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All words spoken by Jesus Christ are in **red text**.

Introduction

God has given us an incomprehensible gift in His Son, Jesus Christ—for we humans are incapable of fully understanding the width, length, depth, and height of God’s love.

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Ephesians 3:14-19

Jesus declared:

- “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” John 3:16-17
- “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and **believes** in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.” John 6:40
- “He who **believes** in Me, though he may die, he shall live.” John 11:25

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 6:23

Those who receive God’s gift will not only live with Him in Heaven, He will also prepare us for eternity by making us into a new creation that reflects the righteousness of His Son.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

As such, as we witness our transformation; as we reflect upon the changing of our thoughts, behavior, and desires; as we discover a new disdain towards those things that held us in bondage to sin; and as we look at the world from a different perspective—what should we do with the gift God has given us?

Jesus declared our next transformative step. “Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching** them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:19-20

These words of Jesus to “**make disciples**,” “**baptizing**,” and “**teaching**” are referred to as the Great Commission (which are the three topics in this lesson). The relative truth of His words become more evident—and the motivation to fulfill His commandment becomes stronger—as our spiritual eyes are opened by the Holy Spirit; as we are able to more clearly see in the darkness; as we are able to identify

the devastating consequences of Satan's lies; and as we experience a heart-felt empathy for those who are bound by sin. But what's more, the growing deep desire to help those who are lost (by sharing The Gospel of Jesus Christ) exemplifies the workings of the Holy Spirit as He spiritually transforms our heart, soul and mind.

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:18



Jesus said, **“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Matthew 5:16** His truth is similar to seeing someone drowning in water, struggling to stay afloat. How is it possible to not help them when we have a life preserver in our possession? This realization aligns with God's will: for God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

There is a “next step” beyond salvation: discipleship. It is a wonderful experience to rest in God's grace, His forgiveness, and His love. But our spiritual blessings of salvation are magnified beyond comprehension when we are used by God to touch the lives of others.

What is a Disciple

“If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:31-32

A disciple is a fulltime student of Jesus Christ. The need for our continual life-long learning is due to our sinful nature—passed from generation to generation via the seed of Adam (Romans 5:12)—and because we will never achieve perfection while we are in our physical bodies. The Apostle Paul revealed this truth when he wrote to the Philippians. **“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:12-14**

The twelve disciples who physically walked with Jesus learned from Him directly. But in lieu of us being able to physically walk with Him—we are able to spiritually walk with Him because He has provided us with a spiritual teacher: the Holy Spirit. For He said:

- **“I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Matthew 28:20**
- **“If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you.” John 14:15-18**
- **“These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” John 14:25-26**

Simply stated, a disciple has a heart-felt desire to:

- Press on in their process of transformation (sanctification).
- Become more like Jesus and less like themselves.
- Study and internalize God's word.
- Obey the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Help others discover the transformative power of God's forgiveness in Jesus.
- Strengthen the faith and unification of the body of believers via their spiritual gifts.

What is Baptism

The second component of the Great Commission is to baptize believers. The word baptism originates from the Greek word "baptizo," which means to plunge, immerse, dip, or submerge. It requires a quick and full immersion of the believer under water—which derives a multitude of spiritual benefits.

Baptism is a personal and public profession that declares the believer's:

- Faith in Jesus Christ, and Heart towards God.
- Inward and outward change in their life.
- Repentance.
- Obedience and commitment to their Savior and Lord.



Baptism symbolizes:

- Our transformation from death associated with sin (as we are "buried" under the water) unto a new life of in Christ (as we are raised from the water).
- Christ's death on the cross, His burial, and His resurrection.
- What will occur after we physically die.

It is important to note that baptism is not:

- Required for salvation. We are saved by God's grace through faith and not works (Eph 2:4-10).
- Appropriate for those who are unable to:
 - Understand the gospel message.
 - Comprehend the need to repent from sin.
 - Express their faith in Jesus.

"Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Romans 6:3-4

"Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it." Colossians 2:12-15

How A Baptism Should Occur

A baptism is a positive, wonderful and loving event. As such, if possible, it is beneficial to have family, friends and Christian brothers and sisters attend to witness the baptism.

The baptism should occur in any clean and safe body of water—including a pool, stream, lake, ocean, bathtub—or any means possible where the baptized may be fully immersed.

What Should Be Worn

- Clothing will become wet and possibly transparent. As such, make sure whatever is worn does not reveal inappropriate under garments or “private areas” of the person’s body.
- It is prudent to change into dry clothing soon after the baptism.

What the Baptizer Should Say

The person performing the baptism (the baptizer) must be a Christian—preferably the pastor or elder within the church. It is appropriate for the baptizer to introduce the one being baptized to those who are witnessing the baptism. The introduction may include:

- Their personal knowledge of this person.
- How they have witnessed their transformation.
- Additional relevant background information if appropriate.
- Asking the baptized if they would like to speak.

What the Baptized Should Say (before baptized)

- Acknowledgement of their sinfulness and need for a Savior.
- Why they made a decision to be baptized.

What the Baptizer Should Say (prior to the baptism)

- Have you (their name) accepted Jesus Christ as your Savior?
- Because of your declared faith, I baptize you, **“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”** Matthew 28:19

How to Baptize:

The baptizer should instruct the baptized to close their mouth and use their thumb and index finger to close their nostrils (or closed by the baptizer). Then placing one hand behind their head and another hand to hold their arm or wrist, the baptized should relax and fall backward into the water. Once fully submerged, the baptizer should raise their head out of the water and assist them upward until standing.

Important Note: Baptism should be a joyful experience and not a ritual. Except for baptizing **“In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”** (Matthew 28:19)...the other suggested words above do not need to be followed exactly. It is about the intent of our heart; it is about our faith; it is about worship; it is about obedience; and it is about our love for God. As such, our acts of worship and obedience should flow freely from our heart and not defined by a specific sequence of ritualistic words and behaviors. Rituals can stifle the spirit and harden the heart towards the true meaning and purpose of our worship and obedience to God. Therefore, whenever possible, make this a joyous and special occasion for the one being baptized.

Jesus was Baptized

It is important to realize Jesus demonstrated all aspects of Christian life—including being baptized.

God assigned John (the cousin of Jesus) the task of preparing people for the arrival of Jesus: **“The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” John 1:29** In addition, God informed John that he would see a miraculous sign that would identify the Messiah: **“Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.” John 1:33**

However, John was spiritually aware of who Jesus was as He entered into the water and walked towards him to be baptized. As you read the scripture below, consider the awestruck emotions John must have experienced as he realized who stood before him.

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, ‘I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?’ But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” Mat. 3:13-17

The baptism of Jesus:

- Fulfilled God’s promise to John that he would see a miraculous indicator of the Messiah.
- Provided God with the opportunity to declare His pleasure in His Son.
- Commenced His ministry.
- Symbolized His death and resurrection.

As such, baptism is spiritually significant for the believer and the body of Christ—and should be given to those who seek to obediently grow their relationship with Jesus Christ.

Teaching

The ministry of Jesus was comprised of spiritual instruction. In fact, when you think about it...except when He was sleeping or praying alone to the Father, Jesus continually taught everyone who would listen. But what’s more, His techniques of instruction—including the content of His instruction—transcends any lessons devised by man. This is why we are able to continually “chew” on His words (time and time again) to extract “spiritual nutrients,” with the intent of causing His truths to reach the deepest parts of our heart, and soul, and mind—so that our behavior (what we say and do) reflects Him.

The best source of instructional content is the Bible, and the most effective instructor is the Holy Spirit.

- **“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” 2 Timothy 3:16**
- **“The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” John 14:26**

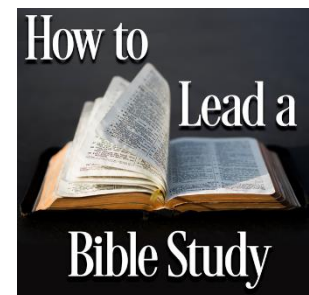
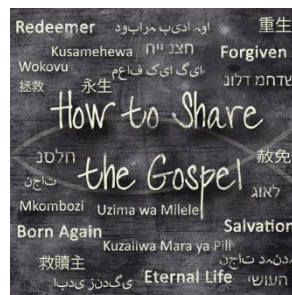
Human-based instruction that lists behavioral requirements such as “This is what we should be doing” and “This is what we should not do” (i.e. do’s and don’ts) is ineffective because it speaks to the mind and not the heart. What’s more effective is to allow the word of God and the Holy Spirit to reach, influence and change the desires of the heart—thereby resulting in an improved behavioral alignment (words and deeds) with God’s will. As such, an effective teacher realizes they are simply a spiritually-prepared humble “vessel” through which the Holy Spirit communicates.

The best example of an effective teaching “vessel” is Jesus, who declared, **“Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”** John 5:19

Jesus taught in various ways. For example, to explain spiritual truths He:

Used many parables (allegorical stories that create relatable mental images).	Mat. 7:24-27; Mark 13:34-37; Luke 8:5-15; Mat. 18:12-24; Luke 15 :11-32
Spoke words that revealed the condition of the listener’s heart.	Luke 6:20-49; Mat. 6:19-21, 22:37-39; John 6:35, 8:12
Asked thought-provoking questions.	Mat. 5:16, 7:3, 9:5, 16:26, 23:12, 26:53; Luke 6:46; Mark 8:34-37, 4:21; John 4:13-14
Exemplified the righteousness of God.	Isaiah 11:5; Jer. 23:5; 2 Cor. 5:21; John 8:2-11, 13:1-17; Mat. 6:33

Here are two lessons that provide additional instruction on how to teach. “How to Share the Gospel,” and “How to Lead a Bible Study.” Click on the graphics to access each lesson.



Saved, Equipped and Prepared for Eternity

Life is often filled with day-to-day obstacles and challenges— which at times can be overwhelming. However, when we stand back from a great distance and look at the “big picture,” it becomes easier to realize our Savior and Lord is preparing us to spend eternity with Him.

“But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:18



All for His Glory,
Harold D. Thomas