (1828-1900). This verse became firmly established as part of the hymn by its addition in popular hymnbooks of the early twentieth century.

John Newton described himself as a "wretch" in need of grace. Though his mother taught him to pray, she died when he was 7 and his heart hardened against God. He became a wild, young man who mocked Christianity and drowned himself in drink.

At 23, while a crewman on a slave ship, Newton was jolted awake by a violent storm—so terrifying that he cried out to the Lord. The John Newton who arrived safely in England was a repentant man. For the rest of his life he would refer to March 10, 1748, as the day of his conversion.

Unfortunately, Newton's conversion did not change his views of slavery for many years. He became the captain of his own slave ship. In time, under the influence of famed abolitionist William Wilberforce and Anglican priests John Wesley and George Whitefield, he had another spiritual awakening. In 1760 he became an ordained minister and a powerful foe of slavery.

He eventually settled in the Olney parish where he and his friend William Cowper spent four days a week collaborating on hymns for their prayer meetings. On Jan. 1, 1773, the hymn was "Amazing Grace," which accompanied a text on David's response to God's blessings (1 Chron. 17:16-17). The original title for the song was "Faith's Review and Expectation."

Two earlier forms of the tune were published in the 19th century, but recent scholarship credits William Walker's Southern Harmony (1835) with the marriage of Newton's text to an old plantation melody. Much of the hymn's early popularity was the result of the songbook, which sold 800,000 copies.

The redeemed sinner who wrote, "I was lost but now I'm found ... was blind but now I see" was literally blind when he died—but he had seen clearly the wonder of God's grace.

Chris Tomlin added the newer chorus to the song, and had this to say about his contribution:

"I started doing some research on "Amazing Grace," and I was blown away that the last verse ("*When we've been there 10,000 years bright shining as the sun*") was written about 100 years later. The original verse by John Newton was "*The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,*" this incredible verse that I'd never seen in a hymn book. I started thinking about where John Newton came from, the slave ships, and what God had done in his life. We're all made slaves to sin in our life, but God has set us free. He has ransomed us from our slavery. I just wanted to add this idea that I hope brings freshness to the heart of the song."

This updated version of the song is also found on the *Amazing Grace* motion picture soundtrack.¹⁵

Your turn:

What are some fears you have? What would it take to relieve those fears? What would God's grace look like in those situations?

[It is Well with My Soul](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3lgJrLhb5Y)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C3lgJrLhb5Y>

Lyrics by Horatio Spafford, 1873
 Music by Phillip Bliss
 Performed by Colin Battersby
 © Public Domain
 Youtube video uploaded by *colinbattersby*

When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
 When sorrows like sea billows roll;
 Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
 It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Refrain:
 It is well, with my soul,
 It is well, it is well, with my soul.

Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
 Let this blest assurance control,
 That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
 And hath shed His own blood for my soul.

My sin, oh, the bliss of this glorious thought!
 My sin, not in part but the whole,
 Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more,
 Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!

For me, be it Christ, be it Christ hence to live:
 If Jordan above me shall roll,
 No pang shall be mine, for in death as in life
 Thou wilt whisper Thy peace to my soul.

But, Lord, 'tis for Thee, for Thy coming we wait,
 The sky, not the grave, is our goal;
 Oh, trump of the angel! Oh, voice of the Lord!
 Blessed hope, blessed rest of my soul!

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight,
 The clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
 The trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
 Even so, it is well with my soul.

In the 1870's Horatio Spafford was a successful Chicago lawyer and a close friend of evangelist Dwight L. Moody. Spafford had invested heavily in real estate, but the Chicago fire of 1871 wiped out his holdings. His son had died shortly before the disaster.

Spafford and his family desperately needed a rest so in 1873 he planned a trip to Europe with his wife and four daughters. While in Great Britain he also hoped to help Moody and Sankey with their evangelistic tour. Last minute business caused Spafford to delay his departure, but he sent his wife and four daughters on the *S. S. Ville Du Havre* as scheduled, promising to follow in a few days. On November 22, the ship was struck by the English ship *Lochearn*, and it sank in twelve minutes. Several days later the survivors landed at Cardiff, Wales, and Mrs. Spafford cabled her husband the brief message, "Saved alone."

When Horatio Spafford made the ocean crossing to meet his grieving wife, he sailed near the place where his four daughters had sunk to the ocean depths. There, in the midst of his sorrow, he wrote these unforgettable words that have brought solace to so many in grief.

Even so – It was Well with His Soul. ¹⁶

Your turn:

What is the worst that could happen? Is it well with your soul? What does that look like for you?

[Mighty to Save](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYZQ6KN13jU)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYZQ6KN13jU>

Words and Music by Ben Fielding and Reuben Morgan of Hillsong Church, Australia
Performed by Michael W. Smith
© 2005 Ben Fielding/Hillsong Publishing (Australia)
Integrity's Hosanna! Music (US)
Youtube video uploaded by Michael W. Smith

Everyone needs compassion,
A love that's never failing,
Let mercy fall on me.

Well, everyone needs forgiveness,
The kindness of a Savior,
The hope of nations.

Chorus
Savior, He can move the mountains.
My God is mighty to save,
He is mighty to save.
Forever, Author of Salvation,
He rose and conquered the grave,
Jesus conquered the grave.

So take me as You find me,
All my fears and failures,
fill my life again.

I give my life to follow,
Everything I believe in,
I surrender...I surrender.

Chorus x2

Shine Your light and let the whole world see,
We're singing for the glory of the risen King, Jesus.

Shine Your light and let the whole world see,
We're singing for the glory of the risen King.

"Mighty to Save" was written by the Worship Team at Hillsong Church in Australia and won a Dove Award for Worship Song of the Year at the 40th GMA Dove Awards. ¹⁷

It is based on Zephaniah 3:17:

*The LORD your God is with you, the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you; in his love he will no longer rebuke you, but will rejoice over you with singing. NIV*

And Isaiah 63:1:

*Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson?
Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength?
"It is I, proclaiming victory, mighty to save." NIV*

Your turn:

What are some areas of your life that could use a little compassion or kindness?
Share a time when you needed help from a mightier person.
Share a time when you had "mighty power" to show a little compassion or kindness.

I Stand By the Door (a poem)

An Apologia for my Life
By Samuel Moor Shoemaker

I stand by the door.

I neither go too far in, nor stay too far out,
 The door is the most important door in the world-
 It is the door through which people walk when they find God.
 There's no use my going way inside, and staying there,
 When so many are still outside and they, as much as I,
 Crave to know where the door is.
 And all that so many ever find
 Is only the wall where a door ought to be.
 They creep along the wall like blind people,
 With outstretched, groping hands.
 Feeling for a door, knowing there must be a door,
 Yet they never find it ...
 So I stand by the door.

The most tremendous thing in the world
 Is for people to find that door--the door to God.
 The most important thing any person can do
 Is to take hold of one of those blind, groping hands,
 And put it on the latch--the latch that only clicks
 And opens to the person's own touch.
 People die outside that door, as starving beggars die
 On cold nights in cruel cities in the dead of winter—
 Die for want of what is within their grasp.
 They live, on the other side of it--live because they have not found it.
 Nothing else matters compared to helping them find it,
 And open it, and walk in, and find Him ...
 So I stand by the door.

Go in, great saints, go all the way in—
 Go way down into the cavernous cellars,
 And way up into the spacious attics--
 It is a vast roomy house, this house where God is.
 Go into the deepest of hidden casements,
 Of withdrawal, of silence, of sainthood.
 Some must inhabit those inner rooms.
 And know the depths and heights of God,
 And call outside to the rest of us how wonderful it is.
 Sometimes I take a deeper look in,
 Sometimes venture in a little farther;
 But my place seems closer to the opening ...
 So I stand by the door.

There is another reason why I stand there.
 Some people get part way in and become afraid
 Lest God and the zeal of His house devour them
 For God is so very great, and asks all of us.
 And these people feel a cosmic claustrophobia,
 And want to get out. "Let me out!" they cry,
 And the people way inside only terrify, them more.
 Somebody must be by the door to tell them that they are spoiled
 For the old life, they have seen too much:
 Once taste God, and nothing but God will do any more.
 Somebody must be watching for the frightened
 Who seek to sneak out just where they came in,
 To tell them how much better it is inside.
 The people too far in do not see how near these are
 To leaving--preoccupied with the wonder of it all.
 Somebody must watch for those who have entered the door,
 But would like to run away. So for them, too,
 I stand by the door.

I admire the people who go way in.
 But I wish they would not forget how it was
 Before they got in. Then they would be able to help
 The people who have not, yet even found the door,
 Or the people who want to run away again from God,
 You can go in too deeply, and stay in too long,
 And forget the people outside the door.

As for me, I shall take my old accustomed place,
 Near enough to God to hear Him, and know He is there,
 But not so far from people as not to hear them,
 And remember they are there, too.
 Where? Outside the door--
 Thousands of them, millions of them.
 But--more important for me--
 One of them, two of them, ten of them,
 Whose hands I am intended to put on the latch.
 So I shall stand by the door and wait
 For those who seek it.
 "I had rather be a door-keeper ..."
 So I stand by the door.

Sam Shoemaker, founder of Faith At Work at Calvary Episcopal Church in New York City in 1926, was also one of the spiritual leaders who helped draft the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. He was an Episcopalian priest, the rector at Calvary Episcopal Church in New York City and was also a leader in the American Oxford Group.

It was at the Oxford Group meetings held at Calvary Church that Bill Wilson met Sam Shoemaker. Sam became one of Bill's early spiritual mentors and Bill credits Sam with teaching him the principles that became the Twelve Steps.

This piece is taken from the book "I Stand By The Door," a biography written by Sam's wife Helen and printed after his death in 1967. The book is titled after what Sam called an apologia for his life. In it Sam tells us how he viewed his role as a servant of God.

Shoemaker wrote over thirty books, about half of which were circulating before A.A.'s 12 Steps were first published in the Big Book in 1939.

*Revelation 3:20 – (Jesus speaking) "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 that person, and them with me." NIV*¹⁸

Your turn:

Where do you stand?

more cool stuff

What Just Happened?



Credit to RNLI, 2011

You come to that point in your spiritual journey where you do it.
You believe in Jesus.
You agree that it's not OK. You're not OK, and things never will be OK.
Unless you believe in Jesus.

You understand you were born into a broken relationship with God, your Creator, and there is nothing you can do about it.
You're a sinner in need of rescue.
God knew that and sent Jesus to rescue you.

You want to be rescued. You want to be OK.
And you believe Jesus can do it.
So you ask Him to do it.
You let Him take over your life and the adventure begins.

So, What Just Happened?

The Holy Spirit just happened.
You are now a New Creation. The Holy Spirit, or God, now lives within you and empowers you.
You are no longer broken. You are now OK. In fact, you are much better than OK.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is called God throughout the Bible. He is the Third person of the Trinity, co-equal with the Father and Jesus. (Acts 5:3-4, Acts 28:25-26, John 14:16-17, 16:7-15) He is not a mysterious or mystic force in the universe but a distinct person and a spirit who can be grieved, resisted, and insulted.

A Look Back

At work in the Beginning

The Holy Spirit was, is, and will be present in and at all levels of the cosmic process and creation. He provided energizing power in the creation of the world as He hovered over the waters. (Gen. 1:1-2, Psalm 104:30) And even though we cannot explain life, we know the Spirit gives life. (Job 33:4, John 6:63) Adam came alive only after God breathed His Spirit into him. (Gen 2:7) Humans, unlike any other creature, were then endowed with this unique and special Spirit in order to have personal communion with God.

The Spirit organized the chaos of the universe into beauty, the relationships in society to create good and right instead of evil and wickedness, and finally, the individual character of man to

produce joy and happiness. (Nehemiah 9:20)

At work in the Old Testament

In Old Testament times, the Holy Spirit came upon people to advance God's purposes and then would leave when His work was complete. There are around 400 of these appearances recorded in the Old Testament. *Ruah*, the word used for Spirit in these instances, means God's breath or God's energy let loose.

The Spirit's work was all about action, about getting work done. It was selective, temporary and task oriented. He revealed God's messages to His Spokesmen; the judges, prophets, craftsmen and civil rulers. He taught the way to be faithful and fruitful; eliciting faith, repentance, obedience, righteousness, praise and prayer. He equipped for strong, wise and effective leadership and gave skill and application for creative work. Below are just some of the examples of how the Spirit worked in the Old Testament.

- Joseph - Genesis 41:38-39
- Bezalel - Exodus 31:1-11
- Moses and the 70 Elders - Numbers 11:16-25
- Joshua - Numbers 27:18
- Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson - Judges 3:10, 6:34, 11:29, 13:24-25, 15:14
- Saul and Samuel - 1 Samuel 10:10, 11:5-7
- David - I Samuel 16:12-13, Ps 51:11
- Zechariah - 2 Chronicles 24:20
- Daniel - Daniel 2:47, 4:9
- Ezekiel - Ezekiel 3:12-24

As the Books of the Old Testament were created, collected and passed on through verbal and in written form, the Holy Spirit also began the process of inspiring and protecting Scripture for all generations. (Nehemiah 9:30, 2 Peter 1:21, 2 Timothy 3:16)

At work in the earthly life of Jesus:

Jesus earthly ministry was completely Spirit empowered, Spirit filled and Spirit led. (Luke 4:1, 14, 18, Acts 10:38, Is 61:1-2, Matthew 12:24-28, Luke 10:21) From his conception by the Holy Spirit creating his human form in Mary's virgin womb, (Luke 1:35, Mark 1:10-12) to his adult baptism by John the Baptist, when the Spirit descended on him like a dove without limit, completely uniting with him for ministry (Luke 3:21-22), Jesus became both the recipient and the bearer of the Holy Spirit.



Jesus was full of, empowered by and totally dependent on the Spirit of God and as a result was supernaturally victorious over hostile forces, demons, sickness and death. (Matt.12:28, Acts 10:38)

Jesus also taught much about the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit. Here is a short list of his teachings.

- Everyone must be born of the Spirit to see the Kingdom of God - John 3:5
- Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life - John 3:6-8
- God is Spirit - John 4:24
- Jesus fulfilled prophecy of Isaiah 61:1-1 - Luke 4:18
- Jesus fulfilled prophecy of Isaiah 42:1-4 - Matthew 12:18
- The Spirit alone gives eternal life - John 6:63

- Holy Spirit gift from the Father - Luke 11:13
- Blasphemy of Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven - Luke 12:10
- In depth instruction on ministry of Holy Spirit - John 14-16
- New believers to be baptized in name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit - Matthew 28:19

Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit

Near the end of his earthly ministry, Jesus began to prepare His Disciples for His departure from earth. In John 14-16, He describes the Spirit as an Advocate, Helper or Comforter, whom He, Jesus will send to them, from the Father. The Holy Spirit would do the same things Jesus did for them; encourage, instruct and strengthen. Jesus went on to describe some of the things the Spirit of God would do.

- John 14:16 -17 – Communicate truth about God, duplicate and sustains Jesus work
- John 14:26 – Teach, remind and clarify everything Jesus taught
- John 15:26 – Testify about Jesus, counsel and protect believers
- John 16:7 – Reveal the truth about our sin, God’s righteousness and the coming judgment
- John 16:13 – Reveal truth from Jesus about the future and bring glory to God

After His Resurrection Jesus, once again, promised them the Holy Spirit and cautioned them to wait in Jerusalem for the Spirit before they commenced their ministry.

- Risen Christ commissions disciples and gives them Holy Spirit - John 20:21-23
- Jesus commands His Disciples to stay in the city until the Holy Spirit’s power is sent from the Father - Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4-5
- Promises power to fulfill Great Commission through Holy Spirit - Acts 1:8

The Holy Spirit shows up at Pentecost

Pentecost is a Jewish Festival that occurred 50 days after Jesus was crucified. Because Jews were required to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for this festival, there were many from every surrounding nation and culture. The 120 Disciples and believers had been told to remain in



Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit appeared. They were all gathered together for prayer and suddenly, very visibly and powerfully, the Holy Spirit appeared and filled each believer.

This initial extraordinary appearance, recorded in Acts 2, came with the roar of wind and tongues or flames of fire over each follower of Jesus. The believers began to testify about Jesus to the other Jewish festival attendees in the crowds in languages the speakers did not know. The Spirit gave the ability to communicate to everyone what Jesus had done so the hearers could understand in their own language. This very situation had been prophesied hundreds of years earlier in Joel 2:28-29.

...I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days...(NIV)

The arrival of the Holy Spirit, and the indwelling and filling of every believer from then on, gave birth to the Church. (Acts 2:38)

Peter replied, "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."

The unity necessary to lead, instruct and care for Jesus' followers would not be possible without the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. The church grew exponentially as 3000 people initially believed in response to Peter's Spirit empowered message delivered at Pentecost. Many of these were Jews, who had traveled to Jerusalem from other countries, then returned home, taking the message of Christ with them.

At work in the in New Testament

The Holy Spirit appears in the New Testament as a person, distinct from the Father and the Son, with a ministry of His own as he takes over Jesus' role as counselor, helper, strengthener, supporter, advisor, advocate and ally. The word used for the Spirit in the New Testament is the Greek word *pneuma*, which means breath, wind or air in motion.

The Spirit hears, speaks, testifies, shows, leads, guides, teaches, prompts speech, commands, forbids, desires, helps, intercedes, groans, and prompts missionary action to make Christ known. He also can be personally insulted, blasphemed, lied to and grieved by sin.

There are numerous references to the person and work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament in the Gospels, Acts and the Epistles. We have already seen how Jesus and the Spirit worked together, but the Spirit also was working in and through countless believers and followers of Christ.

Here are just a few:

- John the Baptist – Luke 1:15, Mark 1:8, John 1:32-34
- Mary – Luke 1:35
- Elizabeth - Luke 1:41
- Zechariah – Luke 1:67
- Jesus/Mary – Matthew 1:20
- Simeon – Luke 2:25-27
- John the Baptist about Jesus – Matthew 3:11, Luke 3:16, John 3:34
- Jesus Baptism – Mark 1:10, Matthew 3:16, Luke 3:21-22, John 1:32-34
- Jesus Wilderness – Matthew 4:1, Luke 4:1-2
- Jesus Ministry – Luke 4:14
- Disciples - Acts 2:4, Acts 4:31, Acts 6:1-7
- Peter – Acts 4:8
- Peter/John - Acts 8:14 - 17
- Stephen – Acts 6:10, 7:55-59
- Philip – Acts 8:29-39
- Saul/Paul - 2 Cor. 12:11-12, Acts 9:17, 13:9
- Paul/Barnabas – Acts 13:1-5,15:28
- Barnabas - Acts 11:24
- Early Church – Acts 2:4, 41-47, 4:31, 5:32, 8:15-17, 29, 9:31

Communicator of Grace

The Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit, is one of the most mysterious attributes of God. We understand just a glimpse of all that is God; He is incomprehensible to our human minds. Because of this, He has left us Proof of Life to show us facets of His character, through creation, beauty, math, music, the moral code within each of us, miracles, even science, and then to cap it all off, He came Himself, as the God Man, as one of us, as Jesus Christ.



Jesus, fully God, fully man, and fully empowered by the Holy Spirit, spent 33 years on earth, provided a means to rescue mankind from our sin problem, and then after his death and resurrection He returned to Heaven with the promise of His Return at the End of the Age.

However, **He did not leave us alone** in His physical absence but **sent back the Holy Spirit** to be the Communicator of God's Grace, towards both His Children and to those who have yet to believe. Supernaturally, the Spirit of God, gives birth to spiritual life within all who believe and, yes, it's mysterious. Jesus, in John 3, explains it this way.

I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. So don't be surprised when I say, "You must be born again." The wind blows wherever it wants. Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit. (NIV)

And Nicodemus' very predictable response (which we can all relate to) was,

"How are these things possible?"

Jesus goes on in the same passage to discuss judgment on those who do not believe in God's One and Only Son. Many people love the darkness and evil so much, they hate when light or goodness shines brighter, exposing the truth of their lives. Jesus was the Light of the World, and in His absence the Holy Spirit has picked up where He left off.



The Holy Spirit and those yet to Believe

While **those yet to believe in Jesus do not have the Holy Spirit within them, they do have the image of God**, the original likeness to God that He placed within Adam and Eve. This makes us all spiritual beings, gives us a sense of right and wrong, a conscience, a desire to find truth, a spirit of community and generosity, goodness and vast amounts of creativity. This in itself is Proof of Life that God exists.

Spiritual longings are unique to humans and we are also compulsive worshippers. In some way, each one of us is on a religious quest of some kind for touch or connection with the eternal and universal. Deep, deep down inside we feel out of sync with our environment. We seem to know this world is not our home.

It is within this tension the Holy Spirit begins to communicate the Grace of God. In theological terms this is called **Prevenient Grace**, or the work the Spirit does around the unsaved one to renew their heart and bring them to personal faith in Jesus.

The Holy Spirit touches human spirit and confronts, convicts and reveals the need for change and repentance. As sinners, our minds are distorted and we are unable to contemplate God. Even with Proof of Life and natural revelation all around us, our human depravity obscures our ability

to understand and respond to it. The Holy Spirit seeks to influence the unbeliever's will to act contrary to the dictates of their sin nature and cross the line of faith.

Jesus explains in John 16:8-11:

When He comes, He will prove the world to be in the wrong about sin and righteousness and judgment: about sin, because people do not believe in me, about righteousness because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer, and about judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. NIV

No one crosses the line of faith without the drawing and enlightening of the Holy Spirit. Faith itself is a gift of the Spirit necessary to believe. The convincing and wooing ministry of the Holy Spirit is how God draws the heart of the unbeliever to come to belief.



But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, He will guide you into all truth....John 16:13

Here is a list of the various things that the Spirit reveals and spurs on in the human spirit of one yet to believe.

- **Conviction of Sin:** The reality of our spiritual condition and our separation from God - John 16:8-11.
- **Faith** is a gift of the HS in response to our cry for help. Reason may accompany faith but it does not cause faith.
- The Spirit gives **motive** to believe – God alone, not reason, is the basis of faith.
- Preps those yet to believe for the **presentation of the gospel** – 1 John 3:24, 4:13.
- Bears witness to and gives assurance of the **truth of Christianity** - 1 John 5:6-10.
- **Truth of Scripture:** Certainty only comes through Spirit working through objective evidence to confirm in one's heart that the Bible is Word of God. The Holy Spirit empowered the origin of scripture and gives understanding of Scripture's revealed truth.
- Prompts **belief** and works in and through evidence.
- Provides **supernatural evidence** (miracles) to confirm Christianity.

The Condition of our Hearts

The Spirit comes to us that we might come to Jesus. (John 6:44) He woos us, draws us in, gently showing us our serious eternal situation while at the same time enlightening us to the solution that is already in place. He shows us who we are and then He shows us who Jesus is.

Then we move closer or farther away. We become more or less curious. He matches us step by step. Sometimes the wooing turns to warning. It all comes down to the condition of our hearts.

In a spiritual and Biblical context, the heart represents the total response of a person to the life around them and to the will of God. Those who reject the Spirit's advances, ignore them, spurn them, are rebellious and even hostile towards them, are said to **harden their hearts** toward God. To continue in sinful, idolatrous, or rebellious ways or practices will harden one's heart to God. We may even know the truth and believe it is true, we just don't want to give up our sin, change our lives, so we say NO to God.



They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Ephesians 4:18 NIV

Sometimes we harden our hearts from extreme emotion – anger, disappointment, tragedy, all things we blame on God. It's not fair, makes no sense, we are controlled by our hatred, our anger, how could God not answer our prayer? How could God allow this to happen, that person to suffer, our lives to become such a mess? So we say NO to God.

The Spirit also warns us against the hardening of our hearts leading to unbelief. (Hebrews 3:7-13)

Unbelief or failure to believe God is the greatest sin you could ever commit for it locks you out of God's Grace Gifts and Blessing for eternity.

When you've heard the truth of Jesus Christ, and then you turn your back and you walk away, there is nothing God can do. Every time you do this, the harder your heart will become.

See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. NIV Hebrews 3:12

And so once again, the Holy Spirit says to us, respond to Jesus while the Spirit still warms your heart, while your heart is still sensitive and while it is soft, respond to His love and His call of grace.

God Within Us – In An Instant

At the point of faith, the moment of salvation, a miracle occurs as Jesus through the Holy Spirit enters your spirit, soul, mind and heart. The Holy Spirit is now God living in you. It is very real, but beyond understanding.

Several things occur that may or may not matter to you at that moment. But eventually you need to understand how the Spirit works in you and through you, and how you cooperate, listen to, obey, and rely on the Spirit's wisdom, direction and power.

New Birth - New Creation

John 1:13 states that all who have believed in and accepted Jesus have been reborn spiritually as Children of God. This is called the **Regeneration of the Believer** and the Holy Spirit accomplishes it when He enters our spirit. (John 3:3-7)

Yet to all who receive Him, to those who believed in His Name, He gave the right to become Children of God – children not born of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. NIV John 1: 12-13

Below is a list of other things that also occur at that moment of New Birth.

- **New Life in Christ:** In an instant we change from a state of spiritual death to one of spiritual life. 2 Corinthians 5:17, John 3:1-8
- **Spiritual resurrection:** John 5:21, Romans 6:13, Ephesians 2:5
- We are **Redeemed:** Penalty paid, forgiveness received, We are washed clean.
- We are **Justified:** Declared not guilty and therefore righteous in God's sight.
- We are **Reconciled:** No longer an enemy of God, brought back into right relationship
- We are **Transformed:** Receive a new nature in place of old sin nature, patterned after God's nature, New Birth, New Creation.



- We are **Sanctified** and begin an ongoing process of development of divine qualities and longing for things of God.
- We are **Adopted**: Become Co-Heirs with Christ, new identity as Children of God.
- We are **Sealed**: Assurance of Salvation assures believers they are His Children and that salvation is unable to be reversed.

New Benefits

Remember the Grace Gifts and Blessings we are promised yet do not deserve? Once we are Children of God, they all are available for our use.

- **Co-Heirs with Christ** – we get what He gets – limitless blessings.
- **Access to the Father** through Christ – right now, prayer life enhanced.
- **Names are written in the Book of Life** – eternal life in Heaven and on New Earth.
- **Holy Spirit now dwelling within us** guides, comforts, convict of sins, and strengthens – like having Jesus at our side.
- **Fruit of the Spirit** (Galatians 5:22-23) The ability to display love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control in situations where we naturally would not.
- **The Armor of God** (Ephesians 6:11-18) These are supernatural powers and protections provided to believers to stand against the Devil and his evil schemes.
- **Spiritual Gifts** for Ministry (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12:4-8, Ephesians 4:11-13) These are abilities given to believers for use within the Body of Christ to build it up and make it effective and powerful, fulfilling the will of God.
- **Spiritual Eyes** – discernment of good and evil, wisdom, eternal perspective (Matthew 13:13-17, Mark 8:17-18, Luke 10:23-24, Acts 26:18)
- **Power to love** one another (1 John 4)
- **Spiritual blessings** (Romans 15:27)
- **Faith and Hope** (1 Peter 1:21, James 2, Hebrews 11, 1 Peter 1:3-9)
- **Promises of God** realized (2 Corinthians 1:18-22, 7:1, 2 Peter 1:4)
- **Power over sin** – Rom 8:1-4
- **Power to live** a fruitful life - Gal. 5:22-23
- **Power for ministry** – I Cor. 12:1-31
- **Power to yield** to Spirit's guidance and power – Gal.5:16-18
- **Power to understand** God's thoughts and ways – I Cor. 2:9-16

God Conforms Us – To Be Like Jesus



You are now a Child of God – a Christian, a Believer, a New Creation.

The Holy Spirit now indwells you, your sins are forgiven, you're washed white as snow.

You have access to the Gifts of Grace and the Throne of Grace.

Your name is written in the Book of Life.

You have power to be victorious over sin.

Your life has purpose and God has given you gifts and power to minister and reflect His light to the world.

And then the **lifelong process of sanctification** begins (John 15:1-8, 1 Peter 2:2, 2 Peter 3:18, Hebrews 5:12-6:12). Sanctification means to set apart for holy purposes, or to make holy or perfect. The more sanctified a person is, the more conformed to Jesus he becomes.

1 Corinthians 6:11 - "...But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

Because we are now alive to God and the Spirit, we have a new direction for life. We also have the aspiration to attain and obey the Will of God as we cooperate with the Holy Spirit in the mysterious life of transformation into the likeness of Christ.

Caution: Spirit at Work

God works in us and through us and all around us to lead us to Christ controlled living as we slowly relinquish the control our ego demands as the center of our life. We learn submission and obedience. Sure there are plenty of mistakes along the way. We learn to listen for the Spirit's input. We get to know God on a personal level, to walk with Him, talk to Him, rely on Him, submitting to His Will. We give up the Thrones of our Lives and let Jesus and the Spirit be in charge.

Therefore my dear friends, as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. NIV Philippians 2:12-13

And our lives change...as we progressively are transformed into Christ's moral and spiritual likeness. Even if we are not aware, the change is occurring if we are relying on the Holy Spirit. Here is a list of some of the ways the Spirit works in our lives.

- **Spiritual eyes:** no true understanding of Christian Faith apart from the Holy Spirit
- **Makes God personal** to each believer by uniting us to Christ
- Makes people alive to God
- **Enlightens minds** of believers
- **Illuminates and confirms truth** of scripture and revelation
- Produces virtues within – **Fruit of the Spirit**
- **Power to cease or be victorious** over sinful thoughts and actions
- **Selfishness curbed:** No longer what can I get out of it
- **Changes our priorities and perspective:** Becomes what can I do for Christ or others?
- Creates internal personal **passion** and inward **power to please** the One who freed us.
- **Empowers** believers for ministry
- **Ability to perceive and stand** against spiritual powers of darkness: Armor of God

Sanctification is spurred on by adopting and practicing spiritual habits or disciplines, such as the ones presented in the Practice elements of all the OmniInfinity Journeys. We learn to engage and learn from the Bible, how to relate to others, how to gain guidance from God, how to pray, how to recognize and confess sin and ask for forgiveness, how to forgive others, how to submit to and obey God, how to trust Him, deepen our faith, how to serve and give and love.....

Like John the Baptist in John 3:30, we must become lesser so Jesus can become greater in our lives, which is exactly the opposite from the way the world system operates.



Filled to the Brim

Our ability to access the ongoing stream of life and power from the Holy Spirit is short circuited if there is unconfessed sin in our lives. The process of being **Filled with the Spirit** will reconnect us simply by our confessing our sin and asking the Spirit to take back the control of our lives. This process is extremely important in relation to growth in our Christian experience, power and service. It is repeated often since we will all still sin, if not in action, in our thoughts, attitudes and hearts.

Be very careful then how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead be filled with the Spirit....NIV Ephesians 5:15-18

It is not a matter of acquiring more of the Holy Spirit, but of the Holy Spirit acquiring more of us. We are commanded to be filled in Ephesians 5:18, so not to be filled is to be in a state of partial disobedience. His power is not at our disposal to use as we please. We are at his disposal.

When we are Filled with the Spirit we are in the spiritual state in which the Holy Spirit is fulfilling all the He came to do in the heart and life of each of us. Our lives will show an observable difference when we remain filled.

Being Filled is not the same as Spiritual Maturity. New Believers can be filled with the Spirit right away and manifest the power of God in their lives. Spiritual maturity comes only from spiritual experiences that extend over a lifetime of being filled as well as a maturity of judgment in spiritual things.

Grieving the Spirit (Ephesians 4:30-31) happens when we indulge in anger based sin or activity rooted in selfishness, when our love for self is higher than our love for God or man. Once we move to the place of hate or anger we are easily lured into many greater sins. Forms of anger that grieve the Spirit include bitterness, malice, clamor, envy, resentment, intolerance, criticism, revenge, wrath, hatred, jealousy, rebelliousness, attack, gossip, sarcasm and unforgiveness.

Quenching the Spirit (1 Thess. 5:19-22) happens when we indulge in fear based sin or activity. Fear based issues usually result from lack of faith, a fear of the future, resulting in saying No to God. The longer we live in this form of disobedience the greater our fear becomes. We have our eyes on our circumstances or future problems that will never occur. Ninety-nine percent of the things we fear will never happen anyway. We need to change our focus to the Faithful Almighty One who provides for our every need one hundred percent of the time.

Forms of fear based behavior that quench the Spirit include anxiety, doubts, indecision, superstition, withdrawal, loneliness, over aggression, worry, inferiority, cowardice, suspicion, haughtiness, and social shyness.

The high standards set by Jesus for living the Christian Life cannot be fulfilled without the Spirit's power. We must continually be being filled since we cannot depend on yesterday's power or get power today for tomorrow's problems. **Walking in the Spirit** (Galatians 5:16) is the moment by moment moving through our lives relying on the power of the Holy Spirit, which has and is Filling us, and then **Spiritually Breathing** as we need to, to keep on walking. Spiritual Breathing is the Exhaling or confessing of our Sin (1 John 1:9, Hebrews 10:1-25) and then Inhaling by surrendering, yet again, control of our lives back to the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18, 1 John 5:14-15). We breathe out our confessed sin and the breathe back in the Spirit's control and power.

So I say, walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. NIV Galatians 5:16

This process of Sanctification, Filling, Breathing and Walking with the Spirit, will be discussed in greater detail in Journey 11.

Within the Church, the Spirit:

- Gives and restores life
- Calls and Commissions workers
- Guides God's servants where and when he wants to do as He desires
- Instructs the church and individuals in the truth of the Bible
- Bears witness to the power of the Gospel in signs and wonders
- Bears witness to Jesus and brings Him Glory
- Bestows gifts on God's people – Spiritual Gifts
- Energizes and equips God's people to share the Good News, serve the Lord, work for the Kingdom of God.
- Develops and Grows and Expands the ministry of the Church
- Prays effectively in and for believers in Christ who feel unable to properly pray for themselves - Rom 8:26
- Teacher and Revealer of God's thoughts and ways
- Guidance and power for Evangelism
- Goal to make believers like Christ - Rom 8:28-29

Divine Appointments

Even if we know and understand all this information, sometimes it is difficult to see the Spirit working in our lives.

What does it look like when the Spirit is moving in us?

How does the Spirit draw one, yet to believe in Jesus, to Him?

How does He speak to us?

How do we know it is really the Spirit speaking and not our imagination?



We all have divine appointments with God everyday. He speaks through creation and art. He stirs us deep within to desire to know Him, to ponder eternity, to wonder about life after death. He reveals truth; about Himself, about what He has done for us, about our inner lives, our sins, our dissatisfaction with our lives.

He directs others to interact with us, to uplift us or challenge us, to help us, inspire us, befriend us, or sometimes it's just a passing "chance" meeting with a stranger that changes our lives.

He sends thoughts, ideas, dreams, songs, books, movies, even television preachers. Sometimes He scares us to death, in love, of course. We can't get Him out of our minds. We know we need to do something. Get to know Him, read His Word. Take him up on his Promises. Begin your life of faith. Partner with the Holy Spirit, don't run from Him.

Recapping the Spirit List

1. He **convicts** the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).
2. He **guides** us into all truth (John 16:13).
3. He **regenerates** us (John 3:5-8; Titus 3:5).
4. He **glorifies** and **testifies** of Christ (John 15:26; 16:14).
5. He **reveals** Christ to us and in us (John 16:14-15).
6. He **leads** us (Rom. 8:14; Gal. 5:18; Matt. 4:1; Luke 4:1).
7. He **sanctifies** us (2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rom. 5:16).
8. He **empowers** us (Luke 4:14; 24:49; Rom. 15:19; Acts 1:8).
9. He **fills** us (Eph. 5:18; Acts 2:4; 4:8, 31; 9:17).
10. He **teaches us to pray** (Rom. 8:26-27; Jude 1:20).
11. He **bears witness** in us that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16).
12. He **produces in us the fruit** or evidence of His work and presence (Gal. 5:22-23).
13. He **distributes spiritual gifts** and manifestations (the outshining) of His presence to and through the body (1 Cor. 12:4, 8-10; Heb. 2:4).
14. He **anoints** us for ministry (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38).
15. He **washes and renews** us (Titus 3:5).
16. He **brings unity and oneness** to the body (Eph. 4:3; 2:14-18). Here He plays the same role that He plays in the Godhead. The Spirit is the life that unites Father and Son. He plays the same role in the church. When He is operating in a group of people, He unites them in love. Therefore, a sure evidence of the Holy Spirit working in a group is Love and Unity. Not signs and wonders (those are seasonal and can be counterfeited).
17. He is **our guarantee** and deposit of the future resurrection (2 Cor. 1:22; 2 Cor. 5:5).
18. He **seals us** unto the day of redemption (Eph. 1:13; 4:30).
19. He **sets us free** from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2).
20. He **quickens** our mortal bodies (Rom. 8:11).
21. He **reveals the deep things** of God to us (1 Cor. 2:10).
22. He **reveals what has been given to us** from God (1 Cor. 2:12).
23. He **dwells** in us (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Tim. 1:14; John 14:17).
24. He **speaks** to, in, and through us (1 Cor. 12:3; 1 Tim. 4:1; Rev. 2:11; Heb. 3:7; Matt. 10:20; Acts 2:4; 8:29; 10:19; 11:12, 28; 13:2; 16:6-7; 21:4,11).
25. He is **the agent** by which we are baptized into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).
26. He **brings liberty** (2 Cor. 3:17).
27. He **transforms us** into the image of Christ (2 Cor. 3:18).
28. He **cries** in our hearts, "Abba, Father" (Gal. 4:6).
29. He **enables us to wait** (Gal. 5:5).
30. He **supplies** us with Christ (Phil. 1:19).
31. He **grants everlasting life** (Gal. 6:8).
32. He **gives us access** to God the Father (Eph. 2:18).
33. He **makes** us (corporately) God's habitation (Eph. 2:22).
34. He **reveals the mystery** of God to us (Eph. 3:5).
35. He **strengthens** our spirits (Eph. 3:16).
36. He **enables us to obey** the truth (1 Pet. 1:22).
37. He **enables us to know** that Jesus abides in us (1 John 3:24; 4:13).
38. He **confesses** that Jesus came in the flesh (1 John 4:2).
39. He **says "Come, Lord Jesus"** along with the bride (Rev. 22:17).

journal

9.7 Nitty Gritty

1. **The Mercy of God decrees we will not receive** what we deserve. When we do wrong – someone else is punished.
2. **Mercy is the hand that reaches down.**
3. **While Mercy could be defined as not receiving** what we deserve, Grace would then be receiving what we don't deserve.
4. **Grace baffles us because it is free** - It costs us absolutely nothing, but it costs the Giver everything.
5. **Grace imputes merit where there is none**, it declares there is no longer a debt where one existed before. That is why we cannot earn our salvation. There is no other way to be saved except by grace.
6. **Since Grace destroys self-righteousness**, nothing in grace is attractive to fulfilling the requirements of the pride of man. There lies the battle.
7. **If we don't truly understand the Holiness of God**, the depravity of our sin, and the horror of our judgment – eternity in hell, we will not be impressed by His Mercy and Grace.
8. **God doesn't accept us because of our efforts**, He accepts us because of what Jesus has done. We do not define ourselves by who we are not, but by Whose we are.
9. **God is provable in a legal way** - with evidence, and logic, and testimony and historical experience, with truth tests, the same way a court of law evaluates evidence to come to a verdict beyond a reasonable doubt.
10. **The first step in the process of changing roads is to Believe and put our faith in** the Truth about God, ourselves and Jesus. But true faith requires action and that leads us to the second step. We have to do one thing, an act of the will and tell Him we want to get off the Road to Hell.
11. **Extra Credit and Reading Recommendation:** [What's So Amazing About Grace](#) by Phillip Yancey.
12. **We also recommend viewing *Amazing Grace*** (the Movie) released in 2007 and available for rent or purchase.



closure

Because it matters what we think about God

We have come to the end of **O Mercy Me**, the ninth of the 12 OmniInfinity™ Journeys. This journey has caused us to **Remember** *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace."* and **Read** Philippians 2-3, Galatians 5 and 1 Thessalonians 5.

We **Analyzed** by doing a Word Study on one of the Fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5:22-23; **Investigated** God's Mercy and Grace; and **Practiced** Community. We took **Inventory** of our Money and went **Adventuring** by learning how to Break the Ice and start up conversations with strangers. We were challenged in **More Cool Stuff** to learn more about the Holy Spirit and how He works in and around our lives as both believers and ones yet to believe. And finally, **Lyrics** spoke to our hearts and souls as we pondered through music the impact of God's Grace and Mercy on our lives.

The **Journal** revealed that after the bad news of sin and hell, **God provided the Good News, the Gospel, and it is our Only Hope.** Our Merciful God, who **provided a way for us to escape** what we rightfully deserve, hell, is also a Gracious God who **then adopts us as His children** and lavishes us with benefits we could never deserve. **And yet we still struggle** with believing that we need saving at all.

We realized the God of Mercy knows we are suffering, even if we won't admit it. He seeks to help us, rescue us, lessen the severity of our pain and suffering. He takes pity on us and **offers us a Hand Up.** All we have to do is take His Hand. Yet that is such a battle for us because we are hanging on with both our hands to all we hold dear, hoping it will save us, but knowing deep down we are doomed if we won't let go. **Mercy is the Hand that reaches down to save us.**

Grace is the Hand that reaches out and blesses us with God's gifts. Instead of condemnation, prison and death, we receive power and presents. **The Mercy of God declares us Not Guilty, and then the Grace of God declares us Righteous.** It imputes merit where there is none and relieves the debt that existed before. Grace saves us, it is free, cannot be earned, it is a gift of God.

We also discovered **we live in a very ungracious world.** This spirit of rebellion has been around from the Fall to the present day, as **mankind seeks to fight against God's gracious authority.** Unfortunately, this world of ungrace, continually **striving for pleasure, profit, power and privilege**, rubs off on us. Jesus taught and modeled with His own Life just the opposite – a life of humility, unselfishness, sacrifice, obedience, and compassion. The Gospel takes away our self-issues, the need to compare, criticize and correct because now our image management is no longer up to us, but up to God.

At some point in all our Spiritual Journeys we come to an off ramp, **a chance to get off the Road to Hell and on to the Road to Life.** Our journey to and with God is likened to the Dash on our tombstone, the time between our physical birth and death. We learned that **God is very provable, in a legal way**, with witnesses, truth tests, evidence and logic. Many look for scientific proofs and yet there is no way natural science will ever prove the existence of a supernatural God. God has left evidence of Himself, or Proof of Life, all over the place. **He will provide us with whatever we need to know to come to Him.**

The first step onto the Road to Life is to Believe or have Faith that all we have learned about God, ourselves and Jesus is true. We must come to a verdict beyond a reasonable doubt. **The second step requires action, an act of our will.** We must tell Jesus that we know we are sinners, that we believe He died just for us and that we want a different life, the life only He can provide, eternal life. We need to ask Him to forgive all our sins, and take over our

lives. We need to take the offramp, open the door of our car, and invite Him in to drive. He journeys with us in the form of the Holy Spirit – like our new GPS.

As **Children of God** we have access to the Throne of Grace and the Gifts of Grace. Our names are written in the Book of Life. We have the power to be victorious over sin. Our lives have purpose and God has given us gifts and power to minister and reflect His life to the world.

And **still many pass on God's merciful and gracious rescue and life giving power and future.** Perhaps they have believed the lies spread about what it is like to live life with Jesus. Others are enjoying their lives, unaware, thinking they have it all under control. Some aren't yet desperate enough. They enjoy their sin and their sin has blinded them to their fate. Many are waiting for another day, as the cares of this world take up their time. Then there are those who will try to earn their way to God or become their own Gods. Finally, many are just afraid and doubtful. Their God is too small.

Now it's time to **think back** over this part of your journey and **reflect** on what you have discovered and learned. The sections below may help jog your memory. **Describe** the details of any areas that **apply** to you.

New Things I Learned

Old Things I was reminded of

Questions I have

Areas I was challenged in

First steps I took

Areas I would like to study more



“AHA!” moments

Dreams and visions



appendix

- [About the Journeys](#)
- [About Remembering](#)
- [About the Practices](#)

about the journeys...

Welcome to **OmniInfinity™**.. a series of guided journeys leading to greater knowledge and understanding of the attributes of God and the Spiritual Practices necessary to gain this knowledge.

The only requirement is a willingness to learn and discover through a variety of activities. Some elements you may naturally be drawn to, some will challenge you, and some may be way out of the box for you. It is important to do them all, in order, completing one journey before moving on to the next.

There are twelve journeys or units, **each designed to be completed in two months** - either by yourself, with a friend or in a small group setting. It is important to remember we all start from different places, we start with what we know and move on from there, but we are all traveling together.

journey elements

The following elements make up each journey and should be completed in order. Some of the elements require some advance planning, so you might want to review the entire contents of each journey before you begin. Use the Table of Contents to check off your progress.

Remember: One or more Bible verses to memorize for each journey unit.

Read: Throughout the twelve journey units you will read some of the most profound and well loved chapters in the Bible.

Analyze: A variety of Bible Study methods will be offered to help you analyze in greater depth a section of the Reading above. The goal of this section is to familiarize you with various ways to greater understand God's Word.

Investigate and 10 things: Each journey unit focuses on a group of God's attributes, defining terms, and completing a directed investigation page.

Practice and Why?: Part of growing in our relationship with God is the intentional practice of skills that have helped Christians from the beginning. Each journey unit will focus on one or more of these with instructions for developing each discipline skill. Some Practices involve doing a specific activity, while others require we stop doing certain things.

Inventory: A personal inventory will be completed regarding areas related to the attributes and skills studied in each unit, reviewing your personal history and evaluating your current practices and beliefs.

Adventuring: This section guides you to venture out into the world with a specific assignment to observe, interact with or impact your surroundings and neighborhoods. The intent is to allow God to reveal Himself through nature, media and other people.

Lyrics: You are encouraged to read the included song lyrics as poetry for your inspiration, go online and listen to the actual recordings and then reflect on the questions that follow.

Journal and More Cool Stuff: The author has included some musings and further information pertaining to the subject of each journey unit for your consideration, personal response and reflection.

Closure: At the conclusion of each journey there is a place to recap where you've been, what you learned, new thoughts, challenges, growing pains.....

enjoy the adventure ...

about remembering...



Think of this exercise as a necessary foundation for future excellence – like practicing scales on the piano or doing wind sprints or swimming laps, taking your vitamins, or eating your vegetables.

We actually recall or remember all kinds of things we've memorized without really even trying. Can you think of any?

How about your phone number, email address, street address, zip code, social security number, birthday, names of your family, how to get to work, how to drive a car, that secret recipe...or how to spell or multiply, song lyrics, movie scenes, jokes, what someone was wearing, what car they drove, sports statistics, what chocolate tastes like, what the ocean smells like, and on and on.

Why do we remember what we remember?

Recollection is just the tip of the memory iceberg. Within our marvelous and mysterious brain the memory works in collaboration with us and the world – it uses all our senses and emotions. We associate smells, colors, places, rituals, symbols, landmarks, even people, with memories and when we sense the trigger, we remember.

There are tremendous spiritual benefits from Remembering Bible verses:

- Strengthens our faith
- Shapes how we view the world
- Makes God's Word immediately accessible
- Guards our minds.....and that's just for starters.

Experts say that we will forget more in the first hour after our memory event than in one day, and more in the first day than the first month...What we remember for one month, will probably stay with us.....so the idea is to remember regularly for one month and we've got it.

Here are some suggestions to help you get started. We all learn differently – so don't be afraid to try some of the more unusual methods. Not only do we need to remember the verse, **we need to remember to work on remembering the verse.**

- Write the verse on several post it notes or index cards and put them where you will see them such as the car, the bathroom mirror, the kitchen sink, a bulletin board, your computer screen saver, your cell phone, by your bed....
- Make plans to spend five minutes, twice a day (usually as you get up and before bed) to review.
- Say it slowly, 15 times in a row, emphasizing each word.
- If you have already learned it in another translation, review that one. Once you know it in one, look it up in a couple of other translations to see what is different.
- Review it when you are waiting in line, or on hold on the phone.
- Sing it – make up a tune to go with it
- For extra credit, add the verse before and the verse after.

about the practices...

The Spiritual Practices put us in a place where we are better able to interact with our environment and God. God can then reach inside our spirits and transform them.

Just as our body needs to eat, breathe, exercise, drink, sleep, etc., so our spiritual self needs to make sure it is being sustained, cared for, and trained.

The results include spiritual growth, a life controlled by the Holy Spirit, evidence of the fruit of the spirit, and the ultimate goal, living life like Jesus did.

The Spiritual Practices are not:

- Meritorious laws that earn favor with God
- A way to show how spiritually mature we are
- Unpleasant or difficult

Instead, they are:

- Intentional
- Activities we do that when practiced allow us to do activities we cannot now do.
- Adaptable to work with our temperaments and gifts
- Adjustable according to the rhythm and seasons of our lives

There are two kinds

Practices of Abstinence - when we stop doing something that is perfectly normal to allow ourselves to focus more on God, His Word, and growing in godliness. These also help us resist our tendency toward sins of commission (when we do something we shouldn't do). We withdraw to breathe in all that God can provide to us, breaking the hold that the world has on our lives. Practices of Abstinence help ready us and create room for the Practices of Engagement.

Practices of Engagement - when we do certain activities that help us grow in Christ and obey his commandments. The Practices of Abstinence have opened up the time and broken up the preoccupations so we are now free to learn of, focus on, and practice those things that God commands us to do. These assist in keeping us from our tendency toward sins of omission (not doing the things we should do). We engage to breathe out all that God commands us. ¹¹

As their name implies, the Spiritual Practices are not one-time events, but skills to be learned and developed over time. So don't be discouraged in the beginning if you struggle with them or find them difficult. Make them a regular part of your life. In our Journeys we would rather **emphasize the actual practicing of the Practices** and not so much the reading about them.....and let you discover the benefits as they appear in your life.

credits

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17. Ben Fielding and Rueben Morgan, lyrics and music, "[Mighty to Save](#)", 2005, Hillsong Publishing/Integrity's Hosanna! Music. Performed by Michael W. Smith. Additional information from [Wikipedia](#).
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19. Frank Viola, "[50 Things the Holy Spirit Does](#)", November 11, [2010 Blog post](#).

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so what now?

Continue your Omniainfinitude™ adventure with

- Journey Ten: To Die For**
- Journey Eleven: Up Close & Personal**
- Journey Twelve: Perfect Ending**