

# ***The Gospel of the Covenant Is the Pilgrimage to Salvation***

## **Lesson 13. Being Born Again Requires Your Trust (De-Hellenizing Mental Muck)**

*Please prayerfully take your time going through each section of this lesson and consider both the information and the questions. Your heartfelt responsiveness and determination matter to our Lord, so don't try to complete an entire lesson at once. Also, you'll reap greater benefit if you go through each lesson with others close to you.*

### **Section 1**

***“Keep trusting in the LORD  
with all your heart and  
never rely on your own rationalization;  
in all your ways look to Jesus,  
and He will guide your life”***

(Proverbs 3:5,6 rephrased for the born again).

Because He is the God of the whole universe and Sovereign over all that exists, our Lord has the right to command your trust in Him. It's by His grace on your behalf that you can be born again in Christ and continue in the journey toward your salvation. That's why you must have *total confidence* in Him—the “with all your heart” part. This depth of trust flows out of the same heartfelt commitment as loving Him:

*“Love the Lord your God with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul and with **all** your mind and with **all** your strength”* (Mark 12:30).

Neither love nor trust are something you can conjure up by your own energy. And thanks be to God, you don't have to! When you are born again, the Holy Spirit takes up residence in you and pours into you the capacity to love and trust as Jesus would have you (see Romans 5:5).

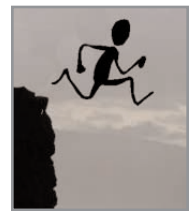
Your responsiveness to grow ever more yielded to the Spirit to *keep* loving and trusting produces the **all** factor toward our Lord. When the Bible uses the word “**all**” it literally means *everything within you*. Just as both *ahav* and *agape* love call for your total heartfelt commitment, our Lord requires **all** your trust in Him. Peter expressively weaves together

the love and trust in our Lord Jesus that result in wondrous inner joy:

*“Though you have not seen Him, you love Him. Even though you don't see Him now, you trust in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving **the goal of your trust, the salvation of your souls**”* (1Peter 1:8,9).

### **Trusting God Is Far More Exacting Than Just Believing He Exists**

The Hebrew word for trust, *emunah* [eh-moo-NAH], entails far, far more than just mental belief in God. The Hebrew root word for trust means “to fling yourself off a precipice.” How's that for confidence in the Arms that will catch you! *Emunah* is a robust word, necessitating your firm heartfelt resolve to cling to the reliability, truth, grace, mercy, strength, and love of God—unchanging attributes of His worthiness to be trusted by those who belong to His Son.



Your steadfast trust when you're born again is based on *Who Jesus is* to you. This is the same *determined, steadfast trust in God* which Abraham exercised by responsive action time and again. The trust of this man led him to unhesitatingly obey His Lord! Because of his unwavering trust, Abraham is called the father of all who are born again (Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:7). *Trust* means that obedience to the One Who commands you far outweighs any perceived outcome.

The Hebraic understanding of *emunah* is that your trust always leads you to responsive action. Again, looking at our father Abraham's trust: In total obedience to God, Abraham left his ancestral home in Ur of the Chaldees; waited over two decades for the birth of Isaac, the son of God's promise; and was prepared to sacrifice his beloved Isaac on Mount Moriah.

Anchor this truth for yourself. It's the difference between a manmade counterfeit gospel and the authentic salvation of someone who is born of the Spirit:

**The trust that our Lord Jesus requires of those who belong to Him is both deeply intense and responsive because it emanates from your heart. If you're born again you evidence this trust by the immediacy in which you follow through on the conviction and guidance the Holy Spirit gives you, as well as in your determination by His grace to make God's commands your way of life.**

A documented event reveals the *readiness to take action* which genuine trust (*emunah*) entails:

Charles Blondin was a 19th century tightrope walker who amazed audiences by pushing a wheelbarrow blindfolded high above the ground. A promoter read about him in the papers and wrote a letter saying, "Mr. Blondin, I don't believe you can do it, but I'm willing to make you an offer. For a very substantial sum of money, plus all your transportation fees, I would like to challenge you to do your act over Niagara Falls." Blondin accepted.



Weeks later (30 June 1859), high above the roaring water the young man started across on the Canadian side, blindfolded and confidently pushing his wheelbarrow. Drums rolled as he easily reached the American side. The crowds went wild! Blondin approached the promoter and said,

"Well, Mr. Promoter, now do you believe I can do it?" "Well of course I do. I mean, I just saw you do it." "No," replied Blondin, "do you *really believe* I can do it?" "Well of course I do, you just did it." "No, no, no," countered Blondin insistently, "do you *believe* I can do it?" "Yes," answered Mr. Promoter, "I *believe* you can do it." "Good," said Blondin. "Then *get in the wheelbarrow* and we'll cross over together."

- Visualize yourself at Niagara Falls that day. Would you prefer to be 1) a spectator, 2) the confident, blindfolded Blondin, or 3) the person who gets in the wheelbarrow? Explain your choice.

It's one thing to *believe* a man can walk across Niagara Falls by himself. And it takes *some trust* to agree that he could

**Having failed to appreciate the emotional intensity and commitment of *emunah*, many Bible translations have replaced "trust" with "believe." Unfortunately, the modern understanding of *believe* connotes passive acceptance — intellectually agreeing that something is true. However, *belief* totally misses the mark of the *trusting resolve* our Lord commands His own, a resolve which results in *responsive obedience*.**

**Multitudes throughout Christendom have been deceived into thinking God only calls for mental *belief*: belief that He exists, belief in their creed, belief in what their religious leaders teach. People whose connection to God consists only of their belief, their *mental perception*, have nothing they trust our Lord for. They may pray, but they don't really *trust* that He will answer. So they set up a backup plan "just in case." They may study the Bible, but they put little or nothing of His righteous ways *into action*.**

James warns such people, "*Show me your trust without deeds, and I will show you my trust by what I do... As the body without the spirit is dead, so trust without deeds is dead*" (James 2:18,26).

(theoretically) carry you across. But it's genuine total trust (*emunah*) when you get into the wheelbarrow and are pushed across the river. This is the depth of trust your heavenly Father requires of you — *emunah*. He holds the “wheelbarrow” of your life in His hands! It's not enough to passively believe in Him. Not until you “get in the wheelbarrow” and entrust *all* to Him, which begins with trusting in the shed blood of Jesus as payment for your sins, are you born again.

### **From Generation To Generation, Sin Hinders Our Ability To Trust God**

It's not just the **power of self-will** of our sin nature that deters us from trusting our Lord. Most people are emotionally scarred and guarded because they've been hurt by other sinful people they trusted. Often it's *their father* who has failed them and created a pattern in them of ongoing **distrust**. Whether through neglect, abuse, lack of love, or absenteeism, fathers have significantly harmed their children. *Boys and girls grow up being emotional survivors, generally limited as adults in their ability to trust anyone.*

It's no small thing that the Older Testament ends with focus on the relationship between fathers and children:

*“He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse”* (Malachi 4:6).

God intends that a *heart relationship of trust* secure fathers and their children. Yet following through in that dynamic is an age-old tension that each generation must resolve. Failure to reconcile fathers and their offspring breeds distrust.

Added to this friction are studies which show that *children of divorce* have one thing in common: *They can't let*

*themselves trust other people!* Here again God uses Malachi to reveal His heart: *“I hate divorce!”* And because of human sinfulness in general, countless other forms of emotional hurt are hurled against each other to produce **distrust**.

When it comes to forsaking sin and being born again, emotionally wounded people struggle with fully trusting in our Lord Jesus and our Father in heaven. Since most Bible translations give the false impression that “belief” means head knowledge and agreement with certain verses, they miss the depth of *total commitment* depicted by biblical trust. As a result many self-identified Christians are actually passive “believers” rather than active and responsive “trusters.”

**Becoming alive in Christ and walking in Him demands much more of you than just believing that He is real. And certainly the spiritual intimacy He intends with you in His Spirit far surpasses the contemporary portrayal of just believing in Him as “fire insurance”—being declared “saved” so you can stay out of hell.**

- Where would you place yourself on the graph below:

Believer ..... Truster  
 Where do those who know you well place you (if they're honest)?

- If you find that you can't fully trust your heavenly Father, is there a particular someone, or something specific in you, that's blocking that trust? Do you need to forgive someone or repent of something? Will you, right now?

**The Bible never once says, “Figure it out.”  
 But over and over it says, “TRUST GOD.”  
 He's already got it all figured out.**

## Section 2

Our Heavenly Father Says To You,  
“Trust Me! I have a purpose for you.”

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Ephesians 2:10).

There’s a sincere, childlike beauty in the heart that trusts in our Lord Jesus and our heavenly Father. Like our father Abraham, the trust of a person who has a living hope through their new birth in Christ responds with *obedient action*—action that accords with our Father’s will:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only he who does the will of My Father** who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

“The world and its desires pass away, but the man **who does the will of God lives forever**” (1John 2:17).

Can the Bible make it any more clear to you? Your trust leads to action—fulfilling the will of your Father in heaven! If you don’t trust that this is His call for your life, then you aren’t born again. And without that transition out of darkness into the light of Christ as your Lord and Savior, you won’t receive His welcome in heaven (John 12:46-48).

The intensity of trust your Father seeks in you can’t be ingrained by reading or by hearing a sermon. That ongoing trust is fostered as you *yield to the Spirit* and see Him work in and through and around you — in other words, you *experience* our Lord through trust. As we shared in Lesson 10. “Being Born Again Is To Know God and Experience Him,” in biblical Hebrew the word *know* isn’t referring to your mental ability to learn something. Rather, it points primarily to what you acquire through experience.

- **To trust your Lord is to know Him.**
- **To know your Lord is to experience Him.**
- **To experience your Lord is to trust Him.**
- **His Spirit within you makes this possible.**
- Describe the ways your Father is fulfilling His purposes through you.
- Name three events in which you experienced our Lord Jesus in the past week.
- In your daily life, how do you discern what your Father’s will is for you?

### Being born again both begins and continues with your trust

Your initial trust in the shed blood of Jesus as payment for your sins demonstrates that you realize your Almighty Father’s *love for you*. And as you *continue* to trust Him, you progressively weaken the influence of your **power of self-will**. As your ongoing trust deepens and you increasingly perceive His unfailing faithfulness, a childlike peace envelops your inner being. This childlike serenity isn’t

A man falls down a cliff. But before plummeting to certain death, he’s able to grab hold of a limb protruding from the side of the cliff. As he grips the limb with all his might, he hears a voice from the top of the cliff.



“Hello!” the voice calls out. Hanging on for dear life, the man frantically yells to a figure above he can’t quite make out: “Please help me! I’m losing my grip. Please help me!”

A calm voice echoes from the top of the cliff, “Do not worry, my child. It is God. All you have to do is let go.” There’s a long pause. The man looks down at the 200-foot drop and the raging river below. He takes a deep breath ... and yells back, “Is there *anyone else* up there?”

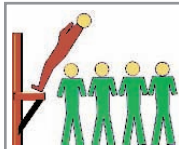
**Trusting your Father is not inherent in the human soul. Only His Spirit gives you the confidence to trust His sovereignty no matter what.**

immaturity, but rather your absolute confidence in *His faithfulness*.

That's an extreme transition from the self-reliance and independence that's embedded in us from our youth. But that's precisely the transformation our Lord calls for to enter His kingdom:

*"I tell you the truth, unless you **change and become like little children**, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:3).

Again, you begin your pilgrimage to your salvation by trusting in the shed blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. You continue on in your faith journey by trusting in the loving care of your Father. Where trust in Him thrives, His peace that *surpasses all understanding* flourishes as well. It's the peace a child experiences in the arms of a caring father.



At the retreat center we administered for many years, we often conducted *trust falls*. One weekend the teens asked Mike to fall into their arms—and they *dropped him*, leaving his back painfully wrenched. Then the next weekend a group of women asked him if he'd fall into their arms. Knowing he had to set aside the previous weekend's experience, he again fell backward, and they caught him! The moral of this anecdote: If you weaken in trusting God, *repent and return* to your trust in Him.

Do you have any worry or anxiety about the future, your finances, or any perceived outcome in your life? Then you're being entangled in a *lack of trust*. In fact our Lord Jesus commands you *not* to worry (see Matthew 6:24-34; 1Peter 5:7). Instead He reinforces the only goal worthy of being the trusting child of His Father: *"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well"* (Matthew 6:33).

- If you were told by our Father to "let go of the limb," would you? Do others close to you believe your response?
- Have you ever done a trust fall? If so, how long did it take you to finally fall backward?
- Are you more secure in making decisions yourself, or in trusting your Father? Do others close to you agree with your response?
- Would you describe yourself as a worrier, someone who's plagued by anxiety? How do those who know you well see you?
- How resolved are you in seeking the kingdom of God as a life priority? Where would you place yourself on the graph below:  
Not at all ••••• Somewhat ••••• Passionate  
Where does everyone close to you put you?

### To Trust Your Father Is To Actively Respond To His Spirit

Here are several spiritual landmarks in which your *dynamic trust* is an essential response to your Father's call:

- When you experience godly sorrow (grief) about your sins and you repent, you place your trust in the shed blood of Jesus as payment for your sins. You are trusting and *continuing to trust* in the truth that your heavenly Father by grace has accepted the sacrifice of Jesus as full payment for your sins (Ephesians 1:5-8).

**If you don't fully trust in the shed blood of Jesus on your behalf as *complete satisfaction* of the debt you owe, you'll go on in life trying to earn your Father's love by good works. The truly sad reality is that you'll NEVER experience His love by doing good works in the hope of being accepted by Him.**

- Throughout your life, as you increasingly become more like your Lord Jesus through the transforming work of His Spirit in you, you gain experience in *knowing* your Father

as His child and a member of His household (see Ephesians 1:17-19). Because you *know* the loving care He has for you, you can willingly commit to Him your future, dispelling any fears and worries, and trust in His sovereignty and faithfulness (see 1Peter 5:7, and similarly, Nahum 1:7).

- By faith you can look within and trust in the indwelling Holy Spirit given to you by the Father and our Lord Jesus to keep doing these activities on your behalf:

- > to convict you of your sins;
- > to intercede on your behalf;
- > to guide you;
- > to empower you.

It's the Holy Spirit abiding within you Who makes it possible for you to remain trusting so you can continue toward your salvation (see Romans 8:10-14).

Let's review these four aspects of the Spirit's work in you. Because the Bible specifically informs you of the purposes of the Holy Spirit within you, you must trust in the reality of what the Spirit does in and through you.

- > The Holy Spirit *convicts you when you sin* (John 16:8). In other words, He makes known to you that you've violated God and need to forsake that attitude or action to restore fellowship with our Father and with one another (1John 1:5-7). When you confess and repent of what the Spirit shows you is wrong, it's because He has revealed your guilt to you and knows that our Father wants you to be forgiven, cleansed and restored (1John 1:9).

- Do you regularly examine your heart and mind, asking the Holy Spirit to reveal any sin(s) in you? Do you trust Him to show you if Father holds anything against you for which you need to repent and be cleansed by Him?
- Do you have any unconfessed sin right now?

- Do you, and have you previously, partaken of communion with unconfessed sin? (See the warning in 1Corinthians 11:27-32.)

- > The Spirit *helps you when you pray* because He knows what the will of your heavenly Father is: *"In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express, and the One who searches hearts knows exactly what the Spirit is thinking, because His pleadings for God's people accord with God's will"* (Romans 8:26; see also Ephesians 6:18).

- What is your understanding of what takes place when you pray?
- When you pray, do you try to twist your Father's arm to get what you want? Or, through prayer, are you seeking His will to be done?
- When you pray, do you experience a growing trust in your Father? Or, do you voice a petition in prayer and then take it back by doing it your way or giving in to fear and worry?

- > If you resist the power of your self-will, and in trust turn to the Holy Spirit within you, He will *guide your life*:

*"Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires... Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God"* (Romans 8:5,14).

*"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit"* (Galatians 5:25).

When you consistently trust the Holy Spirit to guide your life, you'll continue to nullify the influence of your sinful **power of self-will**. Recognize too that the Spirit's guidance has nothing in common with the way your natural mind thinks (rationalization, weighing the

pros and cons). It's His responsibility to guide you, and He will as you yield to Him. It's your responsibility to seek that guidance, which always accords with our Father's will. Simple childlike trust enables the Spirit to impart things into your mind you'd never have thought of.

Our Lord Jesus describes one who is born again and guided by the Spirit:

*"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"* (John 3:8; see also Acts 8:29-29; 10:19; 16:7; 20:22).

- How attuned are you to the Spirit's guidance? Where would you place yourself on the graph below?

Deaf ..... Readily Hear

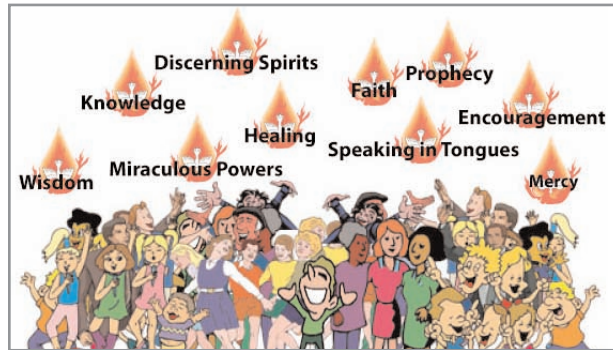
- Would others describe your life as "Spirit-guided"? Ask them.

> "Baptism" literally means to be immersed so you *take on the qualities* of the substance you're dipped in. In light of this immersion and subsequent spiritual saturation, think about baptism *in the Holy Spirit*. [John the baptizer speaking]: *"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come One Who is more powerful than I, Whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire"* (Matthew 3:11).

Jesus agreed: *"For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 1:5).

- What does being *baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire* mean in view of being *immersed into the qualities* of the Spirit?
- Do you think that being baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire was intended only for the apostles and our Lord's first followers? Or, was He speaking to you too? What's your stance on this?

- Have you ever considered *why* the Bible records the *evidence* of such gifts as prophecy, healings, and speaking in tongues to confirm the Holy Spirit's presence in a born again person when He took up His dwelling?
- Why do you think our Father wanted signs of various giftings to represent the Spirit's presence in someone who is born again? Do you think He bestows the same on you?



- The Spirit's gifting(s) to a born again person are His empowerments. You become *His conduit* for these to flow through you as He uses you to accomplish our Father's will and purposes. What gifting(s) of the Spirit does He demonstrate through you which evidence you're a new creation in Christ?

**Please answer these questions from deep in your heart. Your conclusion not only verifies if you're born again, but will affect how much you trust the Holy Spirit to do what the Bible says He was sent to do. If you don't fully trust the Spirit of our Lord within you, you're incapable of any other trust that our Father commands.**

### Section 3

*"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father"* (John 14:12).

Did you know that Thomas Jefferson produced a Bible translation which removed all references to the supernatural?

***“The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor”*** (Matthew 11:5).



Failure to trust our Lord Jesus to *do the miraculous* has been a great blemish on Christendom since the beginning. Even in His own home town we’re told, *“He did not do many miracles there because of their lack of trust”* (Matthew 13:58). If you’re born again your trust for our Lord to do “greater things” through you must be absolute—He is worthy of your trust!

John 14:12 records a promise our Lord gave *you*—that He intends to do greater things through the lives of those who know and love Him than He did while on earth. By refusing to trust that He wants to *use you* in ways that defy rationale because they *are* supernatural by His Spirit, you’re calling His promise a lie.

- Do your words and actions reflect your refusal to trust our Lord to work supernaturally through you?
- If so, do you want to continue this way? If you do want to trust Him and be available for however His Spirit would use you, then repent. Be alert to opportunities where He can work miraculously through you by His Spirit.

***“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth*** [apply from God’s commands what you *won’t* do]

***will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth*** [apply God’s commands to what you *will* do] ***will be loosed in heaven.***

***Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them*** (Matthew 18:18-20).

When you’re born again, the Holy Spirit within you, *our Lord’s Spirit* (Romans 8:9; Philippians 1:19), brings this promise: When two or three (or more) come together to discuss how to apply God’s commands to their lives, our Lord’s Spirit is with them. This essential truth of *seeking together in the Spirit* to put God’s Word into practice is all too often overlooked throughout Christendom.



The collective discussion of God’s commands and how to apply them to specific life situations is important. Even *more important* is your *mutual trust* that our Lord’s Spirit is there with you and will make known our Father’s perspective. This truth must be at the forefront when you look into God’s Word with others to discuss, internalize, and apply His commands!

- Has applying God’s commands, either in binding (not doing) or in loosing (doing), been your central focus when you’ve explored the Bible with your family or with others?
- Why do you usually open your Bible? What do you expect to find when you do read it?
- Has *our Lord’s presence* been at the forefront of your thinking when you’ve looked into His Word with others? If not, what do you and they need to change?



***“[Jesus] will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire”***

(Matthew 3:11).

Your sinful power of self-will doesn't like the Biblical reality that your Father uses suffering and trials to help you become more like His Son, Jesus. These are the “fire” John the Baptizer is referring to here, fire which cleanses, purifies, and tests authenticity. It's certainly less painful to just keep gathering more facts about Jesus by reading about Him. But those facts *won't change your character* to be more like His. To become like our Lord in Spirit-grown fruitfulness, to truly *know Jesus intimately*, you need “fires” in your life.

**Your sinful power of self-will hates the very thought of trials or suffering, or any other kind of testing or adversity. But to be transformed into the character of our Lord Jesus by grace, your Father is going to make sure that various trials, including suffering, happen to you! After all, He has promised to be with you IN your troubles, not exempt you from them (see 2Corinthians 1:3-5)! As we've noted before about cooperating with Him, “You can do this the easy way or the hard way, but He will accomplish what He intends in your life.”**

Let's take a closer look at what Scripture says about the fire of *suffering*:

*“...we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope”* (Romans 5:3,4).

*“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to trust on Him, but also to suffer for Him”* (Philippians 1:29).

*“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps”* (1Peter 2:21).

*“And the God of all grace, Who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will Himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast”* (1Peter 5:10).

*“We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God...”* (Acts 14:22).

Can your need for the suffering your Father allows in your life be said any more clearly? Again, His purpose as you persevere through trials and suffering is to produce in you the character qualities of your Lord. (See the diagram on page 13 which depicts your spiritual growth as spoken of in 2Peter 1:5-11.) The writer to the Hebrews affirms in 12:6-15 that our suffering and trials are proof that our Father has accepted us as His children, and points out His particular purpose:

*“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it”* (12:11).

In chapter 5 of the letter to the Hebrews Jesus is called “a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (v.6). The name Melchizedek means “king of righteousness,” and as king of Salem, he is the “king of peace” (Hebrews 7:2). Righteousness and peace, the very characteristics our Father uses suffering and trials to produce in you.

- What is your stance on the need for you to suffer so you may become more like Jesus?
- If you agree that this is one of your Father's ways of conforming you to be like Jesus, what can you do to cooperate with His purpose when you're suffering?

In the Garden of Gethsemane during the moment of His greatest travail, our Lord Jesus proclaimed, “Father, if You are willing, take this cup from Me; yet **not My will, but Yours be done**” (Luke 22:42). If

our Lord Jesus could yield in such obedient trust, is anything less an option for you? Have you considered a prayer like this: *“Dear Father, it’s hard for me right now, but I know You love me and will give me what’s best. I entrust my suffering into Your will.”*

***“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed”***  
(1Peter 1:6,7).

Suffering is one form of “fire” our Father uses. But there are other kinds of trials our Father uses to test your faith’s genuineness. For example,

*“King Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah”* (2Kings 18:5).

Yet after the king had experienced a period of God’s blessings, ***“God left him to test him and to know everything that was in his heart”*** (2Chronicles 32:31). It may seem “unloving” that our Lord withdrew from King Hezekiah to test his heart. But a similar situation faced the apostle Peter, who’d followed Jesus for over three years and was warned by Him that his trust would be tested by the devil:

*“Simon, Simon, Satan has begged earnestly [literal] to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your trust may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers”* (Luke 22:31,32).

Notice that our Lord didn’t pray that Peter *wouldn’t get sifted*, but only that his trust would be steadfast in the midst of

his sifting. Even knowing ahead of time that Peter would deny Him, Jesus told the apostle to use his experience of testing to strengthen the other apostles. Like Peter or Hezekiah, you may discover to your dismay during suffering or trials that your own trust falters. Don’t flee from your Father in shame; instead, repent!

Remember this truth:

- + **The greater the gift(s) of the Holy Spirit that flow through you;**
- + **the greater your potential to make Jesus known;**
- + **the greater the devil knows who you are;**
- + **the greater need you have to surrender your will to Him; therefore**
- + **the more severe your suffering, trials, and sifting will be.**

- Can you recount specific situations when your loving Father permitted your trust to be sifted?
- Did He find it genuine, or did you need to repent? *Did* you repent? If you didn’t, how did you feel and how did you then respond?
- Some trials can be THE most painful experience you’ve been through. The heavens seem closed and it seems like your Father doesn’t care anymore. Have you had times like this? Did your trust remain steady? Grow? Or, did you indulge your sin nature?
- When others are enduring a trial, what’s your reaction to them? Are you compassionate and supportive? If you aren’t, can it be that you have an *inner avoidance* to suffering and trials that you need the grace to overcome?
- When other Christians are going through times of testing, do you view their struggle as weakness in their trust? Or, as we wrote in the lesson on love, are you their greatest encourager? How do those who know you well see you?

#### Section 4

***“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth”***

(Isaiah 53:7).

***“When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly”*** (1Peter 2:23).

One of the great influences of our sinful **power of self-will** is *pride*, which often reveals itself in our false expectation of how others ought to treat us.



We anguish when we feel ridiculed, humiliated, unjustly corrected, rebuked. During those times our normal fleshly reaction is to verbally fight back or defend ourselves. When our personal reputation is brought low or our feelings are hurt, it's especially hard to respond in a Christ-like way. That's because emotional pain overtakes us through what we perceive to be someone else's wrong actions or attitudes.

Two reasons may explain why our loving Father would let your feelings be hurt through perceived injustice. First, that may be the only way He can point out something in you that displeases Him—and He'd love to see you repent!

*“When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies live at peace with him”* (Proverbs 16:7).

When our Lord allows or raises up someone who hurts your feelings, look inside yourself and ask the Spirit if He's *trying to get your attention.* If He's using your hurt feelings to show you something, find out what it is and, yes, repent!

The second reason we face painful situations is to teach us to respond as our Lord Jesus did in Isaiah 53:7 and 1 Peter 2:23. Ask yourself in each trying circumstance, how would He respond if He were me? When people hurt your feelings, your Christ-like response demonstrates *“humility put into action under extreme conditions.”*

But isn't that precisely the character quality our Lord has called you to as His own? When you are chosen by our Father, Jesus extends an open invitation for you to become like Him:

*“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matthew 11:29; see also James 4:10; 1Peter 5:6).

If you don't fight for your own rights or defend yourself when your feelings are hurt, you'll find peace filling your heart.

- Think back and describe five events in your life when your feelings were deeply hurt. What was your immediate reaction to the person or situation? Even now as you recount the events, what feelings surface as you recall each one?
- When King David was fleeing Jerusalem, Shimei stood on a hill to cast stones at him. David's nephew Abishai wanted to kill Shimei, but David cautioned, *“Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the LORD has ordered him. It may be that the LORD will look on my affliction, and that the LORD will repay me with good for his cursing this day”* (2Samuel 16:11,12). In your past experiences can you see how God may have wanted “stones” thrown at you to accomplish His good purposes in your life?
- When your feelings are being hurt, do you trust our Lord Jesus enough to turn to Him, *“taking captive your thought to make it obedient to Christ”* (2Corinthians 10:5)? If you can't do this, what's hindering you?

***“And my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus”*** (Philippians 4:19).

The last testing we want to discuss is the *trial of money*. There’s no doubt we all need provision to sustain ourselves on this earth. But it’s the way we *view* money that’s a trial so many Christians fail. Those who have plenty wouldn’t consider this a trial. But for those who have little, the trial can be more obvious *if* they compare themselves to the prosperous.

The essential starting place for each group is to realize that *our Lord* is the Provider. We can learn a lot about this truth from God’s warning to the Israelites:

*“He gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your fathers had never known, to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you. You may say to yourself, ‘My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.’ But remember the LORD your God, for it is He Who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms His covenant, which He swore to your forefathers, as it is today”* (Deuteronomy 8:16-18; see 1Corinthians 10:6,11 for why we should look to the Older Testament as a guide for our lives).

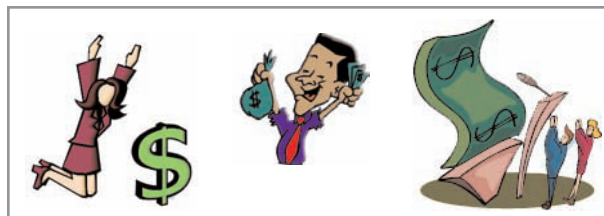
So many Christians misguidedly work to earn money chiefly to provide for themselves. Yet what they really need instilled within is that where they work is our Father’s place of provision for them. And more importantly it’s His place for them to represent His Son, Jesus.

To work just to earn money is a two-fold trap. First, you feel ownership of your own income rather than stewardship of your Father’s provision. **Ownership** says, “I can spend MY money on anything I want.” **Stewardship** says, “This is my Father’s money, and I need to

know how He wants me to use it.” When you’re a steward and walk in the Lordship of Jesus in your life, you see all that you have as your Father’s, for however He wants to use it through you. And if you tithe, you recognize that you’re only giving to Him 10% of the totality of what’s really all His. Tithing off the top is in reality your Father’s way of testing if you trust Him that He is THE Provider.

This warning from our Lord Jesus reveals whether you’re serving your SELF in your time, talents, and treasures, or yielding to His Lordship in all that He has given you:

*“No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and agape love the other, or he will hold fast to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money”* (Luke 16:13).



Choosing between God or money (including all the things it can buy and the prestige that goes with luxury) is a trial because you have to choose *just one*. Whether you have surplus money or are barely scraping by, *don’t focus on the wrong goal!* It’s paramount that you keep this in mind: *wherever* your Father has put you to work for His provision, He wants you there to serve His purposes for both your own character development and to access people around you for His Kingdom.

The most important service you can provide is being His ambassador for the eternal salvation of others: *“Disciple... baptizing... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”* (see Matthew 28:19,20).

- Are you the “owner” or a “steward” of your income? Do you honestly regard our Father as your ultimate Provider?
- Ask those who know you well whether you serve God or money. Or, do you try to balance them both in your lifestyle choices?
- Where you live right now: Did the Holy Spirit guide you to live there, or is it because you could well afford the mortgage or rent?
- If you have plenty, are your house and possessions fully commensurate with your income level? Would our Lord Jesus do the same thing if He had your income, or would He use more of it to help those in need?
- Do you make major purchases just because you have the money and the desire to do so, or do you first seek the Spirit’s guidance to see if this is Father’s will for you?
- If you’re struggling from paycheck to paycheck (or are even currently *without* a paycheck), can you be satisfied with God’s promises to those who love Him? “*Listen, my dear brothers: Has not **God chosen** those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be **rich in trust** and to **inherit the kingdom He promised** those who love Him?*” (James 2:5).
- If you think your financial resources are too limited, is your trust in your Father growing stronger in the midst of your need? Or, are you a complainer, envious of what others have? Do you *love Him* more or less because of your lack of money and your humble circumstances?

