

**The Gospel Of The New Covenant
Is The Pilgrimage To Salvation**

**Older
Testament**
*Hebrew
Scriptures*

**"Whoever trusts in Me,
as the Scripture has said,
out of his heart will flow rivers
of living water.' [Jesus] said this
about the Spirit, whom those
who trusted in Him were
later to receive..." (John 7:38,39a)**



by Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
Restoration Ministries International

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Have You Embraced The Gospel That Leads To Salvation?

Three Essential Premises Undergird This Article:

1. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross inaugurated a **New Covenant**. But, the stipulations for you to *enter* this covenant—to be *born again*—are found in the only Scriptures in existence at the time of Jesus, the *Older Testament* (the Hebrew Bible).
2. Embracing the **New Covenant** that is offered by our Father starts you on a pilgrimage with the indwelling Spirit Who will *guide, empower and transform* you into ever-increasing Christ-likeness.
3. By remaining in union with our Lord Jesus and heavenly Father which the **New Covenant** offers, you will find yourself being welcomed at the Judgment Throne as you receive your salvation at your earthly journey's end.

Encouraging You to Carefully Examine Your Christianity

“Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you —unless, of course, you fail the test?” (2Corinthians 13:5).

No one wants to question their faith. If we sit in congregations every week among other like-minded people it reinforces our conviction that we must be right. But, in the end we will each stand at the Judgment Throne alone. That's not the time to realize that we may have believed a lie. And, that's not the time to hope our Lord will let us into heaven anyways. Why do we begin this article by encouraging you to examine your faith? First, it's because we are servants of our Lord Jesus, and we care about your eternal future.

For centuries a variety of theologians developed their “gospel” from the Newer Testament. But, the unabashed prejudice of centuries of anti-Semitic theology aimed against anything Jewish also created a Christianity of competing gospels. Today, Christianity is filled with over 38,000 divisive denominations and sects. The question that needs to be asked is,

**“At the Judgment will our Lord Jesus accept
you no matter which “gospel” you believed?”**

Those who first put their trust in our Lord had a thorough understanding of the Older Testament, the Hebrew Bible. For them our Lord's words made sense as he only Scripture at that time was the Older Testament, the Hebrew Bible:

‘Whoever trusts in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’ By this Jesus meant the Spirit, whom those



who trusted in Him were later to receive” (John 7:38,39).

Put Yourself in the Crowd on Pentecost Listening to Peter Preach.

Peter spoke to the God-fearing crowd (Acts 2:5), who were able to grasp what he was telling them. They had a thorough knowledge of the Old Testament which Peter was using to prosecute the truth for Jesus being the long-awaited Messiah. It's with their knowledge of the Hebrew Bible that prompted their response, “When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, ‘Brothers, what shall we do?’” (Acts 2:37). Then Peter shared the Old Testament truths of repentance and immersion, and our Lord's promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

The Language in Which You Learned Scripture Can Be a Hindrance.

We've noted in previous writings that while the English and Greek languages emphasize a noun or subject, Hebrew thought and language emphasizes the verb, that is, the action or what the subject does. In this light, "Lord" is what Jesus does—He "masters and rules" me by commanding me to do His Father's will as His beloved child, soldier, family member, sheep and all the many other facets of a glorious relationship with Him. And through His indwelling Spirit, He strengthens and girds me to follow through in obedient trust.

English is a difficult language to understand what our Lord and the writers of the New Testament were conveying. We've previously recommended the Complete Jewish Bible translation by David Stern. It's the best source we've seen for understanding the Hebraic emphasis on taking responsive action. Stern does a wonderful job of pointing out the ongoing sense of verbs when the original languages call for it. English tends to make many of God's commands look like a one-time act when in fact He intends that we keep on doing it. For example, here's Stern's translation of Romans 10:10:

“For with the heart one goes on trusting and thus continues toward righteousness, while with the mouth one keeps on making public acknowledgement and thus continues toward deliverance.”

We share these truths about our forefathers who first put their trust in Jesus because many in Christianity may just have their toes in the doorway of the Kingdom, but, because of false man-contrived “gospels” they've don't know who to enter the Kingdom.

We'll expand on this later in this article: But know that entering the Kingdom is a matter of deep conviction, which only a person who has recognized the depravity of their sins can comprehend. This person is able to be filled with heart felt appreciation for the sacrifice of Jesus to pay the penalty for their sins; something they couldn't do for themselves. Does this describe you? If not read on and learn how to enter the Kingdom and an eternal welcome.

Please, take your time as you prayerfully go through this article. The conditions to embrace the New Covenant *demands everything you are and have.*

Our Heavenly Father is a Covenant-giver

The first followers of Jesus were mostly Jewish, and some God-fearing gentiles, who were well-steeped in the significance of biblical covenants. Today covenants are understood dimly at best. Yet the Bible cites the word covenant a whopping 293 times!



We see in the Older Testament that our God had established covenants with His people through Noah, Abraham, Moses and David. Jeremiah had prophesied that the Jews could expect yet another covenant, one in which the teachings of God's way of life would be written in their hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-33).

Many understand covenants as some form of contract, but that idea completely misses the magnitude of what our Father has offered us in His Son through the New Covenant. When Jesus stresses, *"This is My blood of the **covenant**, which is poured out for many"* (Mark 14: 24) He is not focusing on the cup of wine. Rather, He's directing our attention to the *goal of our Father, that all who put their trust in the atoning blood of Jesus may live in intimate relationship with Him*. The emphasis is on reconciliation in mankind's relationship with a righteous God.

For instance, when a couple marries, which is more important: the ceremony, or the loving, intimate relationship which the ceremony ratifies? Of course, the ongoing relationship! Our goal in living in union with our heavenly Father and under the Lordship of Jesus is the intimate relationship made possible through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit.

The word "**covenant**" can mean *"to come into union with"*, such as in marital relationship. The New Covenant our Father offers invites you to *live in union with Him*. Union implies oneness, and an ongoing *pilgrimage with Him* on earth until the time of your salvation when your name is read aloud before the host of heaven (Revelation 3:5).

We today can't adequately appreciate the New Covenant offered to us through the sacrifice of Jesus as atonement for our sins unless we have a heart-knowledge of the old covenants as the early Jewish followers did.

The sacrifice of Jesus inaugurated a New Covenant as the four Gospels affirm. But the full understanding of the Gospel, and what one must do to enter this New Covenant is found in the Hebrew Bible, the Older Testament.



God is the *initiator* of any covenant between Himself and His people. And every covenant He initiated with mankind comprises distinct criteria:

1. Our Father's *stipulations* in order for a person to accept His covenant offer.
2. His promises of *blessing* for obedience to Him.
3. His *judgment* for breaking the stipulations of the covenant.

[Please read Deuteronomy, chapter 28, to deepen your understanding that alongside God's promise of blessing stands His judgment for refusal to obey. Every covenant our God initiates has this same promise of blessing or judgment stipulated in His offer].

The Messiahship of Jesus Is Based on a New Covenant:

"To Jesus the mediator of **a new covenant**, and to the **sprinkled blood** that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24).

This phraseology may sound strange to many in Christianity today. But what a thundering impact Jesus' words must have had on those who first heard them: "*This is **My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins***" (Matthew 26:28). Suddenly in that upper room that evening, it was a new ball game on earth—a New Covenant, and everlasting covenant, was being inaugurated!

Paul tells us that the Gospel was proclaimed to the patriarch Abraham two thousand years before our Lord's incarnation. And, Abraham was informed that Gentiles were also part of God's plan for redemption:

"[Abraham] **trusted in God** and was **faithful to Him**, and that was credited to his account as righteousness. Be assured, then, that it is those who **live by trusting and being faithful** who are really children of Abraham. Also the Hebrew Scriptures, foreseeing that God would **consider the Gentiles righteous** when they live by **trusting and being faithful**, told the **Good News to Abraham in advance** by saying, "In connection with you, all the Gentiles will be blessed." So then, those who **rely on trusting and being faithful** are blessed along with Abraham, who trusted and was faithful" (Galatians 3:6-9, JNT).

Abraham Was No Ordinary Older Testament Character!

Consider how crucial Abraham is to us understanding the depth of trust our heavenly Father demands of everyone who enters His New Covenant. When we meet the stipulations of the New Covenant offered to us by our heavenly Father, Abraham is also declared to be our father. Abraham's trust-based obedience is the standard by which our heavenly Father evaluates everyone who embraces the New Covenant.

The Hebrew word for the depth of trust our Father demands of His children is *emunah*.

Emunah means far more than just belief or intellectual agreement which many false gospels today peddle. Many translations errantly use “believe” and “belief” in a way which falls far short of the trust that’s evidenced by your obedience. The Hebrew root for *emunah* means “to jump off a cliff.” It’s a trust that emanates as an emotional response from your heart. Your trust demonstrates that you understand your ALMIGHTY Father’s love for you, and your willing dependency on Him ultimately puts to death your own ambitions and plans and goals as you yield to His.



- Emunah* must describe your unyielding trust in your heavenly Father.
- Emunah* must describe your unyielding trust in the atonement for your sins through the shed blood of Jesus.
- And, like Abraham, *emunah* must describe your confidence trustworthiness of God’s-commands that you immediately put them into action. Your obedient follow through to do His will authenticates your trust as genuine! (see James 2:17-26)

Our Father is a Covenant-keeper (Deuteronomy 7:9)

First, it's important to recognize that our heavenly Father doesn't break the covenants He makes with humans. But to their own detriment, people do break their part of the covenant with Him, angering a just and holy God (Joshua 23:16). As we'll discuss shortly, even in the precious New Covenant offered to us through Jesus, we can break it with dire consequences.

You may wonder why the various facets of biblical covenants are so important. Anchor for yourself that embracing the **Gospel of the New Covenant** is as consequential as entering into marriage and *staying* married:

✨ Beginning with the consummated union of Adam and Eve, our Father intends for marriage to be a life-long commitment. And for those who embrace His stipulations for entering the New Covenant, He expects that our *spiritual* Covenant with Him be *physically* represented in how we live out our marriage covenant. The New Covenant and marriage covenant are inseparably linked!

Consider this Older Testament revelation of our God. He refers to Himself in a "marital" context with His people. In the Our Father describes Himself as the "Husband" of Israel: *"For your Maker is your **husband**—the Lord Almighty is His name— the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; He is called the God of all the earth"* (Isaiah 54:5).

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And, in the Newer Testament followers of Jesus are His bride, and He awaits her at the wedding banquet: *"Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the **wedding** of the Lamb has come, and **His bride** has made herself ready"* (Revelation 19:7).

Newer
Testament



Again, as you continue to read about the Gospel of the New Covenant, keep reminding yourself that the *New Covenant that leads to your salvation and the marriage covenant are intricately linked*. Like marriage, our relationship with our Lord is evidenced by the *deep devotion in our hearts* and our *responsive interaction*.

A Covenant Must Be Both Ratified and Consummated

Every covenant requires *both* **ratification** and **consummation** to confirm that the stipulations of the covenant have been accepted by both parties. In the wedding ceremony a couple *ratifies* the intent of the marriage as they pledge from their hearts their vows, such as, “For better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part.” That’s why these are called wedding vows. The couple is promising that their union will be permanent.

Pure heart motive is crucial in order for a biblical covenant to come into existence. Consider Jonathan’s motive when he established a covenant with David:

“And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he **loved him** as himself”
(1 Samuel 18:3).

Isn’t this the purity of devotion required of a prospective husband?

“In this same way, husbands ought to **love** their wives **as their own bodies**. He who **loves his wife** loves himself” (Ephesians 5:28).

Although ratified at the marriage ceremony, the covenant of marriage is not *consummated* until the couple shares their first intercourse. The ceremony ratifies the couple’s intent to enter into the covenant of marriage, but consummation is the critical part that seals the covenant. The *seal* is the sign that the covenant has been consummated. This applies to all the covenants our Father has offered mankind. Each covenant evidences a seal of consummation:

<u>Covenant</u>	<u>Sign of Sealed Consummation</u>
Noah	rainbow in the sky
Abraham	circumcision
Moses	sprinkling of blood
Jesus	receiving the indwelling Holy Spirit
Marriage	breaking the hymen in physical union

It’s important to recognize that our Father scrutinizes our motives before entering into a Covenant with us. The New Covenant with our Father and the marriage covenant parallel one another. Embracing the New Covenant our Father offers and a marriage covenant are the two most important relationships people will ever share. Nothing should ever interfere with either:

“Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate” (Mark 10:9).

Intentional Devotion and Desire Needed To Enter Into a Covenant

Visualize our Father's view of the Covenant He offers through His Son as you consider the covenant young David made with Jonathan, Saul's son:

“After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became **one in spirit** with David, and he loved him as himself... And Jonathan **made a covenant** with David because he **loved him as himself**. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt” (1 Samuel 18:1-4).

What a demonstration of intimate devotion! The intensity of David's loyalty to Jonathan pours forth in David's lament after Jonathan's death: “I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were **very dear** to me. Your **love for me was wonderful**, more wonderful than that of women” (2 Samuel 1:26).

As we discuss how this covenant was both ratified and consummated, you'll notice that the ceremony was not as important as the intentional yearning to enter into a covenant relationship. Don't get hung up on form here.

The ceremonial form only ratifies and consummates the **intense desire** that is already present in the heart.

David compares the love relationship in his covenant with Jonathan as greater than that found with a woman. A millennium later, Jesus voices from the Hebrew Scriptures the intense love that's required to embrace our Father's covenant:

“**Love** the Lord your God with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul and with **all** your mind” (Matthew 22:37, apperceived from Deuteronomy 6:5).

The intensity of *commitment* our Father requires in the “Greatest Commandment” is one of His stipulations for ratifying the New Covenant in Jesus. The same intensity of relationship is enjoined in Matthew 10:37:

*“Anyone who loves his father or mother **more than Me** is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter **more than Me** is not worthy of Me.”*

Here Jesus affirms the surpassing devotion that's essential to the New Covenant our Father offers those who follow His Son.

Understanding a Covenant Ceremony

Research into ancient customs illustrates the type of ceremony that David and Jonathan enacted to ratify and consummate their covenant. They would have cut an animal in two and placed the halves between them as they faced each other, half on one side and half on the other. Then both men would have walked through the middle of the two pieces

doing a figure “8” around each other. The blood of the animal would drench their feet. The figure “8” signifies infinity. The covenant was to *last forever*, and was ratified by the blood of the sacrifice.



They exchanged valued possessions as the *sign* evidencing to others that a covenant had been consummated between them. As noted earlier, with every covenant there must be a *sign* that a covenant has been consummated.

(Keep this in mind when we discuss the New Covenant with our Father that’s made possible by the sacrifice of Jesus.)

Sometime later, at great personal danger, Jonathan sought out David as he was hiding from Saul at Horesh (see 1 Samuel 23:18). There the two **renewed their covenant** to confirm that the conditions under which the initial covenant had been established were still the same; nothing had changed.

In marriage, when a husband has intercourse with his wife, they are **renewing their covenant**. The usual place of covenant renewal is their bed. Therefore the writer of Hebrews could admonish, “

*Marriage should be honored by all, and the **marriage bed kept pure** [undefiled], for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral” (13:4).*

Also, when you receive the body and blood of Jesus, you are **renewing your covenant** with our Father. New Covenant renewal isn’t to be taken lightly. The Corinthian believers were taking the body and blood without understanding the seriousness of covenant renewal. Paul warned them,

“That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep [died]” (1 Corinthians 11:30).

Communion is much more than bread and wine consumption, or even spiritual commemoration. It is the precious covenant renewal with our Father, remembering that which Jesus has accomplished on our behalf until He comes back for us.

Breaking a Covenant Means Death

What wonderful promises are showered on those who embrace the New Covenant our Father offers through Jesus! Thank Him again as you breathe in the joy of a right relationship with our Lord!

“Therefore, brothers, since we have **confidence** to enter the Most Holy Place by the **blood of Jesus**, by a **new and living way** opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great Priest over the house of God, let us **draw near to God** with a sincere heart in **full assurance of faith**, having our **hearts sprinkled** to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us **hold unswervingly** to the hope we profess, for **He who promised is faithful**” (Hebrews 10:19-23).

Continuing in the same passage we find a dreadful warning to those who *break* the Covenant through intentional disobedience:

“If we **deliberately keep on sinning after** we have received the knowledge of the truth, **no sacrifice for sins is left**, but only a fearful expectation of **judgment** and of **raging fire** that will consume the enemies of God” (Hebrews 10:26,27).

Entering into a covenant in ancient times was so serious that if a man broke a covenant, one of his own family members was obliged to kill him. Covenant-breakers didn't deserve to live. Each of the covenants our Father establishes does offer promises of blessing for those who keep their part of the covenant. However, covenants also contain judgment or curses for those who *break the covenant*.

The Older Testament is a great source for understanding our Father's dealings with covenant-breakers. Paul urges us to pay heed to God's relationship with Israel:

“These things happened to them **as examples** and were written down as **warnings for us**, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come” (1 Corinthians 10:11).

The examples and accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures encourage us that God keeps His promises. They also warn us that *God does not change*, and that dire consequences await covenant breakers! For example, Solomon reiterated that people have an *ongoing obligation* when they enter into Covenant with their Lord:

“You **keep covenant** with Your servants and show them grace, **provided they live in Your presence with all their heart**” (1 Kings 8: 23).

The Older Testament ends with Malachi pronouncing the judgment of God on those who broke marriage covenants through divorce. We today need to pay particular attention to the intensity of *our Father's regard* for the marriage covenant despite the proliferation of divorce.

“The LORD is acting as the **witness** between you and the wife of your youth, because you have **broken faith** with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your **marriage covenant**. Has not the LORD **made them one** [to live in union]? In flesh and spirit **they are His**. And why one? Because He was seeking godly offspring. So **guard yourself in your spirit**, and **do not break faith** with the wife of your youth. ‘**I hate divorce**,’ says the LORD God of Israel, ‘and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,’ says the LORD Almighty. So **guard yourself in your spirit**, and do **not break faith**” (Malachi 2:14-16).

Notice our Father's distinct purpose for the marriage covenant: “**Because He was seeking godly offspring**.” He wasn't just “making them one” to have children. He intended that these children be trained to walk up-rightly in loving service to Him!

Every covenant initiated by our Father entails *purposes to be fulfilled* by the person who embraces the covenant with Him. In the New Covenant offered to us through Jesus, His purpose is emphasized in Ephesians 2:8-10:

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do**” (see also Matthew 28:18-20).

In the New Covenant with our Father through Jesus, the blessings as well as the warning of curses apply. We can break this covenant with terrible consequences, just as our disobedient spiritual ancestors experienced. Pay attention to the link between the covenant-breakers of Moses' time and those who insult the Holy Spirit by forsaking the Covenant with Jesus:

“Anyone who rejected the law of Moses **died without mercy** on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has **trampled the Son of God underfoot**, who has treated as an unholy thing the **blood of the covenant that sanctified him**, and who has **insulted the Spirit of grace**? For we **know** Him who said, ‘It is **mine to avenge**; I will repay,’ and again, ‘The Lord will **judge His people**.’ It is a **dreadful thing** to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:28-31).

You *are* capable of breaking the Covenant with your Father through intentionally falling away. Our Father's part of the Covenant will never be broken, but we, as the Older Testament has shown, are not always that faithful. Consider these passages of Scripture offered by Newer Testament writers as a warning to those who break His Covenant:

“Watch out, brothers, so that there will not be in any one of you **an evil heart lacking trust,** which could lead you to **apostatize** from the living God! Instead, keep exhorting each other **every day** [keep working out your salvation together], as long as it is called Today, so that none of you will become **hardened by the deceit** of sin. For we have become sharers in the Messiah, **provided,** however, **that we hold firmly** to the conviction we began with, right through **until the goal is reached**” (Hebrews 3: 12-14, JNT).

The writer continues his warning:

“It is **impossible** for those who have once been enlightened, who have **tasted the heavenly gift,** who have **shared in the Holy Spirit,** who have **tasted the goodness** of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, if they **fall away,** to be **brought back to repentance,** because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting Him to public disgrace” (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Peter as well sounded the alarm about giving way to worldly compromise that causes someone to reject Jesus as Lord:

“If they have escaped the corruption of the world by **knowing** our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again **entangled** in it and **overcome,** they are **worse off at the end** than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them **not to have known the way of righteousness,** than to have **known it** and then to **turn their backs on** the sacred command that was passed on to them” (2 Peter 2:20,21).



Perhaps you can grasp the seriousness that surrounds entering our Father’s new Covenant.

Baptism Is Response of Obedience That Confirms Your Heart's Intent.

Your heavenly Father is looking for your heartfelt determination to go on living in Covenant union with Him. This is why He calls for those who embrace His Covenant to be baptized through immersion in water: “

Through immersion into his death we were buried with him; so that just as, through the glory of the Father, the Messiah was raised from the dead, likewise we too might live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will also be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Romans 6:4,5).



[T]he water of immersion, which is not the removal of dirt from the body, but **one's pledge to keep a good conscience toward God**, through the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah” (1 Peter 3:21, JNT).

[For further insight into the Older Testament backdrop to immersion baptism, see: Insight 9, TODAY! What Would Jesus Be Doing esus Be Doing If He Were You?].

When Jesus declares, “This is **My** blood of the covenant” (Mark 14:24), He is affirming that the Father's Covenant calls for entering into THE most important intimate relationship—because it involves eternal consequences. The goal is to live in **covenant relationship with our Father**, that is, to lovingly obey *our* part of the Covenant since He is so faithful to fulfill His part by His grace.

Our Father's Covenant Ceremony

Picture yourself spiritually ratifying and consummating the conditions of our Father's Covenant through the blood of His Son. Father God stands opposite you. You agree in your heart to the stipulations He requires for entering His Covenant. (We'll discuss His stipulations shortly. We first want to make sure you understand the profound significance of accepting His offer.)

When Father God sees the desire of your heart to *want* this relationship above all things, He walks through the blood of the Sacrifice with you. And Who is the Sacrifice? Jesus. You and your Father do a figure "8" in the blood of Jesus. This *ratifies* the Covenant through the blood of the Lamb. What *consummates* the Covenant? Our Father seals you with the Holy Spirit, guaranteeing that *if you do not break* the Covenant, you will receive salvation at the Judgment Throne.



This Covenant is no small matter! **You no longer belong to Satan.** You have been adopted into our Father's family:

“Because you are **sons**, God sent the Spirit of His Son **into our hearts**, the Spirit who calls out, ‘Abba, Father.’ So you are **no longer a slave**, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also **an heir**” (Galatians 4:6,7).

Keep in mind that receiving the Holy Spirit as a sign of the consummation is vital to your ability to keeping the New Covenant. Just as only by God's grace did He call you to Himself through Jesus, only through abiding in His Spirit can you press on in your life journey toward heaven's gate.

Paul reiterates that the seal of the Holy Spirit consummates the Covenant: “

“Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has **sealed us** and **given us the Spirit** in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Corinthians 1:21,22).

The presence of the Spirit in our lives *guarantees* our Father's faithfulness to set His children apart for His purposes.

“In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were **sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise...** And do not grieve the **Holy Spirit of God**, by whom **you were sealed** for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 1:13, 4:30).

Our Father is *for* those He has marked with His seal!

Noticeable signs are evident when you are indwelled by the Holy Spirit. As much as the rainbow, circumcision, or David wearing Jonathan’s robe are recognizable, the Bible makes plain the signs that reveal that our Father’s New Covenant has been both ratified and consummated in you. When the Holy Spirit entered the earliest followers of Jesus, some prophesied while others spoke in tongues. Still others healed the sick, or worked miracles (see 1 Corinthians 12:4-11).

The same noticeable indicators should be readily apparent if you embrace the Father’s Covenant. The indwelling Holy Spirit is the crucial sign that the Father has consummated the Covenant with you. Paul warns,

“And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ” (Romans 8:9b).

If you have become the Father’s child, you WILL know it!

What Is Salvation? When Do We Experience It?

Salvation was understood by the earliest followers of Jesus to occur at the end of our pilgrimage on earth. For those who *endure to the end* our Lord promises,

“He **who overcomes** will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but **will acknowledge his name before My Father and His angels**” (Revelation 3:5). This is the moment of salvation!

For your name to be in the Lamb’s Book of Life calls for two essential elements.

Justification—placing your trust in, and *continuing* to trust in, the shed blood of Jesus as payment for the penalty of your sins. You can do nothing to atone for your sins. Purely by grace Jesus accomplished this by atoning for your sins on the cross.

Sanctification—the Holy Spirit, Who is not only given by the Father and Lord Jesus the moment you’re born again, sanctifies you—transforming you to the character of Jesus. In essence, throughout your pilgrimage on earth the Holy Spirit changes you from within into the character and motivation of Jesus.

The pilgrimage of a Jesus follower:

- Begins with **Justification**—the day you’re born again, receiving the Holy Spirit because you trust in the shed blood of Jesus;

- Continues as a lifelong process of **Sanctification** where you become more and more Christ-like through the Spirit;
- Culminates ultimately in **Salvation** before the Throne as your name is proclaimed.

The true Gospel points to your pilgrimage in Christ as you endure to the end, the moment of salvation when you appear before the Lord (2 Timothy 2:12). To relate the New Covenant of justification and sanctification to the marriage covenant, prayerfully ponder this:

- Justification is like the moment a couple is declared “married”. The moment you are born again, being justified by shed blood of Jesus, is analogous to the moment a couple weds.
- Sanctification is the life long *process* of the indwelling Holy Spirit conforming you to the character of Jesus. is living out your marriage. Remaining marriage is a lifelong *process* of the spouses and their marriage increasingly reflecting the loving character of Jesus. Marriage is a *process* of mutual cooperation. Sanctification is a process of mutual cooperation as Paul tells us, "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" (Philippians 2:12,13).
- Just as no one can promise on the day a couple is married that their marriage covenant will last, no one can assure a person on the day they're born again that they will be welcomed into heaven.

Justification frees us from the penalty of our sins: “

Since we have now been **justified by His blood**, how much more shall we be **saved from God's wrath** through Him!” (Romans 5:9).

Jesus paid the price as our substitute, the Sinless for the sinful. Accepting the atoning work of His death alone justifies us before our Father and *reconciles* us to Him.

In its fullest sense, **sanctification** may be described as a *transformation process* worked in us through the indwelling Spirit:

"Now 'the Lord' in this text means the **Spirit**. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. So all of us, with faces unveiled, see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord; and we are **being changed into His very image**, from one degree of glory to the next, by the Lord, the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:17,18, JNT).

This ongoing process is dependent on God as we press on in **continuing obedience** to live out that which is His purpose and will for our lives:

Therefore, my beloved 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 according to **His good purpose** (Philippians 2:12,13).

Through His Spirit we are transformed into the character of Jesus, Who gives us the determination to persevere no matter the cost (Romans 5:3). This love-driven life of obedient trust is the continuing course for us to undertake with intentional focus until we stand before His Throne acknowledged as His.

The Older Testament: THE Source for the Gospel of Jesus

Jesus tells us that in the Older Testament we find the stipulations for entering the Father's Covenant through Him. Again,

‘Whoever trusts in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.’ By this Jesus meant the Spirit, whom those who trusted in Him were later to receive” (John 7:38,39).

“*Streams of living water*” refer to the undeniable evidence of the Holy Spirit's in-dwelling of anyone who puts his trust in Jesus. The only Scripture in existence when Jesus spoke these words was the Hebrew Bible. If you want to trust Jesus “*as the Scripture has said*,” you must study the Older Testament to discern the complete Gospel that enables you to enter the Father's Covenant.

Over two hundred years before the coming of Jesus, a number of what we call the “Hebraic stream” of rabbis taught that a person must experience a spiritual birth, a *response* to God's call on his life. These rabbis understood the trust-filled relationship Abraham had with God. Conversion meant *rebirth*. Being “*born again*” was a shift from following the letter of the law to abiding in a *love-based relationship* with our Father. Consider our Lord's own words on the need to be born again:

“Jesus declared, ‘I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again... I tell you the truth, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit’ (John 3:3,5).



Because the teaching of spiritual rebirth had been around for many years, our Lord Jesus marveled that Nicodemus was ignorant of this vital spiritual decision, “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?’” (John 3:10).

Again, being born again was the point at which you shifted from reli-

gious practice (or *no* practice!) and put your **full trust and reliance** in Jesus as your Sin-bearer, Savior and Lord. Jesus endorsed this break with religious form and practice when He told those who criticized Him about His disciples not fasting:

“No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the **new piece will pull away** from the old, making the tear worse. And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the **wine will burst the skins**, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, he pours new wine into **new wineskins**” (Mark 2:21,22).

- To be “born again” is to trust in Jesus as *Abraham* had trusted God.
- Trying to trust in Jesus while relying on religious traditions or creeds only rips each apart, rendering both useless.

Father's Stipulations To Enter His New Covenant

- **Repentance**
- **Love**
- **Obedient Trust**
- **Forceful Conviction and Determination**
- **Forgiving Others**

Father's stipulations aren't like checking off a list of requirements. But they reflect the inner motivation of one's heart to be His child and live in covenant union with Him. your life is one in which His will is fulfilled. Let's review the stipulations of the Older Testament, the Source whose prophecies and promises are fulfilled in Jesus.

1. Your Salvation Pilgrimage both begins *and* continues with your Repentance

John the Baptist, Jesus, and Peter at Pentecost all affirmed **repentance** as the first step toward salvation. There are two aspects of repentance.

1. Biblical repentance always demands a turning away from your sin. Confessing your sins is your agreement that you have broken God's commands, your ownership of a depravity you no longer want to be enslaved to.
2. Turning *to* God is your hunger for forgiveness, and for the Holy Spirit to help you live according to His will and commands.

Don't forget these two distinctives: **Turning away from your sin and turning to God.**

Authentic repentance that begins a life in the Spirit will result in spiritual fruit—good works empowered by the Spirit within as Paul proclaimed: *"I declared that they should repent and turn to God and do works befitting repentance"* (Acts 26:20).

Repentance grieves you that you have grieved God. You hunger for the forgiveness, cleansing, and restoration that only He can give. That grief is the "godly sorrow [that] brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret" (2 Corinthians 7:10).



Repentance in the Bible Is a Continuing Stream of Reconciling Truth.

“Blessed is he whose **transgressions are forgiven**, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord **does not count against him** and in whose spirit is **no deceit**. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through **my groaning** all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my **strength was sapped** as in the heat of summer. Then I **acknowledged my sin** to You and did **not cover up** my iniquity. I said, ‘I will **confess my transgressions** to the Lord’ — and You **forgave the guilt** of my sin” (Psalm 32:1-5).

Unless you humbly wash in the river of repentance and forsake your sin, you can't enter the Father's Covenant. Look at the nature of a person our Father does accept:

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a **broken and contrite heart**, O God, You will not despise... This is the one I esteem: he who is **humble and contrite in spirit**, and **trembles at My word**” (Psalms 51:17; Isaiah 66:2).

Our Father's parameters for those who want to be counted among His own are precise.

“Nevertheless, God's solid foundation **stands firm**, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows **those who are His**,’ and, ‘Everyone who **confesses the name** of the Lord must **turn away from wickedness**’” (2 Timothy 2:19).

To help you understand the sweeping importance of repentance, let's again use an analogy from marriage. On the morning of his wedding a groom approaches his betrothed and says,

“Honey, I love you deeply, but I also have two lovers I'm having trouble giving up. Let me keep them for a while and maybe I can get rid of them later.” How would she feel? Would she marry him? NO!

If you truly want to enter the Father's Covenant, then you should examine yourself to determine if your sins are more important to you than a Covenant relationship with your Father. Lack of repentance says to your Father, “I want what you have to offer, but I don't intend to change or to give up anything.” Will He enter into a Covenant with a person who refuses to give up other lovers? NO!

2. Your Salvation Pilgrimage both begins and continues with your Love

For you to embrace the Father's Covenant, He establishes the same relational requirement as He did in the Older Testament, that is, to *love Him*. The Older Testament speaks of a Father Who longs for a love relationship with His people. The foundation of this love requirement is found in Deuteronomy 6:4,5:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. **Love the LORD your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

The Hebrew word for love, ahav (ah-hahv'), means that you are filled with devotion and delight and passion for the one you love. You long to be in union with your Father. The meaning of the Hebrew letters of ahav is “**a window into the Father’s heart.**” The second of the ten commandments declares that our Father promises to show His love to a thousand generations of those who *love* Him and *keep* His commandments.

Quoting from the Deuteronomy passage cited earlier, Jesus delivered the most vital commandment:

“**Love the LORD your God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and **greatest** commandment. And the second [which is from Leviticus] is like it, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matthew 22: 37-40).

The Greek word for love here is agape (ah-gah'-pay), and its meaning is similar to the Hebrew ahav. Our source of agape love is the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22, which lists the fruit of the Spirit, the first of which is *agape* love). To summarize the priority of loving God:

Everything in your Christian life—everything about knowing God and experiencing Him, everything about knowing and doing His will—depends on the quality of your love relationship with our Father and His Son, Jesus. If your love relationship is not right, nothing in your life will be right. *His love* compels you to obey His commands.

This wholehearted, self-sacrificing love is wonderfully manifested by those who know the Gospel found in the Hebrew Scriptures and understand the *depth of their own depravity*. For them it’s easy to see God’s *grace* when He accepted animal sacrifices as a substitute for Israelites on the Day of Atonement. In this light they can lovingly appreciate the *sacrifice of Jesus* on their behalf.

If you try to keep God’s commands without loving Him, you’ll grow proud, caught up in what you *do* for Him. Paul admonishes in I Corinthians 13 that “*without (agape) love, we are nothing.*” Living out God’s commands because of your *love for Him* keeps you humbly dependent on Him, and contrite when you fail.

3. Your Salvation Pilgrimage both begins *and* continues with your Obedient Trust

As we share earlier, the Hebrew word for “trust” means more than just belief; it is a profound trust in God. Trust is a purposeful heart response, far more than mere intellectual assent that God is real. Reliance on the Lord penetrates the very core of your being, propelling you to an obedience that starts in your heart and manifests itself in action.

Your trust demonstrates that you understand our Almighty Father’s love for *you*, while your willing dependence on Him ultimately puts to death your own ambitions and plans

as you yield to His. As your ongoing trust deepens and you recognize His unfailing faithfulness, an element of childlikeness takes root in you—not immaturity but absolute confidence in *His* faithfulness.

You begin your pilgrimage 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 our Father. Where trust in Him exists, His peace that surpasses understanding does as well.

Any worry, anxiety, or concern about the future indicates a *lack* of trust. That's why Peter exhorts us to cast *all* our cares on our Lord because *He cares for us!* (1 Peter 5:7) Habitual failure to trust can lure you to break your part of the covenant. If you refuse to trust your sovereign and all-powerful Creator and Redeemer, you're placing yourself *above* Him. That means you're making an idol of your fears and grieving His heart: "You shall have **no other gods** before Me" (Exodus 20:3)—yourself included.

The steadfast trust that God calls for in His children is the fabric woven throughout the Hebrew Bible and the Newer Testament because HE is worth all of our trust! As you choose to cooperate with the indwelling Holy Spirit, He empowers you to walk in reliance on our Father, not fearing your troubling circumstances or trials.

Look at some of God's promises to those who trust Him to orchestrate their life pathways:

- "Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's **unfailing love surrounds** the man who trusts in Him" (Psalm 32:10).

This doesn't say that you won't face trials, but with your Lord as a shield, you can stand, and keep on standing.

- "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in **all your ways** acknowledge Him, and **He** will make **your paths straight**" (Proverbs 3:5,6).

It's much easier to walk along a path our Father has leveled than to stumble about in confusion and unbelief! A person who trusts our Father first seeks His will and then does it without concern about the cost of his obedience. The child who trusts forgoes looking to circumstances as confirmation of His will; rather, he presses on *despite* them.

- "Here is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'Look, I am laying in Zion a tested stone, a costly cornerstone, a firm foundation stone; he who trusts will **not rush here and there**' (Isaiah 28: 16, CJB).

If you are certain of His sovereignty, your heart can rest in peace. Or would you rather rush here and there trying to solve your own problems?

Hang on to this with ALL our heart: Your pilgrimage to your salvation is based on your ongoing, loving trust in the God Who loves you. This is the type of relationship Abraham was commended for having: “Abraham **kept trusting** God, and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6).

4. Your Salvation Pilgrimage both begins *and* continues with Your Forceful Conviction and Steadfast Determination

Answering the call of your Father to trust wholeheartedly in Jesus is a *determined response* from which no earthly power can hold you back! As Jesus proclaimed, following Him is a heart issue that both upholds and fulfills the Hebrew Scriptures: “Up to the time of John there were the Torah and the Prophets. Since then the Good News of the Kingdom of God has been proclaimed, and everyone is **forcing his way into it**” (Luke 16:15,16; see also Matthew 13:44-46).

This passage about unswerving conviction can best be understood by considering the walls that surround Jerusalem:

Around a military fortification such as the walls of Jerusalem, “*killing zones*” are established to concentrate weapon fire for maximum killing effectiveness. Those who attack the fort must first courageously battle their way through the killing zone. Because of the strong likelihood that they may be killed in the attack, these individuals have to “be dead” to everything else *beforehand* in order to fully focus on their objective (see John 12:25).

That kind of forceful determination was the standard in the earliest Church for those who embraced our Father’s covenant, and is captured in Matthew 13:44-46:

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then **in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field**. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, **he went away and sold everything he had and bought it**”.

It takes tremendous certainty to give up everything you’ve got in order to embrace the Covenant your Father is offering you. Genuine repentance, love, and your complete trust produce the type of conviction and determination our Father enjoys.

5. Your Salvation Pilgrimage both begins *and* continues with You Forgiving Others

Jesus declares, “If you **do not forgive** men their sins, your Father **will not forgive** your sins” (Matthew 6:15). No one can be forgiven of anything by our heavenly Father if we **do not forgive** those who have violated us.

The Apostle John warns us about unforgiveness:

“We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a **liar**. For anyone who **does not love** his brother, whom he has seen, **cannot love God**, whom he has not seen. And He has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also **love his brother**” (1 John 4:19-21).

The earliest followers of Jesus clearly understood that our Father will not consummate a relationship with an unforgiving person. Why? Because our Father refuses, in light of the **incomparable sacrifice of His own Son**, to walk through His blood with someone who refuses to forgive. To the earliest followers of Jesus, bitterness and pride were nearly synonymous. The former is a reflection of the latter, which our Father resists, “God opposes the arrogant, but to the humble he gives grace” (James 4:6).

Unforgiveness, that is, unresolved bitterness, is the most common factor that keeps our Father from consummating the Covenant.

A bitter person is like a bride on the day of her wedding who tells her groom, “Honey, I’m a prostitute and I’m going to continue my profession. I refuse to give it up. Will you still marry me?” The spiritual adultery that is manifested by clinging to bitterness is just as vile!

A bitter person shows no evidence of the Holy Spirit operating as a “*stream of living water*.” Our Father doesn’t need “**streams of bitter water**” representing Him in this world. A person who clings to unforgiveness has failed to appreciate how much he or she needed to be forgiven through the shed blood of Jesus.

Your decision to forgive opens the way for the Holy Spirit to take up His residence in you. It is He Who heals your heart and emotions, since you can never heal yourself. Only by correctly understanding forgiveness could martyrs throughout history have responded with grace toward their persecutors. Those suffering for their trust in Jesus have already forgiven their tormentors. It all begins with the loving words of Jesus, repeated by Stephen, “Father, forgive them...”

Let’s review the biblical stipulations for you to enter into our Father’s Covenant. Your pilgrimage to your salvation begins and continues with your:

- 1 Repentance.**
- 2. Love.**
- 3. Obedient Trust.**
- 4. Forceful Conviction and Steadfast Determination.**
- 5. Forgiving Others.**

There’s nothing complicated about these stipulations. They are not doorways you must walk through, but rather motives of your inner most being that wants a relationship with

your heavenly Father, through having the debt of your sins paid for by the blood of Jesus.

If you're prepared to embrace the Gospel offered to you by our Father and to enter into Covenant union with Him, then ratify the conditions of the Covenant with Him from your heart. Repeat the stipulations like a vow to Him declaring your part of the Covenant.

- Do you intentionally and genuinely want our Father in your life through His Spirit?
- Do you desire and purpose with all your heart to live as our Father's child by His grace?
- Are you willing to forsake all other goals or values that compete with your devotion to Him?

And, we encourage you to be baptized, immersed—identifying with our Lord's death on your behalf and His promise of resurrection (see Romans 6). By this you are pledging to your Father that, by His grace and with the help of the Holy Spirit, you will keep a clear conscience on your pilgrimage to salvation.

[For further insight into covenants and the historic influences that have spawned the of false gospels being peddled today, please see the materials available on our web page: [The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation](#)].

[For further insight into the relationship of the New Covenant and the marriage covenant, see: [Our Heavenly Father's Two Paramount Covenants – Interwoven And Made Possible By The True Gospel](#)].

The Seal of Consummation —The Holy Spirit

Streams of Living Water: the Indwelling Holy Spirit

To consummate His New Covenant with us, our Father seals us with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and we become “streams of living water.” To us who embrace our Father’s Covenant, the Spirit’s indwelling is critical if we are to press on in the pilgrimage as our Father desires.

Stop for a moment and picture this. God now indwells you! A union of oneness with our Father now exists. Hey! A wonderful miracle has taken place within you! A woman who is pregnant for the first time knows that this new life is more than a biological event. She has a physical and emotional union with that new life.

The indwelling Holy Spirit engenders a spiritual union within that perhaps can be pictured by the loving intimacy a pregnant woman experiences with her growing child. But the Holy Spirit has a special ministry to complete both in you and through you. All you have under your control is your willingness to yield to Him the easy way in cooperation or the hard way with fear and doubt.

Or, it’s sadly within your power to break the New Covenant by rebelliously turning away from Him and denying Him by deliberately walking in sin. As the writer to the Hebrew believers warned, along that path lies “the terrifying prospect of Judgment, of raging fire that will consume the enemies” (Hebrews 10:26,27; Isaiah 26:11). The consequences of blaspheming the Spirit are heart-wrenching: “[E]veryone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven” (Luke 12:10).

In light of the beauty and the empowerment the Holy Spirit brings with Him, do you understand the tragic impact of the false gospels of today that negate His Person and His presence? The deluded blaspheme the Holy Spirit by negating His significance to the followers of Jesus and denying His power or attributing it to Satan as did the Pharisees. In their desire to “save” others, Spirit-deniers make them “twice the sons of hell” that they are. Yet, the truth is, “If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ” (Romans 8:9).

With the Holy Spirit within, you have the potential to be transformed into the character of Jesus and to live an empowered life. This type of living threatens the very gates of hell. It is open warfare between you and the minions of Satan. How Paul relied on power from above!

“[Jesus] said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Knowing how important the power of the Spirit is in your ability to live for God, you can understand the depth of the great apostle's emotions when he chastises the Galatians, “Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?” (Galatians 3:3). How many who are trying to follow Jesus end up quenching His Spirit and struggling in their own strength, refusing to trust in His loving power to deliver them?

- Describe a time when you knew the Spirit was directing you in a particular situation or encounter and you followed through in obedient trust. Did you share that testimony with anyone to encourage and strengthen them in their own walk?
- Describe a time when you resisted His prompting through disobedience. What consequences or conviction followed?

The Spirit Throughout the Bible

Skim your Bible concordance to grasp how much the Holy Spirit was part of God's work in the Hebrew Bible. He is so much more than we can imagine! The Spirit of God is found all throughout the Older Testament. You don't go far into it without encountering the Spirit: “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” (Genesis 1:2).

In another example, the elders selected by Moses validated their God-given authority through the anointing of the Spirit: “Then the Lord came down in the cloud and spoke with him, and he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied [a sign of the Spirit's presence], but they did not do so again [because He wasn't indwelling them]” (Numbers 11:25).]

In the Newer Testament the Holy Spirit's work continued in a deeper dimension. For Jesus to become incarnate as “the Son of God” and “the Son of Man”, a very human Mary conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit: “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

In order for Jesus to take up the priesthood of Melchizedek, the Spirit descended on Him upon His immersion in the Jordan River. With that anointing, the Levitical priesthood ended and an everlasting Priest in the order of Melchizedek came into being (see Hebrews chapter 7).

Realizing that Jesus would give His people the power to carry out their Covenant responsibilities, John the Baptist announced to his listeners, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Luke 3:16b).

Jesus, about to ascend to His Father, urged His disciples,

“Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit...You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:4,5,8).

That promised moment came, and it didn’t arrive unnoticed!

“Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them” (Acts 2:2-4).

In response to this miraculous manifestation, the apostle Peter proclaimed the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy:

“In the last days, God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams’” (Acts 2:17).

Again, Peter was addressing devout Jews from all over who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate at Pentecost the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. These men were thoroughly acquainted with the Hebrew Bible and its promises!

Stung in their hearts, they pleaded with the apostles,

“‘Brothers, what shall we do?’ 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’” (Acts 2:38,39).

What glorious hope and purpose for these men as they trained up their households as Abraham did, in devotion and intimacy with their Lord!

How Many Generations of Jesus Followers Need the Holy Spirit? Every One of Them

It’s not as if the Holy Spirit isn’t being given to consummate the Covenant any longer. The Lord’s promise is still in effect:

“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.”

Nothing in this promise has been revoked by our Father. “The gift my Father promised,

which you have heard me speak about” (Acts 1:4), is still being offered to all who enter into Covenant with Him.

Then what has happened to dissuade church people from walking wholeheartedly in covenant with Jesus through His Spirit? Consider these assaults on the intimate relationship our Father has desired with His people.

- Because of the inroads of Hellenistic philosophers in the second and third centuries, the covenant foundations of the Gospel were removed.
- The Bible was hidden in Latin for over eleven hundred years, available only to the few who were educated.
- Well-meaning theologians over the last three hundred years have developed “gospels”, but ignored the Covenant foundation of the Good News found in the Older Testament.

If religious leadership had set aside their anti-semitic bias, then their “gospels” would have been grounded on the substructure of the Older Testament and its prophetic fulfillment in the Lamb in the manner He called for: repentance, love, and obedient trust.

As it is, few false gospels even quote a verse from the Older Testament. Even fewer call for repentance. Many internationally known “evangelists” overlook repentance; instead, they offer a “forgiveness” without the need to turn from the old way of death. This may be the reason that, according to international evangelist Ray Comfort, 90% of those who are declared “born again” by man fail to live on in Christ. Without repentance, there is no “new birth.” And without that turn from darkness into the Light, there is no indwelling Spirit to empower and to convict.

Grievously, so many who are sent to evangelize rely on “drive-by” crusades. Unless a person shares the Gospel and stays on until a faith community is started, he/she is not an evangelist by the definition of that anointing in the early Church. An evangelist is a “church planter and repairer” as were Paul, Timothy, and Titus. Understanding the relational issues of our Father’s Covenant, these men entered into a discipling/spiritual parenting relationship with those who turned from sin to embrace the Gospel.

Sense the parental heart of Paul in his letters to the different faith communities.

“As emissaries of the Messiah, we could have made our weight felt; but instead, we were gentle when we were with you, like a mother feeding and caring for her children...for you know that we treated each one of you the way a father treats his children. We encouraged you and comforted you and appealed to you to lead lives worthy of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:7,11).

These were spiritual sons and daughters to him! And the depth of that intimacy takes time and devotion to develop. You can't share the true Gospel at an impersonal evangelistic Crusade. Fruit that lasts calls for faithful nurturers and pruners.

Keep in mind that the false gospels developed in the last three hundred years consider relationship unnecessary, and the need for the indwelling Holy Spirit optional at best.

- Who came alongside you as a spiritual parent to disciple you when you first walked with Jesus as your Lord?
- Have you ever discipled anyone as a spiritual parent, helping them to grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus? How long did that relationship continue? Was that person equipped to reach others as a discipler?

Empowerment: “Streams of Living Water” From the Spirit

Have you ever observed streams? They vary in so many ways, yet there is something beautifully pleasant about them. No two are ever alike. They are like a pilgrimage themselves, with a starting point and an ending point. Many end up joining with other streams to become rivers before they reach the ocean.

We, too, can be streams that, when joined together through the covenant union with our Father, can become mighty rivers. The Spirit's indwelling in each of us brings this about. No programs are needed for this living water to bring refreshment and healing to others, just walking with the Spirit.

As a fellow “stream” I want to share what this might mean to you concerning the empowerment and work of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, I don't want to become definitional about Him. No one can adequately describe God. When the Spirit indwells those with whom our Father consummates His Covenant, we become the Spirit's temple. If someone asks you where God is, you can answer, “In me!” You don't have to try to conjure up His Presence. Intimacy with Him is a special privilege, rather like being pregnant with spiritual fruit ready to be birthed as we draw nourishment and strength from our Holy Indweller!

A reminder of encouragement and exhortation: When the Covenant is consummated, you are sealed with the Holy Spirit. “Now it is God who makes both us and you stand

firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (2 Corinthians 1:21,22). He will not break the Covenant, but you can become a covenant-breaker through habitual sin and permanently forfeiting your trust in Him. Live in reliant trust on the Spirit as one who knows you’re loved! “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:24,25).

Our Father verifies His love for us through the Holy Spirit. The Bible is not God Himself, but only His Word for us. Both Testaments point to our Father and His salvation purposes: “...the Holy Scriptures, which can give you the wisdom that leads to deliverance through trusting in Jesus the Messiah” (2 Timothy 3:16). The Word presents truth to us, but only the Holy Spirit can open our hearts to believe it as truth and give us empowerment to live it.

As you yield your life to the Holy Spirit, He produces “... love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control” (Galatians 5:23). These qualities are necessary for you to have healthy relationships with others. They are also indicators that the Spirit is winning the spiritual battle!

As your motives and attitudes are changed, your behaviors follow. This is our Father’s process of sanctifying us into conformity to His Son Jesus — it is a lifelong pilgrimage of heart change in which behavior then follows suit out of love. Remember: God is examining your heart as motivation for your behavior. The Pharisees had the behavior, but not the heart.

Our Father gives us understanding of His love for us through the indwelling Holy Spirit: “And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Romans 5:5).

The Spirit’s presence in you starts to change your motives and attitudes — a lifelong process of decisions and choices. His goal is to conform you to the image of Jesus Christ, the First Born among us. In the midst of this alteration process, a battle rages between the Spirit and your carnal nature. Which one will rule your mind, will, and emotions? Paul voiced this tension when he counseled the Galatians,

What I am saying is this: run your lives by the Spirit. Then you will not do what your old nature wants. For the old nature wants what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit wants what is contrary to the old nature. These oppose each other, so that you find yourselves unable to carry out your good intentions. But if you are led by the Spirit, then you are not in subjection to the system that results from perverting the Torah into legalism” (5:16,17, JNT).

The Roman followers of Jesus, too, needed admonition to turn away from their sinful desires and live by the Spirit of Christ in them:

For those who identify with their old nature set their minds on the things of the old nature, but those who identify with the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. Having one’s mind controlled by the old nature is death, but having one’s mind controlled by the Spirit is life and shalom...But you, you do not identify with your old nature but with the Spirit — providing the Spirit of God is living inside you, for anyone who doesn’t have the Spirit of the Messiah doesn’t belong to him (Romans 8:5,6,9, JNT).

In our book [God’s Instruments for War](#), Sue and I address the importance of gifts of the Spirit so that we may effectively wage war against Satan. Note that you have to identify your spiritual weaponry and that of your extended spiritual family, then use it.

To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines” (1 Corinthians 12:8-11).

Because so few take God at His Word and fail to walk in these empowerments, Satan continues to grow in His control over this nation. Is the darkness spreading because so many who call themselves “Christian” do not have the indwelling Holy Spirit to penetrate the gloom with His Light?

- In what manner are you using your spiritual gifting to bring praise to our Father?
- What is the most frequent temptation to give in to your old nature that you face? How do you handle that temptation?

Prophecy, Words of Knowledge and Wisdom: Support Your Trust While Confronting Your Rationale

Following Jesus is an obedience-based trust, grounded in a love relationship much like that of Abraham. Obedience-based trust means that we are concerned with seeking our Father's will and doing it no matter what the cost. Outcome-based religious practice, on the other hand, relies on rationale, not obedient trust. People within that framework seek a desired result regardless of whether it is our Father's will for them.

As you walk in trust in our Father, you'll rely less and less on your carnal rationale. Your love for our Father produces trust-filled obedience empowered by His Spirit within. Part of the sanctification process of your mind calls for you to replace with trust the rationale on which you've always relied before. Whenever you conjecture about the future, or try to make decisions by weighing the 'pros-and-cons', you are relying on reasoning, not trust. Our Father wants to bless you by making the decisions for you — making level and straight your path.

One of the purposes of prophecy and words of knowledge and wisdom is to help you have His mind on the circumstances and encounters that affect you. These giftings cut through the rationale of your carnal nature, that is, trying to rely on your own reasoning as you weigh the positives and negatives of your choices. He reserves the right as our Father to make the decisions for His children, and receives glory when His children look for and count on His intervention and revelation.

We are warned, "Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good" (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21). Doesn't this accord with, "Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7)? Fear of the prophetic voice of God indicates that you want to be in charge of your own life. If you find yourself habitually distrusting our Father to show you the path He desires for you, you may find yourself sliding toward the ledge of breaking the Covenant.

We've written on behalf of the Hebraic Restoration as a result of my mother's prophetic words to me ten years ago: "When you get back from Israel, the Lord wants you to move in with me and write." I remember my first inclination was, "Write what?" Next, I received a fax from a man in upper state New York whom I had never met. When he heard from mutual friends that we had left our retreat ministry and were going to live in Jerusalem for awhile, he wrote, "The Lord is sending you on a prophetic mission."

We didn't even have money for the air fare until the last hour to pay for the ticket! He ended his letter with a passage from Isaiah, "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with

my righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10). Our spirits were boosted!

In Israel others approached us to confirm our prophetic mission. Now, 10 years later, we are fulfilling the prophetic mission, sharing what our Father revealed to us during that time — the restoration of the intimacy and relational priorities of the earliest Church.

- What specific prophecies or words of knowledge or wisdom have been shared with you that impacted your life in a particular way?
- What is your response to the whole idea of the Spirit working with power in His people today? Do you share close fellowship with others who are walking in their gifting to bring praise to our Father?

Suffering Is the Spirit’s Agency for Change

“For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to bring you back again into fear; on the contrary, you received the Spirit, Who makes us sons and by whose power we cry out ‘Abba!’ (that is, ‘Dear Father!’). The Spirit Himself bears witness with our own spirits that we are children of God; and if we are children, then we are also heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Messiah—provided we are suffering with Him in order also to be glorified with Him” (Romans 8:15-17, JNT).

No one enjoys suffering. But along with our acceptance of our Father’s Covenant comes suffering. It’s part of our Father’s refining plan. Jesus suffered. Should our Father treat His children any differently by withholding that which helps to conform us to His Son’s image?

“In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering” (Hebrews 2:10).

Why should we suffer? Wasn’t the suffering of Jesus enough? Our Father explains why suffering is essential in our pilgrimage:

“We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Romans 5:3-5).

Hope is the lifeline that keeps us focused on the narrow gate and the heavenly welcome. Satan offers us pleasure, then despair. Our Father offers us suffering, then hope — the confidence of His love for us.

It would be so simple if we could just bask in our Father’s care here on earth and then be zapped up into heaven before any trials come our way. However, that just does not

fly scripturally, nor does it bring honor to our Father as He sustains our brothers and sisters in persecuted lands during harsh torture and the loss of all things for the sake of Christ.

Peter didn't tell anguishing followers of Jesus to pray that their trials be snatched away from them. On the contrary, he comforted them with these words:

“Rejoice in this [assurance of deliverance on the Last Day], even though for a little while you may have to experience grief in various trials. Even gold is tested for genuineness by fire. The purpose of these trials is so that your trust's genuineness which is far more valuable than perishable gold, is judged worthy of praise, glory and honor at the revealing of Jesus the Messiah” (1 Peter 1:6,7, JNT).

- How do you view suffering?
- What character transformation have you undergone as a result of a personal season of trial or suffering?
- How often do you pray for our suffering family in Jesus who are being persecuted around the world? Do you share of your own means with organizations that help to meet their needs and bring them comfort and encouragement?

Grumbling Impedes Your Spiritual Growth

Failing to grasp the methods of character development that our Father uses hinders our growth in spiritual maturity. Sharing the cup of suffering is one of His most effective means of drawing us to trust Him more. Yet, in a culture of false gospels, suffering is a nemesis: “If you're suffering, there must be something wrong with you.” (Remember the finger-poin-ing of Job's buddies?) Our Father, however, uses the fires of affliction to burn away the dross of worldliness and self-reliance.

But how do we often respond to these opportunities to learn greater dependence on our Father? We grumble. We complain that we don't deserve such irritations or assaults. But when we protest to God, all other spiritual development stops. Do you remember what Paul said about the Israelites?

“And do not grumble, as some of them did — and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as example and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come” (1Corinthians 10:10,11).

Mike: I remember a time our Lord dealt with me about my grumbling:

We'd been working hard at our retreat ministry/farm. Most weeks required 80 hours of work, and we had little time off. Our teenage son, Mike, had been accepted to go to Irian Jaya for the summer with Teen Mission. We intended to drive him from Con-

necticut to the training camp in Florida with a stop at Disney World first. The night before we were to depart, Mike and I were wrestling. Somehow I twisted my back. All throughout the trip, including our time at Disney World, I fought off agonizing pain. After we dropped Mike off, Sue and I headed north for several stops to visit friends. I was getting more weary by the day as I struggled with the pain. I began grumbling to our Father, "We've been working hard for months. Surely you want to bless us with a great vacation!" I received no healing and heard no reply.

When we arrived at a friend's home near Philadelphia, I got out of the vehicle. Our friend, Bill, was tossing a frisbee to his son on the front lawn. The moment I closed the door he threw the frisbee to me. As I returned it I felt a little click in my lower back— and I was healed! Later, the Lord convicted me about my false expectations and showed me how I had grieved the Holy Spirit with my grumbling and distrust. Our Lord wants convinced and convicted people to represent Him to the world: "Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it' (Matthew 16:24,25). He uses convicted people — those who are so persuaded about Him that they have chosen to set aside their own desire in order to take on the daily willingness to put Him first. Then they follow through with obedient trust. The Holy Spirit instills increasing conviction in those who keep in step with Him as they run the gauntlet.

Don't Grieve or Quench the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit enables us to be changed into the likeness of Jesus. Paul isn't being brash when he asserts, "We have the mind of Christ" (1 Corinthians 2:16). Picture the sanctification process of your life with the Holy Spirit as running a gauntlet through demonic attacks in the form of mental lies, attempting to hinder you from running any further. Your unwillingness to lean on the Holy Spirit has an effect on the Spirit,

"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Ephesians 4:30).

Your thought life is the battle ground. This is where you get enticed:

"Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. Don't be deceived, my dear brothers" (James 1:14-16).

The vast majority of people who have sought help from us over the years have shared a common thread: They entertain demons in their thought life, and finally want to escape the bondage that listening to these demons produces. The Lord warns,

“Demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up [in your mind] against the knowledge of God, and take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:6).

[See our book [Demolishing Strongholds](#) for more about demonic hindrances].

NO one can take “our thoughts captive” for us. To take our thoughts captive and bring them into obedience to the thoughts of Jesus calls for personal spiritual discipline. Our thoughts do come into obedience to Jesus over time as we exercise that discipline. We begin to recognize that our motivations are being changed — we want intimacy with our Father and the joy of fulfilling His purposes. First our motivations change, then our behaviors are changed by our motivations.

We often find ourselves rebuking the demonic spirits who are trying to use the thoughts of our mind against us. Demonic voices often sound just like the voice of your own mind. If you reflect frequently on what you’ve read in the Bible, you develop a discernment about the thoughts that demonic spirits whisper. Aren’t we told that “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14)?

Recognizing that a demonic voice is imparting nothing that Jesus would think, say or do, I submit to the authority of my Father and rebuke that Adversary’s servant in the Name of Jesus. Then I ask the Lord Jesus for His mind on the matter and praise Him for the difference!

Unclean spirits labor to hinder us from walking in the Spirit. Paul tells us, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons” (1 Corinthians 10:21). We’d like to add,

**“You cannot entertain the voice of demons in your mind
and hear the Spirit’s voice or experience His power.”
You become like whomever you listen to.**

The indwelling Holy Spirit produces a way of life that becomes increasingly Christlike on your pilgrimage. Listening to demons and believing their lies quenches the Holy Spirit’s power.

- What demonic lies most often assail your thoughts? How do you respond to them? How should you respond in order to hear only the Holy Spirit in your thoughts?

Prayer Is Trusting Your Heavenly Father To Respond

Jesus’ disciples knew from experience that even the Son of God relied on prayer. Earnest in their zeal to learn from Him, they pleaded, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples” (Luke 11:1). Jesus replied to them and to all of us, “When you

pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom come...' (v. 2).

Prayer is intimate communication with our Father. As we praise and worship Him, confess and bow before Him, laugh and cry with Him, we draw strength from being attuned to His Presence. He already knows our needs. Our petitions and thanksgiving to Him indicate that we understand our dependency on Him to meet these needs. As the disciples asked Jesus to "teach us to pray," the indwelling Spirit helps us, too, to pray:

"...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 he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will" (Romans 8:26,27).

Answered prayer is one of many ways we can bring glory to our Father as we share testimony with others about His faithfulness. Remember, our part of the Covenant is to glorify our Father! Your repentance and the Father's willingness to answer your prayers is intricately connected.

Peter warns us about failing to repent and entertaining sin in our lives:

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (1 Peter 3:12).

Another word for "evil"-doer is "lawlessness". A lawless person has no concern for the commands of God, and consequently fails to repent. God refuses to answer the prayers of the unrepentant.

- How would you describe your prayer life? Intense?Obligatory? Uplifting? Rote? Rare? What do you need to do to draw closer to Him in prayer?
- What prayers has our Father answered on your behalf or those for whom you've interceded?
- Have you made known to friends, neighbors, and co-workers that you come before our Father regularly to pray, and that you'd be glad to bring before Him their concerns?

Remember That our Father's Children Live Free!

As the Spirit wins the sanctification of your mind, will, and emotions, your life grows in the freedom Jesus promises His own.

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Corinthians 3:17,18).

We hope that each one who lives in the New Covenant with our Father can proclaim a phrase that comes to us each year:

“The person I was last year at this time wouldn’t recognize me because of what the Spirit has changed!”

Our Father has given both of us a dignity in Him since our research 10 years ago in Jerusalem that we hadn’t known in the previous 17 years of following Jesus. With His dignity comes increasing freedom. Please ask yourself, “What evidence of His freedom in my life can I testify about to others?”

Our Final Exhortation

We hesitate to describe more about the Holy Spirit. If you want to know more, you need to read the Book He inspired and ask Him for wisdom and revelation to apply it to your life. As in our marriage, knowledge of each other grew as our relationship together matured. I believe you will find this true of the Spirit. If you don’t harden your heart and grieve, quench or blaspheme Him, you’ll yearn to know Him more deeply. Then you’ll know what Zechariah understood, “‘Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty” (Zechariah 4:6).

We trust that this study has helped you and those for whom you care to understand and to live the pilgrimage of the true Gospel. First and foremost, your journey is a heart issue, one of devotion and desire. If you like formulas and rules so that you can feel good about yourself, then our Father’s Covenant isn’t for you. But if you desire loving intimacy and the trust of childlike dependence on our Father, then review the stipulations of His Covenant. If your spirit bears witness with what the Spirit is showing you, walk through the blood of Jesus with our Father and give Him the joy of consummating His Covenant with you. Begin a life that lives to glorify Him.

What a wonderful moment for all of us when Jesus declares each of us called, chosen, and faithful!. So many of you who are being encouraged by what we share are personally unknown to us, but your correspondence encourages us to keep writing. We look forward to meeting you when Jesus introduces each of us to the hosts of heaven!

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him — but God has revealed it to us by His Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him?

In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God ... This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words” (1 Corinthians 2:9-11,13).