

**EXCHANGING LIFE
WITH
THE WORD OF LIFE**

*As deer pant for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God,
My soul thirsts for God, for the Living God.
Psalm 42:1*

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ENTERING THE EXPERIENCE OF EXCHANGING LIFE WITH THE WORD OF LIFE

The writings of Jesus' earliest selected students and friends (what we call the New Testament) are *literary witnesses* of Jesus' promise that the Holy Spirit would lead them into an experience of *all truth* in a context where Jesus called Himself *The Truth* (John 14:6; 14:26, 15:26, and 16:13-15). These writings are the Holy Spirit inspired authoritative witnesses to the meaning and significance of Jesus *The Word of Life* for all who believe in Jesus (1 John 1:1-4). These witnesses point us to our possible experience of the *fullness of God's message*, which is *Christ in you, the Hope of Glory* (Colossians 1:24-29). The experience of exchanging life with Jesus was originally referred to by the earliest followers of Jesus as *The Way*.¹ What they meant by the phrase *The Way* is the Lord Jesus Christ, *Who is The Way*, living *His Life* in and through each individual and all Christians together. Jesus *The Way* and *The Life* living His Life in, with and through those who believe in Jesus is their essential way of life and message.

Jesus and His designated witnesses never did and never would have taught the Christian life by simply asking, *What would Jesus Do?* This question is well meant and provokes us to think. It also assumes things about human beings and Jesus. That question assumes that the questioner actually *knows sufficiently* the mind of Christ to answer adequately the question. It also assumes that the questioner actually has *sufficient power* to do adequately what Jesus would do.

Contrary to assuming that those who had believed in Christ were sufficient *in themselves* to actually understand and live as Jesus would live, Jesus and the *Apostles* (His designated witnesses) clearly teach the opposite. They teach that our human minds and human powers are totally inadequate to do or live as would Jesus (John 15:5; 2 Cor. 3:5; Romans 7, among many others). They teach that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have come to live inside each person who receives Jesus as Savior and Lord. Based on God indwelling each person who receives Jesus as Savior and Lord, they teach that the mind and power of Christ would emerge from and be manifested through each Christian and Christians gathered only when they *allow God, Christ and the Holy Spirit to live in, with and through them*.

The Greatest Performance of Life ever Seen in the Theater of this World

Imagine a director has invited you to be in a play or movie. Your favorite male or female actor has already done your assigned part in a previous play or movie. You study the written script *and* the performance by your favorite male or female actor. Then, you attempt in your own power to give a performance that is faithful to the script and an imitation of your favorite male or female actor's performance. That is how all of us at times attempt to answer the question, *What would Jesus do?* The written script is the Bible. Our favorite actor is Jesus. We attempt in our own power to be faithful to the written script of the Bible and to the performance of Jesus that we read in the Bible. And, just as would be true if we attempted to

¹ See Acts 9:2, 18:26; 19:9, 19:23, 22:4, 24:14, 24:22 for references to exchanging Life with Jesus as *the way*. The earliest followers of Jesus or others never used the term Christian or Christians until the early 40s AD. *Christ* is derived from the Greek word *Christos* and means *The Anointed One, The Messiah*. Christian comes from the Greek word *Christianos* and means *little anointed one*. Followers of Jesus or *The Way* were first called Christians or *little anointed ones* in Antioch in the early 40s AD (Acts 11:26).

imitate our favorite male or female actor, some of these *imitations* of Jesus' performance seem good, and some of them, frankly, seem not so good.

Now, imagine a *totally different kind of performance*. Remember, this is only an analogy. Imagine we could allow our favorite male or female actor to live literally inside our bodies in spirit form. Imagine surrendering our minds, spirits and bodies to our favorite actor. Imagine our favorite actor then lived in, with and through us their master performance of the written script. Would their *performance in, with and through us be different from* our imitation of their performance? That is the difference between trying to *act out* the Christian part in our own power as opposed to allowing the Master Actor Jesus to live in, with and through us His Life and Performance of the Greatest Role ever seen in the Theater of this world, The Incarnation. Incarnation means *in the body or in the flesh*. The Incarnation happened once, when God became a human in the person of Jesus. One of the first people who saw this Incarnation performance described Jesus like this:

The One who was from the beginning, Who we heard, Who we saw with our eyes, Who we observed as if He was in a Theatre,² Who our hands touched, that One is The Word of Life. The Life appeared, we saw His performance, we are witnesses to Him, and now we announce to you The Eternal Life, Who was with the Father and appeared to us (1 John 1:1-2).

Repeat Performances of the Greatest Life ever Seen in the Theater of this World

Not only did Jesus give the greatest performance of Life ever seen in the theater of this world, Jesus now desires to give *repeat performances*. *Those repeat performances can now be experienced and seen in the lives of all who exchange their human lives for Jesus' supernatural personality living in, with and through them*. Another of the first followers of Jesus described his experience of Jesus' repeat performance in, with and through his human life like this.

I am crucified with Christ. I am living, but it is no longer me that is living, but Christ is living in me. This life I am now living in my body I am living by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:19-20).

As you will discover when you experience the studies in this book, the Exchanged Life is really Jesus giving repeat performances of His life in the lives of all who allow Him to do so. The exchanged life is *experiencing* the difference between the *imitation of* Jesus by our own life and *transformation by* Jesus through His Life.

What would Jack (or Tiger) Do?

I have no intention here of entering the debate about who the greatest golfer of all time is, Jack Nicklaus or Tiger Woods. Experts agree based on their performances that the debate is between them alone. Millions have observed them swinging a golf club. Both have written books on *the way* they swing a golf club (Nicklaus titled his *Golf My Way*). Millions of people have studied these books, watched them swing, and then attempted to *imitate* the way they

² The Greek word John used at 1 John 1:1 and translated in most versions as "looked at" or "observed" is a form of "Theatron," which has come to us in English as "Theatre."

play golf. That is how all of us at times play the game we could call the *Christian way of life*. We study a book written by The Master (the Bible). We scrutinize the swing of The Master (the swing of Jesus' Life). Then, we go to the course (life) and try to imitate the instructions and swing of The Master (live the Christian life). If you are one of these millions, you are probably laughing right now, or smiling, or at least you should be laughing and smiling. Despite all of your studying and observing and imitating, you know that the *quality* of your swing and theirs is at best *only a pale imitation of their perfection*. Imagine now a *totally different kind of golf experience*. What if Jack or Tiger could come inside our minds and bodies and then use our minds and bodies to play golf they way they play golf? Remember, this is only an analogy. You would still be you, but now you would be *experiencing golf* on an entirely different level. That is a pale analogy of the Exchanged Life. Jesus can come into our minds and bodies and use them to live His Life and swing. This next sentence is for golfers: do it *your way* and you will be fortunate to play bogey golf; allow Jesus to play through you and you will experience breaking par for the first time in you life. If you are not a golfer, pick your sport and whoever you think is the Master of that sport and ask yourself, what would happen if it were possible (it is not) for him or her live in and play through me their game?

The Difference between Christ and Socrates

Christ actually living *His Life in and through each Christian* is the essential difference between the *primary* Christian writings (the New Testament) and every other form of religion and worldview lifestyle. The chart below displays a comparison between Jesus and Socrates to make this point. One cannot help noting the many earthly similarities between these two influential figures in world history. We could make similar comparisons between Jesus and every other notable leader. Socrates had and continues to have many followers, people who sincerely ask, *What would Socrates do or teach?*³ Then, they try to *perform* or *imitate* in their own human strength what they think Socrates would teach and do. Is there any difference between the *Socratic church* and *Jesus' church*? Yes! Socrates did not rise from the dead as Jesus did. Socrates does not live inside his followers as Jesus does. The followers of Socrates cannot allow Socrates to give a supernatural, repeat performance of his life through them.

The experience of exchanging life with Jesus that Jesus and the apostles' witness to starts when we receive as true that Christ did rise from the dead, Christ does live inside of Christians and Christ desires that we allow Him to live *His Life* in and through us. *Experiencing* the exchange of life with the Word of Life starts when we stop trying to act out the part or imitate what we think Jesus would do or be in our own power. We can experience the exchanged life to the extent that we exchange depending on our own natural abilities and *allow Jesus to give repeat performances of His Life in, with and through us*.

Jesus is the first to exchange human life and abilities for experiencing the Holy Spirit and God the Father living in, with and through Him. Jesus is the first to allow God to live through Him while He was in His first body (John 14:10-11; Philippians 2:1-11). Instead of living in one human body, Jesus' Spirit now lives in His *New Body*. Jesus' New Body is the total number of people that have received Jesus into their lives. Now, Jesus can live His Life

³ See Peter Kreft, *What Would Socrates Do?* (Barnes & Noble: History of Moral Thoughts and Ethics), 2004.
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through each Christian and through His New Body in the same way that Jesus lived when He was on earth in His first body.

The Exchanged Life of Jesus Christ taught by Jesus and His designated witnesses is not following a set of laws, rules, codes, principles, disciplines, scripts or cookbook formulas in our own power in an attempt to be like Jesus. The Exchanged Life is not us giving imitation performances with our own acting abilities of what we think Jesus would do or be. Exchanging Life with Jesus is Jesus giving repeat performances of His life in the lives of all who allow Jesus to live the supernatural performance of His Life in and through their lives.

An Overview of Exchanging Life with The Word of Life

Exchanging Life with The Word of Life points us to an experience Paul called . . . *The Word of God in its fullness, The Mystery that has been hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to those who belong to Him . . . which is Christ in you, The Hope of Glory.* Paul described Christ's purpose in his life as, *We proclaim Christ, counseling and teaching everyone with all Wisdom, so that we may present everyone as fully mature in Christ.* By doing these studies, I hope you will experience what Paul hoped for his friends, a fully developed and mature experience of exchanging life with Jesus Christ.

In Chapter 1, you will discover how Jesus lived and taught the exchanged life. Jesus promised His friends that they could *experience* living life in the same way that He lived His life on earth!

In Chapter 2, you will learn that the first followers of Christ *experienced* that promise of Jesus, described by Luke in the *Book of Acts*. The Holy Spirit enabled Jesus friends to *experience*, live and teach others about exchanging life with the Holy Spirit.

In Chapter 3, you will do a series of studies that focus on how the *experience of exchanging life with Jesus* is the *core message* the Apostles taught the earliest Christians in their writings or letters. These interactive studies end with the one essential thing each of us must do if we are to *experience* exchanging life with Jesus.

Chapter 4 contains some words about experiencing the Word of Life, experiences beyond words. These are explanations about the distinction of Jesus as *The Word* and the Scriptures being the *words of God*. One reading explains how we can return to supernatural experiences described by Jesus and his earliest followers that are *beyond words or understanding*. The second reading answers the question, *Is the Exchanged Life a Program or a Person?* Another reading explains why some Christians *argue about* words instead of *experiencing* the exchange of Life with The Word of Life. The purpose of these articles is to explain how people of all persuasions can stop arguing about words and *experience together* exchanging life with *The Word of Life*. Some final readings address the distinction between *being* the Body of Christ and *going to* religious services or church.

So, let us leave together acting school where we tried to imitate in our own power the Greatest Performance of Life ever seen in the Theater of this world. Repeat performances of that Life are ready to be experienced in my life, your life and in the lives of all who allow The Life to live His Life again in the theatre of this world.

**TABLE 1-THE EXCHANGED LIFE TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST
A COMPARISON OF SOCRATES, JESUS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES**

CATEGORIES	SOCRATES	JESUS
Origins	Humble, working class, blue collar	Humble, working class, blue collar
Current Status	Studied, venerated and followed around the world	Studied, venerated and followed around the world
Vocations	Mason; wandering philosopher	Carpenter; wandering Rabbi
Writings	None: all that we know of Socrates' teachings come by the writings of Plato.	None: all that we know of Jesus' teachings come by the writings of the Apostles.
Disciples	Many, who carry on his teachings in a variety of ways and places to this day.	Many, who carry on his teachings in a variety of ways and places to this day.
Educational Philosophy	<i>Dialogic</i> : question and answer designed to remind people of what they had forgotten.	<i>Rabbinic</i> : Question, answer, and parables designed to lead people to an encounter with God and Truth.
Relationship to Authorities	Viewed with suspicion and outright persecution; tried by the state for corrupting youth.	Viewed with suspicion and outright persecution; tried by religious authorities for corrupting the Torah and by the State for political treason.
Results of Teachings	Revolutionized Western Philosophy and is still a seminal force in philosophy as it is studied around the world.	Revolutionized Judaism and is regarded as a seminal force in religion as it is studied around the world.
Death	Executed by the State by poison, surrounded by disciples.	Executed by the State by crucifixion, surrounded by disciples.
Views on Death & Truth	Believed in an Ultimate Deity, absolute truth and an afterlife, probably transmigration.	Believed in an Ultimate Deity, absolute truth and an afterlife, resurrection.
A Comparison of	<p align="center">Socrates' Community</p> <p>People who read about Socrates in the writings of Plato and then attempt to put into practice the teachings of Socrates based on their own natural abilities. Socrates does not live supernaturally through them. No supernatural power is available to them to follow Socrates' example. They attempt to follow Socrates the best they can. They are doing the living of Socrates' teachings.</p> <p>See Krefl, Peter. <i>What Would Socrates Do?</i> (Barnes & Noble: History of Moral Thoughts and Ethics, Portable Professor Series), 2004.</p>	<p align="center">Jesus' Community</p> <p>People who encounter spiritually the Risen Christ by faith in Jesus' death and resurrection. Then, they discover in the primary writings of the first followers of Jesus that the Risen Lord (actually the Triune Godhead) has come to live <i>inside</i> of them. Then, if they exchange their earthly lives for Christ and His Life and allow Christ to live supernaturally in and through them, they experience Jesus actually living <i>His Life</i> in and through them <i>repeat performances or a recapitulation of His Life</i> in the same way Jesus lived when He was in His first body (Philippians 2:1-11).</p>

CHAPTER 1

EXCHANGING LIFE WITH JESUS

DISCOVERY 1- JESUS EXPLAINING THE EXCHANGED LIFE (JOHN 13-17)

Jesus' favorite term for the Holy Spirit was *Paracletos* (παράκλητος). *Paracletos* means *one called along side of another to offer help*. The passages below are records of Jesus explaining to the Apostles (and us) how Jesus lived the *Exchanged Life* while He was in His first body. Jesus now desires to give repeat performances of His life in each Christian and in His New Body, the total number of individual Christians.

PASSAGES FROM JOHN	NAME-DESCRIPTIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	DETAILS OF JESUS' EXPLANATIONS ABOUT EXCHANGING LIFE WITH GOD THAT YOU DISCOVER
John 14:15-24		
John 14:25-26		
John 15:26-27		
John 16:4-11		
John 16:12-15		

JESUS EXPLAINING THE EXCHANGED LIFE

Read the passages below and record your own thoughts and observations below mine.

Jesus explaining the exchange of life that He experienced and that they could experience was the last formal teaching Jesus gave to His friends prior to His crucifixion and resurrection. Jesus' explanation of how He lived the *Exchanged Life* focuses on three *new* realities that are at the heart of the *Exchanged Life*. Those three new realities are *The New Covenant, the New Commandment and the New Counselor*.

John 13:34-35: During this Passover meal, Jesus announced to His friends that His death would become the way God would fulfill Jeremiah's prediction of a *New Covenant* (Jer. 31:31-34; Luke 22:17-24). The first or older covenant had *commandments* (613 of them). Jesus gave one *New Commandment*⁴ that is the essence of the *New Covenant*: *I give you a new commandment, love one another, in the same way I loved you, you should love one another, just as I have loved you. All people will know that you are my followers if you love one another* (John 13:34-35). No one could keep the 10 commandments of the Older Covenant, much less all 613. Even more true is that none of us can keep this *new commandment of agape love* without the supernatural Christ Himself living and loving through us as we yield ourselves to Him (Romans 5:5-8).

John 14:10-11: The words and works that Jesus did happened because Jesus exchanged His human abilities for God's. God was *abiding in (living in, speaking and working through)* Jesus. God enabled Jesus to do everything Jesus did in His life and service to God and others.

John 14:16-18: Christ promised to return personally and live supernaturally within His friends. This then future but now realized personal return of Jesus inside His friends was predicted to begin when they received the *New Counselor*, the Holy Spirit (later fulfilled as described in Acts 2). Jesus is telling them and us that we can exchange our lives and abilities for those of the Holy Spirit in the same way Jesus *exchanged* His human abilities for those of the Holy Spirit while He was in His first body.

⁴I learned the following analogy in a discussion with Kevin Rohr on 6/13/06. *Commandment* here means *instruction*. Instead of thinking of this as something we have to *keep or live up to or do* in our own power, view it instead as a line of *computer code instruction*. The Holy Spirit gives us a *new heart or upgraded hard drive* when we enter the New Covenant by faith in Jesus. Then, the Holy Spirit writes on this upgraded hard drive *this new line of instruction of supernatural agape love* (Romans 5:5-8; 2 Cor. 3). Then, because our upgraded hard drives are programmed with new instructions, people can allow this new line of instruction to love others as Jesus loved us *to run the program of their lives*.

John 14:19-23: Jesus taught them that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (the Triune God) would come and *literally live in and through them*, just as was done in Jesus while He was in His first body. They would *experience exchanging* their lives for the life of God within them.

John 15: Just as grapes draw their life from the vine, Jesus explained that *without Jesus* we could do nothing in our own power. However, if we *abide* in Jesus in the same way He *abided in God* (remain in, live connected to, live in union with, live supernaturally joined with), *then Jesus would live His supernatural life within and through us*. Because of that *exchange of life*, we can bear *fruit, more fruit, and fruit that remains*. The *result* of remaining in Jesus is remaining fruit.

John 16:7: Jesus shocked His friends by telling them it would be *better* for them (and for us) for Jesus to leave His body and them physically and then later return to *live within them and us in the Spirit*. This is better because since Jesus would no longer be *localized* in His first body, Jesus could come in Spirit along with the Father and the Holy Spirit and *live within our bodies and work through us* just as God did in and through Jesus when Jesus was in His first body.

John 17:21-26: Jesus prayed that the Union, Glory and Love that has been, is and always will be the essence of the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit would be the *experience* given of Jesus' friends, for them and all of Jesus' friends for all time. God unites supernaturally all who believe in Jesus with God in such a way that the essence and experience of the relationship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit can also become their experience.

DISCOVERY 2 - JESUS LIVING THE EXCHANGED LIFE

Jesus lived and experienced exchanging life with God while in His earthly body. Jesus was truly human, and at the same time, Jesus was and is truly God or Deity. It actually took some time for the early Christians to understand how Jesus, truly God and truly human at the same time, lived His Life as the *God-human*.

Even though Jesus was with God and was God for all eternity before He became a human, Jesus did not rely on His own Deity or Divine nature to live His earthly life. Instead, Jesus *exchanged* His abilities for the supernatural abilities of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit to live His earthly life. That is why near the end of His life Jesus said to His friends, *Why would you say, 'Show us the Father'? The one who has seen me has seen the Father* (John 14:8-9). Jesus so allowed God to live in and through Him that seeing Jesus was like seeing God. Now, Jesus wants to give *repeat performances or recapitulate* living His unique incarnation as a human. Only this time, Jesus will do this in and through each person who allows Jesus to do so.

In the passages below, you will discover how Jesus as human allowed God the Father and God the Spirit to live supernaturally through Him.

- 1) First, read the passages in the left column, A), and record what you discover about Jesus living the *Exchanged Life*.
- 2) Second, read the passages under B), and discover how Jesus illuminated others to understand the words of God, the Older Testament Scriptures to prepare them for their later experience of exchanging life with Jesus.
- 3) Third, read the passages under C) and record your discoveries from these witnesses to how followers of Jesus are now to experience exchanging life with Jesus.
- 4) Finally, compare what you discovered in each box from columns **A** and **C**. You will discover amazing correspondences between *Jesus' experience* of exchanging life with the Father and the Spirit and what can and should be *our experience* of exchanging life with Jesus.

What you are about to learn is that Jesus wants to live in, with and through each one who believes in Him *in the same way* He lived His life when he was in His first body. Jesus lived the Exchanged Life while He was in his first body. Now, Jesus desires to live the Exchanged Life through each person that is in His New or second Body, the Body of Christ, everyone who believes in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-21; 1 Cor. 12).

A) HOW JESUS LIVED THE EXCHANGED LIFE WITHOUT BURNING OUT (ALL PASSAGES BELOW FROM LUKE)	C) HOW JESUS DESIRES TO LIVE AGAIN HIS LIFE IN US WITHOUT US BURNING OUT
1:41-52	
3:21-22	2 Cor. 1:21-22
4:1a	Eph. 5:18
4:1b	Gal. 5:18
4:4	Eph. 6:17
4:8	Eph. 6:17
4:12	Eph. 6:17
4:14	Acts 1:8
4:18-19	Col. 3:16 Eph. 5:18

B) THE FIERY BURNING OF THE EXCHANGED LIFE OF JESUS: HOW JESUS LIT UP AND PREPARED OTHERS FOR EXCHANGING LIFE WITH GOD (LUKE 24:13-49).

24:25-27

24:32

24:44

24:45

24:46-49

UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF “HE EMPTIED HIMSELF:” INTRODUCTION TO DISCOVERY 3

Philippians 2:6-8a is a complicated passage to translate and fully understand. However, it is essential to understand what Paul *meant* there if we are to experience exchanging life with Jesus. Below are three approaches to Phil. 2:6-8a. First, what Paul originally wrote in Greek is cited in the first two rows. Disregard these rows if you do not know Greek. Second, some translations of the original Greek words of Phil. 2:6-8a from reputable versions of the Bible are listed. Third, two translations from the author are listed, the first a literal translation, the second an *amplified* translation in which I both translate and interpret these words according to what I think Paul meant to say about Jesus’ Deity and humanity. After we understand what Paul meant to convey to us about Jesus at Philippians 2:6-8a, we can then go on to Study 3 on the following page.

Versions	
<i>The Greek New Testament, 4th Revised Ed.</i> (Eds. K. Aland and others United Bible Societies: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft), 675.	”ὁς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἄρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν μορφὴν δούλου λαβὼν ἐν ὁμοιώματι ἀνθρώπων γενόμενος· καὶ σχήματι εὗρεθεὶς ὡς ἄνθρωπος . . .”
English “transliteration” of the Greek words of Phil. 2:6-8a	“hos en morphē theou huparchōn ouch harpagmon hēgēsato to einai isa theō, alla heauton ekenōsen morphēn doulou labōn, en homoiōmati anthrōpōn genomenos: kai schēmati heuretheis hōs anthrōpos . . .”
King James	“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation , and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man . . .”
New American Standard	“who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself , taking the form of a bond-servant, <i>and</i> being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man . . .”
Revised Standard	“who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself , taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form . . .”
New International	“Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing , taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man . . .”
Geib, literal translation	“Who while existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as a state to be held onto, but He emptied Himself , taking the form of a servant, becoming in the likeness of a human; and being found in the likeness of a human . . .”
Geib, what I think Paul meant to convey	From all eternity, Jesus existed in His uncreated, divine nature as God, equal with God the Father in every way. This was before His incarnation as a human. However, He did not consider equality with God as a state of existence that He should cling onto and refuse to give up. For our salvation, Jesus incarnated Himself as a true human and became <i>God with us</i> and <i>one of us</i> as a true human. Then, as God in human form, The God-Human, Jesus emptied Himself, meaning, Jesus decided not to use His own divine powers to live as a human . Instead, Jesus took the role of being a human servant of God and lived as God originally designed humans to live, exchanging their lives for God’s life. And, finding Himself as a human, that is how he lived, exchanging the use of His own Divine Power for God’s supernatural life and power in Him to live life.

**STUDY 3-EXPERIENCING REPEAT PERFORMANCES OF JESUS LIVING
HIS LIFE IN OUR LIVES (PHILIPPIANS 2)**

Jesus, when in His human body, did not rely on His own Divine nature and power to live and serve others. Instead, Jesus experienced God's supernatural Life living in, with and through Him. At the end of His life, Jesus explained to His friends during a dinner how He had lived His human life (John 13-17). Similarly, Paul explained to his friends in Philippi that they also could experience life in the same way as Jesus lived. Christians can exchange their lives for Christ's Life and then allow the Risen Christ to live in, with and through them. When we make this exchange, we experience allowing the *Mind* and *Life* of Christ (Philippians 2:1-11).

Philippians	Discoveries you make about
How Jesus Experienced the "Exchanged Life"	
2:6	Even though Jesus was God, equal to God with all of God's powers, Jesus did not cling on to His right and ability to use His divine abilities after He became a human.
2:7	Instead, Jesus <i>emptied</i> Himself, meaning that while in His human body He <i>did not His own Divine Nature and Power</i> to live life. Instead, Jesus lived the way God designed humans to live. Jesus <i>exchanged His own abilities for God's abilities</i> and allowed the Father and the Holy Spirit to live in and through Him as a human <i>servant</i> of God.
How Paul Experienced the "Exchanged Life"	
1:19	
3:3	
3:7-11	
3:12-14	
How We Can and Should Experience the "Exchanged Life"	
1:6	
1:11	
2:1-2	
2:5-8	
2:13	
3:3	
3:15-17	
4:6-7	

CHAPTER 2

EXCHANGING LIFE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the Book of Acts, Luke clearly described the Holy Spirit as the One who *lived and worked in, with and through* the disciples to enable them to do and teach what they did. The first believers in Jesus *exchanged* their human, natural abilities for the supernatural power and abilities of the Holy Spirit living in and working through them. The Holy Spirit, along with the Spirit of Jesus and God the Father, then worked *in, with and through them* just as they did in Jesus when He was in His human body.

Chapter 2 contains studies by which we can discover how the *Exchanged Life* began to be experienced in persons other than Jesus at The Feast of Pentecost. Then, we will learn how it is possible for any of us to experience exchanging life with the Holy Spirit and Christ.

SOME WORDS ABOUT OF EXCHANGING LIFE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AT THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

In the Older Testament, God instructed Israel to celebrate three annual *feasts*. First, *Passover* celebrated God setting the Jewish people free from slavery in Egypt and giving them hope of a *new life* of freedom. Second, *First Fruits* celebrated the first emergence of *life* in the spring, the spring vegetables. These early vegetables were the promise of a full harvest in the fall. Third, *Pentecost* was to be celebrated exactly *fifty* days after the feast of *First Fruits*. The name of this third feast in Hebrew is *Asip*, meaning *ingathering, harvest*.⁵ The name of the feast in Greek is *Pentekostos*, meaning *fiftieth*,⁶ because it fell fifty days after the feast of *First Fruits*. *Pentecost (or Asip)* is referred to in the Older Testament at Exodus 23:14-16, Exodus 34:22-23, Leviticus 23:15-21, Numbers 28:16-31, Deuteronomy 16:9-12 and 2 Chronicles 8:12-13.

Pentecost became a time for *renewing* the Law Covenant each year it was celebrated. This was because Moses began receiving the Law on Mt. Sinai 50 days after the initial *First Fruits* feast. Pentecost thus became an annual celebration of Moses receiving the Law *and* a celebration of the ingathering of the wheat harvest in late May-June.⁷

Because of these two themes (spiritual and physical provision), Pentecost is somewhat like the American holiday *Thanksgiving*. Pentecost was a feast dedicated to joyfully giving thanks and recognition to God the provider of all good things. God provides spiritual food in The Law of God via Moses (Deuteronomy 8:3) and physical food (Psalm 104). Each time Israel celebrated Pentecost, they were really giving thanks to God who gives spiritual and physical *life* to all.

Acts 2 records what happened *exactly fifty days* after the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus' death was the fulfillment of feast 1, *Passover* (Lev. 23:5-8, 1 Cor. 5:7-8, see chart below). Jesus'

⁵ F. Brown, et al, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the OT* (Oxford: Clarendon), 63; R. L. Harris, et al., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody), 60-61.

⁶ E. Lohse, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), VI, 44-52; W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of the New Testament* (McLean: MacDonald), 854.

⁷ H. E. Dosker, "Pentecost," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Eds. J. Orr, and others (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939), IV, 2318-2319; E. D. Isaacs, "Feasts," *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, II, 1103-1104.

resurrection was the fulfillment of feast 2, *First Fruits* (Lev. 23:9-14, I Cor. 15:20-23, see chart below). Jesus' promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit corresponds to The *Feast of Weeks* or *Pentecost*, precisely 50 days after Jesus' *Firstfruits Resurrection*, fulfilled as described in Acts 2 (Lev. 23:15-22; Joel 2:28).

At the Pentecost described in Acts 2, for the first time in history, the Holy Spirit came to live inside humans in a new and unique manner. Jesus had told them this when Jesus predicted to them that the Holy Spirit, Who had been *with* them and *on* them, would after Pentecost live *in* them *forever, or on a permanent basis* (See John 14:16-17).

The Pentecost experience of Acts 2 also represents the formal beginning of the *New Covenant* in fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:31-34. The Holy Spirit, writing the New Covenant on the *interior tablets of people's hearts*, became the new Source and Director of spiritual life and replaced the Older Covenant Law that had been written on *exterior tablets of stone*. We have to realize that we cannot think of the New Covenant in the same way we did about the Older Covenant. The Older Covenant was *613 commandments* (not just 10) that God *commanded those in that covenant to keep or live up to or do* in their own power. Perhaps we can begin to understand the *difference* between Covenants Older and New by using an analogy with modern computer terms. The Holy Spirit gives us a *new heart* or *upgraded hard drive* when we enter the New Covenant by faith in Jesus. Then, the Holy Spirit *writes on this upgraded hard drive new lines of instruction of supernatural power and agape love* (Romans 5:5-8; 2 Cor. 3). Then, because The Holy Spirit has installed *supernatural New Code Instructions, programming and power in our upgraded hard drives*, people can allow this New Covenant relationship with the Holy Spirit *to run the programs of their lives*.

Enabled by the *exchange of life* that happened when God the Holy Spirit began to live inside of them and speak through them, the testimony of Jesus through them resulted in a great *spiritual harvest*, as *about 3000 people were added to their number* (Acts 2:41; 1 Peter 1:10-12). See Table 2 below for the coordination of these Jewish Feasts and Jesus' spiritual fulfillment of them.

**Table 2-HOW JESUS FULFILLED THE THREE FEASTS OF THE OLDER COVENANT
SO WE COULD EXPERIENCE THE NEW COVENANT EXCHANGE OF LIFE**

FEASTS	OLDER TESTAMENT MEANING	NEW COVENANT, EXCHANGED LIFE FULFILLMENT IN JESUS
<p align="center"><i>Passover</i></p>	<p align="center">Leviticus 23 :5-8</p> <p align="center">Celebration of God liberating Israel from slavery in Egypt into the new life of freedom. (Ex 12:1-14; Num. 9:1-14; 28:16; Deut. 16:1-7)</p>	<p align="center">1 Corinthians 5:7-8</p> <p align="center">Jesus, by His death, became our <i>Passover Lamb</i>, the ultimate Life God uses to liberate humanity from slavery to sin into the newness of Christ's Life. (John 1:29; Revelation 5 Matt. 26:17; Mark 14:12-26; John 2:13; 11:55; Hebrews 11:28)</p>
<p align="center"><i>First Fruits</i></p>	<p align="center">Leviticus 23:9-14</p> <p align="center">Spring harvest celebration of the <i>first fruits or first life</i> of spring, the basis of hope for the complete harvest of fall.</p>	<p align="center">1 Corinthians 15</p> <p align="center">Jesus, by His Resurrection from the Dead, became the <i>Firstfruits</i> of all who will be resurrected later by faith in Him (Romans 8 :23; 1 Corinthians 15 :20-23)</p>
<p align="center"><i>Asip, or Feast of Weeks, or Pentecost</i></p>	<p align="center">Leviticus 23:15-21</p> <p align="center">Fall Harvest celebration of God who provides food for spiritual life (The Law, the Words of God) and food for physical life (Ex 23:16; 34:22; Num. 28:26-31; Deut. 16:9-12).</p>	<p align="center">Acts 2</p> <p align="center">The beginning of God's spiritual <i>Ingathering and Harvest</i> of all who believe in Jesus. The <i>New Covenant</i>, and The Holy Spirit living the <i>Exchanged Life</i> inside each believer <i>replaces</i> the Older Covenant of Law. New Covenant believers are now <i>empowered by the exchange of Life with Christ</i> to help gather in <i>The Harvest</i> of everyone that eventually receives <i>Jesus, The Word of Life</i> (Luke 24: 45-49; Acts 1:1-8; 2 Corinthians 3)</p>

SOME WORDS OF EXPLANATION ABOUT EXCHANGING LIFE VIA THE BAPTISM-RECEPTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON PENTECOST

How Jesus Knew that God Would Fulfill the Promise of The Holy Spirit in a Few Days

After Jesus' resurrection, Jesus spent 40 days with His friends in His resurrection body (Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15). Jesus knew he had already fulfilled the first feast *Passover* by His death and the second feast of *First Fruits* by His resurrection. Jesus not only knew the Scriptures, He could count days. Jesus knew that on the 50th day after Jesus fulfilled *Firstfruits* by His Resurrection that the third feast of Leviticus 23, the feast of *Weeks or Pentecost* would also be fulfilled. Therefore, Jesus confidently predicted to His friends that *in a few days* God would give the Holy Spirit to them (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5). Jesus knew he had spent 40 days with them after *First Fruits*. Thus, Jesus simply counted the days remaining to Pentecost and thus knew and predicted that in just a few days (about 10), God would fulfill the promise God made in Joel 2 by sending the Holy Spirit on the Feast of Pentecost (John 14-16; Joel 2:28-29). Therefore, the Holy Spirit did not come on Pentecost (Acts 2) because they waited or prayed for Him to come. Instead, they waited and prayed because Jesus told them to, because Jesus knew that God had determined and predicted that the Holy Spirit would come on that day in fulfillment of God's plan recorded in Leviticus 23 and the previous fulfillments by Jesus of *Passover and First Fruits*.

Before this first Pentecost of the Christian era, Jesus' disciples lived in a *transitional* period similar to the Older Testament era. Before Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was *with them or on them* but not *living permanently within them* (compare John 7:37-39 with John 14:16-17). All references in the Gospels that describe the disciples *receiving* the Holy Spirit, such as John 21:21-23 and Matthew 10:1, should be understood as *partial and first-stage experiences* that would be completely fulfilled in the then future day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was then *with them and on them* but not living permanently within them during this transitional period (examine together carefully John 7:37-39 with John 14:16-17).

This transitional phase ended forever on the first Christian Pentecost. On that day, the Holy Spirit fulfilled what Jesus promised in John 7:37-39. Luke describes in Acts 2 the initial and full *Baptism of, by and in* the Holy Spirit. This experience represents a new era in God's relationship with humanity, with God now living *permanently within and forever inside* of people that believe in Jesus (John 14:15-17; Ephesians 1:13-14, 4:30).

How Luke Structured the Book of Acts on Jesus' Promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8)

Luke structured the entire Book of Acts around the promise of Jesus recorded in Acts 1:8: *You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will become witnesses of Me in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the world.* Based on that promise, Luke structured the Book of Acts around their witness about Jesus in Jerusalem to Jewish people (Act 2-7), their witness in Samaria to the half-Jewish people the Samaritans (Acts 8) and their witness in the *Gentile* (non-Jewish) world (Acts 9-28). Luke repeatedly used a *summary report technique* to report on how the message of Jesus *grew* among these people groups to convey the progressive fulfillment of Jesus' promise during these years. Acts 6:7 summarizes Acts 2:1--6:6, the growth of Jesus' witness in Jerusalem. Acts 9:31 summarizes 6:8--9:30, the growth of Jesus' witness in Judea, Galilee and Samaria. Acts 12:24 summarizes 9:32--12:23, the growth of Jesus' witness in Antioch among Gentiles. Acts 16:5 summarizes 13--16:4, the growth of Jesus' witness among Galatian Gentiles. Acts 19:20 summarizes 16:6--19:19, the growth of Jesus' witness to Gentiles in Europe and Asia Minor. Acts 28:31 summarizes the process described in 19:20--28:30, the spread of Jesus' message to the then capital city of the world, Rome.

The Fulfillments of Christ's Promise of the Baptism-Reception of the Holy Spirit among Jewish, Samaritan and Gentile Ethnic Groups in the Book of Acts

The Fulfillment to Jewish People The first application of Jesus' promise about the then future *baptism-reception* of the Holy Spirit with *ethnic implications* is found in Acts 1:8, . . . *you will be witnesses of me in Jerusalem . . .* Christ began to fulfill this promise in Acts 2 when the Holy Spirit empowered their testimony of Jesus to Jewish people that came to the Feast of Pentecost.

The Fulfillment to Samaritan People Luke describes in Acts 8 the second application of Jesus' promise with ethnic implications as . . . *you will be witnesses of me in all of Judea and Samaria . . .* Luke reports in Acts 8 on Philip's testimony of Jesus to the *half-Jewish* people the Samaritans. At that time, it was not yet an idea that most Jewish people could conceive that Samaritans or Gentiles would also be included in Jesus' Kingdom (see John 4; John 8:48 and Luke 10:25-37). Also true at that time was the fact that Jesus had authorized the Apostles to function as *authoritative witnesses* and *ultimate discerners* of what was of God or not. Therefore, God allowed a *gap of time* to occur between the Samaritans' reception of the Gospel and their Baptism-Reception of the Holy Spirit. God did this at that time so that Apostles Peter and John could travel from Jerusalem and be present for this event (Acts 8:14-17). God allowed this time gap to happen at that time so that Peter and John could function later as *legal witnesses* (see footnote)⁸ to other Jews that God was indeed calling not only Jews but also Samaritans to faith in Christ. Later, when John wrote his Gospel, he included the story of the Samaritan woman (John 4) to show that Jesus had from the beginning planned to include Samaritans in God's Kingdom. However, Jesus knew that when He was in still in His body and before the fulfillment of the New Covenant through His death, resurrection and the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that the Jewish disciples were *not yet ready* to grasp God's long-range plans for the Samaritans (John 16:12). Jesus was waiting for the New Covenant to be fulfilled and the *exchanged life Baptism-reception of the Holy Spirit* to occur so that Jewish people would be spiritually prepared to understand and embrace that Jesus is for *all people*, not just Jewish people.

Thus, the *laying on of hands* of Acts 8 was not the *cause* of the Holy Spirit being given to the Samaritans. Instead, it was a *legal witness* to and before the Apostles Peter and John of God's desire to include Samaritans in the New Covenant family of Christ. This event was a spiritual and physical reversal of their previous desire to *burn up* and exterminate Samaritans with fire from heaven (Luke 9:51-59). Now, the Holy Spirit led them to pray for, lay hands on (physically identify with them as witnesses that Samaritans were not to be regarded as *unclean*) and witness the Samaritans being *lit up by the spiritual fire of the Holy Spirit* coming inside of them (see 1 Thessalonians 5:19 to explain this *metaphor of fire*). Instead of *killing* them with *judgmental fire* from heaven, they became witnesses to the *life-giving* fire of the Holy Spirit from heaven. Later, Peter and John testified as God's authoritative witnesses about this event to other Jewish believers, compelling them to accept the Samaritans as *New Covenant* family in Christ (Acts 9).

The Fulfillment to Gentile (Italian) People Luke describes in Acts 10--11 the start of fulfilling Jesus promise of the third-stage application of Acts 1:8 with ethnic implications . . . *to the ends of the earth . . .* *The ends of the earth* is a *metaphor* to describe the *Gentiles* or non-Jewish people. Acts 10-11 is the story how *Italians* came to believe in Jesus and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. As we read carefully Acts 10--11, we discover that *no hands were laid on anyone* and there was not even an *alter call*. Rather, precisely as Paul describes the pattern God revealed for the reception of the Holy Spirit at Ephesians 1:13-14, Cornelius and his family simply a) *heard* the good news of Jesus, b) *believed* the

⁸ God established the "multiple witness" notion as a means to establish the truthfulness or falsity of things in Deuteronomy 17:6, 19:15, Matthew 18:16, 2 Corinthians 13:1, 1 Timothy 5:19 and 1 John 5:6-8, among other places.

good news of Jesus and then c) were *sealed, baptized by and in and received* the Holy Spirit (see pages 88-90 for a detailed study of terms used in Acts to describe experiences of the Holy Spirit).

The Fulfillment to People who were (and some still are) Waiting for the Messiah Acts 18:18—19:10 is among the most controversial of texts among some Christians. Please note as you carefully read this story the following facts.

1. Paul's first visit to Ephesus was only a short visit, and then Paul left for Antioch. Paul told the Ephesians he would return if it was God's will (Acts 18:18-22). Instead of staying himself with the Ephesians, Paul asked two of his partners, Priscilla and Aquila, to remain in Ephesus and teach what Paul taught in his place.
2. After Paul left Ephesus, a Jewish scholar named Apollos arrived in Ephesus and began teaching a *John the Baptist message* (Acts 18:25). This means that Apollos at that time did not know the Messiah (Jesus) had already come, and thus Apollos was at that time not yet a follower of Jesus. However, Apollos was a great Jewish scholar and was able to teach fervently and accurately about the expected Messiah from the Older Testament, just as John the Baptizer did before Apollos (Acts 18:25). No one who came to study with Apollos as his student or disciple would have learned from him that the Messiah (Jesus) had already come. In that culture, *disciples meant learners*, not necessarily Christians. One could be a disciple-learner of *Moses* (John 9:28), *any Rabbi* (Paul had been a disciple of Gamaliel, Acts 22:3), *Jesus* or *many other teachers*. Thus, the *disciples* of Acts 19:1-7 were actually *disciples of Apollos*, Jewish men who were not yet Christians and who were awaiting what they believed to be the future arrival of the Messiah.
3. After Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos speak, they invited him to their home. Then, in Luke's culturally sensitive words, they . . . *explained more accurately to him the way . . .* (Acts 18:26). Luke's delicate phrase means they shared with him that Jesus the Messiah had already come and is now *The Way*. There is no doubt that Paul and others had educated Priscilla and Aquila to use Older Testament prophecies *about the Messiah* and Jesus' recent *fulfillment of many of them* to convince Jewish people that Jesus is Messiah. The apostles had learned how to do this from Jesus Himself (see Luke 24). Then, allowing Jesus to illuminate them and teach through them, the apostles' pattern was to use Older Testament prophecies *about the Messiah* to convince Jewish people that Jesus *is* Messiah (see Acts 2; 7; 8:26-35; 13:13-52; 17:1-4; 17:11; 18:1-4 among others). After attending this *Jesus Seminar* in Priscilla and Aquila's home, Apollos became a *Christocentric* teacher of the Scriptures, able to persuade people that Jesus is The Messiah based on the Older Testament Scriptures (Acts 18:28; 1 Corinthians 3:4-6). That is why, soon after Apollos believed in Jesus as Messiah (Acts 18:27-28), he decided to go to Greece and host other *Jesus Seminars* to persuade people based on Older Testament prophecies that Jesus is The Messiah. However, apparently, he left so soon that his students or *disciples did not hear from Apollos* about his conversion to Jesus as Messiah.
4. Apparently, it *was God's will* for Paul to return to Ephesus, for Paul arrived there soon after Apollos left for Greece (Acts 19:1). As was his custom, Paul began sharing Jesus as Messiah in *Jesus Seminars* with Jewish people. Paul apparently noticed something *missing* in the lives of some *students or disciples* because Paul asked them '*Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?*' (Acts 19:2). Paul then learned that they had not heard of the Holy Spirit because they had *not yet even heard* that Jesus is Messiah. They had only been baptized into *John the Baptizer's baptism*, a *baptism they learned about from Apollos* (Acts 18:25). Thus, the *disciples* of Acts 19:1-7 were actually *disciples of Apollos*, Jewish men who were not yet Christians and who were awaiting what they believed to be the future arrival of the Messiah. Paul then explained to them that *John's baptism* was a baptism of *repentance*, a baptism that indicated that the one who received it had *turned from* a life

of sin and was prepared *to receive* the Messiah when the Messiah did arrive (Acts 19:4). Apollos' disciples had not been baptized into *Jesus' Name* because they had not yet heard the good news that Jesus is The Messiah and that He had already died and risen from the dead. Apollos never told them that Jesus is The Messiah because when they were his *disciple-students*, Apollos himself did not know Jesus is Messiah.

5. Paul then explained to Apollos' disciples (really *disciples of John the Baptizer and his pre-Jesus message to get ready for Messiah*) the good news that Jesus is The Messiah and that He had already died and risen from the dead. Then they received Jesus as Messiah, Savior and Lord, were baptized into Jesus' Name and, with Paul functioning at that time as an Apostle and an authoritative witness, *then they received the Holy Spirit*.

The Intended Meaning and Conclusion to all of these Reports about the Holy Spirit

God used these events in Acts 2, 8, 10-11 and 18--19 to *prove God's point* that needed to be proved to many people at that time, and some perhaps still need to be persuaded of this, that *all ethnic groups* were to be included in Christ by faith in Jesus. Once that point had been proved, God then began giving the Holy Spirit to everyone immediately upon their faith in Jesus and without the necessity of having apostles present as authoritative witnesses (Gal. 3--4, Eph. 1:11-14, Colossians 2:9-10, etc).

From that time onward began, for those Christians and all Christians, the life-long process of giving more of ourselves to God. After we receive Jesus and the fullness of God that is in Jesus, we *do not really get more of God*. *All of the fullness of God is in Jesus, and if a person has Jesus, they have all the fullness of God* (Col. 2:9-10). What really happens is that, as we give more of ourselves to God, God gets more of us, and then we *experience more* of God. These experiences can be so powerful or dramatically different that it is *often interpreted by or seems like* to the person having the experience that they *suddenly got more of God*. What really happens is that, *whenever we experience more of God it is because God now has more of us*. There really is no point in *fighting over mere words* with others about this point. The real point is that *all* of us should give *all* of ourselves to God and then experience with others *all* the fullness of God that is in Jesus Christ!

Other references to the Holy Spirit and His power in Acts are 1:5-8; 2:1-4; 2:17-18; 2:33-39; 4:8; 4:25; 4:31; 5:3-32; 6:3-5; 7:51-55; 8:15-39; 9:17; 9:31; 10:19; 10:38-47; 11:12-28; 13:2-4; 13:52; 15:8; 15:28; 16:6-7; 19:1-6; 20:22-28; 21:4-11; 28:25.

Discovery 4 below is a survey of passages throughout the New Testament literary witnesses that address issues of the *promises, experiences, explanations and evidences* of exchanging life with the Holy Spirit of first-century Christians. As you study these passages, ask the Holy Spirit to help you understand the *transition* from the pre-Pentecost era, the post-Pentecost era when God was proving a point about who would be included in Christ and the *ultimate normative pattern* God now follows in giving the Holy Spirit to *all* people who receive Jesus Christ as Lord (1Cor. 12:1-3).

DISCOVERY 4-EXCHANGING LIFE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (HISTORICAL EMPHASIS)

Look up the passages below and record what you learn from them in the space next to the passages.

1) HISTORICAL PROMISES GIVEN “BEFORE” PENTECOST ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

Passages	Discoveries you make
Joel 2:28-29	This prophecy was given somewhere between 840 BC/BCE-500 BC/BCE. God <i>began</i> to fulfill this prophetic promise on the Day of Pentecost and <i>continues</i> to fulfill it in the lives of those who open themselves to and exchange life with Jesus Christ.
John the Baptizer Mt. 3:11-12 Mk 1:8 Luke 3:16-17 John 1:33-34	
Jesus John 7:37-39 Luke 24:49 Acts 1:5-8	

**2) HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES OF EXCHANGING LIFE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT
 “AFTER” PENTECOST IN THE BOOK OF ACTS**

Before you make your discoveries below, read carefully and understand the section titled SOME WORDS OF EXPLANATION ABOUT EXCHANGING LIFE VIA THE BAPTISM-RECEPTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT ON PENTECOST (pages 19-22). That historical background material and explanation will help you understand the passages below.

Passages	Discoveries you make
Jewish: Acts 2 (33 AD/CE)	
Samaritans: Acts 8 (35 AD/CE)	
Gentiles (Italians): Acts 10--11 (40-41 AD/CE)	
Disciples of Apollos (people awaiting the Messiah): Acts 18:18--19:7 (52 AD/CE)	

3) **EXPLANATIONS (SOME, NOT ALL) IN THE LETTERS OF EXCHANGING LIFE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT “AFTER” PENTECOST IN CHRISTIANS**

Passages	Discoveries you make
Eph. 1:11-13	
Gal. 3:1-5	
Gal. 3:26--4:7	
Rom. 5:5-8	
Titus 3:4-7	
1 Cor. 12:13	

4) **EVIDENCES (SOME, NOT ALL) OF EXCHANGING LIFE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Passages	Discoveries you make
Acts 1:5-8	
1 Cor. 2:9-16	
1 Cor. 12:1-3	
Romans 8:15-17	
Galatians 5:22-26	
1 Thess. 4:1-8	
1 Cor. 12:4-11	

CHAPTER 3

EXCHANGING LIFE WITH JESUS IN THE WRITINGS OF THE APOSTLES

DISCOVERY 5- EXCHANGING LIFE WITH CHRIST THE WORD OF LIFE IN THE LETTERS

The texts below are a *partial listing* of passages from Letters in the New Testament that witness to the experience of exchanging life with Christ. As always, reading the New Testament holistically and in context is the best way to understand any particular topic in the New Testament. These passages were selected as *core witnesses* to exchanging life with *the Word of Life*, the *core message* of the New Testament (1 John 1:1-4). Read the following passages and, *before* you read my brief comments, record what you discover. This *overview* study will prepare you for the series of Bible discovery studies (6-15) selected from New Testament letters that follows this overview introduction. Those studies will then allow each of us to have a deeper understanding of experiencing the Exchanged Life.

- 1) **Romans 6—8:** The central passage on *union with Christ* in His death to self and Resurrection into new, supernatural life, or, exchanging Life with Jesus.

- 2) **1 Corinthians 1:30:** The Person of Christ Himself is *our Life* and provision, not impersonal qualities or virtues.

- 3) **1 Cor. 2:16:** The *mind of Christ* is actually Christ living in and thinking His thoughts within our minds, not us attempting to think like Jesus in our own power! The *mind of Christ* can be experienced as we cease depending only on our human minds and as we yield our human minds to Christ. It does not mean that next year you will win the Noble Peace Prize in Physics. Rather, it means that *the way Jesus thinks* about life will begin to be the way you think about life.

- 4) **1 Cor. 6:16-19:** People become *one in Spirit* with Jesus by faith in Him. God now lives supernaturally within and through those people. As we yield to God within us, we are in effect *exchanging* our human lives and abilities for God's supernatural life and abilities.

- 5) **1 Cor. 12—14:** The Triune God manifests personally and supernaturally through Christians for service to God and others. This is very different from Christians trying in their own power to do ministry (see especially 1 Cor. 12:4-6). Spiritual Gifts are *not primarily possessions, things or qualities that Christians possess*. Rather, the manifestation of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit *themselves* through each of us as we *exchange* our lives for God's supernatural life is what Paul and others termed spiritual gifts (read carefully 1 Cor. 12:4-6).

- 6) **2 Cor. 3:** The *New Covenant* reality of exchanging Life with Jesus is essentially God living within and through Christians, not Christians reading a *code book of laws* and attempting to put into practice in their own power what they think God wants them to do.

- 7) **2 Cor. 4:7-18:** The *Exchanged Life* is the *treasure of Jesus* living supernaturally in and through *earthly vessels* (humans), not earthly vessels attempting to live how they think Jesus would have them live.

- 8) **2 Cor. 12:7-10:** To the extent we cease relying on our human abilities and allow Christ and His Life of Power to live through us, to that extent we experience the *Exchanged Life*.

- 9) **Galatians 2:20:** Perhaps the shortest and clearest expression of *exchanging Life with Jesus* in the earliest Christian writings. Christians live, but it is not us living alone but Christ who is living in, with and through us *His Life*.

- 10) **Galatians 5:** The flesh (human ability) cannot live the Christian life. However, if we exchange our lives for the Life of the Holy Spirit within us (*live and walk in the Spirit*), we will experience the *Exchanged Life* of Christ living His Life in, with and through us.

- 11) **Ephesians 1:15-2:10 and 3:14-21:** By faith in Jesus, we are *spiritually united with Jesus, raised with Jesus and seated with Jesus* in spiritual union with God. If we cease depending on our human abilities to live life and exchange our lives for His Life, we will experience the fullness of God and God's love that surpasses human or natural knowledge, or, the *Exchanged Life*.

- 12) **Ephesians 5:18:** God instructs Christians to allow themselves to be *filled* (controlled) by the Spirit, because that is the only way we can experience the *Exchanged Life* of Christ living in and through us. It is an error to think God does not want to fill us or that we have to beg God to fill us. God is a loving Father Who wants to fill us more than we want to be filled, . . . *for it is God Who is working in you to will and to work out God's good pleasure* (Philippians 2:13; Luke 11:11-13). It is the good pleasure of God to influence our wills so that we say "Yes" to God's gracious desire to fill us so we experience the filling of the Holy Spirit and the Exchanged Life. Of course, we can *quench* the Spirit by resisting God influence on our wills and by saying no to God's desire to fill us (1 Thessalonians 5:19). *Will we say "Yes" or will we resist exchanging life with the Holy Spirit?*
- 13) **Philippians 2:1-11:** When in His first body, Jesus did not rely on His own Divine nature and power to live life. Instead, Jesus relied on God's supernatural Life to live and serve God and others (see John 14-16). In the same way, Christians can cease depending on their natural abilities and instead allow the Risen Christ to live in, with and through them and so experience the *Exchanged Life*.
- 14) **Colossians 2:8-10:** All of the fullness of God lives in Jesus. Since Jesus lives in each Christian, each Christian has all of the fullness of God living in them. Consequently, if we *exchange* depending on our own power and allow Christ to live in, with and through us, we will experience the *Exchanged Life*. The *Exchanged Life* in Colossians is described as a) Christ *within* us (1:27), b) our potentially complete unification with Christ (1:28) and c) a potential, total exchange of our lives that are hidden with Christ in God for Christ *Who is our life* (3:1-4).
- 15) **1 John 4:7-21:** *God is Love (Agape)*. John means by this that the essence of the Person of God is Agape Love. God is *personal and a Person*, not an object or a thing or an idea. Agape Love is not primarily an impersonal quality or an emotion. *Agape Love is a Person, God*. God, Who is Agape Love, is the essence of Agape Love., not impersonal love is the essence of the Personal God. The Person of God Who is Agape Love lives now within all true Christians. Those Christians can allow the God Who is Agape Love to live in, with and through them and thus they can share with one another *The Person of God Who is Agape Love*, not just our watered-down versions of human love. When Christians do this, they are actually sharing God with one another. Thus, they supernaturally fulfill John 13:34-35. Johns' revelation is light years away from a person *deciding to be like Jesus* and *attempting to love others like Jesus did in their own human power*. Only as we *exchange* our human abilities and powers for the *Person of God Who is Agape Love* can we experience *God is Agape*, living in and loving others through us.

**TABLE 3- EXCHANGING LIFE IN JUSTIFICATION, SANCTIFICATION AND GLORIFICATION,
GOD’S ULTIMATE PROCESS FOR GIVING TO HUMANS “CHRIST WHO IS OUR LIFE”**

- 1) Read the passages in the left column first, moving downwards.
- 2) Then, read the passages in the center column.
- 3) Then, start at the bottom of the right hand column and read going upwards.

Why we need to Exchange Life with Christ “Who is our Life”	How Jesus Christ exchanged His Life for Us and Became “Our Life”	How we can Experience Exchanging Life with Christ “Who is our Life”
<p align="center">VIOLATION (Rom. 3:23)</p> <p>All humans have turned away from God and are spiritually dead.</p> <p>God allows humans to experience our own sinfulness so we will return to God and experience the exchanged life.</p> <p>The phrase Paul uses to describe this is</p> <p><i>God . . . gave them over to . . .</i> (Rom. 1:24, 1:26, 1:28)</p> <p align="center">↓</p> <p>Paul described what humans who turn away from God are <i>given over to</i> as</p> <p align="center">Idolatry (1:18-23)</p> <p align="center">↑</p> <p align="center">Immorality (1:24-27)</p> <p align="center">↑</p> <p align="center">Mental and Moral Depravity (1:28-32) ⇒</p>	<p align="center">Jesus Christ Our Life</p> <p><i>It is of God that you are in Christ Jesus, Who has become Wisdom for us from God, our Righteousness, Holiness and Redemption.</i> (1 Cor. 1:30) ⇒</p> <p align="center"> <i>God gave Him over to death for our sins, but He was raised for our Justification</i> Romans 4:25 ⇒</p>	<p align="center">GLORIFICATION (8:18-39)</p> <p>Glorification is the future event when we see Jesus face to face. We will see Him <i>as He is</i> and will <i>thus become as He is</i>, completely, perfectly and eternally conformed into the Image of Christ.</p> <p align="center">↑</p> <p align="center">SANCTIFICATION (Chapters 6--8, 12--15)</p> <p>Sanctification is the experience of <i>exchanging</i> our sinful lives for the Holy Life of Christ within us. As we yield ourselves to Christ, we experience more and more of the Holiness and Love of God’s Life within us. As this exchange of life progresses, God transforms us stage by stage into the glorious <i>Image of Christ</i>.</p> <p align="center">↑</p> <p align="center">JUSTIFICATION (3:21--5:21)</p> <p>Justification is the event that happens when we first believe in Jesus. Jesus comes to live inside of us. God then declares us “<i>righteous</i>” because God considers Jesus the Righteous One to be our Righteousness. We become spiritually alive because the Life of Christ is given to us</p>

*Now to the One who is able to establish you according to my good news and the proclamation of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of The Mystery that has been kept secret for long ages past but is now made known by the writings of the Prophets according to the commandment of the Eternal God for the obedience of faith to be made known among all nations,
To the only wise God through Jesus Christ be the glory forever*
(Romans 16:25-27)

DISCOVERY 6-THE FOUR LAWS OF EXCHANGING LIFE WITH JESUS

INTRODUCTION The theme of Romans 6-8 experiencing the exchange of life with Jesus. One technical term used to describe the exchanged life is *Sanctification*. The Greek word for Sanctification is *hagiasmos* (ἁγιασμός). This term means something or someone that is *dedicated or set apart for special use*. The apostles taught that Christians can *exchange* our sinful lives for the Holy Life of Christ within us. As we yield ourselves to Christ, we experience more and more of the holiness and love of Christ's Life within us. As this exchange of life occurs, Christ transforms us from *one stage of glory to another stage of glory* and progressively into the *Image of Christ*. Because of Christ transforming us, we become more and more *set apart* for God's special use. Paul taught in Romans 6 that those who have believed in Jesus have become spiritually *united or one* with Christ by faith. On that foundation, Paul taught in Romans 7-8 the *Four Laws of Exchanging Life with Jesus*. **Read the passages below in either the *King James* or the *New American Standard versions only* and then record your answers to the questions below. Those two translations are the only ones that translate the Greek word for *law* (*nomos*) consistently and correctly throughout Romans 7—8.**

LAW 1: (ROMANS 7:1-14) THE LAW OF _____

What is this law called? Write the name of this "Law" on line above

7:1-6: *How long does it have authority or power over people?*

7:7-11: *What does this law reveal?*

LAW 2: (ROMANS 7:15-23) THE LAW OF _____

What is this Law called? Write the name of this "Law" on line above

7:17-23 *Where is this law found?*

7:15-23, especially 7:23 *What does this law do?*

LAW 3: ROMANS 7:21-25) THE LAW OF _____

What is this Law? Write the name of this "Law" on line above

What does this Law do?

7:21

7:22

7:23

7:25

LAW 4: (ROMANS 8:1-17) THE LAW OF _____
What is this Law called? Write the name of this "Law" on line above

What does this Law do for us?

8:1-2

8:4

8:5

8:6

8:9

8:11

8:14

8:15

Write in your own words how you think and feel you should respond to *"The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus."*

DISCOVERY 7- EXCHANGING LIFE WITH CHRIST THE FULLNESS OF GOD

Introduction

A key witness to exchanging life with Jesus is Colossians is 2:8-10. All of the fullness of God lives in Jesus. Since Jesus lives in each Christian, each Christian has all of the fullness of God living in them. Consequently, if we exchange depending on our own life and power and allow Christ live in, with and through us, we will experience the *Exchanged Life*. Paul pointed us to Jesus and the experience of exchanging life with Jesus in Colossians as Christ *within* us (1:27), our complete *unification* with Christ if we yield to Christ (1:28) and a total exchange of our lives that are hidden with Christ in God, for *Christ is our life* (3:1-4).

DISCOVERY 7, PART 1

YOU ARE “FULLY COMPLETE” IN CHRIST: THE FULLNESS OF GOD IN JESUS

Before we can experience fully the Exchanged Life, we have to understand *who* Jesus is. Look up the passages below and record what you learn about the *Person* of Jesus.

A. JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD THE FATHER

1:15a: Jesus is the *Image* of God (image, *eikon*, εἰκὼν)

1:29 and 2:9: In Jesus is the *Fullness* of God (fullness, *pleroma*, πληρωμα)

B. JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE "OLD CREATION"

1:15b: Jesus is the *firstborn* or *first in importance* in this created universe.

Because Jesus is the Co-Creator along with God the Father of all things, Jesus is preeminent over all created things (*prototokos, πρωτότοκος*). Jesus existed in Spirit with God the Father and Spirit from all eternity. Jesus was *not created*, Jesus was *incarnated* as a human. Jesus is an Eternal Spirit that became a human. As such, Jesus should be regarded as *first in preeminence and importance* before all created things. See the passages below to learn that *firstborn* in certain contexts does not mean first created or literally born first but *first in preeminence and importance*.

Deuteronomy 21:15-17

Exodus 4:22

Psalms 89:19-27

1:16a: *In* Jesus, all things were created (in, en, εν)

1:16a: *By* Jesus, all things were created (by, dia, δια)

1:16a: *For* Jesus, all things were created (for, eis, εις)

1:17a: Jesus existed *before* all created things (before, pro, προ)

1:17b: In Jesus, all created things are *held together* (sunnesteken, συνέστηκεν)

C) JESUS' RELATIONSHIP WITH THE "NEW CREATION," HIS BODY, THE CHURCH

1:18a: Jesus is The **Head** of the New Creation, His Body (Head, *kephale*, κεφαλή)

1:18b: Jesus is The **Ruler** of the New Creation (ruler, *arche*, αρχή)

1:18c: Jesus is **First in Importance** in the New Creation (firstborn, *prototokos*, πρωτότοκος)

D) JESUS RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH CHRISTIAN: HOW WE CAN EXPERIENCE THE REALITY OF "CHRIST OUR LIFE" AND THE "EXCHANGED LIFE"

1) 1:26-27

2) 2:9-10

3) 1:18

Summarize what you learned about who Jesus is here.

DISCOVERY 7, PART 2

YOU ARE FULLY COMPLETE IN CHRIST: THE FULLNESS OF JESUS' WORK

Before we can experience fully the Exchanged Life, we have to understand
what Jesus has done for us.

Look up the passages below and record what you learn about the “work” of Jesus.

A. OUR NEED OF CHRIST'S WORK ON THE CROSS

1) 1:13

2) 1:21

3) 2:13a

B. UNDERSTANDING THE WORK OF CHRIST FOR US

1) 1:13

2) 1:14

3) 1:20-22

4) 2:11

5) 2:12a

6) 2:12b

7) 2:13b

8) 2:13c

9) 2:14

10) 2:15

C. RECEIVING AND EXPERIENCING THE BENEFITS OF CHRIST'S WORK

1) 1:4

2) 2:6-7

Summarize what you learned about what Jesus did for us here.

DISCOVERY 7, PART 3
EXPERIENCING THE FULLNESS OF JESUS AND HIS LIFE (COL. 3)

First, we learned *Who* Jesus is. Jesus is fully God, equal to God, The Creator of the Old Creation and the Creator of the New Creation, His New Body. Second, we learned *what* Jesus has done for us. Jesus fully exchanged His life for our lives so we can experience the fullness of His Life and salvation. Now we can learn how each of us can fully experience the reality of *Christ Who is our Life* living in, with and through each of us as we exchange our lives for Christ's Life.

Look up the passages below and record your discoveries about how we can the fully experience the reality of *Christ Who is our Life*.

- 1) In the left column, record what the Holy Spirit helps you discover and understand about who Jesus is and what He has done for us, *the basis* for how we can experience the Exchanged Life.
- 2) In the right column, record what the Holy Spirit helps you discover and understand about what *we can and should do* based on who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

As we exchange our lives for Jesus' Life, relying on the power He gives us, we will experience the reality of *Christ, Who is our Life*.

DISCOVERIES ABOUT JESUS, WHAT HE HAS DONE AND HOW HE IS THE SOURCE OF THE EXCHANGED LIFE	DISCOVERIES OF WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW AND DO IN RESPONSE TO JESUS IN ORDER TO EXPERIENCE THE EXCHANGED LIFE
3:1-4: Focus on how we are to <i>realize</i> Christ our Life	
3:1	
3:2	
3:3	
3:4	

3:5-11: Focus on what we are to *remove* from our lives based on exchanging life with Jesus

3:5	
3:6	
3:7	
3:8	
3:9	
3:10	
3:11	

3:12-17: Focus on what we are to *receive* from Jesus based on exchanging life with Jesus

3:12	
3:13	
3:14	
3:15	
3:16	
3:17	

DISCOVERY 8: EXPERIENCING UNION WITH THE LIFE OF CHRIST

Introduction and Overview: The moment we truly receive Jesus, we become spiritually *united with Jesus, raised with Jesus and seated with Jesus* in spiritual union (Ephesians 1:15-2:10). If we then exchange our natural lives for Christ, we will *experience the fullness of God*. Paul points us in Ephesians to the fullness of God, the *experience of God as Agape*, the supernatural love that surpasses human or natural love (3:14-21). Based on our union with Jesus, Christians are commanded to be *filled* (controlled) by the Spirit because that is the only way we can experience the *Exchanged Life* of Christ living in, with and through us (Ephesians 5:18). It is an error to think God does not want to fill us or that we have to beg God to fill us. God is a loving Father Who wants to fill us more than we want to be filled . . . *for it is God Who is working in you to will and to work out God's good pleasure* (Philippians 2:13; Luke 11:11-13). *It is the good pleasure of God to influence our wills so that we say "Yes" to God's gracious desire to fill us so we can experience the filling of the Holy Spirit and the Exchanged Life.* Of course, we can *quench* the Spirit by resisting God influence on our wills and by saying "No" to God's desire to fill us (1 Thessalonians 5:19). *Will we say "Yes" or "No" to the experience of being filled with God?*

Look up the passages below and record what you learn about what Christ has already done for us and how we can thus experience exchanging Life with Christ, Who is our Life.

"SITTING" WITH CHRIST: THE CHRISTIAN'S UNION WITH AND POSITION IN CHRIST

THE CHRISTIAN'S PAST POSITION: WHAT WAS TRUE OF US BEFORE WE BECAME UNITED WITH CHRIST

2:1

2:2

2:3

THE CHRISTIAN'S PRESENT POSITION: WHAT IS TRUE OF US NOW THAT WE ARE UNITED WITH CHRIST

1:20-22: Where is Jesus?

2:4-6: *Where is the Christian?*

How is this position possible?

**THE CHRISTIAN'S REALIZATION OF THEIR UNION WITH CHRIST:
HOW WE CAN "EXPERIENCE" THE REALITY OF UNION WITH AND THE LIFE OF CHRIST**

Ephesians 1:15-23	Ephesians 3:14-21
1:17	3:16
1:18a	3:17a
1:18b	3:17b
1:18c	3:18
1:19-21	3:19
1:22-23	3:20-21

EXCHANGING LIFE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE EPHESIAN LETTER

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
Who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly dimensions in Christ (Ephesians 1:3)*

Passages from the Ephesian Letter	Discoveries: record below what you learn about how the Holy Spirit enables us to experience the Exchanged Life.
<i>And having heard the message of truth, the good news of your salvation, and having believed, you were sealed with promised Holy Spirit (1:13-14)</i>	
<i>Having heard of your faith in Jesus . . . I keep asking the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, to give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of God (1:15-18).</i>	
<i>For through Christ both Jews and Gentiles have full access to the Father by one Spirit (2:18).</i>	
<i>And in Christ all of you are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:22).</i>	
<i>[I pray] . . . that God would give to all of you, according to God's glorious riches, supernatural power through the strengthening of the Holy Spirit in your inner persons, so that Christ may fully occupy your hearts by faith, and now that you have become rooted and grounded in God's agape love, that God's power would enable all of you together to experience every dimension of God's agape love, the wideness, the length, the height and the depths and that you would go on to fully experience Christ's Agape Love that surpasses human knowledge, so that you may experience being filled with all the fullness of God (3:16-19).</i>	
<i>Allow the binding power of Christ's peace to empower you to do everything possible to keep the unity of the Spirit (4:3).</i>	
<i>Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with Whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Remove from yourselves all forms of bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander and malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ forgave you (4:30-32).</i>	
<i>Do not get drunk with wine, which leads to reckless living. Instead, become filled [continuously] with the Spirit (5:18).</i>	
<i>Be praying in the Spirit in all times with all kinds of prayers and requests . . . always be praying for the family in Christ . . . pray that I will openly make known the mystery of the good news (6:18-20)</i>	

STUDY 9: EXPERIENCING GOD WHO IS AGAPE LOVE

God is Love (Agape). John means by this to reveal that the essence of the Person of God *is* Agape Love. *Agape* Love is ultimately a *Person*, God. *Agape* Love is not primarily a word, an action, a quality or an emotion. God is personal and a Person, not a word, object, or an idea. When I use the term *person* to refer to God, I do not mean God is a human. I mean human persons are *like* God in that God is self-conscious, exhibits intelligence, will and purpose, can communicate with us and most importantly, loves other persons, the humans God created in God's spiritual image. Actually, instead of thinking God is like humans, God creating humans in God's spiritual image means that God created us to be *like* God. Of course, God is infinitely greater than the created persons God made in God's image.⁹ We bear a *resemblance* to God's spiritual image but we are *not equal* to God. God Who *is* Agape Love lives now within all true Christians. Christians can allow God Who *is* Agape Love to live in, with and through them and thus share with one another *The Person of God Who is Agape Love*. When Christians allow God to love others through them, they are actually sharing the Person of God with others and thus fulfilling supernaturally John 13:34-35. This truth about sharing the person of *God Who is Love* is actually the opposite of persons asking *what would Jesus do, deciding to be like Jesus and attempting to love others like Jesus did in their own human power*. That simply results in us giving to one another our watered-down versions of what we think God's love is like. Only as we *exchange* our watered-down versions of love for the *Person of God Who is Agape Love* can we experience God Who is Agape living in, with and through us. Look up the passages below and discover how we can experience exchanging our human versions of love for the *supernatural God who is Agape Love*.

- 1) John 13:33-34: How does Jesus *instruct* Christians to live and love?

- 2) Romans 5:5-8: How does God supernaturally empower us to fulfill the *New Instruction or Commandment*?

- 3) Ephesians 3: 14-19: Discover what God desires the Body of Christ to *experience*.
3:16
3:17a
3:17b
3:18
3:19a
3:19b

Ephesians 3:20-21: Discover the exchange of Life that God desires for us so we can together experience exchanging Life with God.

⁹ A good, basic explanation of God as Person or Personality is C. S. Lewis' "Beyond Personality: First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity," the third section in his book *Mere Christianity*.
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**DISCOVERY 10: THE MYSTERY OF EXCHANGING LIFE WITH CHRIST AND IN MARRIAGE:
MUTUAL SUBMISSION TO THE LORD OF LIFE AND TO ONE ANOTHER**

INTRODUCTION: WE ARE “INSTRUCTED” TO ALLOW OURSELVES TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT!

Eph. 5:22 in the *original Greek New Testament* reads as follows:

"The wives, to your own husbands as to the Lord . . ."
"αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ . . ."

The verb *submit* is not included in the original Greek sentence at Eph. 5:22. Look this verse up in the *King James* or *New American Standard* versions and you will discover that they print the word *submit* at Ephesians 5:22 **in italics** to indicate that they have *added this word* to help us better understand what Paul meant to convey. **Where can we find the *missing verb* of Ephesians 5:22?**

Look back to 5:21 and you will find the word *submit* in participle form, “. . . *submitting* to one another as to the Lord . . .” Therefore, here is how I understand what Paul meant to convey to us about how being filled with the Holy Spirit results in experiencing an exchange of life with Christ and with our partners in marriage, if we are married.

1) The Main Verb or Command is found in 5:18: *Be filled* (plerousthe)

We are *commanded or instructed* to allow the Holy Spirit to fill us.

2) The results of being filled with the Spirit: Paul then cites in this context some evidences of being filled with the Holy Spirit. (not every evidence he could have cited, there are others cited in other contexts). Paul in this context lists each of these evidences in *participle form* (words ending in “ing”)

5:19: speaking . . .

5:19: singing and hymning . . .

5:20: thanking . . .

5:21: submitting to one another . . .

3) Thus, this is how I think Eph. 5:18 *should be diagrammed*.

Main verb: *Be filled* (Eph. 5:18)



Participles that take their direction from the main verb and which describe what happens *because of being filled with the Spirit*

5:19: speaking . . .

5:19: singing and hymning . . .

5:20: thanking . . .

5:21: submitting to one another . . .

4) Therefore, Paul really taught that *mutual submission of one another to one another* is really *the result of what happens when we first submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit and exchange our lives for His life and fullness*. Now that we understand the relationship of *being filled* with the Holy Spirit and the *results of being filled*, we can go on to the Bible study that follows on the next page.

1) **THE ANALOGY OF BEING DRUNK AND BEING FILLED**

What is *similar* about Luke 1:15, Acts 2:1-13, especially 2:13 and Ephesians 5:18?

2) **THE COMMAND TO BE FILLED AND THE RESULTS OF BEING FILLED**

Eph. 5:18 is a *command* not a suggestion! What are some *evidences* or *results* of the Holy Spirit filling us?

Eph. 5:19a

Eph. 5:19b

Eph. 5:20

Eph. 5:21

3) **HOW BEING FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT RELATES TO HUMAN MARRIAGE AND OUR SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE WITH JESUS CHRIST**

The Mutual Submission of Wives: How would a Spirit-filled wife relate to her husband?

5:22

5:23

5:24

The Mutual Submission of Husbands: How would a Spirit-filled husband relate to his wife?

5:25

5:26-27

5:28-30

4) **The Mystery of the Marriage Relationship of Christ and the Church: How would a Spirit-filled Church (Jesus' spiritual wife) relate to Jesus (her spiritual husband)?**

Eph. 5:31-32

Revelation 19:7-8

Revelation 21:9-10

DISCOVERY 11: EXCHANGING LIFE AND LIVING IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Galatians 2:20 is perhaps the shortest and clearest witness to the *experience of exchanging Life* with Jesus in the New Testament writings. Christians *have been and are crucified with Christ from the moment they received Christ as Lord and Savior*. They thus live, but it is not supposed to be us but Christ who is living His Life in, with and through us. If we understand and say “Yes” to what Paul taught in Galatians 5—6, this exchange of Life *experience* becomes possible. The *flesh* or our human abilities cannot live as Jesus lived. However, if we *live and walk in the Spirit*, which means we allow the Holy Spirit to control us and live through us, we will experience the *Exchanged Life* of Christ living in, with and through us.

1) “RECEIVING” THE HOLY SPIRIT: THE BEGINNING OF EXCHANGING LIFE

Discover in the passages below *how and when* we receive the Holy Spirit.

3:26

4:6

3:2

3:5

3:14

2) “RESULTS” (THE FRUIT) OF RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the left hand column, discover *what our human nature or flesh produces* when we try to live life in our own power. Then, in the right hand column, discover what happens when we exchange our natural powers for the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. You will also learn that for every *problem or sickness* produced from our flesh, there is *healing fruit* or *antidotes* that God desires for us to experience as part of the exchanged life. The *healing fruit* of The Holy Spirit is actually the *Person of Jesus Christ emerging within us similar to how a baby is formed within a pregnant mother. Jesus wishes to completely be formed and then express Himself* through us as we allow Him to transform us into His spiritual image (read Galatians 4:19 prayerfully and carefully).

5:19-21: THE PROBLEMS

SEXUAL

SPIRITUAL

EMOTIONAL

RELATIONAL

5:22-23: THE SOLUTION

3) “RESPONSIBILITY RELATIONSHIP” WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT THAT RESULTS IN EXPERIENCING EXCHANGED LIFE

Discover in the passages below what it means to have a *relationship* with the Holy Spirit. This relationship is *like* (but not exactly the same, the Holy Spirit is God) other significant relationships that are fostered by loving respect and cooperation. Whenever we say “Yes” to the Holy Spirit in the ways that Paul describes in these passages, we experience exchanging Life with *Christ who is our Life*. We should always remember . . . *it is God Who is working in you to will and to work out God’s good pleasure* (Philippians 2:13). It is the good pleasure of God to influence our wills so that we *willingly say* “Yes” to God’s gracious desire to fill us. When we do respond positively in this relationship motivated by loving concern and influence, we experience *relationship living* with the Holy Spirit. Of course, we can *quench* the Spirit by resisting God influence on our wills and by saying “No” to God’s desire to fill us (1 Thessalonians 5:19). *Will we say “Yes” to a relationship with Holy Spirit or will we resist exchanging life with the Holy Spirit?*

5:16

5:18

5:25

6:7-8

DISCOVERY 11, PART 2: THE EXCHANGED LIFE AND “GROWING UP” INTO CHRIST

Paul, John and Peter likened living the exchanged life to the process of human development that all of us have gone through since we were born. We are conceived, go through a process of development in the womb, are born, and then begin life as newborn babies. Then we begin the process of moving from infancy into childhood into adolescence into full maturity as adults. In a similar way, in the spiritual realm, humans can go through a process of being *conceived* in Christ, being *born again*, and then, if all goes well, we can develop from spiritual infancy to *fully developed, fully exchanged spiritual maturity*.

- 1) First, read the passages in the left hand column first and discover the *stages* of spiritual development described in the New Testament. Compare your findings with your discoveries from Galatians (Study 11, part 1).
- 2) Second, when you finish reading the passages, look up 2 Cor. 13:5 and do a *self-assessment*. Ask God and perhaps some knowledgeable and trusted spiritual guides to help you discover where you are in the process of spiritual development.
- 3) Third, talk with God about *where you would like to be* and how you can experience more fully the exchanged life. God desires for each of us to experience the fullness of *Christ, Who is our Life*.

Witnesses & Passages	Categories or Stages of Spiritual States	The Meaning of the Stages or Categories
Paul 1 Cor. 2:14	“natural” person (psuchikos)	A person who has not yet become a Christian. They have not yet allowed by faith Christ to conceive His Life within them
1 Cor. 3:14-15	“Conception,” when a person receives the <i>Life of Christ</i> within them through faith in the good news of Christ as Savior.	A newborn, “born again” spiritual infant.
1 Cor. 3:1	“baby” or “infant” (nepiois)	A baby Christian, a young, immature born-again person.
1 Cor. 3:1; Galatians 4:19	“fleshly” or “worldly” person (sarkinois)	A Christian who is allowing the <i>flesh</i> (their human nature) to control portions or much of their lives; an immature and not growing Christian.
1 Cor. 2:15; 1 Cor. 3:1;	“spiritual” person (pneumatikos)	A Christian who is allowing the “Spirit of God” to control much of their lives; a mature, growing Christian who is fully and progressively experiencing the “Exchanged Life.”
John 1 John 3:9	“Conception,” when a person receives the <i>Life of Christ</i> within them through faith in the good news of Christ as Savior. John actually used the Greek word <i>sperma</i> , where we get <i>sperm</i> (translated <i>seed</i>) to describe the initial moment of spiritual conception when Christ conceives <i>His Life</i> within our spirits.	A newborn, “born again” spiritual infant.
1 John 2:12, 2:14	“little children” (teknia and paidia)	Infant, baby Christians
1 John 2:13-14	“young people” (neaniskoi)	Growing adolescent Christians
1 John 2:13-14	“Fathers” [and Mothers] (pateres)	Mature, fully grown, adult Christians progressively experiencing the Exchanged Life.
Peter 1 Peter 1:3; 1:23	“new borns” (anagennes)	A newborn, <i>born again</i> spiritual infant.
1 Peter 2:2	“babies” (brephe)	Infant, baby Christians who need <i>spiritual milk</i> (basic words of God) to live and grow
1 Peter 5:5	“young people” (neoterai)	Growing adolescent Christians
1 Peter 5:5	“Elders” (presbuteros)	Mature, fully grown, adult Christians

STUDY 12: EXCHANGING LIFE VIA COMMUNICATION WITH GOD

INTRODUCTION TO “COMMUNICATING IN THE SPIRIT” AND EXCHANGING LIFE WITH GOD

If we are to understand the exchanged life experience of communication with God by prayer described in the earliest Christian writings, we must first understand the nature of God, some common myths about prayer and the realities of prayer as taught by the Apostles. Read the cited passages and this article and then record what you discovered and other thoughts you have.

THE NATURE OF GOD

Theologians have identified from the words of God (the Bible) certain *attributes* of God. Theologians divide God’s attributes into two categories, *incommunicable* attributes and *communicable* attributes. *Incommunicable* attributes are those God alone possesses and in which no created being can share, such as eternity, aseity, omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. *Communicable* attributes are those that God can share with created beings made in the spiritual image of God. These attributes are holiness, love, intelligence, rationality, volition and others that make up what the Biblical authors meant when they use the term *image of God* to describe human beings. Even in communicable attributes, humans only share these with God in a *similar (analogical)* manner and *not in the very same (univocal)* manner. God is unique. We are *like* God but *not the same as* God.

MYTHS ABOUT PRAYER

Certain myths that some believe about prayer can be corrected by understanding the nature of God as described in the words of God, the Bible. One myth is that the *timing* of prayer or the *length of time* that one prays is essential to effective prayer. This myth is corrected by understanding that God is eternal and outside or not confined within our human conception of time. To God, everything is eternally present tense. The correspondence of *when* someone prays or *how long* one prays has no relationship to the events or situations about which one is praying. This is because God is *omniscient* and *knows everything at once, past, present and future*. God knows in God’s *eternal present tense* the things we will pray about in *our future experience and tense*.

Another myth involves the *specificity* of prayer, that prayer should be specific and not general. This myth is rooted in a misunderstanding of God’s omniscience. God *needs no information, for God knows all*. God is omniscient and already *knows everything* about whatever we happen to be praying for (Matthew 6:8).

Another myth is that God *needs* our prayers to work, and is in some way *bound or chooses to be inactive* until someone prays and *releases the power* of God. This myth is corrected when we understand God as *Omnipotent* and *Sovereign*. God *needs nothing* from humans in any way to bring about God’s sovereign plans. God *chooses* to weave Holy Spirit inspired prayers by humans *into* the sovereign plans of God, just as God chooses to weave human actions *into* the sovereign plans of God. However, this notion of God inspiring and using human choices in action and prayer to work together with God is radically different from the notion that God needs action and prayer from humans to achieve God’s sovereign plans. If God really needed us to achieve God’s will, how could we ever have a solid hope or be confident that God will ultimately and successfully *work all things after the counsel of God’s will* (Eph. 1:11, 1:5, 1:9)?

**ROMANS 8:26-34-THE CORE NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGE ON THE REALITY OF
SUPERNATURAL, “EXCHANGED LIFE” COMMUNICATION WITH GOD**

**The Role of the Holy Spirit in Communication with God:
The *Inspirer* of Supernatural, Exchanged Life Communication with God
(Romans 8:26-27)**

All prayer that God considers *inspired and informed* originates in the supernatural activity of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit *inspires* humans to communicate *in the Spirit* in harmony with the sovereign plans of God. Humans are finite, weak and ignorant. Thus, we *do not know* what to pray for that which is truly proper in light of God’s will. Because of what Paul identifies as our *weaknesses*, we need the Holy Spirit to inspire us to communicate with God in harmony with God’s will. This is what Paul witnesses that the Holy Spirit does for us. The Holy Spirit *intercedes* in us and for us with *groanings* too deep for words in accordance with the sovereign will of God (Romans 8:26-27). This *groaning* in this particular passage is not referring to *tongues*,¹⁰ for the same Greek word translated as *groan* (stenagmoi, stenagmois) is used in 8:22 to describe the *groaning or longing* of creation itself for the revelation of the glorified children of God. Paul is certainly using a metaphor here. We should not interpret this to mean that *impersonal creation or the entire universe is literally speaking in tongues* for the glorification of Christians. Paul used the same Greek word for *groan* at 8:23 to describe the *groaning or longing* of Christians themselves for our release from this fallen world, from our fallen bodies, and our eventual glorification. In this context, Paul is not referring to tongues, but the *unspeakable longings too deep for mere words* that Christians have for their ultimate liberation from this fallen world, their fallen bodies and for eternal union with God. Thus, the Holy Spirit is *groaning in prayer (with the groaning creation and within groaning Christians)* for the ultimate will of God to be realized in and for Christians. The prayers that the Holy Spirit thus *intercedes and inspires* within the Christians are those communications that are in perfect harmony with the omniscient knowledge the Holy Spirit has, along with God the Father’s omniscient knowledge about the ultimate will of God in general and in particular. Christians can learn to experience *praying in The Spirit* (Ephesians 6:18; Jude 20). *Praying or communicating in the Spirit* is not limited to praying in tongues but is what happens when Christians are open to and waiting on the Holy Spirit. They can have the *groanings of the Holy Spirit communicated spiritually to them*, which they can then join in harmony with the Holy Spirit as they communicate with God. This is a supernatural, mystical experience that cannot be adequately reduced to human words or human cookbook formulas for prayer. *Praying in the Spirit* can be experienced only as a supernatural experience.

**The Role of Jesus in Prayer in Communication with God:
The “*Interpreter and Interceding Mediator*” of Supernatural, Exchanged Life Prayer
Romans 8:27; 8:34**

Jesus the Risen and Glorified Lord shares the *incommunicable* attributes of God. As such, Jesus *knows* the omniscient mind of the Spirit, *knows* the ultimate will of God, and *knows* these things as He *searches* the hearts of Christians. Thus, both Jesus and the Holy Spirit share equally in their omniscience. Jesus mediates and intercedes to God the Father for Christians *at the right hand of God* in light of that omniscience (8:34). As always, when speaking of the eternal and unique nature of God, we should not take these ideas in a *physical* (univocal) but *analogical* manner. *God is Spirit* (John 4:21).

¹⁰Tongues or *Glossolalia*, speaking and praying in languages supernaturally inspired by the Holy Spirit, was and is a legitimate spiritual gift, mentioned in the New Testament at Acts 2, 8, 10, 19 and I Cor. 12-14. Thus, I am not here claiming that *Glossolalia* is not a legitimate spiritual gift, because I believe it is. I am simply clarifying and suggesting that Paul’s triple use of the word *groaning* in Romans 8, the three groanings of 1) creation (Romans 8:22), 2) Christians’ (Romans 8:23) and 3) The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:26) are not *in that context* primarily referring to tongues or glossolalia. In that context, groanings are the *deep, unspeakable longings* we all share for God’s ultimate will of liberation, freedom and glorification (Romans 8:21; 8:27-31).

God is an Eternal, everywhere present at once, unbounded Spirit. Jesus *standing at the right hand of God* is a metaphor or symbol, for God does not have a literal hand, a literal right side, a literal throne at which side Jesus stands, and so on. God communicates to us in analogical symbols to accommodate to our weaknesses as finite humans. These symbolic analogies witness that Jesus is our Intercessor and Mediator with God. As the omniscient Lord, Jesus searches the hearts of Christians, interprets the longings and groanings of the Spirit in light of the longings of our hearts and God's sovereign will and then presents a *synthetic intercession* to God the Father. Instead of looking at this in a mechanical and earthly manner, we should simply understand Paul to mean that Jesus, the Holy Spirit and the Father are all intimately and supernaturally involved in the inspiration of and reception of prayers. This is supposed to encourage and comfort us, not involve us in mental confusions (cognitive conundrums) that exceed our finite understanding.

**The Role of the Father in Communication with God:
The "Sovereign Synthesizer" of Supernatural, Exchanged Life Prayer
Romans 8:27, 8:34**

Ephesians 1 is a classic *Trinitarian* passage in the New Testament. Paul there witnesses to all three Persons of the Triune God. God the Father in that passage is identified as the Sovereign God who . . . *according to God's purpose works all things after the counsel of God's will* (Eph. 1:11, 1:5, 1:9). God *works all things together for good for those who love God and are called according to God's purpose* (Romans 8:28-30). This *working together* or *supernatural synthesis* includes the *groanings* of the Spirit as the Spirit prays in Christians, the intercession of Jesus for Christians in light of the prayers of the Spirit in Christians and the finite *weaknesses* of Christians. God the Father *synthesizes* every one of these prayers and in fact, synthesizes *all things* according to God's eternal plans and purposes. Again, we ought not to think of God the Father, Son and Spirit as at any time *being unaware of what each is thinking or doing*. Their knowledge and actions *are eternally unified within the incommunicable attributes of omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence*. For our purposes, God accommodates to us and specifies to us their respective roles so we can appreciate and experience the supernatural dimensions of prayer. Eventually, we must grow up spiritually into Christ and the highest level of spiritual maturity and understand that all three Persons of the Trinity are simultaneously involved every time any given Christian *says their prayers*.

Some Personal Conclusions on Communicating with God

Despite the fact that Romans 8:26-27 tends to shatter current ideas about prayer that many have, I think it essential to begin with this witness. I think we all need to see that the *highest experience of prayer is communicating with God in harmony with the prayers of the Holy Spirit*, not us telling God what we think God ought to do. After all, God is *omniscient!*

Therefore, if we carefully examine this passage, we discover that

- 1) we should start with the realization that we don't know what to pray for,
- 2) accept that the Holy Spirit does because the Holy Spirit is omniscient, and then
- 3) allow God to give us the experience of *praying in the Spirit*. Prayer can then become in our experience *a dynamic relationship between the Holy Spirit and us*, a relationship of communication in which the Holy Spirit illuminates us as to what we should pray for in light of God's eternal and omnisciently known will.

When I pray, I begin by agreeing that I have only a finite perspective on things. I then openly and with critical self-consciousness open my self to the perspective and *groanings* of the Holy Spirit, Who I have been told is already praying within me and for me. I allow the Holy Spirit to inspire me, but I also *pour out my heart* to God as a finite creature (Psalm 62:8), trusting that Jesus will interpret and

intercede for me based on His eternal perspective and not my finite perspective. I ultimately trust God the Father to *synthesize* the differences between my finite outpourings and when I allow myself to be inspired to pray *in harmony with and in the Spirit*. Ultimately, I view prayer as an opportunity for me to *experience God* rather than a means to *change God, influence God or inform God*. Supernatural communication with God *changes us* into conformity to God, we do not change God.

Of course, some people find this explanation too mystical and want a *formula* for how to pray. Unfortunately, there are many who feel ready and able to give them a *formula or a cookbook recipe for how to pray*. Paul did not teach formulas, but *relationship* with the Holy Spirit. Such a relationship with the Holy Spirit leads to the *experience of Christ, Who is our life*. When we experience Christ as our Life, Christ increasingly transforms us into the image of Christ. Because of that ongoing transformation, the person communicates with God based on that dynamic relationship. Thus, the prayers of Paul and Jesus are not formulas but *expressions of being in harmony with the Holy Spirit*. Even *The Lord's Prayer* is simply a written *expression of suggested categories* we can talk with God about while we are in the Spirit, not a cookbook recipe or formula that we are to repeat over word by word.

Thus, if I list in a formal and mechanical way that I do not want to be taken as a formula but as simply the inevitable result of my being a human in time and not omniscient, I view communication with God as follows.

- 1) I start with Rom. 8:18-39 as the context to understand the highest level of Holy Spirit inspired prayer at 8:26-27.
- 2) I use Luke 18:1-8 to understand that God cannot be manipulated into answering our prayers *based on our persistence*. Rather, God is a loving Father that answers based on love and grace. This conclusion is actually the opposite conclusion that many people obtain from this parable. That is why many people *depersonalize* prayer into formulas and sayings like *the power of prayer*. *Such a saying makes it seem* as if prayer were a *technique that works* if one is adept enough or persistent enough, like learning how to harness the *power of electricity*. Prayer does not work, *God works* through the people who enter relationship with and experience *praying in the Spirit* (Rom. 8:26-27). How would we feel if one of our loved ones assumed that we needed to repeatedly reminded and hectored to do something for us because they began with the assumption that we really do not love them enough to give them willingly what they need or want?
- 3) I use Luke 18:9-14 to understand the true *attitude* that should emerge within one who is experiencing an exchange of life with Jesus, the ultimate source of supernatural humility (Phil. 2:1-11). The Holy Spirit is the only One who can impart *mind of Christ humility* inside of us. Repeatedly saying a formula like *I'm not worthy, I'm not worthy* as a means to convince God that we are really humble and not proud is treating God as if God is not omniscient and does not know us as we really are.
- 4) I use The Lord's Prayer to understand the *categories of concerns* that will emerge within us as we communicate with God *in the Spirit*. These words are not a *formula* or a set of magical words that we are to say word-by-word repeatedly, as if by saying these words repeatedly something supernatural will happen. When we communicate with other humans we love, what would we think and feel if one of our loved ones wrote out a short expression of what we mean to them and then repeated it to us word by word, repeatedly, whenever they talked to us?
- 5) I see the prayers of Jesus and Paul as expressions of what communicating with God is like when someone is praying *in The Spirit*, not as cookbook recipes or formulas that we should memorize and recite back word by word to God (John 17; Eph. 1:15-23, 3:14-21, Phil. 1:9-11, Col. 1:9-14,

4:12-13, 1 Tim. 2:1-7). Once we understand that we are to allow the Holy Spirit to empower us to pray in harmony with what the Spirit knows we should pray for, we should find ourselves able to use the prayers of Jesus and Paul as *normative expressions of but not as legalistic formulas* of supernatural communication with God.

SUMMARIZE WHAT YOU LEARNED ABOUT EXCHANGED LIFE PRAYER

DISCOVERY 13: EXPERIENCING SPIRITUAL GIFTS AS GOD LIVING THROUGH US

PART 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO AND DEFINITION OF TERMS USED TO DESCRIBE SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Look up the verses below and record your thoughts and observations under the definitions I provided.

The writers of the original Greek New Testament used six Greek words to describe spiritual gifts. While these different words give various shades of meaning to the idea of spiritual gifts, they should generally be regarded as synonyms or . . . *simply different descriptions*.¹¹

- 1) **Pneumatikon** (πνευματικῶν) is one way to refer to spiritual gifts, found at I Corinthians 12:1 and 14:1. The English words *pneumatic* and *pneumonia* are derived from this Greek word. *Pneumatikon* means *spiritual things or matters, spiritualities* and . . . *the totality of the gifts of the Spirit*.¹²

- 2) **Charismaton** (χαρισμάτων) is another term used to describe the gifts, used at I Corinthians 12:4, 12:9, 12:28, 12:30, 12:31, Romans 12:6, I Peter 4:10 and Ephesians 4:7. The English words *charisma* and *charismatic* are derived from the Greek. *Charismaton* means *a gift (freely and graciously given), a gift involving grace on the part of God as the Donor, a proof of favor, benefit*.¹³

- 3) **Diakonion** (διακονιῶν) is a third term used to refer to gifts, used at I Cor. 12:5, Rom. 12:7, Eph. 4:12, I Peter 4:10-11. The English word *deacon* derived from the Greek word. *Diakonion* means *service, aid, support, ministries, and a discharge of service*.¹⁴

- 4) **Energematon** (ἐνεργημάτων) is a fourth term that refers to gifts, used at I Cor. 12:6 and 12:10. The English words *energy* and *energetic* are derived from the Greek. *Energematon* means *activity, workings, operations, what is effected*.¹⁵

¹¹*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, V.9, 405.

¹²*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 685; *Vine's Expository Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1087; *TDNT*, v. 6, 437.

¹³*Lexicon*, 887; *Vine's*, 487; *TDNT*, v. 9, 402.

¹⁴*Lexicon*, 183; *VINE*, 756; *TDNT*, v. 2, 87.

¹⁵*Lexicon*, 265; *Vine's*, 1256; *TDNT*, v. 2, 652.

- 5) **Phanerosis** (φανέρωσις) is the fifth term used to describe the gifts, found at I Cor. 12:7. The English words *phantasm* and *phantom* are derived from the Greek. *Phanerosis* means *disclosure, manifestations* and . . . *the revelation imparted by the Spirit and consisting in the charismata listed in I Cor. 12:8 ff. . .*¹⁶
- 6) **Dorea** (δωρεα) is the sixth word used to describe the gifts, found at Eph. 4:7. *Dorea* means *gift, bounty of God, a free gift*.¹⁷

SPIRITUAL GIFTS: SOME ENTRY LEVEL DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

Spiritual gifts are *supernatural, exchanged life manifestations of the Persons of the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit* that occur in every true believer in Jesus Christ. It may help some to understand this shattering idea by understanding that when the words of God refer to God giving to some who believe the *gift of eternal life*, eternal life is actually *a person, Jesus, The Life*, not a *thing* we possess (1 John 1:1-3; 5:20). Similarly, there are different kinds of gifts, different kinds of service and different kinds of workings, but the *same Spirit, the same Lord and the same God works all of them in all*. The manifestations of the Spirit are all the work of Spirit, and the Spirit determines and gives these gifts, services and workings to each person in Christ (1 Cor. 12). Instead of viewing them as *impersonal things*, we should understand that spiritual gifts are just the supernatural and normative way God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit *express themselves* through yielded Christians. Christians do not *possess* spiritual gifts as if they were things or possessions. Rather, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit live in Christians and wish to *possess each Christian*. As Christians allow God to possess their lives, God then begins to manifest increasingly in *varied ways* through the Christians. The varied ways the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit express themselves through Christians are termed the *gifts of God* or *spiritualities* in the New Testament. Spiritual gifts are manifested *through* Christians, but their ultimate *source is God*. Instead of God working through the physical body and life of Jesus as God did when Jesus was in His first body, now God works through the bodies and lives of all the Christians together. Together, they are called *The Body of Christ*, Christ's *second body*, made up of the totality of all Christians (Ephesians 4).

The two main purposes of these manifestations of God in Christians are the same as when God was manifesting through Jesus when He was in his first body. First, God's gifts bring glory to God by revealing God as God. Second, God's *spiritualities* stimulate Christians to *exchange* life with God (edification) and *impart* the Life of God in those who are not yet Christians (evangelism). *Spiritualities* differ from natural talents and abilities common to humanity by virtue of being human. They are different from human talents developed by training, education or experience. However, Christians can learn to allow God to express God through themselves in increasingly purer and more distinct ways as they grow into maturity in the exchanged life. Timothy was told to *stir up* his gifts, which means that he was discouraged and was allowing something to hinder God from expressing God through Timothy in an unhindered manner (2 Tim. 1: 6).

¹⁶ *Lexicon*, 861; Vine's, 718; TDNT, v. 9, 6.

¹⁷ *Lexicon*, 209; *Vine*, 486-487; TDNT, v. 2, 166-167

DISCOVERY 13, PART 2: A CLASSIFICATION OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Read the passages next to each gift.

Then, communicate with God about discovering how God may choose to work in, with and through you

I) MESSAGE or SPEAKING GIFTS: “TO DELIVER A MESSAGE”

1. APOSTLE (APOSTOLOS, ἀπόστολος) 1Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11
2. PROPHET (PROPHTAS, προφήτης) I Cor. 12:28-29; Eph 4:11; Rom.12:6
3. TEACHER (DIDASKALOS, διδάσκαλος) I Cor. 12:28-29; Rom. 12:7
4. PASTOR-TEACHER (POIMENOS, ποιμένος) Eph. 4:11
5. EVANGELIST (EUAGGELISTES, εὐαγγελιστής) Eph. 4:11
6. EXHORTATION (PARAKALEO, παρακαλέω) Rom. 12:8
7. WISDOM (SOPHIA, σοφία) I Cor. 12:8
8. KNOWLEDGE (GNOSEOS, γνώσεως) I Cor. 12:8
9. TONGUES (GLOSSA, γλώσσα) I Cor. 12:10; 12:28; 12:30
10. INTERPRETATION (of tongues: HERMENEIA, ἑρμηνεία) I Cor. 12:10; 12:30

II) MINISTRY OR SERVICE GIFTS: “TO DELIVER A MINISTRY”

1. SERVICE (DIAKONIA, διακονία) Rom. 12:7; I Peter 4:11
2. HELPS (ANTILEMPHIS, ἀντίληψις) I Cor. 12:28
3. MERCY (ELEOS, ἔλεος) Rom. 12:8
4. LEADERSHIP (PROISTEMI, προϊστημι) Rom. 12:8
5. ADMINISTRATION (KUBERNETES, κυβέρνησις) I Cor. 12:28
6. GIVING (METADIDIDOMI, μεταδίδωμι) Rom. 12:8
7. CELIBACY (AGAMOS, ἄγαμος; PARTHENOS, παρθένος) I Cor. 7

III) MIRACULOUS or SPECTACULAR GIFTS: “TO DELIVER MIRACLES”

1. FAITH (PISTIS, πίστις) I Cor. 12:9
2. MIRACLES (DUNAMIS, δύναμις) I COR. 12:10; 12:28-29; HEB 2:4
3. HEALING (IAMA, ἴαμα) I Cor. 12:9; 12:28; 12:30
4. DISCERNMENT OF SPIRITS (DIAKRISIS, διάκρισις) I Cor. 12:10

DISCOVERY-13, PART 3: DISCOVERING SPIRITUAL GIFTS BY GOD’S PATTERN (NOT A FORMULA)

First, read the passages listed in the left hand column. Then, add your observations underneath my comments in the right hand column.

Passages	Observations and Discoveries
Romans 12:1-2	1) Consecration This involves surrendering your entire being to God for God’s will and purposes. This is the essential step in finding God’s will and gift(s).
Luke 11:1-13	2) Supplication Allow the Holy Spirit to pray persistently within you that God will lead you by the Scriptures, illumination by the Spirit, the Body of Christ and experiences to discover what gift(s) God has given to you.
I Cor. 12:1	3) Education This involves learning the following: <i>the definition, the types, purposes and biblical examples</i> of gifted people mentioned in the New Testament. Remember: it is definitely not God’s will for us to be uninformed about Spiritual Gifts.
Rom. 12:3; 12:6	4) Evaluation This could involve taking the <i>Wagner-modified Houts_Questionnaire</i> ¹⁸ or other such questionnaires and evaluating the results in light of sober, realistic and honest thinking about your past service to God and your current spiritual desires. However, do not depend totally on any questionnaire; they must be used in context of God’s holistic pattern for discovering gifts.
Acts 16:1-3; I Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:3-14	5) Consultation After personal evaluation, consult with those who know you well, such as a pastor, trusted and knowledgeable spiritual guides, and possibly a Bible study group to obtain responses, support and further guidance. This can prevent confusion and self-deception.

¹⁸Available from Amazon.com
<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0830717889/102-5129807-0396152?v=glance&n=283155>

I Cor. 12:31; 14:1; 14:12	6) Investigation Having been prepared by the previous steps, you can now begin to focus on your tentative gifts. Study again the biblical information regarding spiritualities you think you may have in a careful manner. Try to get to know people who you think may have or profess to have these gifts, and question and learn from them. Begin to read extra-biblical books on the subject, but always allow the New Testament teaching illuminated by the Holy Spirit to interpret their conclusions. Seek diligently!
Rom. 12:3-8; I Pet. 4:10-11; I Pet. 5:1-4	7) Motivation This involves two considerations. First, why do I desire to practice or actually practice a certain gift(s)? Biblically, the answer should be for God's glory and the benefit of others. Second, when do I feel <i>comfortable, able and motivated</i> when I serve God? This is what Paul meant by the phrase <i>the proportion of faith</i> (Rom. 12:3-6). God's gift(s) to you should and most often do harmonize with your personality, assuming of course that you are a Christian and walking in the Spirit.
Rom. 12:6	8) Experimentation Now you are ready to take the step of faith and begin to function in the body of Christ and in the world according to your gift(s). Pray for, expect and seize available opportunities to allow God to work through your tentative gift(s). Allow enough time and varieties of experience to get a true <i>read</i> of your potential giftedness. Do not get discouraged prematurely! Paul urged Timothy to <i>stir up</i> God's gift within him (2 Tim. 1:6).
Eph. 4:12-16; 1 Cor. 14:4-6; 14:12; 14:17; 14:26; 14:33; 14:40	9) Confirmation God has gifted you in some way. Eventually, God will bring about consequences that will provide confirmation of God's gift(s) within you. The biblical signs of confirmation are the <i>glorification</i> of God and God's will and the <i>edification</i> (strengthening or building up) of the body of Christ, among others. The <i>agents</i> of confirmation are God, God's Scriptures, other people (Christians and those not yet Christians) and circumstances. If confirmation is repeatedly absent, you most probably do not have the gift(s) you are attempting to exercise. Start the search process again because . . . <i>each has been given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good of all</i> (1 Cor. 12:7).

**SOME OTHER EXERCISES BASED ON DISCOVERING SPIRITUAL GIFTS BY GOD’S PATTERN
(NOT A FORMULA)**

Based on what you learned in the previous study, complete the following steps.

1) **RANK:** Spiritual Gifts appear in the New Testament in three *clusters* or *types* of gifts. Those 3 types are

- 1) **SPEAKING-MESSAGE GIFTS**
- 2) **SERVICE-MINISTRY GIFTS**
- 3) **SIGN-SPECTACULAR GIFTS**

Below, make an *initial and tentative* assessment of how you think God has uniquely gifted you. See the study titled *Classification of Spiritual Gifts* for a listing of Spiritual Gifts mentioned in the New Testament.

MY #1 CLUSTER IS	MY #2 CLUSTER IS	MY #3 CLUSTER IS
_____	_____	_____
My tentative ranking of specific spiritual gifts in this cluster that may be the way God has gifted me.	My tentative ranking of specific spiritual gifts in this cluster that may be the way God has gifted me.	My tentative ranking of specific spiritual gifts in this cluster that may be the way God has gifted me.

2) **STUDY**

Based on your initial self-rankings, begin to study prayerfully the specific spiritual gifts that you think you most likely to represent the usual way God expresses God through you.

3) **CONSULT**

Consulting with others who know you well and who understand spiritual gifts is a biblical and critical step in *confirming* how God has gifted you. God established a pattern for confirming matters by *2 or 3 witnesses* (Deut. 19:15, Matt. 18:16, 18:19-20, 1 Tim. 5:19, 1 John 5:6-12, etc.). Below are *three consults* that you may choose to pursue as you seek confirmation of how God has gifted you.

- a. *Consult with mature, trusted spiritual friends or guides* that know you well. Show these people your tentative self-assessment above and receive their feedback. Pray with them and ask God for illumination.
- b. Consult with your local church and Pastor.
- c. Consult with the many authors who have written on the subject of spiritual gifts.

4) **ACT IN FAITH AND EXPECT CONFIRMATION**

After you have ranked yourself, studied the specific gifts you think you may have and had that self-assessment *confirmed*, begin to pray for and seize opportunities to practice your suspected giftedness. Look for *confirmation from Christ in yourself, others and the fruit* that emerges as you allow God to work through you. You are now on the way to discovering an exciting new dimension of God’s will in your life.

DISCOVERY 14-EXCHANGING LIFE WITH CHRIST THE VICTOR SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Satan and demons do not want Christians to experience exchanging Life with Jesus Christ.¹⁹ Therefore, they fight against Christians and try to trick Christians into fighting back in their own power. Satan and demons are much smarter and more powerful than humans are, and they know if we try to stand against them in our own power, they will win. They also know that when Christians *exchange their lives for Christ's life* and stand against them in Christ they will lose. Read the passages below and record your discoveries about exchanging your life for Christ, *Who is our Life*. When we exchange life with Christ, Christ enables us to experience the *same victory* Christ Himself experienced over Satan and demons when Jesus was in his first body (Luke 4, etc.).

EPHESIANS 6:10-20: STANDING WITH CHRIST AGAINST SATAN'S STRATEGIES

A. OUR ENEMY: DISCOVER FOUR (4) FACTS ABOUT THE ENEMY OF GOD AND HUMANITY

6:11

6:12a

6:12b

6:16

B. THE PATTERN FOR VICTORY OVER SATAN AND DEMONIC POWERS: PRINCIPLE, POSITION, POWER AND PROTECTION

1) PRINCIPLE: JAMES 4:7

STEP 1:

STEP 2:

RESULT?

¹⁹ Those who wish to pursue an in depth study of Spiritual Warfare can consult J. D. Geib, *An Examination Of The Spiritual Mapping Paradigm For Congruence With Biblical Orthodoxy And Ethnography* (Portland, OR : Theological Research Exchange Network, <http://www.tren.com/e-docs/search.cfm?p080-0006>), 1997.

2) POSITION: EPHESIANS 2:4-6

Jesus' position: where is Jesus (Ephesians 1:20-23)

Christians' position: where are Christians (Ephesians 2:5-6)

How rich is a person who marries a billionaire? (Without signing a pre-nuptial agreement).

How rich is a person who marries (becomes spiritually one with) Jesus by faith? (Ephesians 1:3)

3) POWER: EPHESIANS 6:10-14

Discover four instructions we are to cooperate with based on Christ's power within Christians

Eph. 6:10 (Cf. Eph. 1:19-21: How much Power does Christ have?)

Eph. 6:11a,

Eph. 6:13a

Eph. 6:11b, 6:13b

4) PROTECTION (EPHESIANS 6:10-20)

The Analogy: Ephesians 6:10-20 is an *analogy* best understood by Romans 13:14. *The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is our protection.* The *spiritual armor* that we are to put on *is Jesus Himself!* Discover below *Seven Manifestations of Jesus Christ*, Who is our Life, communicated to the Christian by being united with Christ.

1) Eph. 6:14a

Eph. 1:13

Eph. 4:15

Eph. 4:21

Eph. 4:25

2) Eph. 6:14b

Eph. 4:22-24

Eph. 5:3-10

Eph. 6:1

3) Eph. 6:15

Eph. 1:13

Eph. 2:8-10

Eph. 2:11--3:13

4) Eph. 6:16

Eph. 1:13

Eph. 2:8

Eph. 3:12

Eph. 4:5

Eph. 4:13

5) Eph. 6:17a

Eph. 1:3-13

Eph. 2:8-3:6

6) Eph. 6:17b

Matt. 4:1-11

7) Eph. 6:18-20

Eph. 1:15-23

Eph. 3:14-21

Eph. 5:4-

Eph. 5:18-20

STUDY 15: “FURTHER UP AND FURTHER INTO” THE SACRIFICE AND LIFE OF CHRIST

The Riches of Christ

The riches and reality of Christ are *unsearchable, infinite and never exhaustible* (Eph. 3:8). Never in this lifetime or for all of eternity will any of us be able completely come to the end of the fullness of God that is in Jesus Christ. C. S. Lewis used his God-given creative imagination to give us a hint of the infinite riches that will be ours for eternity in Christ. He titled the last book of his *Chronicles of Narnia, The Last Battle*. Lewis titled chapter 15 “Further Up and Further In” to suggest what eternity will be like for those who are one with Christ. “Further Up and Further In” means a continuous and never-ending journey further up and into the Person of God. In chapter 16, titled “Farewell to Shadow-Lands,” Lewis used an analogy to describe the infinite experience of God that awaits us. God and Heaven will be as an onion whose circles get *bigger* instead of smaller the further one goes up and into God. Our experience of God in eternity will always grow bigger, richer and deeper, or, “further up and further in.”

The Agony of Christ

Thinking about the unsearchable riches of Christ and analogies of God and Heaven are fascinating. However, just thinking about them will not actually allow us to experience the reality of exchanging Life with Jesus. This study on the Exchanged Life ends with a look at the single most critical decision each of us must make if we are to experience fully exchanging Life with Jesus. This decision is to allow Jesus to do *again* inside of us what He did when He was in His own body. When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus made a decision with His will to offer His life to God as a sacrifice for all of us and for all of our sins. This decision was so stressful for Jesus to make that Luke recorded Jesus was in *agony*. Those who saw Him in this condition later reported that Jesus was *sweating blood* (Luke 22:44). Sweating blood is a rare physical condition caused by physical and emotional stress, known by physicians as *hematidrosis*.²⁰

The Grace of Christ

However, God gave Jesus as a human the supernatural grace and strength to make the decision to give His life as a sacrifice for each of us (Luke 22:43). The same Jesus that gave His life as a sacrifice for God’s purpose to save each of us is now living inside each Christian. Just as Jesus did when He was in His own body, Jesus now desires for each of us to allow God to give us the supernatural grace and strength so we also present our total selves and lives to God as a sacrifice (Philippians 2:13). Paul described this decision that Jesus wants each of us to make, and one that Jesus will give us supernatural grace to make, as follows:

I appeal to you, family in Christ, by means of the mercies of God, to once and for all present your bodies, your entire selves, to God as sacrifices, sacrifices that are living, set apart, pleasing to God, which really is your logical service to God. Do not allow yourselves to be conformed to this present world system. Instead, allow yourselves to be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Then you will be able to discern the will of God that is good, pleasing and fully realized (Romans 12:1-2).

The following and last study in this Exchanged Life course follows Paul’s witness in Romans 12. As you do this study, you will learn how Jesus desires for each of us to allow Him to give us the supernatural grace and strength so we also present our total selves and lives to God as a sacrifice. In addition, if we make that decision, the same decision Jesus made when He was in His body, we will experience the reality of the Exchanged Life.



²⁰ See “Did Jesus Sweat Blood?” D. Miller <http://www.apologeticspress.org/articles/2223> and the articles cited there. Allen, A.C. (1967), *The Skin: A Clinicopathological Treatise* (New York: Grune and Stratton), second edition; Hobart, W. K. (1882), *The Medical Language of St. Luke* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1954 reprint); Holoubek, J.E. and A.B. Holoubek (1996), “Blood, Sweat, and Fear. ‘A Classification of Hematidrosis,’” *Journal of Medicine*, 27[3-4]:115-33 and R. Lumpkin (1978), “The Physical Suffering of Christ,” *Journal of Medical Association of Alabama*, 47:8-10.

Passages and Questions	Discoveries you make and record
Introduction: Look up the passages below to discover <i>the standards</i> for sacrifices God established in the Older Testament.	
Leviticus 21:17-24	
Leviticus 22:18-25	
Deut. 15:19-21	
Malachi 1:6-14	
1) The Exchange of our Lives as Sacrifices to God: Romans 12:1	
What should we present?	
To Whom do we present?	
Why should we present?	
How should we present?	
When should we present?	

2) The Transformation of our Lives after we Sacrifice them to God: Romans 12:2a-b	
The Enemies of our Transformation	
Rom. 12:2	
2 Cor. 4:4	
1 John 2:15-17	
Rom. 1:28	
How we are transformed	
Rom. 12:2b	
Eph. 4:17-24	
2 Cor. 3:18	
3) The Realization of Transformation: Living the “Exchanged Life” (Romans 12:2—15:13)	
Rom. 12:2b	
Rom. 12:3	
Rom. 12:3b	
Rom. 12:4-8	

If you truly feel that you learned and understand how Jesus desires for each of us to allow Jesus to give us the supernatural grace and strength so we also present our total selves and lives to God as a sacrifice, you can sign the following page titled *Title Deed to My Life*. This is just one way of having a permanent reminder that you have exchanged your life for Christ’s life.

TITLE DEED TO MY LIFE

*I urge you therefore, brothers & sisters, in view of the mercies of God,
to present your bodies as a living, holy and acceptable sacrifice to God,
which is your reasonable form of worship.*

*Do not be conformed to this age,
but be transformed by the renewing of your minds
in order that you may be able to discern
the good, pleasing and completely realized will of God.*

ROMANS 12:1-2

IN VIEW OF THE MERCIES OF GOD
REVEALED TO ME IN JESUS CHRIST,
NAMELY,
THAT CHRIST IS MY LIFE IN
JUSTIFICATION, SANCTIFICATION & GLORIFICATION,
I HEREBY ON THIS DAY OF _____
PRESENT ONCE AND FOR ALL
MY ENTIRE LIFE TO GOD
AS A LIVING AND HOLY SACRIFICE
FOR THE PURPOSE OF FULLY REALIZING
THE EXCHANGED LIFE, WHICH IS THE WILL OF GOD.

SIGNATURE _____

CHAPTER 4

WORDS ABOUT EXPERIENCING THE WORD OF LIFE

RETURNING TO THE WORD OF LIFE

John had in mind two distinct cultural groups when he wrote John 1:1-4. First, he was reaching out to Jewish people, people with a rich tradition *anchored in the words of the Older Testament*. John begins his story of Jesus by quoting the very first three words of the Older Testament, *In the beginning . . .* (Gen. 1:1). He then applies *In the beginning*, originally referring to God in the Older Testament, to the Person of Jesus. Jesus was *with God* in the beginning, *as God* in the beginning and is the *Co-Creator with God* from the beginning of everything that was created. John was sharing with his Jewish people that Jesus is God, equal with God, and God they had been worshiping without realizing that God would one day become a human in the person of Jesus.

Second, John is attempting to communicate with Greeks and others who have a rich tradition *anchored in Philosophy*. The Greek word that John selects to describe Jesus is *Logos* (λογος), translated as *Word*. John borrowed *Logos* from Stoicism, a Greek philosophical system. Stoics thought the *Logos* to be

*The underlying, cosmic principle of intelligence or reason that produces the rationally ordered activity in the universe . . . usually regarded as a force . . . impersonal . . . which permeates all things as their causal agent . . . all humans possessed part of the Logos and were dissolved back into Logos at death.*²¹

John borrows the term *Logos*, infuses *Logos* with *Christological meaning* and in effect witnesses, “The universal reason or logic or mind you are seeking for is actually *a Person*, Jesus, Creator and God who became a human, died on the cross and rose again as God’s final *Word* or message to humanity.”

John’s Holy Spirit inspired approach to his culture illustrates what I think is true for all ages Christians live in as well as our current age. If we are to return to the experience of exchanging Life with Christ that is the essence of the apostles’ witness, we should take the first step of that return and follow their footsteps left in the 1st century. Taking that first step means accepting their *way* of understanding from the inside the culture in which we live as a God-inspired, apostolic path. Then, with Christ *Who is our Life* living in and through us, we can allow Jesus to express Jesus through us without distorting Jesus, in Jesus’ way that communicates effectively Jesus to any given group of people and culture.

We now live in an age that many have identified as *Postmodern*. The chart on the next page compares in simple fashion some distinctives of the pre-modern, modern and post-modern eras. Postmodern thought has rejected the notion of rationally discovered, logically explained *Capital T Truth*. For me, this means the present is a cultural motivation for Christians to return to the Exchanged Life. The exchanged life is an experience, *beyond words alone*, of Christ. The Christocentric, supernatural experiences of Jesus as *The Truth* is a way that *The Way* can communicate God, initially *beyond words*, to all people and those who view themselves as postmodern.

The first followers of Jesus originally experienced and shared with their culture Christ’s promises to give all who come to Christ supernatural experiences of exchanging Life with Christ and God as Truth. If Christians hope to be those through whom Jesus communicates God with postmodern people, Christians will have to go beyond not just words but also beyond just their mental understandings of the postmodern times in which we live (2 Ch. 12:32). Rather than just understanding our culture, or any culture, Christians will have to return to the *beyond words and understanding* experience of the Supernatural Christ of the Bible, which is really the heart of the apostles’ witness. Living in and sharing Christ this way with a postmodern age and every age is Christ’s way, for Christ Himself is *The Way* (John 14:6).

²¹ P. Angeles, *Dictionary of Philosophy*, 158.
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TABLE 5-FROM PRE-MODERN TO POST-MODERN: A BRIEF COMPARISON²²

Pre-Modern: What Is	Modernity: What Was	Post-Modern: WHATEVER!
God is Objective Truth	Objective <i>truths</i> Exist	Objectively true, <i>capital T Truth, does not exist.</i> There are only subjectively true, <i>little t truths.</i>
God <i>reveals</i> Truth about God and the Meaning and Purpose of Life	Objective truths can be <i>discovered</i> by Human Reason and by Science, Logic, Arts and the Humanities	Objective Truth cannot be discovered. All humans can do is <i>create subjective meaning</i> for ourselves and others by our words and stories.
God used human language to witness to God's view of Reality. The inspired <i>words of God</i> in The Bible are a witness to God's view of reality. The Bible is thus a God-inspired <i>Literary Metanarrative.</i> (2 Timothy 3:15-17)	It is possible to use human words and language to describe and define objective truths. These descriptions were called <i>scientific discoveries</i> but are now called by postmodern thinkers a <i>Metanarrative.</i>	There is no objectively true description of reality, no true metanarrative. There are only <i>the many narratives or stories</i> humans believe in because they give humans <i>a sense of meaning.</i> All stories or narratives are valid for those that believe them.
God's <i>Metanarrative</i> (the words of God, the Bible) liberates from deception those who accept the witness of God's words in the Bible about God and God's view of reality as Truth (1 John 5)	Metanarratives based on Science, Logic, Historical Fact and the entire academic process liberate us from falsehoods and allow us to discover and know <i>objective truths.</i>	Those who believe in any given Metanarrative inevitably use it to <i>oppress</i> others into believing their Metanarrative as truth. Instead, everyone should simply share their stories and accept them all as subjectively true for those who believe them and only relatively valid for others.
God is the objective standard for right and wrong. God revealed God as The Standard through creation, conscience and the words of God, the Bible, which can be <i>understood at least partially</i> by humans created in the spiritual Image of God.	There are <i>universal standards of justice</i> that humans using human reason can discover and determine as true. Human reason discovers those ethical truths and helps us know how we should apply them.	There is no universal, objective standard of right and wrong. Ethics and Morality are subjective. Right and wrong are what individuals and societies subjectively determine them to be.

²² See J. W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic Worldview Catalog*, 3rd Ed. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997) and D. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 173-186.
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RETURNING TO THE WORD OF LIFE AND EXPERIENCES OF GOD “BEYOND WORDS”

I respect self-defined postmodern people and hope I understand partially their personal, subjective and experiential words about life. I describe in this section some personal, subjective experiences of my own. My experiences are related to earlier experiences had and described by the first followers of Jesus in their writings. All of these experiences have a common source and theme. They are *beyond* words.²³ They are Christocentric, supernatural, exchanged life experiences of God. I think many people sincerely seeking for truths and their truth and who consider themselves postmodern have opened the door *into experience and talking about experiences*. That open door is an invitation from our culture by which we can enter and return to the experience of exchanging Life with Jesus, to Whom the apostles witnessed in their writings.

People who embrace postmodern thought are suspicious, many times rightfully so, of *Metanarratives*. Metanarratives are *words* constructed together by humans into comprehensive statements of beliefs. These statements claim to be *true descriptions of reality for everyone*. In contrast to *words* that become *comprehensive stories* that mirror or define reality, postmodern thinkers believe that the only thing that is relatively true is *personal stories* and *personal narratives*. These *stories* seem true for those who believe them but are not necessarily true for everyone. They think humans create and believe their self-created Metanarratives because believing in them creates and gives them a sense of *ultimate meaning* in life. However, in postmodern thought, no one is able to define ultimate reality or *The Truth*. Therefore, *all* of our stories or narratives are *relatively valid*. Meet and read the following persons as some who can introduce us to basic beliefs of *postmodern thought*.²⁴

Returning to the Persuasions of the Holy Spirit of God

I was raised in a loving but not-yet-Christian home. I never heard a sensible explanation about Jesus until I was 20 and had finished my second year of college. From 1969-1971, I believed in and practiced what some would label a *postmodern lifestyle*. I knew much more about Psychology, the Philosophy of Religion, Buddhism and Hinduism than Christianity. Studies in psychology (*Epiphenomenalism*) and literature about the effects of mind-altering chemicals had convinced me that what some call *reality* was ultimately subjective in each person. Even when I considered the view that objective, ultimate reality may really exist, I saw no evidence in a world of competing religions and worldviews that anyone knew what objective ultimate reality really was. Even when I entertained the idea that perhaps someone did, I did not think they could explain it with words to others. I also believed morality was subjective, relative to the person, culture and age in which one lived. *Little t truths* existed for me, but *Capital T Truth*? No! Then, for about one year, I began to experience a deep, episodic, pulsating experience within me that something was wrong with *my worldview* and ultimately, with me.

²³ They are not *logocentric*, a term used by postmodern philosophers to express the idea that any description of reality centered on words does not reflect reality as it really is. They think word centered descriptions describe only our subjective, personal experience.

²⁴ For a Christian view of postmodern thought and a related idea, “reification,” see D. Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 173-186. People who really believe postmodern thought and are primary sources are, among many others, J. L. Lyotard, J. Derrida, P. Berger and T. Luckmann. Berger and Luckmann’s *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (NY: Doubleday, 1966) is a seminal explanation of how we create but do not discover meaning (note the date). Entry-level introductions and quick overviews of topics such as “post-modernism,” “reification,” “religious attribution” and “relativism,” can be obtained from *Wikipedia*, the free internet encyclopedia. <http://www.wikipedia.org/>

I did not then understand what was happening in me. I felt persuaded personally of various *sins*. I felt persuaded personally of my need for some form of *righteousness* to deal with my sins. I felt persuaded personally that if I did not find some form of righteousness to deal with my sins that I would experience some sort of *judgement*. I spent a year experiencing interior persuasions that were deeper than mere words and logic. At that time, I was as the people described in Acts 19 who said, *We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit*. Now I think what happened to me during that year is what Jesus called the *persuasions* of the Holy Spirit (John 16:7-11). Before I believed that Jesus or the Holy Spirit were real, the Holy Spirit was *persuading* me spiritually, mentally and morally of my need of Jesus. Eventually, I came to understand these deep persuasions as the Holy Spirit working within me, far deeper than words or logic could go. These supernatural persuasions prepared me to hear, understand and say “Yes” to Jesus when I eventually heard about Him. When I eventually asked Jesus to give me His Life, it was because I *had been persuaded I needed His Life*. I later learned that the persuasions of the Holy Spirit that transcend mere words or logical explanations was ultimately *why* I had concluded that I needed Jesus.

The only people who genuinely come to Christ do so only by means of these supernatural persuasions of the Holy Spirit. Advertising, marketing, polling and other human efforts have proven to be effective tools that entice people to *come to meetings or events*. However, *no one ever truly comes to Jesus and genuine faith in Jesus without the supernatural persuasions by and witness of the Holy Spirit to Jesus*. I am returning to a dependence on the supernatural persuasions of the Holy Spirit to share Jesus with people. Many in our postmodern age have stopped believing that words can describe reality or objective standards. They are not *logocentric*. I now see more than ever why depending primarily on the supernatural, interior persuasions of the Holy Spirit that are *beyond mere words* will ultimately lead people to *The Word*. However, my words here are likewise just words. I want *The Word*.

Returning to the “Naturally Impossible” but “Supernaturally Possible” Love of God

In 1970, I met a person my age from my cultural group in the city of Kent, Ohio. As we talked, I shared with him my recent experiences within certain forms of religions and psychological settings. The conversation turned to his experiences with Jesus. He invited me to visit his church, the Ravenna Assembly of God. The following Sunday I actually went there to experience what he claimed to be *Jesus living in people*. The differences in their culture and mine could not have been greater. My noting these outward differences evaporated within me when these people radiated to me a glowing love. I will never forget one older man who gently touched my cheek in an expression of tenderness and compassion.

One year later, I actually began to read the writings of the first followers of Jesus. I learned that the love those people had shared with me a year earlier was actually a known type of love with a name, *agape*.²⁵ I learned that Jesus said that the *experience of Agape Love* is the central, supernatural experience that would allow others to *know* who His true followers were. *I am giving you a new instruction. Love [agapate] one another in the same way as I loved you. This is how you should love one another. All people will know that you are my followers if you share love [agape] with one another* (John 13:34-35).

However, when I actually began to seriously read the writings of the first Jesus followers just as I would read any other book I was trying to understand, I learned that humans in their own power could not fulfill Jesus’ *new instruction*. 600 years before Jesus, God asked Jeremiah an intriguing question. God in effect said to Jeremiah, if you cannot live up to *basic human* standards, how would you ever live up to standards that are *beyond human ability* (Jer. 12:5). I was shocked to learn from the earliest Christian writings that no one has or ever could keep the 613 commandments of the Older

²⁵ See C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*.
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Covenant (Galatians 3:10-25; Romans 7:7-25). Jesus *new commandment* certainly raised the standard of love that was expressed in the Older Covenant as *love your neighbor as yourself* (Lev. 19:18). I could not even *love my neighbor the same way I love myself*. How was I ever going to *love others in the same way Jesus loved us*, a love that enabled Jesus to give His life for each one of us.

As I continued reading seriously the apostolic writings, eventually I learned that when anyone becomes a believer in Jesus, the Holy Spirit supernaturally *pours into* them the very same supernatural, agape love that was in Jesus. *God is Agape* is why Jesus gave His life in exchange for each of us (Romans 5:5-8; John 15:9-17).

I also learned that even though we do not have the ability to love one another as Jesus loved us, God can give all true followers of Jesus an experience of supernatural *agape love* that *actually is God, beyond mere human knowledge*. Here is how an apostle describes this supernatural experience of *Agape Love* that is beyond human words or thoughts:

[I pray] . . . *that God would give to all of you, according to God's glorious riches, supernatural power through the strengthening of the Holy Spirit in your inner persons, so that Christ may fully occupy your hearts by faith, and now that you have become rooted and grounded in God's Agape Love, that God's power would enable all of you together to experience every dimension of God's Agape Love, the wideness, the length, the height and the depth and that you would go on to fully experience Christ's Agape Love that surpasses human knowledge, so that you may experience being filled with all the Fullness of God. . . . And because of the supernatural power that is working in us, God is able to do far beyond what any of us can ask for or think about . . .* (Ephesians 3:14-21).

How can we *know* something that is *beyond* knowledge? How can we *know* something that is *beyond words*? God wants to take us beyond words, beyond the limitations of our minds, into the very *experience* of *The Word* and the supernatural agape love that *is* God. *God is Love (Agape)*. John means by this that the essence of the Person of God *is* Agape Love. *Agape Love* is ultimately a *Person*, God. *Agape Love* is not primarily a word, an action, a quality or an emotion. God is personal and a *Person*, not a word, object, or an idea. When I use the term *person* to refer to God, I do not mean God is a human. I mean human persons are *like* God in that God is self-conscious, exhibits intelligence, will and purpose, can communicate with us and most importantly, loves other persons, the humans God created in God's spiritual image. Actually, instead of thinking God is *like humans*, us being made in God's spiritual image means that *we are like* God. Of course, God is infinitely greater than the created persons God made in God's image.²⁶ We bear a *resemblance* to God's spiritual image but we are not *as or equal* to God.

God Who *is* Agape Love lives now within all true Christians. Those Christians can allow God Who *is* Agape Love to live in, with and through them and thus share with one another *The Person of God Who is Agape Love*. When Christians allow God to love others through them, they are actually sharing the Person of God with others and thus fulfilling supernaturally John 13:34-35. This truth about sharing the person of *God Who is Love* is actually the opposite of persons deciding to be like Jesus and attempting to love others like Jesus did in their own human power. That simply results in us giving to one another our watered-down versions of what *we think God's love is like*. Only as we *exchange* our watered-down versions of love for the *Person of God Who is Agape Love* can we experience the Person of God Who *is* Agape living in, with and through us.

I am returning to the *naturally impossible* but *supernaturally possible* experience of *God is Agape*. We live in a postmodern era that has rejected human words as capable of expressing or defining reality. What

²⁶A good, basic explanation of God as Person or Personality is C. S. Lewis' "Beyond Personality: First Steps in the Doctrine of the Trinity," the third section in his book *Mere Christianity*.

Exchanging Life with The Word of Life

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would happen if we stopped depending on mere words and returned to depending on the Holy Spirit inspired impartation of supernatural agape that is actually the Person of God. The Holy Spirit then enables us to experience and share with others the *Person and Fullness of God*. The apostles could not have made it any plainer that merely using human words to define and talk about God and agape love is just a *human substitute* for the exchanged life that is possible through Jesus. When I look back over 35 years of involvement with organized religion as a follower of Jesus, my experience was meaningful was when I was involved with people who personally shared with me the *Person of God Who is Agape Love*. When it was meaningless or frustrating was when mere words, outward religious practices, rituals, legalism and judgementalism characterized my life and experiences. As I look forward, I am returning to the naturally impossible but supernaturally possible experience of *God is Agape*. However, these are just *words about love*. I want *God Who is Agape*.

Returning to God's Glory

I was surprised by how people at the Ravenna Assembly of God loved me. However, something else happened to me that day in 1970. I was looking at the person who was speaking and his face began to *glow*. As I continued to look at him, it seemed as if a radiance of light was shining through and around his face. As the *glow* gradually got brighter on the speaker's face, I looked away from him and at other people to check my sense of vision. Then I began to see the *glow* coming through their faces as well. While this glow was strange to me, it did not seem a hallucination. The *glow* was only on their faces, and no other distortion was occurring in my vision, hearing or bodily sensations. I left the church that day, intrigued by this loving, glowing people, but I did not leave as a Christian. I returned to my life as a seeker for *my truth*.

Other Christians I met later that year also seemed to *glow*. I had met some other people who spoke with me about Jesus. They invited us to a party, at which we were playing volleyball and eating. As I was playing, eating and interacting with them, I noticed their faces began to *glow*. When the party ended, a few of them asked if they could visit us later that week at our apartment in Kent. As we agreed, they arrived, and thus began a typical night of intense, *searching for truth* discussion in our home. As they spoke, I saw for the third time the *glow* that I had now learned to associate with what were then called *Jesus freaks*. That night, in September of 1971, I did as they invited me to do. I asked Jesus, the One who I concluded makes His followers' faces *glow*, to *give me His Life*.

After this night, one of the first books in the Bible I ever read was Luke's *Acts* (literally titled *praxeis* or practices of the first followers of Jesus). When I arrived at Acts 6--7, I read the story of Stephen, the first follower of Jesus to be murdered because of his faith. I found interesting Luke's vivid descriptions of Stephen. He was *full of God's grace and power*. God enabled him to do *supernatural signs and wonders*. Stephen was *full of wisdom* and the *ancient scriptures* revered by Jewish people. However, what I found entrancing, riveting, unforgettable was Luke's description of Stephen's face as *the face of an angel* (Acts 6:15). Here in the earliest experiences and writings of Christians I found an explanation of and a correspondence to the *glowing faces* of people that I had seen over the previous year who said they followed Jesus.

Later, I studied more carefully this theme of *glow*. I learned Stephen was given a supernatural vision of the *glory* of God and Jesus before he was killed (Acts 7:56). Saul, who later took the name Paul after he became a follower of Jesus, was present that day and approved of Stephen's murder. Paul had seen Stephen with *glowing face*, full of the Spirit and the Scriptures. Saul-Paul had also seen the *glow*, even as I did almost 2000 years later. When I later studied carefully Paul's writings, I learned that Paul had himself gone even further back into the Scriptures, to the Older Covenant, to Moses, and there found a story about how Moses' face was *radiant* after speaking with The Lord and receiving the Law (Exodus 34:29-35; 2 Cor. 3). Years after Stephen's death, I think Paul was inspired by the

memory of Stephen's *glowing face* to understand the story of the *glory* of God that shone on Moses face. Then, the Holy Spirit illuminated Paul to teach us that when anyone receives the New Covenant of God by faith in Jesus, *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ* is supernaturally radiated into them (2 Cor. 3—4:6). Then, as we *unveil our faces* and exchange life with Jesus, we will be *transformed from one stage of glory to another stage of glory*.

It is the *Spirit of the Lord*, the Risen Christ within those who exchange life with Jesus, Who radiates *His glory* through them (2 Cor. 3:18). Humans are insufficient to produce this *glory* (2 Cor. 3:5). The words, rules and regulations of the *written Law* are insufficient to produce this *glory* (2 Cor. 3:7-15). In fact, humans' trying to follow the mere letter and words of the Older Covenant Law leads to the fading of glory and spiritual death (2 Cor. 3:6). It is only as one *unveils* their face and being to Christ and receives Christ's eternal Spirit and Glory that the eternal, transcendent and liberating revelation of *Christ's Glory is revealed through their faces*. When this happens, people of *this age* can see the *glory from before all ages*.

Jesus *shared* this *glory* with God from all eternity (John 17:5). Jesus *revealed* this *glory* when in His first body (John 1:14; Matthew 17:1-5, Mark 9:2-13, Luke 9:28-36). Jesus *gave* this *glory* to His New Body, the Body of Christ, all who truly believe in Him (John 17:22). Jesus *prayed* this *glory* would unite all His friends in one *glorious* unity (John 17:20-23). Down through the ages, Christian artists have *painted* a *glow* or *circle of light* (known as the *nimbus*) around the face of Christ and the faces of those who have exchanged life with Christ.²⁷ Paul described Jesus as The *Icon* or Image of God (Colossians 1:15). Christ now wants to transform all who receive His Life into similar *icons*, living images of the Living Christ (Colossians 3:10).

I am returning to the supernatural glory of God. I wonder what would happen if people of this age began to see and experience in the faces of those who follow Jesus a *glow*, a *glory*, a *nimbus* that has been shining from all eternity, before the glory of the sun and stars, before all ages of humanity, a *glory that is Christ's*? However, these are just *words about glory*. I want *God Who is Glory*.

Returning to Oneness with God

The night before Jesus was murdered, He was heard by John in a garden outside Jerusalem speaking these words to God. *I am asking not only for these, but also for all those that will believe in me because of their message about Me, that they may become one, just as you Father are in me and I am in you, that they may be one in us, so that the world may believe You have sent me. The glory You gave to me I have given to them, so that they may be one just as we are one, I in them and You in me, that they may be brought into a fully realized oneness with Us, so that the world may know that You sent me and love them just as You love me* (John 17:20-23).

Jesus taught his first friends and followers that the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit shared with one another a *oneness*, their common eternal Deity, from all eternity. Jesus temporarily gave up this type of oneness with God and assumed the limitations of living as a human (Philippians 2). As a human, Jesus *exchanged* His human life for us so that we would *receive* His eternal Life. Jesus did this so we could enter into the *experience of spiritual oneness* with God. Jesus asked God to bring into reality the plan shared within God from all eternity. That plan was to bring created beings like us into the *beyond human words and reason experience of spiritual oneness* with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus

²⁷ See the following links for historical information on the glow of God's glory known as the *nimbus*.
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11080b.htm>
http://www.christiansymbols.net/halos_page1.htm
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halo#In_Christianity

prayed that all who exchanged their human lives for His eternal Life would *experience oneness* with God and one another (17:20-22).

Jesus did not pray that Christians would simply *define oneness with words* in creedal and doctrinal statements. These are verbal exercises, using words from the secondary witness of the Bible to create third level sets of words *about* God. These third level words may represent necessary baby steps in doing *everything possible to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph. 4:3). However, babies must leave infancy. Spiritual babies must become mature by growing up and into the *experience beyond mere words* of Christ the Head of the Body, reaching unity in the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God and attaining the measure of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4). Mere human words alone *about God* can never *keep oneness with God* that *has only been created* by God's supernatural Spirit. Jesus asked God to take Christians through all the ages into the *experience of oneness with God* and thus with one another. Jesus knew this *experience of supernatural oneness with God* among His second Body would be *one of the supernatural witnesses beyond words* by which those who did not yet know Jesus *would know, become convinced of and be assured of* that God sent Jesus as The Savior and Lord of the world (17:23).

It is now almost 2,000 years since Jesus asked God to give all who believed in Him the *same oneness* that the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit have shared from all eternity. It is apparent to me from the records of Church history and as one who lives in an era with at least 1,000 denominations that the supernatural experience of oneness in God has been difficult at times for both the world and the visible church to see. Certainly, the world sees and *knows* that *fighting about words* (doctrinal arguments) and *fighting with swords* (religious wars) have been prominent in the historical, institutional Church. Yet, despite our failures, people throughout the ages have continued to come to Christ and testify that they have entered into the *experience of oneness with God*. How can we explain the apparent contradiction of outer divisions and witnesses who claim to experience *oneness with God*?

The prophet Isaiah taught me to understand the difference between persons who truly *know and are one with* the Lord and those who are merely members of a religious institution. Isaiah named one of his children *Shear Jashub*, which means *a remnant shall return*. Isaiah did this to symbolize the distinction between people in the nation of Israel in his time that did not know or obey the Lord and the *remnant*, a smaller group of people within that nation that showed they knew the Lord by loving and obeying God.²⁸ I cannot accept that *my own failures* and the failures of religious institutions such as fighting about words, religious wars that killed members of Christ's family, Crusades that killed members of the human family that may have become members of Christ's family, genocide, racism, slavery, gender bias and oppression, ethnocentrism and other failures that have truly hurt people represent what it means to be the *remnant* of Christ. I cannot accept that particular historical record, covered over with agreeing *about words* in creedal and doctrinal statements that are appealed to as evidence of our oneness, is what Jesus meant when He prayed for us to experience *oneness with God*.

Certainly, I believe based on Jesus' Person and promises that there is a true *remnant* that is *experiencing oneness with The Trinity and with one another*. That remnant is *one with God* and *one with every person* who has ever been or is now *in Christ*. As Isaiah did (Isaiah 6), I am returning from religious institutionalism to God along with many other children of the remnant. I am returning to the *beyond words and human reason experience of spiritual oneness* forever enjoyed by the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. I am returning to the experience of *oneness within God* that Jesus prayed would be shared among all who exchanged their lives for His eternal Life (17:20-22). I do not expect to see this return to be realized because we all suddenly agree on the *words* we use to talk about God.

²⁸ Isaiah 10:20-22; 11:1; 11:16; 17:3; 28:5; 37:4; 37:31-32.

Such a return can happen only as a gift, the gift of Christ's supernatural prayer and grace. Christ's prayer for His Body and His gift of grace can enable the true remnant to return to the Person of God and exchange our human words *about oneness* for the supernatural *experience of oneness* that is beyond human words or thoughts:

[I pray] . . . that God would give to all of you, according to God's glorious riches, supernatural power through the strengthening of the Holy Spirit in your inner persons, so that Christ may fully occupy your hearts by faith, and now that you have become rooted and grounded in God's agape love, that God's power would enable all of you together to experience every dimension of God's agape love, the wideness, the length, the height and the depths and that you would go on to fully experience Christ's Agape Love that surpasses human knowledge, so that you may experience being filled with all the fullness of God. . . . And because of the supernatural power that is working in us, God is able to do far beyond what any of us can ask for or think about . . . (Ephesians 3:14-21).

But, these are just words *about oneness*. I want *oneness with* Christ and Christ's returning remnant.

Returning to God's Power

Early in my college career, professors told me this conclusion from a learned person. *Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.*²⁹ They showed me how human governments have for the most part used power in corrupt ways to control people. I learned the history of religious institutions that have sought power and used it in corrupt ways to control, persecute and even kill those who challenged their agenda. Marxists taught me how they would liberate us from the corruption of capitalism. Capitalists taught me how Marxists would enslave us in the corruption of communism. Today, self-defined conservatives seek power to advance what they believe to be true and are labeled by some as corrupt.³⁰ Self-defined liberals seek power to advance what they believe to be true and are labeled by some as corrupt.³¹ Postmodern thinkers claim that all human constructions of every form of *Metanarratives* or comprehensive descriptions of reality are simply one group attempting to exercise power over other groups of people, corruptly compelling them to agree with their self-constructed view of reality.³² J. R. R. Tolkien published *The Lord of The Rings* in the midst of the 20th century, what some historians consider the most corrupt century of all, in which about 180 million people were killed in war. Tolkien's tale describes in mythic fashion how *Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely*. For this, Tolkien has been nominated as *Author of the Century*.³³ I wondered, *is there any form of legitimate power that is not corrupt and does not corrupt?*

After I began to read the early Christian writings, I learned that God is *omnipotent* or all-powerful. Omnipotent means God can do anything *compatible* with God's perfect nature. There is no limit to God's power attached to God's perfect nature. I learned that the *single defining exhibition* of God's power happened when Jesus returned to life after He was murdered. I studied Paul (1 Cor. 15; 2 Cor.

²⁹See <http://westerncanon.com/cgi-bin/lecture/Thucydideshall/cas/83.html> for a brief précis of the origins of Lord Acton's phrase expressed in a letter to Bishop Mandell Creighton in 1887: *Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men.*

³⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberalism> <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1069503/posts>

³¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservatism> <http://www.anncoulter.com/cgi-local/welcome.cgi>

³² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmodernism>

³³ See T. Shippey, J.R.R. Tolkien: *Author of the Century* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2001) and http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1058/is_32_118/ai_80680235

5), read books and listened to talks given by those who defended as a *historical fact* Jesus' resurrection. I believed and still do that their arguments are valid.

However, as I carefully read the primary writings of the first followers of Christ, I discovered that merely believing in a *future event called the resurrection* or defending as *historical fact* the resurrection of Jesus was for them simply the open door to the experience of exchanging life with Jesus. For them, experiencing the Risen Jesus was inside the open door, inside a Person that says *I Am The Door* (John 10:7-9). As Jesus explained to one of his closest friends Martha, the resurrection is *primarily a Person* and secondarily an event. Jesus says to her and us, *I Am The Resurrection and The Life* (John 11:21-27). *Defending* as a fact of history Jesus' resurrection *without actually experiencing* Jesus' resurrection never entered the minds of Jesus designated witnesses. In fact, the only reason they had for defending Jesus' resurrection as historical fact was that they *experienced the Risen Christ* within them (Acts 9).

I learned from primary Christian witnesses that experiencing the Risen Jesus is the *essence* of apostolic teaching of the exchanged life. *Experiencing God's power* in the Risen Jesus is the *expected experience* in everyone who *exchanges* his or her dead life for His Risen Life. When a person gives their life to Jesus, the Risen Jesus *unites them with Him, raises them with Him and installs them with Him* in spiritual union with God (Ephesians 1:15-23). Christ has *already raised* us into His Risen Life. Christ *is* our life. We have already died and God has hidden in Christ what we consider *our lives*. As we set our hearts and minds on Christ and not on earthly forms of corrupting power, we experience the reality of the Risen Jesus. The future hope of this experience is when Christ, *Who is now our life*, openly appears. Then, because we are one with Him, we will also openly appear in our resurrection bodies, fully perfected in the Glory of Christ (Colossians 3:1-4; 1 Cor. 15).

For now, we have the *treasure* of the Risen Christ within us. We are like jars of clay, made of earth, chipped, cracked and fragile. As we yield our desire for power to the Risen Christ, the surpassing greatness of *His Power* is seen *in us* but clearly *not from us* (2 Corinthians 4:7). The name Christopher means *Christ-bearer*. We should have *Christopher* inscribed into our pots, because each Christian is *bearing* the One who is *The Resurrection*. Our flaws and weaknesses are the very things that motivate us to exchange our lives for His Life and Whose Grace alone is sufficient for us, for Jesus brings *His power* to mature realization within us *because of our weaknesses* (1 Cor. 12:7-10).

In a world of power that corrupts and that distrusts all words about power, I am returning to the power of Christ. I wonder what would happen if self-confessed followers of Jesus surrendered our human powers and our desires for power and began to celebrate openly our human weaknesses in exchange for the experience of Christ's power within us. What would happen if, *for Christ's sake*, we openly delighted in our weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties? Christ's promise is that in our weaknesses we would *experience* the power of Christ and that those who do not yet know Christ's power would begin to see the *power of Christ* within us (1 Cor. 12:7-10). However, these are only words *about power*. I want to experience *Christ Who is Power*.

Returning to Christ our Peace beyond Words and Understanding

I came to self-consciousness in a century that saw 180 million people die in many wars. I became conscious that there was a *peace movement*. Bob Dylan lamented the *Masters of War* that live in mansions built on profits from war, from which they watch blood flow from the bodies of the young. Martin Luther King openly spoke *pacifism* to white and black power alike. The Beatles asked us to *Give Peace a chance*. Bruce Springsteen sang, *War, what is it good for?* His answer? *Absolutely nothing*. The Dave Clark Five exhorted, *Everybody get together, try and love one another right now*. I later learned that there were actually *Peace Churches*, churches that at least on paper believed Christ taught pacifism along with those that wrote the primary literature for the first Christians. In the 1960s, the Western world

became increasingly aware of and open to Eastern religions and gurus that promised the *experience of peace*. *Shalom* signs and patches appeared in public. Despite these exhortations, movements and all of our efforts to understand and resolve the causes of outer war and inner discord, there seems to be little experience of *peace*.

I was entranced when I read in the apostolic writings that they claimed there is an experience of peace that is *beyond understanding* (Philippians 4:6-7). I traced the theme of peace through the Bible, eventually writing a Master's thesis on this topic.³⁴ I discovered that in the primary Christian writings, peace is *primarily a Person*, Jesus, and only secondarily a mental state, for *Christ is our Peace* (Ephesians 2:14). Jesus is *beyond* human words, understanding and logic. Since Jesus is *beyond understanding*, it is paradoxically understandable that the *experience of Jesus as our Peace* would likewise be *beyond understanding*. We can at least understand as we could any other set of beliefs the following beliefs of Jesus' designated witnesses.

Jesus is our Peace-Peace with God They viewed Jesus' death on the cross as the means by which humans can experience peace *with* God (Romans 5:1). They believed God presented Jesus as a sacrifice when Jesus died on the cross. This sacrifice was for our atonement, a word that literally means *at-one-ment*, a state of being *at one* with God. They believed God did this to demonstrate fully God's justice, because in God's mercy God had never fully demanded the full requirement of justice to be satisfied for all of our sins. If God had fully demanded the full requirement of justice from us, it would have cost each one of us our lives. To spare us from that awful requirement, God placed on Jesus the result of our sins, death. Jesus' death for our sins was God's way of demonstrating the full requirements of justice. By placing on Jesus the death sentence each of us deserved, God remained perfectly just because God dealt with all of our injustices with perfect justice through Jesus' death. God then could *justly justify* those who have faith in Jesus *blood (death)* as payment for their sins. *To be justified is to be declared by God free from the penalty of sin and thus right with God*. Therefore, since Christians have been justified through faith in Jesus, we have *peace with God* through Jesus (Romans 3:25-26 and 5:1).

Jesus is our Peace-at Peace with God and Others The apostles viewed *Jesus* as our peace. Jesus' bodily death satisfied the requirements of and abolished as a standard of righteousness *The Law*, the 613 commandments and regulations of the Older Covenant. The Law actually made us *aware of our separation* from God and one another (Romans 7; Galatians 3:10-25). Jesus did for us what we could never do for ourselves. Jesus' death satisfied God's standard of righteousness *in The Law* and thus destroyed the wall made *from The Law* that kept Jewish and Gentile people from being *at peace* with God and one another. Jesus' death satisfied the requirements of God's Law and made it possible for all people groups to be *at peace* with God and one another in Christ. God's ultimate purpose was to create in Christ a unified, new type of humanity from all of the people groups of the human race. Since Jesus' death reconciled all people groups to God, Jesus Himself is the One that *made peace* between the members of the human race. Jesus made peace *for us* with God, which allows us to be *at peace* with God and others. Since it is through Jesus that everyone has access to the Father by one Spirit (and not by the standards of The Law or any ethical code), Jesus removed our need to be hostile with one another. Therefore, those who believe in Jesus should no longer regard anyone as foreigners and aliens. Rather, because *Jesus is our Peace*, everyone has become a potential fellow citizen and member of God's family (Ephesians 2:14-18).

³⁴*A Biblical Exposition of War*, 1984, available from *Theological Research Exchange Network*, order # 042-0141[14207] at <http://www.tren.com/e-docs/search.cfm?p042-0141>

Jesus is our Peace: Peace Announced to the Human Family Christ Himself has made peace with God and between all humans. After Jesus rose from the dead, Jesus told His followers to announce the peace Jesus had made with God and between all members of the human family. Actually, it was Jesus Himself, living in and through His first followers, that actually was announcing *this peace* (see the Book of Acts; 1 Peter 1:0-12). Therefore, Jesus told those who believe that *Christ is our Peace* to allow *Jesus within them to live out Himself as One Who is at peace with all and as The Announcer of peace to all*. The Risen Jesus came inside the first followers of Jesus and began announcing peace to people who were far away from God and peace to those who were near to God (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Jesus is our Peace: Peace of God The first followers of Jesus were the designated witnesses to and human announcers of being *at peace* with God and *with* one another. They also witnessed that it was possible for any of us to experience God's peace that is *beyond understanding* (Philippians 4:6-7). This peace is *primarily a Person, Jesus*, and only secondarily a mental state, for *He is our Peace* (Ephesians 2:14). This experience is found *in Jesus*, not in circumstances, situations or cookbook formulas for living life. Human words and mental understanding cannot define or confine this *Person of Peace*, but humans can *experience* Christ who is our Peace. This transcendental peace is Christ manifesting *The Self of Jesus* in us in a supernatural, *trans-rational* manner. Jesus is beyond human words, understanding and logic. Again, since Jesus is *beyond understanding*, it is paradoxically understandable that the experience of Jesus as our Peace would likewise be *beyond understanding*. Understanding this paradox is similar to any human who comes to understand that their human understanding is *far beyond* the understanding of a chimpanzee.

We live in an age where many believe the universe came to be by random chance. Postmodern thought has rejected the idea that any set of words can explain reality or give us peace and relief from the legitimate fears and anxieties that are valid if what they think to be our real situation would be true, a godless, purposeless universe. I am returning to *Christ Who is our Peace, Who is beyond human understanding*. What would happen in a postmodern age if Christians exchanged their human efforts to find and make peace for the *experience of Christ Who is our Peace*? Since the experience of Jesus as our Peace *beyond understanding*, I wonder why it has taken me so long to understand that it will *not be with words alone* that we share Jesus with those who have not yet believed? Rather, it will only be as we experience and allow Jesus to display *Jesus is our Peace* through us that we will help others who are searching for peace find Christ. But, these are just *words about peace*. I want *Christ Who is our Peace*.

Returning to The Transcendent Being Christ

Today, as in all days, there are sincere human beings who are *against* certain cultural trends. Others are *conforming* to cultural trends. Still others are committed to *transforming* cultural trends. Everyone has to do what he or she thinks best to do. My hope is to *transcend* cultural trends by returning to *The Transcendent Being* and allow myself to be one being along with other beings in who reigns the Transcendent Being, Love, Unity, Glory, Power and Peace of Christ. This sounds so arrogant that I assure myself and readers that I agree totally with Paul that this is impossible for me or any human being to do by human will or power, for . . . *we are not competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God* (2 Cor. 3:5). I believe the religious word for such a return is *revival*. However, it does not matter what words we use in an age that has rejected the power of words to define reality and *being*. Whatever words, strategies or stories we use, unless we return to The Transcendent Being of the Living Christ and share His Being with those that are seeking, our words, books, sermons, stories and religious services will all merge into the shadows of human strategies that preceded ours. *But, these are just words. I want The Being.*

IS THE EXCHANGED LIFE A PROGRAM OR A PERSON?

We are giving people a program [religion] instead of a Person [God].

According to Jesus and Jesus' designated witnesses, anyone who chooses to can allow the Risen Christ and God Who is Agape Love to be received, experienced and mediated through him or her. However, it seems to me at least that this does not represent the norm of what is happening at present in organized religion, churches, the academy or in society. I think Jeremiah's assessment of religious programming in his day is applicable to much of what goes on in organized religion at present:

*My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.*

Jeremiah 2:13

Jeremiah lived 600 years before Jesus. When Jesus arrived, He alluded to this metaphor and applied it to Himself: *'If anyone is thirsty, come to me and drink. The one who believes in Me, as the Scriptures say, will experience streams of living water flowing out of their inner being.'* John immediately in the next verse added his apostolic interpretation of what Jesus meant. *Jesus said this to refer to the Holy Spirit, Who those who had believed in Jesus would later receive. The Spirit had not yet been given at that time because Jesus had not yet been glorified. Glorified* meant for Jesus His death for our sins. God and Christ first gave the *streams of Living Water*, the Holy Spirit, to humans in the way Jesus and John meant in this verse at the feast of Pentecost (Acts 2). Thus, Jesus clearly interpreted the *streams of living water* to be the *experience* people would have of the *Person* of the Holy Spirit *after* Jesus was *glorified* by Jesus' death and resurrection.

Another metaphor that explains what is currently happening in religious circles is Paul's phrase *winds of teachings* (Ephesians 4:14). These *winds of words* have blown through various human teachers though the ages and into the present. These winds of doctrines share the same source, *humans under the control of their own human minds and other minds, using human words to construct human religious systems that further human centered agendas* (Col. 2:16-19; 1 Tim. 4:1-5; 1 Cor. 1:18—2:16 and many others). They have blown in all eras, coming through teachers and leaders in the historical eras in which they lived. *Infants* (Paul's term for spiritually immature people) interpret these *windy words* as new or unique teachings. What infants cannot and do not realize is that these winds actually keep them in the harbor of infancy. They hinder or even prevent the Body of Christ from experiencing the full maturity God has planned for Christ's body: *All Christians should attain together the unity of the faith and experience the full knowledge of the Son of God, becoming a completely mature, corporate person that represents fully the measure of the full likeness of Christ* (Ephesians 4:15-16).

This being blown back into infancy by the winds of human words and thus kept in a state of spiritual thirst happens whenever people reject or replace the *primary experiences of God as streams of living water that leads to experiencing together the full likeness of Christ with secondary and third level religious programming*. When that happens, *fellowship* becomes defined in human terms and by human social standards. *Fellowship* defined by the program of religion means some people compelling other people into mental agreement about words and doctrines. Then, some demand that all must use the *same words in the same way to talk about secondary and third level issues of our religious program*. *Fellowship* (*Koinonia*) for the earliest Christ followers meant that Christians shared *in common a Person, the Risen Christ*. Then, they shared and mediated supernaturally to one another Jesus' Life. Jesus and the apostles taught that spiritual unity and maturity would come only from sharing a common experience in and with the Risen Christ. They realized that Christians would always have *different levels of mental understandings* (1 Cor. 1—2). They knew that the spiritual *experience* of a Person, Christ, *The Word*, would never happen

by a program constructed with human words. Irony of ironies, self-defined liberals and self-defined conservatives both promote this slavish focus on secondary and third level religious programming.

Religious, denominational and culture wars are the result of drinking from broken cisterns instead of the Living Stream of Christ's supernatural Life (John 7:37-39). The Body of Christ is being kept in a state of infancy because they are drinking from broken cisterns (religious programs) made by human effort. We, orthodox and liberal, academic and popularizers, are giving people a *program* (religion) instead of a *Person* (God).

The apostle John experienced God *as personal and a Person*, not a religious program (1 John 4:7-21). *God is Love (Agape)* means that the essence of the *Person* of God *is* Agape Love. In God, Agape Love is personal, the eternal personal relationship of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Agape Love is the essence of God's Triune nature. The Person of God Who is Agape Love lives now within all true Christians. Those Christians can allow the God Who is Agape Love to live in and through them. When they allow God to live through them, they exchange with one another *The Person of God Who is Agape Love*, not a program made by human words. When Christians exchange with one another The Person of God Who is Agape Love, they are actually sharing God with one another and thus supernaturally fulfilling John 13:34-35. The Holy Spirit transports them into the community of Agape Love, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that is eternal and thus we become a community of persons united by the One who is beyond personality, God (Eph. 2:18). Only as we *exchange* our human powers for the Person of God Who is Agape Love can we *experience the streams of Living Water*, the Person of God living in and through us.

We can return to the *Spring of Living Water*, God. As we satisfy our thirst through God alone, we will share and experience with others the *Person* of God Who is Agape Love, beyond words and knowledge (Ephesians 1: 15-23 and 3:14-21). Alternatively, can continue drinking from broken cisterns, dug with our words and human religious programs that cannot hold the *streams of living water*, and thus continue leaking out of ourselves the brackish, dead words and works of religious programming (Matthew 15:8-9). *But, these are just words. I am dying of thirst for The Water of Life.*

**THE LETTER KILLS BUT THE SPIRIT GIVES US LIFE:
ARGUING ABOUT “WORDS” INSTEAD OF EXCHANGING LIFE WITH “THE WORD”**

The Word

I will never forget the day I first read John 1: 1 in the Greek New Testament and learned what John was doing when he titled Jesus *The Word*. The Greek word that he used there translated as Word is *Logos* (λογος).

John had in mind two distinct cultural groups when he wrote John 1:1-4. First, he was reaching out to Jewish people, people with a rich tradition anchored in the *words* of the Older Testament. John began his story of Jesus with *In the beginning . . .*, quoting the very first three words of the Older Testament (Gen. 1:1). He then applied those words, originally referring to God in the Older Testament, to Jesus. Jesus *The Word as Deity* was always with God from all eternity. Jesus *The Word* was with God in the beginning when God began to *speak* the Cosmos into being. Jesus *The Word* is the *Co-Creator* with God *from* the beginning *of* everything that has been created. John was sharing with Jewish people that Jesus is God, equal with God and, that they had been worshiping Jesus from *their beginning* without realizing that God would one day become a human in the person of Jesus.

Second, John reached out to Greeks who had a rich tradition anchored in Philosophy. John borrowed *Logos* (λογος) from Stoicism, a Greek philosophical system. *Logos* in Stoic thought was thought by Stoics to be

*The underlying, cosmic principle of intelligence or reason that produces the rationally ordered activity in the universe . . . usually regarded as a force . . . impersonal . . . which permeates all things as their causal agent . . . all humans possessed part of the Logos and were dissolved back into Logos at death.*³⁵

John took this term *Logos*, infused it with Christological meaning and in effect affirmed, “The universal reason or mind or logic you are seeking for is actually a person, Jesus, the Creator and ultimately God who became a human, died on the cross and rose again as God’s final Word-message to humanity.”

I have read the primary writings of apostolic Christianity and thought about the *Exchanged Life* against the backdrop of 1970 years of Christian history and theology for 35 years. I am more convinced than ever that the Apostles clearly believed that Jesus as *The Word* and the experience of exchanging life with Jesus are *the primary realities of God’s revelation to us* in what we call The New Testament. The words of God (the Scriptures) are secondary witnesses to Jesus. Much of the confusion and misapplications about those *primary realities of God’s revelation for us in the New Testament witnesses* to faith and experience through the ages, and especially at the present, is rooted in reversing in importance Jesus as *The Word* and the Scriptures as *the words* of God.

Jesus is “The Word” of God and the Scriptures are “the words” of God

Jesus made a clear distinction between Himself as *The Word* and the Scriptures being the *words* of God (John 5:39-40). Why is this distinction between Jesus as *The Word* of God and the Bible as *the words* of God so important for us to understand?

The earliest Christians had no written *gospels* and no authoritative collection of apostolic *letters* as we do at present. From the beginning of the apostolic led community of persons that was centered on Jesus, the earliest Christians did not find their deepest inspiration in a text-based tradition. They had only the spoken witness of Jesus’ designated witnesses, witnesses animated by the indwelling Christ (John 14:26, 15:26, 16:12-15; Acts 2:42). Some fortunate early Christians and others had limited access at times to the Older Testament. However, the Apostles read and interpreted the Older Testament in a *Christological (Christ-centered)* manner, just as Jesus had done and then supernaturally illuminated them to do (Luke 24, especially 24:25-27; 24:32; 24:44-45). Early Christians read the Older Testament as a *witness to* and a *means to* experience Christ, not as a religious and historical text in itself. They were not concerned with *word studies* and *literary criticism* on Older Testament books. Instead, they read Older Testament books as witnesses that pointed them to *The Word Jesus, by Whom they were then illuminated and enlivened.*

Before Jesus’ era, Jewish rabbis had identified three types of literature that comprised their authorized Scriptures. These three sections, or *genre*, are *Law (Torah, sometimes called Moses as well), Prophets (Nevi’im)* and *Poetic Books (Kethuv’im)*. Jewish scholars then took the first letter from each of those Hebrew words, *Torah, Nevi’im and Kethuv’im, or TNK*, and created an acronym by which they referred to the collection of writings they considered to be from God, the *Tanak*.³⁶

Soon after Jesus’ resurrection, Jesus met two disciples on the way to Emmaus. Jesus expressed surprise that they had missed the *Christological predictions* threaded throughout the entire three-fold

³⁵ P. Angeles, *Dictionary of Philosophy*, 158.

³⁶ Sometimes spelled *Tanakh* to capture the Hebrew pronunciation.

Exchanging Life with The Word of Life

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division of the Jewish Tanak. *This is what Jesus told them: Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer first and then enter into His Glory? Then, starting from Moses and then from all the Prophets, He interpreted to them in the Scriptures the things that applied to Himself* (Luke 24:25-27). Later, after Jesus left them, this was their response to Jesus' Christological tour through the Jewish Bible: *And they said to one another, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while He spoke with us on the road and opened to us the Scriptures?'* (Luke 24:32). Jesus appeared to them again soon afterward, this time while they were with Jesus' initial group of students. Again, Jesus *opened the Christological significance of the Jewish Bible to all of them*. Not only did their *hearts burn* but Jesus *opened their minds* as well to understand how Jesus was the main subject of the Jewish Bible. *He said to them, 'This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.'* Then He *opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures*. He *told them, 'This is what is written: The Messiah had to suffer, rise from the dead on the third day and in His Name a summons will be announced to turn away from and experience forgiveness of sins, beginning in Jerusalem and extending to all the people groups of the world ...'* (Luke 24:44-45). Many would love to have been there that day for this first ever *Jesus Seminar*, as the Master *opened the words of God and opened their minds* so they could ultimately know *The Word of Life* (John 1:1-18; 1 John 1:1-4). Reading the Older Testament in a Christological manner in effect pointed them primarily to an experience with Christ Himself, and only secondarily to itself as the Scriptures. Jesus and the apostles understood and clearly taught that the words of God were *secondary witnesses to Jesus, The Word of God*.

The distinction Paul made between Jesus as *The Word* and the *Scriptures as the words of God* is particularly clear in the Colossian letter. Paul defined the *Word of God in its Fullness* (Col. 1:25) as the Person of *Christ in you, the Hope of Glory*, not a text. Paul taught that the Scriptures were *God-breathed* and inspired (2 Tim. 3:15-17), but he clearly considered the words of the scriptures as secondary witnesses to the *primary message or The Word of God, Christ Himself* (Col. 1:27).

Consequently, the apostles proclaimed *Him* (Col. 1:28), not *it* (words, texts, stories, principles and propositions, etc.). They did so because their ultimate message and purpose was to know *The Mystery of God, Christ Himself, in Whom all wisdom resides* (Col. 2:2-3). When Paul writes at Col. 3:16 that we are to allow the *word of Christ* to dwell within us and to teach one another with *wisdom*, what Paul meant by the *word of Christ* is Jesus Himself, for *Jesus is God's ultimate Word or Message in personal form. Wisdom for Paul is Jesus, a Person, not a thing, quality or set of depersonalized principles* (1 Cor. 1:30).³⁷

There are two main reasons why this distinction between Jesus as *The Word* and the scriptures as the *words of God* is particularly clear in the Colossian letter. First, it is a fact of history that the Colossians had few or no texts to read and find *the Word of Christ*. They had experienced the Person of Jesus as *The Word* through the witness of one of Paul's partners, Epaphras (Col. 1:7; 4:12-13). Epaphras before them had experienced the Person of Jesus as *The Word* through the witness of Paul (Acts 19:10). Second, the internal, literary, contextual flow of thought recorded in the Colossian letter shows that what Paul meant by the word of Christ is best understood as the *Person of Jesus Himself. The Word of God in fullness is Christ in you* (Col. 1:27) and *Christ is our Life* (Col. 3:4). *Jesus is the Personal Messenger and Personal Message of and from God. Thus, The Word of God in the fullest sense is Jesus, not a book or a text. Jesus is the Perfect Image (Icon) of God* (Colossians 1:15). When Paul described the purpose of his service as . . . *to present every person fully developed in Christ* (Col. 1:28), what he means by

³⁷ People who enjoy advanced mental processing can better understand this point by understanding what is meant by the term "reification." Reification is viewing human words, thought and constructs as if they were things or objects that exist independently from our own conceptions about them. Paul's personalizing of The Word and Wisdom of God as Jesus has actually been reversed, "reified" and depersonalized by well meaning people so that wisdom becomes a *state of mind*, a set of *depersonalized principles or propositions*. The apostles did the opposite. They took depersonalized words, principles and propositions then current in their culture such as *Logos* (reason) or *Sophia* (wisdom) and, following Jesus' inspired claims recorded in John's Gospel, saw the Person of Jesus Himself as *The Word, The Bread, The Door, The Light, The Resurrection, The Way, The Truth, The Life* and in Paul's letter to the Colossians, *The Wisdom of God*.

*fully developed*³⁸ is that it is the design of God for each Christian to become renewed in the fullest sense, resemble and actually *be* the *image (icon)* of Christ (Col. 3:10). . . . *Every person fully developed in Christ* means that it is the design of God for each Christian to become in the fullest sense an *Iconic Christbearer*. *Christo* means Christ, and *phero* is a Greek word that means to bear, to carry. The name *Christopher* actually means *one who carries or bears Christ*. What Paul (and the Holy Spirit through him) really means to convey at Col. 3:16 is that we should allow Jesus, the *Personal Messenger and Personal Message of God, The Word Who is Wisdom*, to manifest Jesus' *Self* through us to one another. We are to be *Icons of Jesus, mediating Jesus Who is The Word, The Icon, The Life, The Wisdom* to one another.

The "Letter Kills" but the Spirit Gives Us an Exchange of Life

Proclaim the word. . . (2 Tim. 4:2) is ultimately and best understood as *Jesus is The Word*, the Person-centered view described above. *Proclaim the word* . . . ultimately means *Proclaim Jesus*. Many beloved and sincere Bible professors, teachers and pastors that I studied under and whom I love and respect synthesize 2 Tim. 4:2 with 2 Tim. 3:15-17 to make a case for *Biblical preaching*. On one level, of course we should teach the Scriptures. However, we should teach *the words of God in the same way* as do Jesus and Jesus' designated witnesses. Jesus noted the clear distinction between the *witness* of the Scriptures and *The Person (Jesus)* to Whom they witnessed and pointed us. Jesus revealed that Jesus *was the Source of Life*, not words or texts that are witnesses *about Jesus* (John 5:39-40). Thus, *proclaim the word* . . . means teaching the Scriptures as Jesus and the apostles do, *teaching how the words of God direct us to and into union with The Person of Christ, The Word of God, The Word of Life*, not just teaching the Scriptures themselves as *texts*.

Even the very text some use to make a case for teaching the scriptures actually points us to an experience of Jesus, . . . *for the set apart scriptures are empowered witnesses that make us wise about the experience of salvation through faith in Christ Jesus* (2 Tim. 3:15). Correctly understanding Paul's prediction at 2 Timothy 4:3-4 depends entirely on correctly understanding what Paul means by certain terms he uses in that prediction. Here is how 2 Timothy 4:3-4 is translated in the KJV.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

What does Paul mean by terms such as *sound doctrine, the truth and fables*? *Sound doctrine* means for Paul teaching sets of words as witnesses to the *experience* of being transformed and set apart by union with Christ. *The Truth* means for Paul teaching sets of words as witnesses to the *experience* we can have with *Jesus Who is The Truth*. *Fables* (literally *myths* in the Greek) means for Paul stories that are *sourced in humans, centered on humans and satisfying to human desires*. Any teaching, whether it comes through self-confessed conservatives or those labeled as liberal, that does not direct us into union with *The Word of God in its Fullness, Christ in you, the Hope of Glory* and the experience of exchanging life with *The Word of Life* is *not sound, not the truth* and is *just human centered fables or stories* made with human words (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).

A legalistic focus on the words of the Bible diverts us from the real point of the words of God, union with and exchanging life with Christ. This is what Paul means when he writes that the *letter* of the text *kills* but the *Spirit makes us alive or gives life* (2 Cor. 3:5). The *letter* is *when we understand and teach the words or texts of the Bible in a depersonalized, legalistic sense, focusing on the words themselves*. Reading the words of God *in the Spirit* means reading them in the manner God intended them and as Jesus taught us to read them, as *witnesses to and as facilitator of an experience with the Lord Jesus Himself*. When we believe the

³⁸ The Greek word is *telion*, from *telos*, which means something or someone who has reached the full, mature realization of what they were designed to be. *Telion* does not mean "perfection" in the literal sense, which applies only to God.

words of God are true and thus do as they direct us to do, turn away from them and unite with Jesus, Jesus then gives us *His Life*. The Lord Himself is The Spirit, and the Glorious Lord is the One to whom the words of God direct our attention. As we turn our vision from the witnesses of words to Jesus *The Word*, Jesus then shines into our inner selves *His Glory*. As we *behold* His Glorious Image, Jesus transforms us *into* His Image. We are *not transformed* by texts or words. We are *informed* by texts and words to unite with Jesus *Who is our Life*. We are jars of clay that carry *The Treasure of Jesus*. Jesus is seen as *The Treasure as Jesus manifests inside of us* (2 Cor. 4:4-7). The primary focus of Christians should be *The Lord of Glory*, not the *text* of glory. The words of the Bible are witnesses that point us to and urge us *to experience union with and an exchange of Life with the Lord of Glory*.

Experiencing Union with and Exchanging Life with Jesus The Word of Life is the Primary Reality Taught in Primary, Apostolic Literature

The supernatural reality of experiencing union with Jesus is the *primary reality* witnessed to in the primary literature written by the earliest followers of Jesus. For them, the Scriptures (the words of God) play a *secondary* role as a *witness to Jesus* as The Word of Life. The words of God also serve as *normative literary expressions and descriptions of what it looks like* when one has had a true experience of and with Jesus (1 John 1:1-4).

I do not believe there is a contradiction or disagreement between Jesus as *The Word* and viewing the scriptures as *normative literary expressions and descriptions of what it looks like* when one has had a true experience of and with Jesus. I am simply making the same distinction that Jesus and the apostles themselves made. Jesus is the *primary Word and Source of Life* and the words of God, the scriptures, are *secondary, normative witnesses* that direct us into union with and exchanging life with Jesus. Jesus was quite comfortable teaching two *compatible beliefs*, that *Jesus is the Source of Life* and that the words of God are *God-inspired witnesses that point us to Jesus* and not to them.

Jesus is reported to have clearly identified the *contents* of what Jesus considered the inspired and authoritative words of God (what we now call the *Older Testament*, Luke 24:27, 24:44). Jesus is reported to have believed that those contents of the Older Testament *were inspired and authoritative* (Matthew 5:17-20; John 10:34-36). Jesus is reported to have believed the teaching Jesus gave before being glorified was inspired by God and thus authoritative (Matthew 7:24-29; 24:34-35; Luke 21:33; John 14:21-24). Jesus is reported to have predicted that Jesus' followers would be led by the Holy Spirit to receive and later write inspired and authoritative *words of witness* in the future (what we now call the *Gospels and Letters*, John 14:25-26; John 16:12-15). It is clear beyond dispute that Jesus is reported to have believed and taught that the words of God, the scriptures, were inspired by God and thus authoritative. However, it is reported even more clearly that Jesus believed the words of God, the scriptures, are *secondary and normative witnesses* that direct us to *an experience with Jesus Himself as The Word of Life*:

You diligently search study the Scriptures because you think that in them you have and experience eternal life. These Scriptures are witnesses concerning Me, yet you will not come to Me so that you can experience and have this Life that is in Me (John 5:39-40).

Paul witnesses that *The letter kills but The Spirit makes us alive*. Whenever we focus on the *letter* of the Bible, no matter how well intentioned, we *supplant* and can even *kill* the unity of the Spirit and faith in Jesus. Whenever we begin to confuse Jesus as The Word with the secondary witness of the Bible and our third level understandings of the Christian faith (our sermons, teachings, doctrinal statements and stories), we *supplant* and can even *kill* the unity of the Spirit and faith in Jesus. It is a fact of Christian history that many have made *more important* the *secondary witnesses* (the words of God) and our resulting *third level (tertiary) understandings* of the words of God (*creedal and doctrinal statements*) that are with

good intentions used in an attempt to explain the secondary witnesses than the primary experience of life and unity we share in Jesus The Word. When that happens, we replace the experience of exchanging Life with Jesus with *dogma about Jesus*. When that happens, we allow the *letter* of the words of God and our words to *kill* our possible experience of union with and exchanging life with Jesus.

Technical Theological Words that May Help Us Understand the Difference between The Word and the words of God

Below are some technical theological terms that some may find helpful in order to realize the differences between 1) Jesus as *The Word of God*, the primary source of the exchanged life, 2) the Scriptures as the *words of God* and as secondary witnesses to Jesus, and 3) our third level (tertiary) *understandings* of the words of God expressed in theological language. If this section seems too technical for some, feel free to pass over these words. I did not invent these terms. I am reporting them as terms many have used to express themselves in theological discussions and discourse.

Orthos (ὀρθός) in Greek means *straight*. *Doxy* is a form of *doxa* (δόξα) and originally meant glory but came to imply *belief*. When combined, *orthodoxy* means *correct or accurate beliefs* about a topic or state of affairs. Based on a careful reading of the New Testament documents and biblical scholarship, it is clear that orthodox Christianity focuses on Jesus Christ. The death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus as Messiah, Savior and Lord are the heart of the Christian message. This message *about* Jesus requires a response of faith (trust, commitment) *in* Jesus if people are to experience union and exchanging life *with* Jesus. A faith response in Jesus leads to the *experience of salvation*, forgiveness and hope for the future God has promised to those who believe in Jesus. In short, this focus on Jesus is essential Christianity. Historically, Vincent of Lerins is recognized as defining orthodoxy as . . . *that which has been believed everywhere, always, by all Christians*.³⁹

Kerygma (κήρυγμα) means *what is preached, a message, a proclamation*. The *Kerygma* proclaimed by Jesus' designated witnesses recorded in the Book of Acts have as their central focus the death, resurrection and exaltation of Jesus as Savior and Lord in fulfillment of the promises found in the *Tanakh* (the Jewish Bible, the Older Testament).⁴⁰ Faith in this *kerygma* is actually faith in *a Person, Jesus, not faith in a set of words or ideas*. Faith in Jesus leads to the *experience of forgiveness* and the promise of the exchanged life in the present and the future. Consequently, *kerygma* means the proclamation of the witness the Holy Spirit inspired the apostles to share of and about the Lord Jesus Christ. Historically, the apostolic *kerygma* is the basis for *third level* credal and doctrinal expressions recorded in the Apostles' and other Creeds of the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches.

Faith (Pistis, πιστις) is explained as follows: *Faith is the inner assurance of things hoped for, inner certitude about things not being seen* (Hebrews 11:1). *Faith* understood by the apostles is *inner certitude* that certain unseen realities are true (veridical) and thus *worthy of one's trust, commitment and hope*. Apostolic proclamation of Jesus also provided *reasons* or explanations for *why* we should have faith in and commitment to Jesus (1 Peter 3:15; Acts 17:16-34, etc.). This support of faith in Jesus with reasons for why we should have faith in Jesus came to be called *apologetics* (απολογία). The result of the

³⁹ Vincent of Lerins, "Commonitorium," in *Documents of the Christian Church*, 2^d edition, ed. H. Bettenson (London: Oxford, 1973), 84.

⁴⁰ The *kerygma* of the Apostles are recorded in Acts 2; 3; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 7:1-53; 8:26-40; 10:34-48; 13:16-41; 14:15-18; 15; 16:29-34; 17:1-4; 17:10-12; 17:22-34; 18:1-4; 19:1-10; 20:1-6; 20:7-12; 20:17-35; 22:1-21; 23:1-11; 24:10-21; 24:24-25; 26:1-30; 28:23-30.

inner certitude or faith that one places *in* Christ is *belief or beliefs*. *Beliefs* are *what* one believes about the One *in whom* they have placed faith.

Dogma (δόγμα) is another theological term related to faith (inner certitude) supported by reasons and beliefs (apologetics). *Dogma* was used in Greek literature and the New Testament to mean *a rule, a regulation, law, order or decree*. Dogma can be understood as the *set of beliefs that one holds because of one's faith, or normative statements* of Christian belief. Faith *in the true Jesus* (2 Cor. 11:4) always precedes beliefs *about* Jesus and therefore has to precede technically phrased dogmatic statements as the primary basis for spiritual unity and orthodoxy among the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:3). See *Ideology*, below, for an understanding of what happens when we make technically phrased dogmatic statements *about* Jesus *more important* that faith *in* and union *with* Jesus.

Doctrine is essentially a synonym of dogma. The English word *doctrine* corresponds to the Greek word *didaskalia* (διδασκαλία), which means *what is taught, a teaching, instruction*. When used in the Bible, a doctrine is an abstract, coherent expression of belief or beliefs. According to the biblical authors, a doctrine can be true (veridical, accurately corresponding to objective reality) or false. Doctrine and dogma in their best forms are the true, coherent conclusions and formalized expressions of rationally supported faith that are to be taught to others. Timothy was told to pay close attention to both himself and to doctrine, for by doing so he would keep himself and his audience healthy (1 Tim. 4:16). Doctrine and dogma can also be false or even if plausibly true, used in such a way that they rival in importance or even kill the experience of exchanging Life with Jesus.

Theology is a hybrid of *Theos* (θεός, *God*) and *Logos* (λόγος, *something said, a message*). Theology at its best is accurate, organized communication about God. Theology is abstract conceptualizations *about God*, while doctrines are abstract conceptualizations of *what one believes about* any given state of affairs. Like Doctrine, Theology can in its best form be true and help people enhance their experience of exchanging Life with Jesus. Our *theologies* can also become rivals to and even kill the experience of exchanging Life with Jesus.

Ideology comes from the Greek word *eido* (εἶδω), derived from *oida* (οἶδα), *to know or understand*. Interestingly, *eido* (εἶδω) is related to the Greek word for *idol, eidolon* (εἰδωλον). This association between *understanding(s)* and *idolatry* agrees with how some theologians think humans create *ideologies*. When human, cultural and social limitations lead to some types of third level, rigid doctrinal formulations, those doctrines can become so powerful that *they actually take the place of experiencing God*. Jesus identified ideology as whenever one begins ... *teaching as doctrines* [viewed there by Jesus as statements made about God and reality *as if true* and backed by God's sanction] *the commands of humans* [viewed there by Jesus as mere human understandings about God and reality *without God's sanction*] (Isa. 29:13; Matthew 15:9). Theology *becomes* ideology when some people begin to replace experiencing an exchange of Life with Jesus (the central witness of apostolic teaching) with *mental assent to and about doctrinal propositions and human-made additions* to the central witness of the apostles to Jesus. This happens because some humans allow their human, cultural and social limitations to form their doctrinal formulations and then allow such formulations to become more important than the *primary experience of and commitment to the true Jesus* (2 Cor. 11:1-4).

Myth (Mythos, μῦθος) is considered by the apostles in the New Testament writings to be *fanciful stories*, not really true (2 Timothy 4:4). When used in the academic study of religion, myth is considered reflections of what some people have believed to be true, expressed in subjective, poetic and pre-scientific ways. Some *fanciful stories* are compatible with Christ *The Word* and can be used as third level witnesses that help facilitate union with Christ. Other fanciful stories told by conservatives and liberals alike are human centered and thus direct us away from the experience of Christ Our Life.

Heresy, Heresies (haireisis, αἵρεσις) are defined in the New Testament as *divisions or factions* that promote false, not true teachings primarily about Jesus but also about other realities at the heart of experiencing the exchanged life of Jesus (2 Cor. 11:1-15; 2 Peter 2, among many others). Heresy is derived from the Greek work *haireomai (αἵρέομαι)*, *to choose, prefer or decide*. The association seems clear between *divisions* and *decisions*. Heresies are the *human centered personal decisions that lead to divisions* made by false teachers, without God's authority, about what to believe, practice and teach. Heresies always either reject or direct people away from the primary reality of the apostles' witness, *exchanging life with the Word of God, The God-Human, The Word of Life, The Crucified and Risen Lord Jesus Christ*. John identifies those who embrace and teach *heresy as anti-christs* because they are *against Christ* and the exchange of life experience that is found in Jesus (1 John, esp. 1 John 2:18-26).

**Why Christians Have Argued and Do Argue “about words” instead of
Exchanging Life “with The Word” and One Another:
Confusing the Exchanged Life Experience with Secondary and Third Level Texts**

Secondary verbal expressions *about* primary experiences are not the same as the primary experiences themselves. Third level (tertiary) analyses and scholarly disagreements *about* the secondary expressions are sometimes helpful and sometimes not, but are even more removed from primary experience. For example, married lovers can have the *primary experience* of sexual union and later discuss in *secondary* verbal form their experience. Researchers like Kinsey (*The Kinsey Report*) can then study and write up *third level*, scholarly reports on the couples' secondary verbal expressions. However, the married lovers *retain the primary experience* in a unique way. Or, as displayed in the film *The Exorcism of Emily Rose*, Emily's *primary experience* with what she believed to be demonic beings (being demonized) of necessity required *secondary interpretations* of that experience by observers. Researchers were then called in to study and explain those secondary interpretations in *third level*, legal, scholarly publications. However, *primary experience is always primary* regardless of what the experience is or whether the experience is of God, the demonic, married love, *whatever*.

The apostles saw themselves as *ambassadors* or human agents that promoted the *primary experience of and in Jesus and His Spirit that resulted in a supernatural exchange of Christ's life into those who received Christ*. They did this by sharing with other humans *the good news of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit* (2 Cor, 4:7, 5:11-21, etc.). Then, after an authentic supernatural experience with Jesus occurred, they guided (pastored) people by giving them the *secondary witness of apostolic teachings in verbal or written form that supported and nurtured (but was not the source of)* their primary experience of Jesus (Acts 2:42 and The New Testament writings). The apostles concluded that the primary experience of Jesus was authentic when they saw signs of agreement between:

- 1) *The Word, Christ,*
- 2) *the words of God, the secondary witness of their teachings inspired by The Spirit of The Word* within them which later came to be in written form, what we now call the New Testament and
- 3) *the resulting lifestyles* of those who testified they had had an experience with The Word (1 Corinthians 1:18—2:16, especially 2:12-13).

Unfortunately, during and increasingly after the apostolic era, organized religious Christendom has always had some within us who have taken a different approach than the designated witnesses of Jesus. Some of us apparently believe that *promoting the primary experience of and in Jesus* in persons and then nurturing that experience with the *secondary witness* of apostolic teachings in written form *is inadequate*. As such, some of us represent the majority view and practice in the organized church today rather than the minority. Some of us want our *understandings, descriptions and terminologies* on a host of topics in the Bible to be regarded as the *normative word* instead of *promoting the primary experience in and of Jesus as The Normative Word*. Some of us do not seem to be content that union with Jesus has

been authentically experienced when we see *signs of agreement* between The Word of God, the words of God and people's lifestyles. Some of us seem content only when people accept our *third level precisely worded doctrinal expressions, our particularistic verbal expressions of dogma, our precise theological terminology and our interpretive conclusions and perhaps even ideologies on and about micro-issues in the secondary witness of the scriptures*. Some say they do this (I am not judging their *motivations*, just noting *what* they do) to produce what some think is *a normative expression of Christianity*.

The same thing happened in ancient times among biblical religionists (Matthew 15; Matthew 23). This will continue to happen wherever and whenever we *confuse The Source of Life* (uniting with Jesus The Word and exchanging Life with Him) with *secondary and third level witnesses about The Source* (words and definitions about Jesus and other topics considered *vital*). We then attempt to feed ourselves, live and find *significance and unity in our third level words or explanations about Jesus* rather than by *uniting with and living on the supernatural Source of Life, the Risen Jesus*. And, since these *third level words or explanations about Jesus* are just human words, they have never proven adequate to unite Christians in supernatural Life and Unity with Our Head, Jesus Christ. Instead, the Body of Christ has been kept in infancy by feedings with sub-milk and the organized church has been and is riven by factions fighting over words (Ephesians 4:11-16).

The Word is speaking to us and calling us into union with *The Word* and the *experience of exchanging Life with God*, not to *secondary shadows* (Col. 2:17). As long as we continue to attempt to find life and unity in secondary witnesses (the words of God, the Scriptures) and third level witnesses (our particular understandings of the words of God on a host of topics), we will continue to stumble around in the shadows and as hungry infants do, fight with one another about *words*. May it not be that Jesus will say to us as He said to the religionists of His day,

You diligently search study the Scriptures because you think that in them you have and experience eternal life. These Scriptures are witnesses concerning Me, yet you will not come to Me so that you can experience and have this Life that is in Me (John 5:39-40).

EXPERIENCING CHRIST OUR LIFE TOGETHER IN HARMONY

PART 1: EXCHANGING LIFE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (WORD EMPHASIS)

Read the passages below and record your discoveries about the variety of *words used synonymously* by the Apostles to describe the experience of exchanging Life with the Holy Spirit next to the cited verses.

WORDS USED SYNONYMOUSLY TO DESCRIBE THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

- 1) *Baptizo* (βαπτίζω) is the source for the English word *Baptism*. *Baptizo* means to . . . *dip, immerse, plunge, sink, drench* . . . ,⁴¹ . . . *to dip in or under, to dye, dyed material, to immerse, to go under* . . . ,⁴² and . . . *a term used by textile workers referring to dyed materials*.⁴³ *Baptizo* or *baptize* is used to describe exchanging life with the Holy Spirit in the Gospels and Book of Acts (see Discovery 4, p. 23 and texts below). Other words used *synonymously* with baptism in the earliest and primary Christian writings when they describe exchanging life with the Holy Spirit are below.

Acts 1:5

11:16.

- 2) *Enduo* (ἐνδύω) means . . . *dress, clothe, put something on someone*.⁴⁴ *Enduo* was used by Jesus as a *synonym* to refer to the then near future Pentecost experience of the baptism of the Holy Spirit at

Luke 24:49.

- 3) *Pimplemi* (πίμπλημι) means . . . *fill, fulfill* . . .⁴⁵ and was used *synonymously* to refer to the baptism of the Holy Spirit at

Acts 2:4

Acts 4:31

- 4) *Shapak* (שָׁפַק), was used at Joel 2:28-29 and means . . . *pour, pour out* . . . *in both physical and metaphorical senses* . . . [such as] . . . *water, broth, dust, blood* . . . [or] . . . *wrath, heart, soul, God's Spirit*.⁴⁶ The translators of the Hebrew Bible (Older Testament) into the Greek version *The Septuagint* translated the Hebrew word *Shapak* (שָׁפַק) by the Greek word *Ekecho* (ἐκχέω) discussed below, # 4.

Joel 2:28-29

⁴¹Bauer, Arndt and Gingrich, *A Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, 131 [cited here after as BAG].

⁴²A. Oepke, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, V, 529-30.

⁴³Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the New Testament*, 103.

⁴⁴BAG, 263.

⁴⁵BAG, 633.

⁴⁶H. J. Austel, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, II, 949-950.

5) *Ekecheo* (ἐκχέω) means . . . *pour out* . . .⁴⁷ *Ekecheo* was used *synonymously* with the term *baptism* of the Holy Spirit in the following passages.

Acts 2:17

Acts 2:18

Acts 2:33

Acts 10:45

Titus 3:4

Romans 5:5

6) *Lambano* (λαμβάνω) means . . . *receive* . . .⁴⁸ and was used *interchangeably* with the term *baptism* at

Acts 2:33

Acts 2:38

Acts 10:47

Acts 19:1-6

7) *Didomi* (δίδωμι), means . . . *give, grant, bestow, impart* . . .⁴⁹ and was used *synonymously* with the term *baptism* when referring to exchanging Life with the Holy Spirit at

Acts 5:32

Acts 11:17

⁴⁷BAG, 246.

⁴⁸BAG, 465-66.

⁴⁹BAG, 191-92.

- 8) *Ephíphito* (ἐπιπίπτω) means . . . *to fall or come upon* . . .⁵⁰ and was used *synonymously* with the term baptism to describe the work of the Holy Spirit at Acts 11:15. The prepositional part of this word (epi, which means *upon*) was used at Acts 19:6 in *association* with the term baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 11:15

Acts 19:6

- 9) *Pleres* (πλήρες) means . . . *full* . . .⁵¹ and was a typical word used *synonymously* with baptism of the Holy Spirit in passages such as

Acts 6:3

7:55

- 10) *Pleroo* (πληρόω) is related to *pleres* (*above*) and means . . . *fill, make full, complete* . . .⁵² *Pleroo* was used to refer to the ministry of the Holy Spirit at

Acts 13:52

Ephesians 5:18.

Summarize your discoveries about words used synonymously to refer to exchanging Life with the Holy Spirit in the space below.

⁵⁰BAG, 297.

⁵¹BAG, 675.

⁵²BAG, 677.

ONE CONCLUSION ON THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WORDS USED SYNONYMOUSLY TO DESCRIBE
EXCHANGING LIFE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT,
OR,
HOW ALL CHRISTIANS CAN EXPERIENCE EXCHANGING LIFE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT
TOGETHER IN HARMONY

The study of words above makes it clear that Jesus and Jesus' designated witnesses used the terms *baptism, clothe, fill, full, pour out, receive, give, and fall upon* as *synonyms* to describe the primary experience of exchanging Life with the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. The word studies above are conclusive evidence overwhelmingly in favor of the view that they used these terms *synonymously*. *There is no evidence in the primary sources written by Jesus' designated witnesses* that they or Jesus used these terms as *describing inherently different phases or stages of their experiences* with the Holy Spirit. If those apostles and witnesses were with us today, I am sure they would do as they did in their day, describe the primary experience of exchanging life with the Holy Spirit by a variety of synonyms. They would help us so that we did not confuse the *primacy* of that experience with *secondary* terms and descriptions and thus end up *fighting over words and terms*.

One easy way to resolve different understandings among Christians about words used to refer to the Holy Spirit is to follow the lead of Jesus' witnesses and use *purposively and deliberately* the terms they used *interchangeably and synonymously*. By doing this, we would *avoid becoming excessively attached to particular words or terms* that describe exchanging Life with the Holy Spirit. Use them all interchangeably *to point* people to the experience of exchanging life with the Holy Spirit, which is *the point* anyway. Even better, we should realize that exchanging Life with the Holy Spirit is a *beyond words* experience. Thus, our primary focus should be on *opening ourselves completely in obedience to the supernatural Person and Work of the Holy Spirit* for the glory of God and the promotion of the plans and purposes of The Word Jesus. If all of us would open ourselves to exchanging Life with *The Spirit and The Word*, we would *experience the exchanged life individually and together, in harmony*, based on supernatural unity and not on dictionary definitions. God exchanges life with and transforms us based on whether our hearts and wills are yielded to God, *not based on the particular words we like to use to talk about God*.

Among Christians who open themselves to the Person and exchange of Life with the Holy Spirit, some believe that Christians receive *all* of the Holy Spirit (actually, all of the Triune God, see John 14:15-24) at the time of regeneration by faith in Christ (Eph. 1:13-14, John 3:1-21, among others). Other Christians make a distinction between *receiving* the Holy Spirit at the time of salvation (*regeneration and initial reception*) and the *subsequent Baptism of the Holy Spirit with power at the time of consecration*. Despite these differences, what is *common* to both positions is that each Christian must *yield or surrender* to the Holy Spirit if the Christian is to *experience* exchanging Life with The Word and The Spirit in fullness and power.

As people yield *repeatedly* to the Holy Spirit, many have experienced or realized what appear to be new or unique manifestations of God in their lives. It seems very clear that Paul taught that Christians receive all of the fullness of God when they receive Christ because in Christ dwells all of the fullness of God (Colossians 2:9-10). It seems equally clear that Christians *only realize or experience more* of the fullness of the Holy Spirit and Jesus they already had from the beginning of their union with Jesus as they *repeatedly and progressively yield themselves to The Word and The Spirit* (Compare Colossians 2:9-10 with 3:1-4).

If Christians who self-designate themselves by terms like Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, Evangelical, Charismatic, Pentecostal and others would stop fighting about the *secondary* words they use to describe the *primary* experience of exchanging Life with the Holy Spirit and instead *fully surrender themselves to The Spirit and The Word, Christ's Body would experience supernaturally the Exchanged Life*. Jesus Himself promised that this would happen (Luke 11:13)! God is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or think according to the power of the Life of Christ dwelling within all Christians. Let us stop fighting over mere and secondary words and give ourselves fully to *The Spirit and The Word* so we can *experience what is beyond our current imaginations to experience, unity with The Trinity*. Jesus said others would know who His true followers were *by the love they share for Him and one another*, not the words and theological vocabulary they use and share with one another (John 13:33-34; Romans 5:5-8).

ON LABELING PEOPLE AS “THE LOST,” “SINNERS” AND OTHER SOCIAL CATEGORIES: CHRISTIANS WHO ARE “LOSING” THOSE THEY LABEL AS LOST

When Christians use the phrase *The Lost* with other Christians, everyone seems to think they know what it means, no one takes offense and it seems we all have our hearts warmed at how noble we are to reach this group of *Lost people*. *The Lost* has become a shorthand phrase and shortcut method of describing *them outside* as opposed to *us inside*. However, if *The Lost* knew we felt this way about them, and when they do in fact become hip to the fact that this is how we view and describe them, for *The Lost* our message about the dear Savior who loves them becomes *lost*. At the least, such a term is an *unnecessary block* to communication with them. The designation of humans made in the image of God and loved by Christ as *The Lost* is *in-house, intramural and critically unselfconscious*. I know Christians use this phrase because it is used in a book they regard as inspired and is consequently the cultural language they have adopted in their present cultural context with other Christians. However, consider the following thoughts from a person who lived through the *head-freak-hippie era* and who was *substantively postmodern and emergent* before such labels became known and popular.

The first century equivalent to *Lost* was *Sinner*. See Luke 15:1 especially in the NIV and how the editors placed quotation marks around “sinners” to indicate that Luke was using the term as the Pharisees did, a term of derisive convention, and *not as his view or Jesus’ term for them*. I find it particularly ironic that many *self-designated mega-churches, emergent churches* and others who wish to identify themselves as on *the cutting edge* continue to use a term that is so blatantly offensive to the very ones we are trying to reach. Just as one friend to another, I recommend you replace this phrase in your thinking and vocabulary with *longed for ones* or *those Jesus longs to love and know*. Even better, why not *delete all labels and just love people* straight up and where they are as we like to claim that we do.

Other Social Labels by which Christians Categorize One Another and Others

Below is a quote from a review I wrote of Ron Sider’s *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience* for *Barclay Press*. The entire unedited article follows this quote.⁵³ Much of Sider’s work is dependent on *categories* that George Barna invented and uses in his research. Both George Barna and Ron Sider are, I think, sincere followers of Christ. I am not attempting to criticize them or take a posture against them personally. I think also that there is a lot more to being sensitive to emergent, postmodern and avant-garde culture than simply using new terms and categories. We need truly to experience a Christocentric, supernatural, total “*Revolution of everything about us*” if we are going to achieve what Jesus desires in the 21st C.

... modern definitions and distinctions of types of Christians as evangelical, main-line, nominal, born-again, non-born-again, saint, super-saint, biblical worldview etc. are a potential diversion from the New Testament vision of the ontological unity of the one and only body of Christ that has been and is growing into the mature stature of Jesus Christ for the last 2,000 years (Ephesians 4:1-16).” (Geib, from Review of the Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience)

The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience

An invitation from Barclay Press to review Ronald J. Sider’s *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience* led me to read it seriously and discover it to be a very serious book. I was glad I read this book, as I think many issues Sider raises are at the very core of what it means to be a bearer of Christ in the 21st century. I structured my review as follows. First, I give a *descriptive* synopsis of Dr. Sider’s book to identify clearly his thesis and core propositions. Second, I conclude with some *personal reflections* in

⁵³ The edited review appears at <http://www.barclaypress.com/cafe/reviews/viewreview.php?reviewID=40>

response to my failures as a professing Christian, the failures of Christians in general over 2,000 years and the particular failures Dr. Sider identifies among evangelicals.

I. A Descriptive Synopsis of *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*

The Introduction Dr. Sider presents his central thesis in the Introduction. A Western or American version of Christianity labeled as *evangelicalism* started as a renewal movement within larger Christendom and grew into . . . *one of the most influential wings of the whole religion* (Sider, 12). After such promising origins, pollsters such as *The Gallup Organization*, *The Barna Group* and others used descriptive statistical surveys that seem to indicate evangelicals as a whole have recently been . . . *living almost as sinfully as their pagan neighbors* (14). Thus, Dr. Sider wrote a book in which he explores this crisis within evangelicalism, gives answers for its origins, and provides correctives to what he concluded is *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*.

Chapter 1: The Depth of the Scandal Dr. Sider reports his use of abstracted measurements developed by George Barna that seek to define what a Christian is and which claim to distinguish *born-again Christians* from *evangelical Christians*. *Born-again Christians* (reported as 35%-43% of the U.S. population) are defined as those who have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ and have a hope of heaven based on Christ's work on the cross for them. *Evangelicals* (using criteria selected by Barna and reported as 7%-8% of the U.S. population) are those that are born-again and claim they believe in selected doctrinal confessions such as Jesus lived a sinless life, salvation by grace and not works, Christians should evangelize others and Satan exists (18).

Based on these abstracted measurements or criteria, Dr. Sider used polling data collected by Barna and other surveys from five areas of human behavior abstracted from any number of others that may have been used to conclude that there is . . . *widespread, blatant disobedience . . .* among those who claim to be evangelicals. The five areas of human behavior measured and used to reach this conclusion were *divorce, materialism and the poor, sexual disobedience, racism and spousal abuse in marriage*.

The statistical analyses used by Dr. Sider suggest that evangelicals divorce at about the same rate as society at large (28). By using the *tithe as a standard for giving*, Dr. Sider reports that only 9% of evangelicals tithe. He thus implies a blatant contradiction between Biblical mandates to care for the poor and the financial practices of evangelicals. Dr. Sider found sexual disobedience via surveys that suggest cohabitation, pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex and pornography are only slightly less likely to be practiced by evangelicals and born-again as those who do not claim these labels. Racism and abuse in marriage seem as likely if not more so to occur within those claiming the title *evangelical*. Dr. Sider interprets these statistics as a denial of the miraculous in the lives of many claiming to be evangelicals.

Chapter 2: The Biblical Vision Dr. Sider provides a crisp overview of the New Testament documents in order to discover and recover anew what early Christians believed and practiced as normative Christianity. He documents that Jesus and the New Testament authors always expected a union of *orthodoxy* (right theology) and *orthopraxis* (right action) among true Christians. Put another way, *justification* (right standing with God by faith in Christ's work on the cross) was always united with an expectation of *sanctification*, the transformation of Christians in being and behavior to reflect the person of Christ (43). In light of his survey, Dr. Sider argues that there exists a stark contrast between historic New Testament Christianity and the practices of contemporary evangelicals (31-32). He hopes that a realization of this contrast among evangelicals will lead to their repentance and positive corrections (53).

Chapter 3: Cheap Grace vs. the Whole Gospel Why is there a *scandal of conscience* among evangelicals? The core of Dr. Sider's answer is that a . . . *one-sided, unbiblical, reductionist understanding of the gospel and salvation* has been embraced by evangelicals (57). Sider says this is what Bonhoeffer called *cheap grace* (56). He avers that popular evangelicalism has in effect *separated justification from sanctification*. He thinks many within evangelical circles have reduced the gospel to a *formula* for the forgiveness of sins. This *formula* neglects the expected transformation of lives to reflect Jesus Christ that Dr. Sider maintains is inherent within the New Testament definition of *salvation* (64-68). A by-product of this reduction of biblical salvation is *a failure to see that sin is identified as both personal and social in the Bible* (74; 77). Dr. Sider believes that Evangelical teaching in general has reduced the gospel to justification separated from sanctification, failed to teach that sin is both *personal* and *social* and reduced persons to the status of *souls* to be saved for heaven rather than *persons* who were designed to live in redemptive *communities* on this earth as well as later in heaven. Evangelicals have therefore not been able to . . . *understand the full set of causes or a comprehensive set of solutions* . . . to such things as racism and economic injustice (82).

Chapter 4: Conforming to Culture or Being the Church Dr. Sider locates the origin of individualism, materialism and relativism currently blooming in the West in the abandonment of Christian Theism by the *enlightenment*, thinkers such as Darwin, Freud, and Marx and recent movements like postmodernism (91). He argues that evangelicals have allowed over time the encroachment of these values into their churches and in fact have *conformed* to them. In light of this *conforming to culture*, Dr. Sider calls for a recovery of a New Testament understanding of *being the Church within* evangelicalism (93). The heart of his call to evangelicals to be the church are the notions of . . . *mutual accountability and the power of the Spirit* (94). This includes recognizing and embracing the following six truths.

1. Jesus (not individuals) is the center of the church (94).
2. The church that Jesus is the center of should be holy (not conforming to fallen culture, 95-96).
3. The church that Jesus is the center of should be a community (not isolated individuals, 96-102).
4. The church that Jesus is the center of should be counter-cultural rather than conformed to culture (102-106).
5. The church that Jesus is the center of should be a community of mutual accountability and availability, characterized by economic sharing and loving mutual discipline (106-109).
6. The church that Jesus is the center of is possible only when Christians yield themselves to the power of the Holy Spirit (110).

Dr. Sider suggests two practical steps towards the realization of truly being the church. First, evangelicals should begin with the . . . *best pastors, denominational leaders and theologians* . . . who would develop biblical and effective ways to practice mutual accountability (117). Second, the *idol* of materialism should be dethroned by true biblical teaching on wealth, God's concern for the poor and by seeing poverty firsthand on mission trips (118). Dr. Sider hopes that if this would happen, evangelicals may consider practicing the *graduated tithe* (118), increasing their giving in proportion to their income beyond 10%. If I understand Dr. Sider correctly, his repeated use of the word *tithe* as a standard for giving (tithe is used eight times on pages 20-21 and elsewhere in the book, 28; 106) means he believes 10% should be the base line standard of giving. As such, he seems to imply that the *tithe* is a valid measurement of one's rejection of materialism and concern for the poor.

Chapter 5: Rays of Hope Dr. Sider thinks that no Biblical passage . . . *speaks as powerfully to our situation* . . . in the American church as Jesus' message to the lukewarm church of Laodicea, Rev. 3:14-20 (121). Accordingly, he calls for a revival characterized by repentance, prayer and obedience. Such a revival would lead to a recovery of unified orthodoxy and orthopraxis (122-123). While we pray and wait for that revival, Dr. Sider sees *rays of hope* in the Christian community. For example, Gallup and Jones developed a twelve-question survey that they claim identifies . . . *heroic and faithful* . . . Christians. Moreover, in their book *The Saints among Us* (1992), they suggest from their surveys that other people

exist that they further distinguished by the appellations *saints* and *super-saints* (126). In addition, George Barna developed a set of eight abstractions that he claims can identify people who have a *biblical worldview* (127). Based on Barna's abstractions and findings, less than 10% of born-again Christians were deemed to have a *biblical worldview*. However, Dr. Sider finds rays of hope in findings that suggest that the small circle of Christians who meet Barna's criteria and thus do have a biblical worldview . . . *demonstrate genuinely different behavior . . .* than those who do not have a *biblical worldview* (128). Additional findings derived from Barna's polling led Dr. Sider to conclude that true biblical faith makes a substantial difference in those identified as *heroic, saints and super-saints*. In addition, even *nominal* Christians indicate they are at least open to hearing more about authentic Christian faith and practice. Thus, he concludes that these rays of hope point the rest of the evangelicals to the benefits of full surrender to the biblical Christ, which, if done, will end the scandal of the evangelical conscience.

II. A Prescriptive Analysis of *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*

Much of Dr. Sider's call for revival is plausible and admirable, and in that sense, this book could be applicable to any time in Church history. In general, did I find Dr. Sider's call and propositions to be plausible? Yes! In general, was I reminded of my own failures in areas? Yes! In general, did Dr. Sider's book urge me to yield myself to the Risen Christ more fully? Yes! Thus, Dr. Sider reminded me that many others and I are sinners in constant need of God's grace and revival. I was thankful for this reminder. However, I also find the social science methodology and some of the terminology used in this book to be in need of further discussion and development.

From a *methodological perspective*, the abstractions and measurement criteria used by the pollsters to identify types of Christians and levels of spirituality that Dr. Sider relies on for his data and conclusions are *reductionist, idiosyncratic and predicated on assumptions* that such abstractions and self-assessments are valid. For example, I find it *reductionist* to equate answers to a set of eight questions as a valid means to determine if one has or has not a *biblical worldview*. I find it equally reductionist to consider *self-determined answers to a 12-question survey* as a valid means to identify *heroic and faithful* Christians. To give one example of why this *approach to people* is problematic, the religious person described by Jesus in Luke 18:10-14 who prayed about himself, *God, I thank you that I am not like other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get* may very well have scored high on some of these tests used by pollsters. However, despite his self-determined success based on measurements of orthodoxy and orthopraxis that he considered valid, his despised neighbor who prayed *God, be merciful to me a sinner* is the one Jesus deemed justified.

From a *theological perspective*, I find the New Testament teaching clear that one is either a Christian or not (1 Cor. 12:3, Romans 8:9, among many others). Dr. Sider reviews the New Testament and isolates what he finds to be expressions of mature, normative Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxis. I agree with his partial report, as far as he goes. One can also go through the New Testament and 2,000 years of Christian history and find many examples of Christians who failed in some ways to reach the ideal and normative union of justification and sanctification. Since this problem has existed for 2,000 years, I find modern abstracted definitions and distinctions of types of Christians such as *evangelical, main line, nominal, born-again, non-born-again, saint, super-saint, biblical worldview* [Christians] etc. to be *merely human distinctions and categories by which we label one another*. As such, if not carefully used, and I wonder if they should be used at all, they may be a potential diversion from the New Testament transcendental vision of the *ontological unity of the one and only Body of Christ*. That one and only Body has been growing into the mature stature of Jesus Christ for the last 2,000 years (Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Cor. 1:12-13). *Since it has been and is growing, it always has and still exhibits growing pains*.

Finally, from an *existential or personal* perspective, Dr. Sider's definition and understanding of what it means to be an *evangelical* Christian is for me at least beside the point of how God may view human beings and spiritual development. It may be truer, probably less monolithic and perhaps more realistic to view humans and spiritual development as C. S. Lewis did in *Mere Christianity* (the chapter titled "Nice People or New Men"). Lewis points out (as Paul did in 1 Cor. 1:26-31) that Christ has always attracted

. . . nasty people – the little, low, timid, warped, thin-blooded, lonely people, or the passionate, sensual, unbalanced people." As such, Lewis concluded *We must, therefore, not be surprised if we find among Christians some people who are still nasty . . . because . . . nasty people might be expected to turn to Christ in greater numbers than nice ones.*

Therefore, from God's perspective, true spiritual development is probably understood best by *God's knowledge of where each unique person began their spiritual journey and how much progress they have actually made* from where they started rather than by standardized abstractions devised by statisticians and pollsters. What if people who are attracted to Christ and receive Christ (evangelical or otherwise) would have actually been much worse than they are now if they had not come to Christ? What if the *level of sanctification* they have achieved is deemed supernatural progress from God's perspective, considering where they started from, even if it looks rather shabby compared to others who started from higher natural states (Philippians 3:12-16, especially 3:16). These types of people deeply regret our failures as Christians. We have also learned from our failures and limited successes that it is best *. . . not to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are not wise (2 Cor. 10:12).* I think most everyone who confesses to be a Christian (Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant) would agree with Dr. Sider's prayer and call for genuine revival among confessing Christians and would hope this revival happens. I pray with Dr. Sider that his good intentions are blessed and realized in the church he so evidently loves.

"BEING" THE CHURCH IN AN ERA DESCRIBED BY MANY AS "POSTMODERN AND EMERGENT"

First, from a sociological perspective, I learned as a participant of a distinct social movement in the 60s and early 70s and always vowed to remember *one thing* among many others: *sociological categorizations of humans have limited value.* Humans cannot be as easily *classifiable* as butterflies. While it is true that trends in society do affect humans, this social habit for assigning people into neat little boxes, which I call *boxism* (hippie, boomer, X, millennials, emergents, etc.) is a reflection of how *sociological constructs* have emerged *and dominated human relationships* since sociologists attempted to make their study of society *scientific.*

It seems inevitable for all of us to analyze society, social trends, people and movements. While some good things have emerged from this type of study, this approach to human beings can easily become reductionist and thus ultimately flawed by *its lack of humane and human personalism.* I lived as a young person during the so-called hippie movement era. Ironically, people in this movement *rejected the label hippie* in favor of their own self-designation *heads* or even *freaks.* *They did not think heads or freaks* negative or pejorative designations. I can honestly say that I and the people I hung with in this movement were much more diverse, disparate and complex than the outside sociological and media reports made them out to be. In the years after I began to follow Jesus, I heard many religious leaders and others assess, refute and critique this movement. I can honestly say that the vast majority of them *utterly failed to understand the inner ethos* of this movement. I would sit there and inwardly groan at both their lack of their worldview understanding of these people and their approach to humans in general. Equally disturbing was the organized churches' *superficial use of hippie cultural artifacts and language* in their attempt to be cool and relevant when they tried to share Christ with them. Hippies

saw this approach as hopeless *squares* co-opting their cultural expressions for ideological purposes (they told me so).

This *cultural* approach was largely a failure because it *substituted* artificially obtained social expressions and language for a *real, primary, transcendental experience* of Christ himself. I think this superficial cultural approach actually hindered some of the *beats, freaks or hippies* from being interested in experiencing Christ and His Agape love. Ken Kesey, the main subject of the *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*,⁵⁴ is reported to have said about those who were the outside and exterior part of the hippie movement, that is, superficial hippies, *They know where it is but they don't know what it is* (Wolfe, 224). In every sociological subset, there are those who are *in the pudding*, a phrase used by T. Wolfe in *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* to describe those who knew the *inner ethos of a movement* as opposed to those who were *merely dallying with the outer by-products and superficial fringe expressions* of a movement. While not an endorsement for all that that book chronicles, this insight about what it means to be *in the pudding* is transferable to all sociological subsets in which some are merely *conforming* to the exterior dynamics *without experiencing* the interior ethos. This fact can be observed in Christianity (2 Timothy 3:5), the *Hippie* movement and in all social movements and trends, including the so-called *postmodern* and *emergent church* movements.

In my doctoral dissertation,⁵⁵ I found it necessary to include my outside research minor on *Ethnography*. I learned that ethnography is no simple task and that it is well nigh impossible to classify *objectively* cultures and societies. As C. S. Lewis wrote in *That Hideous Strength*, one *cannot study people* but one can get to *know them*. In addition, it is a fundamental misunderstanding by some of postmodern thought when they use sociological constructs to *classify objectively* the people who are attracted to postmodern thought. Apparently, they do not realize that this *categorizing* of people into boxes is the very thing postmodern people reject and are seeking to avoid in relationships. This is the core problem in the approach to persons inherent in George Barna's polling and Ron Sider's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Conscience*. I attempt to analyze this *statistical and classification* approach to people in a review of his book.⁵⁶

Second, from a *philosophical-worldview perspective*, Jacques Derrida and the other European proponents of what some have labeled *postmodern thought* were serious intellectuals who were actually attempting to refute *objectivism* and any attempt on the part of *modernistic thought* to make objectively and scientifically true statements on or about anything. Everything is *personal perspective and subjective* in their worldview. Most intellectuals I have read who have engaged this type of thought have either 1) endorsed it as a means to reject Christianity in particular or 2) endorsed it as a refutation on anyone's part to make truth claims in general. Christian intellectuals who engaged Derrida and other postmodern thinkers were initially motivated to *refute* postmodernism as a threat to Christianity (see David Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, 173-186 for a brief overview).

Now, it has become popular on the part of some Christians to *engage and use* postmodern ideas as a *means* to sell Christ to self-designated postmodern people. I generally understand and somewhat appreciate the motivation for putting the positive strategic spin that many Christian thinkers have put on postmodern thought as a means to engage people who see themselves as postmodern. The ironic thing is, it is hard for me to think of one single young person among the thousands I studied with who has studied the primary sources of postmodern thought. Perhaps only 10% of them know what

⁵⁴ T. Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (Bantam: NY, 1968).

⁵⁵ J. D. Geib, *An Examination of the Spiritual Mapping Paradigm for Congruence with Biblical Orthodoxy and Ethnography*, 1997, available from Theological Research Exchange Network, <http://www.tren.com/e-docs/search.cfm?p080-0006>

⁵⁶ <http://www.barclaypress.com/cafe/reviews/viewreview.php?reviewID=40>

postmodern thought is merely by means of Christian intellectuals talking about it. I find equally ironic the following observation based on my experience. Most people of this era, young or not, are not intellectuals who wish to abandon objective meaning, truth or reality. In fact, most desperately want objective meaning, truth and reality. Most are *not rejecting truth, simply the lack of supernatural experience that characterizes some of our churches today*. Many *hunger for the God experience*. Most *do not want 3-point, power point, propositional filled sermons* (what one young person whose father is a Pastor called *lectures*). Most do not want *ideology and superficial human relationships*. Many *thirst for a real God experience, Koinonia fellowship* and what used to be called the *cosmic vision*. Most people are not postmodern at all by postmodern standards. Most are simply *thirsting and hungering for God* whether they know or not for what they are thirsting. Many are somewhat confused on how to distinguish organized religion and God (so am I at times), like *sheep without a shepherd*. The organized church tends to place them into *categories*. The Lord of The Church Jesus Christ has *compassion* for them (Matthew 9:36-37). That is why they came and come to Jesus and not to religionists (Luke 15:1-2).

21st century Christians need to return to *being "beings" in which lives and radiates* The Transcendent and Supernatural *Being, Love, Unity, Glory, Power and Peace of Christ*. "*Being" this way in The Way* is the way of the earliest *Christbearers*, witnessed to in the secondary words written in the New Testament. Sharing *stories about* Jesus and related topics may prove to be initially effective with certain people. What is important for human beings to realize to realize is *how* one communicates is different from *what or Who* one is communicating. Instead of debating whose Metanarrative is correct or if any of them are correct, a Christian church should be *a community* in which the Transcendent Being, Love, Unity, Glory, Power and Peace of Christ is available *by experience with other beings who are bearing Christ*. Most people, I think, would abandon the implications of radical postmodern thought if they experienced Jesus is such a community.

From an *existential*⁵⁷ perspective, my hope is that the 21st C Church and individual Christians will allow Jesus to transform us into *beings* that are *bearing and sharing Christ as the Ultimate Being*. Ultimately, Christians are committed to a *Being, Jesus*, and dedicated to sharing Jesus in a personal way with other beings. Our commitment should not be to *a system or formula*, even to well meant categories such as *mega-churches, emergent churches, postmodern churches, cutting-edge churches*. Rather, through *experiencing the Being of Life*, we should become *beings* in whom Christ can *be Who Christ is*. *A community of beings in who Christ is Being and being*⁵⁸ *will be enough to share with the beings we share Life with, each at the proper time in a highly personalistic manner*.

Experiential story sharing (*narrative communication*) may represent a strategic initial contact point with those who consider themselves postmodern. However, that is simply a shift in *how* we communicate. The real question remains, what or more important, *Who* are we communicating? If discussions go any further beyond *sharing stories*, eventually the entire range of *supernatural, exchanged life realities* and apologetical styles described in the writings of the apostles will need to be experienced, for that is *Who* the stories we are telling are about. *Jesus is the Who we are called to tell stories about*. Merely arranging the furniture differently in the church, telling stories, creating multi-media presentations (*invented, by the way, by the original hippies to facilitate and approximate the LSD experience*) and using the terms *mystery and paradox* will not do what needs to be done. This is true for our era in the same way as we discovered in the 60s and 70s, when some well-meaning Christians opened coffeehouses, wore tie-dye clothes, said *far-out* and in general tried to sell Jesus in a hippie context. There are a variety of valid ways of knowing and verifying truth, stories being one of many. The expression of postmodern thought, all thought and all stories uses the law of non-contradiction to express itself as does every other expression other than those done under the influence of LSD. It is important to realize that even

⁵⁷ Existential is a term that has to do with existence, life, *being*.

⁵⁸ The word translated as *abide* in John 15, when Jesus tells us to *abide* in Jesus, is the Greek word *meno*. *Meno* means to live, or, actually, *be*. We are to *be* in Christ.

those who believe the postmodern story, those who hear it and try to understand it and all of the other paradoxes of life are using the law of non-contradiction to do so. One must use the law of non-contradiction to deny the reality of the law of non-contradiction. To deny the reality and validity of the law of non-contradiction is like denying the reality of breathing while one is breathing while one denies the reality of breathing. We do not need to defend the law of non-contradiction, it is simply the only basis by which any story can be expressed and understood by others and ourselves. *I advocate initially sharing Christ and exchanging Life with Christ as an experience with other beings regardless of their cultural identity. By “being” beings who are living, citing and experiencing in community the supernatural experiences in the New Testament that are available to anyone who is open to them, I predict the Holy Spirit will attract all kinds of beings to Christ.* After that initial experience of being, we should still expect that questions will arise in those attracted to the Christ within us. We will then have to answer their legitimate questions using all of the supernatural resources and apologetical styles of communication The Risen Christ makes available to us within Him. The focus will need to be on *Who*, not *how* we communicate (Colossians 2:1-10).

My Personal Conclusions on “Being” The Church in a Postmodern, Emergent Era

Jesus is a *Being* and can be known by other *beings*. Our sharing of Jesus as *The Being* should be done *personally* with other *beings* in a way that is personally relevant to them. Human Beings should not *defined* by their temporary cultural affiliations, or be viewed or treated as *objects in a social class*.

As an initial strategic starting point with other beings, *I advocate initially sharing Christ and exchanging Life with Christ as an experience. By “being” beings who are living, citing and experiencing in community the supernatural experiences in the New Testament that are available to anyone who is open to them, I predict the Holy Spirit will attract other beings or persons to Christ.* Many of our fellow beings have questions that are *more basic to the human condition than mere cultural trends and which transcend intellectual and cultural categories like postmodernism. Communities of beings exchanging Life with The Being* will need to share with *other beings* who are seeking legitimate answers to their legitimate questions that go far beyond *how* we share and that are ultimately sourced in *Who* we share.

Today, as in all days, there are sincere human beings who are *against* certain cultural trends. Others are *conforming* to cultural trends. Still others are committed to *transforming* cultural trends. Everyone has to do what he or she thinks best to do. My hope is to *transcend* cultural trends by returning to *The Transcendent Being* and allow myself to be one being along with other beings in who reigns the Transcendent Being, Love, Unity, Glory, Power and Peace of Christ. This sounds so arrogant that I assure myself and readers that I agree totally with Paul that this is impossible for me or any human being to do by human will or power, for . . . *we are not competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God* (2 Cor. 3:5). I believe the religious word for such a return is *revival*. However, it does not matter what words we use in an age that has rejected the power of words to define reality and *being*. Whatever words, strategies or stories we use, unless we return to The Transcendent Being of the Living Christ and share *His Being* with those that are seeking, our words, books, sermons, stories and religious services will all merge into the shadows of human strategies that preceded ours. *But, these are just words.*