

# **The Journey of the Disciple**



**Practical studies to strengthen  
the believer's faith and motivate a  
closer walk with God**

**Reaching Across Ministries  
San Antonio, Texas**

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Date of this publication: February 2017

## INTRODUCTION

**Objective of the study.** The objective is to assist the reader to discover or reinforce the spiritual foundation in his life through the understanding of basic topics necessary to maintain and grow in the faith. These are strongly recommended before advancing to deeper theological studies and have been edited in a way suitable for individual or group study.

**Universal application.** The studies have been selected to fill universal needs within any culture or church size regardless of the doctrinal positions of the reader. The themes are also useful for readers of any age.

**Basic vocabulary.** For ease of understanding, the vocabulary used is very simple, eliminating theological terms not normally used in common language. For example, words like "justification, sanctification, and glorification" are replaced by "salvation, communion with God, and eternity with God".

**Biblically based studies.** All of the studies are accompanied by biblical references to provide a common platform for all Christian denominations even when doctrinal differences may exist.

**Bilingual study.** To provide greater service to the increasing bilingual communities. This study is available both in English and Spanish.

Congratulations for beginning this educational and spiritually motivating study. As a suggestion, first review the lessons for personal growth. Secondly, seek to share its content with family members, as well as with others within the community that the Lord surrounds you with. If you need additional copies just contact Reaching Across Ministries. Finally, realize that it will be normal to encounter resistance from within yourself as well as from without as you seek to obey what you learn; therefore be strong and resolute in your commitment to follow God and become a true disciple. Remember also that you are not alone, and in the end, you will taste of the heavenly riches God has prepared for those who follow him.

May God bless you as you seek to glorify Him with all of yourself !

Rick Lay  
Reaching Across Ministries

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# The Fall Of Man

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## Key verse

*".. And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die. "*  
(Genesis 2:16-17)

## What does the "fall of man" mean, and where did it occur?

- **The "fall of man"** is the phrase commonly used to describe man's disobedience by eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree of good and evil in the garden of Eden. This disobedience introduced sin in Adam and Eve, and the phrase in the Bible describing the consequence is *"you shall surely die"* (Genesis 2:15-17).
- **This death** refers to a spiritual separation between man and God, beginning during the present life and continuing into eternity after physical death. It also includes the beginning of the aging process that leads to a physical death.

## What is wrong with "knowing" good and evil?

- **Knowledge removes the man from a position of innocence regarding what is "evil".** Innocence here in reference, is the condition in which the person is not intellectually or emotionally aware about what is bad or evil. Under this condition, the person sees all as "good", thus living life with peace and joy regarding daily work and relationship with others. An example of innocence is seen in the life of a young child, living without knowing what is bad or evil and therefore not experiencing guilt and shame when doing "wrong". This innocence, Adam and Eve lost upon disobeying God.
- **Knowledge introduced the feeling of guilt and shame.** This was manifested in Adam and Eve when they went into hiding, after seeing their naked bodies and also becoming mindful that they had disobeyed God. The naked body of man was not created with a shameful image, but in the eyes of the sinner, the natural purity of the body ceased to exist. Since then, man now interprets nudity as something that may produce shame, often creating temptations that may lead to immoral actions.
- **Knowledge activated a sin nature in the inner man, contrary to the guidance of God's spirit in man.** In the position of original innocence, the man made decisions to obey God's voice without asking "why" or without thinking about selfish alternatives. However, knowing good and evil, arose in his inner person, a sinful nature with a tendency to cause the mind to oppose the mandates of God. This inner condition is now inherited by all mankind through Adam, and the Apostle Paul shares about it: *"But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me...who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord..."* (Romans 7:22-24). This sin nature can be described as **the tendency within the inner man, to violate God's commands for pleasure or selfish gain.** The believer recognizes when this law is activated in his being through the conviction produced by the Holy Spirit in him.

## Were Adam and Eve created without sin?

Adam and Eve were created with a "free will" to be used in making decisions pleasing to God through their lives, managing their God given responsibilities in the Garden of Eden. In such condition, they were created and lived as "sinners without active sin". However, they voluntarily used this freedom of choice to disobey God, and upon doing so, immediately transformed their nature to "sinners with active sin". God is the only person without sin in his divine nature.

## How did Satan influence man to cause his downfall?

Satan did not attack the body of the man knowing that such action would have produced instinctive resistance. His plan therefore concentrated on attacking their inner self, the soul (where the mind, emotion, and will lies) through a compelling dialogue, knowing that in this way the decision to disobey God would emerge directly from their thoughtful minds. He knew

that the behavior of the physical man and his obedience to God lies much in the way the man thinks, therefore, he choose to influence the "soul".

- Satan manipulated **the mind** by a clever exchange of words insinuating to Eve that God had given them limited knowledge. He then suggested two enticing options that would be available to overcome this "deficiency". First he said that by eating of the forbidden fruit their knowledge would increase, and secondly, that this would elevate them to be like God. Here are his exact words: *"For God knows that in the day you eat of it (the fruit) your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil"* (Genesis 3:5). These suggestions not only penetrated the mind, but also opened the **emotional** appetite for self improvement which is not contrary to what God wants, however God wants man to better himself through obedience and not disobedience. Once the distortion was planted in the mind and assisted by the emotions, it became very easy for Satan to get them to make a **voluntary decision** to disobey God. In the present, Satan still applies similar strategies against all of humanity in these ways:
  - **To non-believers**, by blinding and confusing their thinking, *"Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News"* (2 Corinthians 4:4)
  - **To believers**, he seeks to open in them the appetite of their sin nature, hoping to weaken their faith and communion with God. *"Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour"* (1 Peter 5:8)

The vital principle, that every believer should keep under a pre-set and willful commitment in his mind and heart, is that when one cannot understand the reason behind a specific command from God, the blessing always comes by accepting and obeying what He declares, by faith and not by reasoning. *"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"* (Hebrews 11:1).

### **What "died" when Adam and Eve disobeyed God?**

- **The relationship and spiritual union between man and God died.** This change created a spiritual separation, (commonly called "spiritual death"), and was the greatest loss for man as such "death" extends from the present till eternity.
- **The favorable condition in nature to sustain the life of the man on earth died.** The complete negative effect on the rest of creation through the fall, is a great mystery, nevertheless, all nature was indeed affected. *"...cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it...both thorns and thistles it shall bring for you...in the sweat of your face you shall eat bread..."* (Genesis 3:17-19). *"For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now"* (Romans 8:22).

## **Why are we now sinners from birth?**

Adam was the "father" of humanity, and having the seed of sin in his being for having disobeyed, transferred it to the rest of humanity through the process of procreation "*Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men...*" (Romans 5:12). This sinful nature is now in every human being without distinction of race, nationality or type of behavior.

## **Is there a solution to the effects of the fall of man?**

- YES there is! This solution is explained in the Bible through the message of salvation revealed primarily in the first four books of the New Testament - Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. This message and offer of salvation, once accepted by faith, allows the genuinely repentant persons, to receive forgiveness for their sins and return to a spiritual union with God. "*For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life*". (John 3:16).

## **Are there persons who have not fallen into sin because they do not have the knowledge of good and evil in them?**

Yes, there are. Here is a description of those in such conditions:

- **"Toddlers"**. These are little children that have not reached the age of mental reasoning and still live in a period of innocence regarding the knowledge of good and evil. This is the reason why they often behave without shame or remorse no matter what they do.
- **Babies that die prematurely**. These babies are those who die before seeing the "light of day" which may occur mysteriously during the mother's pregnancy. Also included here are those that die from abortions or who die within a short period after birth.
- **Adults who have a disability that prevents them from exercising mental reasoning**. This is usually a mental condition that may continue indefinitely into adulthood, and does not allow them to have reasoning between good and evil thus they remain in the innocent stage.

We can conclude then from the above explanation, that these persons are innocent, free from the knowledge of good and evil (which produces spiritual death) and are therefore saved by the love and grace of God. The following are some biblical examples concerning this.

- An example of a "toddler" in the Bible, that does not have the condemnation of death, is the son of David who died at 7 days of age. Upon his death, David said: "..."*One day I will go to him (heaven) , but he may not return to me*" (2 Samuel 12:23).
- Another example is when God speaks to Moses informing him who will entered into the promised land. This entry is not the eternity in heaven, but shows the compassion of God

for those in a condition of innocence. *"Moreover your little ones and your children ...who today have no knowledge of good and evil, they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it."* (Deuteronomy 1:39).

### **What does the study about the fall of man, reveal regarding the character of God?**

- **God does not retract from his word.** With the infinite knowledge of God, He knew how deep and comprehensive would be the punishing effects due to the fall yet, he did not retract from His word. This reveals to us what if we violate His commandments, we will also suffer the consequences. The commandments of God, even though we may not be able to fully understand their purpose through intellectual reasoning, do include a mysterious eternal value for all mankind, and therefore are not negotiable because God demands the best for his creation.
- **God maintains his infinite love and compassion for those who sin and disobey him.** After sinning, Adam and Eve hid themselves in shame for what they had done. God had the power to replace them with another man and another woman, however His action demonstrated compassion and love instead of rejection. This love, God demonstrated in a visible manner by shedding the blood of innocent animals to obtain *"coats of skins"* (Genesis 3:21) and in this way provide a covering for the sinners Adam and Eve. It was indeed a form of restitution for them to come back and reestablish communion with Him again. God still maintains this love and compassion for sinners through the blood of His Son Jesus whom He sacrificed on the cross to cover the sin of those who accept his offer of salvation.

### **Comment**

Normally, the "fall of man" is studied giving focus to the sin, to the failure, and to the disobedience of man. These sad events indeed occurred, nevertheless it is essential to know that the story of the creation and fall of man is actually a story of redemption, seeking to highlight not the inadequacies of man, but the love and glory of God. Yes, this is indeed the real account of Creation and the Fall !!

It gives lots of encouragement, after studying about the Fall of man in the Bible, to see, how the 66 books of the Bible reveal God's love, demonstrating the great desire and plan of God, to have a response of reconciliation for all. Now in this world, all of mankind walks through the dark valley of the shadow of death because of inherited sin, but let us not be discouraged, for just as God sought Adam and Eve after their fall, He is still seeking after us and ready to comfort us in our moments of despair, and He will do so till the end of time.

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# The Salvation Of Man

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## Key verse

*"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works..."*

(Ephesians 2:8-9).

## What is the salvation of man?

The salvation of man refers to the event when the sinner, by the mercy and favor of God, stops being sentenced to eternal damnation (separation from God forever) and becomes spiritually united with God to enjoy eternal life with Him. In essence, this is the event that reverses the punishment of death for sin that was activated by the "fall of man".

## How can I become saved?

- **I must invite Him into my life as savior and also accept Him as absolute true and only God of the universe.** *"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name"* (John 1:12). It is important to understand that to "receive Him" is to invite Him as savior, and to "believe" in His name implies believing in the total person of God (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). At the moment when a

person, using his free will, takes this step by faith, then salvation is received and one becomes a child of God.

- **I must believe by faith in God's promises.** This faith is exercised when the person, exercising freedom of choice, accepts what God promises in His Word even when these promises don't have tangible evidence or reasonable explanation. An example of this is what the Word tells us about the eternal home for the believer, which cannot be confirmed by human intellect or scientific proof. *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not see."* (Hebrews 11:1)

Throughout biblical history people experienced salvation through different manifestations, however all were based on the acceptance by faith in Jesus as the Savior. Consider the following:

- **In the old testament**, faith had to be deposited on the promise that in the future, God would send Jesus the Messiah to offer salvation and forgiveness of sins. Moses said *"The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet"* (Deuteronomy 18:15). Here, faith needed to be deposited over something that was to happen in the future, but always with relevance in the present for those hearing the Word.
- **In the New Testament**, salvation comes through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross *"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"* (John 3:16). In the present, faith now must be deposited over something that occurred in the past (the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross) but with relevance in the present to anyone hearing the Word.

### **After I am saved, is it possible to experience an internal "feeling" regarding my salvation?**

The answer is YES!, and this is the result of the Holy Spirit indwelling the believer. It is a mystery how these new feelings emerge, but the new believer soon awakens to the reality that he is indeed a new person able to sense the new changes. Here are some of these "feelings":

- **You will feel a desire to obey and worship God.** When we are saved, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell our person, thus creating in us the "temple of God". As a result, the believer will sense a "voice" from the Spirit, supporting and motivating him to live right before God and to worship Him. This voice of the spirit, gives inner testimony of the presence of God and salvation. *"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God"* (Romans 8:16)
- **You will begin to understand Scripture better.** When we are born again, the spirit of God helps us to understand the Word in order to assist us in developing greater spiritual maturity. The Word is very deep in its meaning and only through the Spirit's revelation can one understand it from a spiritual and not intellectual perspective. *"But it was to us that God revealed these things by his Spirit. For his Spirit searches out everything and shows us God's deep secrets."* (1 Corinthians 2:10)

- **You will feel joy when gathering with other Christians.** Our way of living and thinking changes, and we will find a new common joy in fellowship in with other Christians. This is something new, perhaps never experienced before and it happens because for the first time we are surrounded by our new spiritual family under one spirit.
- **You will feel love and joy for those who surrender and accept the Lord as their savior.** The joy of seeing others come to Christ is indescribable , especially if they are family members, or friends we have known for some time. Special joy will also be felt when others with whom we have shared our testimony surrender to the Lord.

### **What are some ways, not approved to obtain salvation?**

- **Salvation cannot be inherited from Christian parents.** To have Christian parents is a great blessing, but their salvation cannot be inherited. Everything that can be inherited from parents is "from the flesh" whereas to be saved one must be born spiritually by accepting Christ as Savior "*...That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" (John 3:6)
- **Salvation cannot be obtained through "good works".** Nobody can be saved by being good and / or excelling in humanitarian deeds, nor can one be saved by giving to religious projects or organizations. If it were so, salvation then would be through the power of man. However, eternal life is a gift from God to those who repent and accept Him "... *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast*" (Ephesians 2: 8-9)
- **Salvation cannot be obtained through a human mandate or special ordinances.** All Christians, including church pastors and leaders, can act as messengers of the Gospel but cannot impose or authorize salvation on another person. In addition, any ordinance as the Lord's Supper, water baptism or confession to an officer of the Church, cannot save. Neither the association with Christians or mere membership to a church or denomination can save. Salvation is only through a personal relationship with God, based on the faith of the individual sincerely deposited in Him. "*There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved*" (acts 4:12).

### **What does God do pertaining to our salvation?**

- **God forgives us of guilt and punishment.** Yes, He does this for our sinful condition inherited from Adam, including the sins of the past, present and future. "*Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1)
- **God takes us out of the family of Adam, and adopts us to be His children.** Adoption is the act of adding someone to another family of which he or she was not born. The unbeliever is the son of Adam by inheritance and upon surrendering to Christ he is spiritually adopted by God to be part of a new family. "*...God sent forth His Son, ...to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.*" (Galatians 4: 4-5)

- **God gives us a new spirit.** God deposits his spirit in our person to create in us a new born again spiritual person, and this indwelling of the Spirit is the seal of salvation. "*Because his spirit joins with our spirit to confirm that we are children of God*" (Romans 8:16). The spirit then leads and strengthens in all the areas of spiritual growth, and gives conviction in moments of temptation to help maintain the faith.
- **God gives us eternal life with him.** This eternal life begins at the moment of salvation and from there on, we are never separated from Him. "*... God has given us eternal life; and this life is in his son. He that has the son has life...*" (1 John 5:11-12).

### **What new responsibilities come with my salvation?**

- **The purpose and responsibility of being an ambassador of God.** In the present, there are two "kingdoms", the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Satan. By giving us his salvation, God chooses us to be His ambassadors within the kingdom of Satan on Earth. As ambassadors we have the purpose of disclosing and sharing with the world the good news of the Gospel. "*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us...*" (2 COR. 5:20)
- **The purpose and responsibility of producing "fruits" that have eternal significance.** Christians have the responsibility not just to make a living to provide for their daily needs, but also to do so in a way that will directly or indirectly have an effect on the eternal salvation of others. This can be done by engaging in Christian ministries as well as maintaining an active witness at work, school or in social circles. "*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain,...*" (John 15:16)

Note: These responsibilities are not to be considered based on convenience but rather by obedience. To ignore the purpose and responsibility of life, given by God, results in a dishonorable life style before God and produces a loss of rewards in eternity. Salvation is the gift of God's love to the Christian, and obedience to the Scriptures is the gift of love of the believer to God. "*He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me...*" (John 14:21)

### **What is the difference between being a believer and a disciple ?**

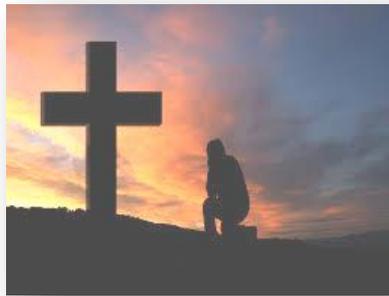
- **The believer** is the person who sincerely surrenders to God to accept him as Lord and Savior. This is an instantaneous event based on the faith placed in what the Word of God says about Him.
- **The disciple** is a believer, who after his conversion, seeks to study the Word, obey it, and practice it in his daily life. This is a process through which the believer receives spiritual revelation from the Holy Spirit to understand the Word and also an empowering to obey it. "*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.*" (John 8:31).

Note: From the above explanation, we can see that every disciple is a believer but not every believer a disciple. If you want to live a victorious life in Christ and receive additional spiritual rewards in eternity, commit to be a disciple and not only a believer.

### **Comment**

After reviewing this study, be sincere before God and do not neglect the most important gift He has placed under your responsibility - YOUR LIFE. Therefore, if you have never surrendered to God or are not sure you have done so from your heart in the past, take a moment to talk to God now. Your eternal future and all that you desire to improve with the help of God in the present depends on your relationship with Him. Do not wait until you feel "good enough" to be accepted. God is willing and desires to accept you as you are this very moment.

If you want to talk with God now, look up to Him with your heart and tell him:



*Lord, I accept that I am a sinner, I want to be forgiven and be given a new life and a new beginning. For this reason, I give you my heart, and I ask you to forgive me. I accept the gift of salvation through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. I accept Him as my savior. Please help me to walk with you and grow as a disciple. Thank you for accepting me as I am. Amen.*

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# Resisting Temptations

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## Key verse

*".. Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies of the devil. "*  
(Ephesians 6:10-11)

## What is the meaning of temptation and where does it comes from?

Temptation is the attraction to get, or do something that contradicts God's law, which upon being activated, creates sin before God. It's not a sin to be tempted, but one falls into sin when one says "Yes" to the temptation. Typically, temptations come as follows:

- **Internally.** Here it emanates from the sinful nature within the person *"For the flesh lusts against the Spirit , and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another"* (Galatians 5:17) . This sin nature ceases to be present in the Christian at the moment of physical death when the Christian goes to be with the Lord.
- **Externally.** Here it comes from Satan, and the Bible warns us in this manner *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour"* (1 Peter 5:8)

## What must I acknowledge, to overcome temptations?

- **I must know that I do not resist "alone".** Before our salvation we fight alone when tempted, but upon being saved we fight and resist in the company of the Holy Spirit who indwells us and is more powerful than the spirit of Satan "... *the spirit that lives in you is more powerful than the spirit that lives in the world.*" (1 John 4:4). This helps to resist, even in moments of solitude when the believer may be away from his Christian community or surrounded by unbelievers opposed to his faith. By relying on the Spirit we can say NO to sin and overcome the temptation.
- **I must know that the Word of God is my "weapon".** Studying the word routinely will deposit the Word in our minds and hearts, and on moments of temptation, reflecting on the Word will give strength and produce the "weapon" to overcome. The Bible says "take... *the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God*" (Ephesians 6:17). We can also use the Word to reject Satan temptations by reciting verses at the moment of temptation. Jesus was tempted by Satan and gave this example. "*Away with you Satan! For it is written, you shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve*" (Matthew 4:10).
- **I must know who Satan is and how he operates.** The world does not believe or take Satan seriously, but for the Christian it is important to know and believe that Satan and his demons are real and powerful spirits dedicated to the work of maintaining humanity away from God. "*The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy...*" (John 10:10). To non-believers Satan seeks to keep them "blind" by planting deceit and lies in their minds so they do not accept Jesus as their Savior. With Christians he seeks to wake up their sinful nature through temptations, with the purpose of hindering their walk with the Lord and weakening their faith.
- **I must know how vulnerable my "soul" is and therefore protect it.** The Soul is that part of man where the emotions, mind, and freedom of choice reside. This is mostly the area that Satan will attack as he did with Adam and Eve. For this reason when we sense our Soul to be under attack, we must seek shelter, in the Word of God, in prayer, and in counseling in order to properly resist. Upon doing so, the Holy Spirit will take over and strengthen us. "*greater is he that is in us (Holy Spirit) than he who is in the world (Satan)*" (1 John 4:4)

## What must I do in my practical life to resist and avoid temptations.

- **Create and maintain a Christian social circle.** It is within your new Christian family that you will find healthy activities along with the mutual encouragement to live and grow in the Lord. The adoption into the new family is instant upon salvation, but the spiritual maturing through the new community is a process and must be intentional on the part of the believer. This Christian social circle is a must since peer pressure from unsaved friends causes a multitude of dangerous temptations. "... *but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*" (2 Timothy 2:22). Avoid friends living dishonorably, even when they are not actively involved in things that society considers immoral. "*Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits*" (1 Corinthians 15:33)

- **Be careful regarding what you read, see and observe.** Pre-determine not to read magazines, watch movies, go to websites or listen to music that will arouse temptations. Also, if something sinful suddenly passes before your eyes, remove the look quickly. The eyes of the Christian cannot be looking at good and evil without consequences, therefore keep your eyes on the Lord. *"My eyes are ever toward the Lord, For He shall pluck my feet out of the net."* (Psalm 25:15).
- **Safeguard your thoughts and your actions even when no one sees you.** Keep your mind and your behavior under the control of the spirit, recognizing that your whole being is transparent before God even when others do not see you *"For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."* (Romans 8:6). If your thoughts are impure, confesses it to God through prayer. Avoid also the type of solitude and privacy that can produce temptations. Always acknowledge your weaknesses and maintain a spiritual strategy to counter them.
- **Be sure to study and memorize God's Word.** Doing this, creates an internal shield that mysteriously keeps sin away. The Bible says, *"Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You."* (Psalm 119:11) Knowing the Word also is key for acquiring wisdom and developing a spiritual foundation for the journey of life.
- **Be humble and receptive to counseling.** Humbly seek help or counseling from mature Christians when you start to feel discouraged, heartbroken or undecided. The voice of God often comes through other devoted Christians.
- **Do not frequent places of dishonorable reputation.** Avoids places or activities where God would be dishonored if he arrived to visit you. Even if others do not see what you do or where you are, God is always saddened whenever you are in an area where Satan is active.
- **Confess your sins immediately.** Postponing the confession before God is like postponing the visit to the doctor when seriously ill, doing so simply permits the illness to continue longer than it should. Unconfessed sin disrupts communion with God and the longer it lasts, the greater the spiritual stress will be. Remember that God is always ready to forgive you and draw you closer to Him to fill you with his peace. *"He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy"*. (Prov. 28:13)
- **Live "totally" for God.** Avoid being a cold and partial Christian. It is not enough just to attend church, instead, try to live for Christ actively in body, soul, and spirit on a daily basis. This complete surrender allows greater care of the sacred life of each believer and is rewarded with greater blessings. *"...but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God"* (Romans 6:13)
- **Take a moment to make a "commitment" before God for a pure life.** As much as it is motivating to remember the moment of salvation, it also helps to recall the moment in which a commitment to purity was made before God. Take a moment to speak with God and make a sincere 'pact' with Him (put it in writing if necessary for future encouragement). This commitment will unleash a sense of accountability, providing strength to resist in moments of temptation.

Resisting temptations is not easy and is in itself a lifelong spiritual battle, however every Christian has the power of the Holy Spirit and the Word to be able to resist effectively. *"...be*

*strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." (Ephesians 6:10-11)*

### **What happens if I do not resist temptations?**

- Not resisting can culminate in problems within the marriage, with finances, and health.
- It will also distance us from God, will feed an impure life style, and display a bad public testimony affecting the promotion and purity of the Church before the world.
- It can also lead to frustrating irreversible "wounds" even when the believer repents and confesses before God to receive forgiveness.
- The effects of not resisting can also cause limitations to serve in some positions within the Church.

Note: If you experience regret for dishonorable past actions, do not try to recall them in your mind constantly seeking to erase them. Instead, as the actions surface unexpectedly, always look back with a transformed mind recognizing that God understands your history and has forgiven your sins. Pray for those who have been affected by your actions and perform acts of restitution whenever possible using biblical counseling regarding proper methods to do so. Make a resolution to devote your life to serve God and read Psalm 32 which speaks about the blessings for those forgiven by Christ.

### **Universal areas of temptation**

Since the beginning of mankind some universal areas of temptations have existed. These are "*carnal desires, which war against the soul*" (1 Peter 2:11). Here are some of these.

- **Sexual energy in the human body.** Sexual energy is normal and given by God for the reproduction of the human race in a pure form as allowed by God. However, the Christian will be opposed by his sin nature to keep this energy pure. The Christian must be realistic about this and keep a pre-meditated plan of resistance to avoid dishonorable acts upon being tempted. This plan must include sensitivity regarding movies, magazines, the computer and friendships that may unintentionally promote sexual immorality, and dangerously affect the mind. Definitely do not try to test your spirituality by exposing yourself to areas that may produce unintended temptations. The best defense is simply to "stay away" !
- **Money.** Money in and of itself, has a very strong intrinsic power and Satan seeks to tempt the Christian to lust and love it as well as use it for selfish and often immoral gains. This is a type of financial idolatry and it is condemn by God. God does not judge the Christian by the amount of money in his possession, but by the way he values it and uses it. In this way all (poor or rich) have an equal responsibility before God. Remember always that the greatest possession is the treasure of blessings God establishes for each believer in eternity based on how trustworthy he has been with the little or much that God deposited in his life on earth.

- **Social power and popularity.** Many have fallen under the temptations for not resisting the admiration they receive due to a skill or talent that leads them to have power and popularity in society. In the end, they can develop pride (self idolatry) which inhibits humility and is a sin before God. This problem can exist even among church leaders, and the answer is to always seek to walk humbly under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Important point: To avoid temptations, *"walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.."* (Galatians 5:16). And how do we know that we are walking in the spirit? We know it when we demonstrate the FRUIT of the spirit through our lives. *"the kind of fruit that the Holy Spirit produces in our life is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control"* (Galatians 5:22-23).

### **What positive benefits are there for resisting temptations?**

- **Benefits in the present life.** Resisting temptations allows you to be chosen by God to be used as a special and honorable worker. It is a mystery how God uses the chosen one and the work service assigned to him, however we can be sure that this will happen since the word tells us *"Therefore if anyone cleanses himself...he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.."* (2 Timothy 2:21).
- **Benefits in eternity.** The Bible reveals that Christians who resist temptations will receive special rewards in eternity called "crowns". Amongst these, there is one, called the "Crown of life" which is specifically granted to those who resist temptations. *"Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him."* (James 1:12).

### **Comment**

Often, one of the reasons why a Christian portrays a bad testimony is not because of lack of knowledge regarding Scripture, but simply because there is conformity with intellectual knowledge while lacking commitment to practical obedience. This must be understood clearly and avoided throughout the journey of life.

Seeking to maintain a spiritual discipline and resisting temptation represents the spiritual warfare of greatest tension during the earthly life of every believer. Based on this, be courageous and keep a firm resistance, obeying the Word in a practical manner, and as you do so, you will notice that resisting temptations becomes easier day by day.

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# Sharing My Salvation

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## Key verses

*"Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" (Matthew 4:19).  
"Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations...teach these new disciples to obey  
all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always,  
even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20)*

One of the biggest joys that a Christian can experience is to lead someone to know and surrender to Christ. Nevertheless, this joy is often missed as a result of the Christian feeling intimidated for being a minority in society and thus remaining passive in sharing the gospel. There may also be the concept that only the pastor of the Church or famous evangelists are called to evangelize, but every Christian, through the power of the Holy Spirit in him, can actually be the instrument used by God to lead someone to Christ. It seems incredible that we can do something so powerful and spiritually significant, yet it is indeed possible!

## How must I personally prepare before sharing with others?

- **Seek to be a "disciple" of Christ.** A disciple studies the Word and does what the Word says, which is not what all believers do. A disciple lives with a spiritual purpose and a Christian visible identity. This is a great first step in preparing to share with others because it permits sharing from a platform of who we are, and deletes any "acting". Sharing with others is more powerful when others actually see the transformation in the believer.
- **Keep an intentional and not passive attitude.** The Bible tells us *"Go and make disciples..."* (Matthew 28:19). The word "go" reveals a constant evangelistic life style not based on easy and convenient opportunities but on obedience to be seeking with an alert and prayerful desire to find the potential candidate to share with. Maintaining this spiritual aggressiveness is a great way to prepare.

## When the opportunity arises, how do I share?

- **Do not "preach" or impose a set of rules on the other person.** Upon being approached the non-believer typically will not be attracted to a "sermon". Sharing is more effective initially when it is a process that helps to develop a harmonious, loving, friendly, and not "judgmental" relationship between two persons. Finally, avoid planting a message suggesting that the person has no value or is insignificant due to his sins. God values and loves all of humanity unconditionally.
- **Avoid imposing your church or denomination as the basis for salvation.** Biblically, making disciples carries the objective of bringing people to God and not to a denomination. Also, if you want to invite the person to an activity within your church avoid a meeting where he will feel uncomfortable for not knowing what the topic or conversation is all about, as it would happen in a small bible study group. A social activity with Christians or a worship service is preferable, and definitely try to accompany him since you are the one that will inspire confidence initially.
- **Share, reflecting in you, the fruit of the spirit.** The fruit of the spirit defines how the Christian is to live internally and externally, reflecting the presence of the Spirit *".. the kind of fruit the Holy Spirit produces in our life is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control"*. (Galatians 5:22-23) Constantly reflecting this "fruit", allows the other person to see the transformation that can be experienced through salvation. *"be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors...they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God.."* (1 Peter 2:12)
- **Demonstrate unconditional love.** Share always under a platform of love because there is no law against love, meaning that no one can keep you from loving him. This is perhaps the most effective way to open doors to introduce the Gospel because in reality every person wants to be loved. Remember that it was this love that God expressed first, before sending his son Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of man. (John 3:16) At the same time, do not forget that to love carries the objective of accepting the sinner, but not so their sins. Based on this, look for opportunities to share the Word in order to assist the person away from sin from a biblical and not a psychological perspective.

## What are some specific things I should share?

After making progress and developing trust with the unbeliever, look for opportunities to share more concrete topics.

- **Share that every human being is a sinner, not for sins committed but because he has inherited a sinful nature from Adam.** This inherited sin nature causes eternal separation from God, known as spiritual death, and cannot be avoided by just wanting to live a good life. *"When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, ...."* (Romans 5:12)
- **Share what God has done in your own life (personal testimony).** What most impresses the unbeliever is getting to know a person joyfully expressing the transformation God is creating in his life. This permits the unbeliever to "see" the real effect of the Word as it could occur in his own life. Based on this, share what God has transformed in your life, such as your ambitions, the way you now think and speak, your attitude about sinful things, and relationships with others. Share also how this transformation gives you joy and peace in this life as you live with a new purpose focused on the hope of a glorious eternity with God.
- **Share that every human being in his present condition as sinner can be forgiven by God and receive eternal life with Him.** Explain that it is no requirement to feel "clean and without sin" in order to come to God, it is only necessary to acknowledge ones sinful condition and call on God, by faith, to be saved. After receiving him, God will give him the strength to start a new life. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16).
- **Share that it is dangerous to postpone a decision of surrendering to Christ.** To receive Christ as savior, a person must make a personal conscious decision. This reveals the urgency of calling and surrendering to Christ, since no one can predict in advance the day of his death or the day they may lose his mental awareness. The Bible tells us *"..indeed, the right time is now. Today is the day of salvation"* (2 Corinthians 6:1-2).

## Upon sharing, what are some of the reactions I may receive?

- **One can receive indifference, rejection or persecution.** It is normal to receive negative responses which represent the "spiritual war" Christians need to be aware of. Do not allow this to lead you into a passive Christian lifestyle, and know that God knows what you are experiencing. As time goes by, large blessings can be expected, to those who persevere in sharing the news of the Gospel.
- **One can receive an emotional gratitude.** Many, upon hearing the Gospel news about hope and forgiveness, respond with emotional gratitude as something they needed to hear to bring peace and hope in their lives. They may not want to surrender to Christ, but are "thankful" and may continue open to receiving additional encouragement. Pray and continue sharing with them, as the opportunities present themselves.
- **One can receive a positive response to accept the Lord as savior.** Sharing with someone who surrenders to the Lord will be an unforgettable experience. When this occurs,

be filled with spiritual encouragement to continue evangelizing. Keep in touch with the new believer, supply him with a Bible and introduce him to a congregation where he can grow spiritually through the teaching and fellowship with other believers. Give thanks to the Lord for the experience and ask Him for more opportunities to share. Also share this experience with other believers to encourage them in their evangelistic efforts.

<b>Possible objections and suggested answers</b>		
<b>Objection</b>	<b>Response</b>	<b>Verse</b>
How can I be a sinner when I continue to do good things in society?	God says that we are all sinners.	<i>"When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone..."</i> (Romans 5:12)
I joined a church with my parents early in life.	Membership in a church or denomination does not save.	<i>"...I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God."</i> (John 3:3)
The Christian life is very restricted and void of fun and joy.	When you accept Christ, He will help you make the necessary changes to experience a joyful life.	<i>"For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength"</i> . (Philippians 4:13)
I have accumulated too many sins in my life.	God accepts us just as we are now.	<i>"... However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them.."</i> (John 6:37)
I am already giving much to the church and to humanitarian causes.	We are not saved by good works, only by our faith in Christ.	<i>"Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it"</i> . (Ephesians 2:9)
I think any good way leads to heaven as long as we are sincere.	According to the Bible, Jesus is the only way to heaven.	<i>"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me"</i> . (John 14:6)
Maybe another day, I am too busy now to think about this.	It is dangerous to postpone a decision of life or eternal death when we do not know when we will die.	<i>"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth.."</i> (Prov. 27:1)
I do not believe in Hell. When I die, I will just cease to exist.	This does not change the reality that hell does exist.	<i>"But the ..unbelieving...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire..which is the second death"</i> (Revelation 21:8).

## **Comment**

To share about your salvation more consistently, review all the points suggested here and if possible study them in conjunction with other Christians for mutual motivation and encouragement. Also, understand that it is God who provides through different circumstances, moments to share with others so, be flexible and attentive to the opportunities that arise. Meanwhile, keep praying for those that surround you daily, and ask God to open the doors to share with them.

Sharing and leading others to salvation in Christ is indeed the most valuable investment in the life of a Christian and it is also what receives the highest compensation from God in eternal life. Making disciples is the main objective of the message of the Gospel since it represents the only eternal "fruit" which every Christian is called to produce *"You didn't choose me, I chose you, I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name"* (John 15:16).

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# The eternity with God

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## Key verse

*"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you and...I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2-3)*

When the world talks about the "end of the world" it does so with terror and a sense of catastrophic loss. This is normal since those that do not know Christ as savior do not have within them the presence of the Holy Spirit providing the living hope of eternity with Christ. On the other hand, Christians having a living hope in them are also able to know what awaits them in heaven based on what God has already chosen to reveal through His Word. This study includes some of these revelations and reviewing them will help as the disciple seeks to increase his faith. Certainly the "end of the world" for those who know Him, represents an end full of peace and joy.

## **Eternity with God is a fact, so begin now to walk with a new and fresh expectation! Imagine the following:**

- In the future, Jesus, who ascended to heaven after his resurrection, will make a sudden appearance in the clouds to the entire world, *"When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am..."* (John 14:3)
- When Jesus comes, it will not be to send us to a home prepared by Him, but instead to take us to live with Him in his heavenly home! Wow what a difference is this!
- Finally, as if it wasn't enough to live with God in his heavenly home, joining Him will not be for just a seasonal celebration but rather to live with Him permanently! What a glorious event and future life represents this for the believer, and what a refreshing reward this will be for those who are currently suffering under persecution for maintaining their faith.

### **What is "eternal life"?**

Eternal life refers to the perpetual existence without interruption or end. It is an existence where time is not an inherent factor. This cannot be explained now by experience or scientifically, it can only be accepted and believed by faith.

- **Eternal life in the present.** Eternal life begins at the moment of salvation, and continues thereafter as a living hope in the heart of the believer. The hope is based on a promise by God. *"He who believes in the Son has everlasting life..."* (John 3:36). As a believer, you are already living your eternity in Christ, but you're living it in your physical body until the moment of physical death when it will continue in a spiritual body.
- **Eternal life in the future.** Eternal life will cease to be a hope based on faith and will become a reality in the future celestial home called the New Jerusalem. There, eternal life will be without the boundaries of time and in the company of God forever and ever.

### **What will be new for Christians in the eternal life?**

Although it is impossible to understand the dimension of what will be new, the Bible does provide some insight that we can accept by faith.

- **There will be a new heaven and a new earth.** The new earth is called the New Jerusalem which the apostle John saw in a vision *"Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away."* (Revelation 21:1 - 2). As everything is "new" then one can understand that it will not contain all the maladies and curse currently experienced in the first heaven and the first earth. The new Earth will also be completely different in its visual form. Its construction will be of precious stones, pure gold, and pearls (Revelation 21). In addition John said there will be no *"need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it"*. (Revelation 21:23). Nor will there be the presence of sin, impurities, or non-believers and rebel angels that have been

sent to hell. It will be a city of perpetual purity and beauty, and believers will not have to work to survive because they will be nourished by the *"tree of life"* (Revelation 22:1 - 2)

- **We will have a new body.** The Bible tells us about our new spiritual bodies (not of flesh and bones) and also gives us the order: *"...the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual"* (1 Corinthians 15:46). This spiritual body represents the eternal living body "in Christ" and is wonderfully given free of death, free of the aging-related discomforts, and the internal conflicts produced by the sinful nature in the human body.
- **We will meet our new community with other Christians in the company of God.** Life in the new Jerusalem will provide a meeting for believers of all ages and nations, as never before experienced in history. *"...I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also"* (John 14:3). Yes!, family, friends, the martyrs, and all who God used to start His Church will gather. In addition, the mothers will see their babies that died prematurely. *"It is not the will of my heavenly father that not even one of these little ones should perish"* (Matthew 18:14). There will also be recognition among believers as Christ was identified by the disciples when He appeared to them in His spiritual body after his resurrection (John 21:12-13)
- **Worship and praise will be different.** Revelation 21 tells us that in the new Earth there are no temples (buildings) to worship since God will be present and will be the permanent temple, radiating his light on the believers in His heavenly home. The apostle John had a vision about this heavenly worship *"Then I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying Alleluia! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigns"* (Revelation 19:6). What will be so amazing also in this worship is that all Christians from all languages along with angels, will worship together without confusion, something never experienced before. Just think what the voices and volume will sound like from millions gathering before the throne of God!

### **Comment**

It is the desire that now, at the end of this topic on eternity, you will have gathered truths and principles for developing a stronger spiritual foundation for your earthly journey. Throughout the inevitable difficult seasons, always strive to keep your eternal hope "alive", understanding that all difficulties due to the fall of man will pass and will be replaced by incredible new heavenly promises and realities. And yes, always remember to be thankful to God for electing you by His grace, to be among the privileged few that have been chosen to *"enter into the Kingdom of God through the narrow gate"* (Matthew 7:13). This gate will lead you to something unimaginable in due time, which the Lord motivates us to long for by saying, *"no eye has seen no ear has heard, no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him"* (1 Corinthians. 2:9)

This study also has another objective, that of awakening in you, the sad reality of eternity in hell that awaits those who do not know the Lord as their Savior. As you ponder about your privileged position "in Christ", commit to expressing your appreciation to God by embarking on a journey to share His Gospel with others, making disciples that will follow Christ and join you in heaven.

## **Information about the Organization Reaching Across Ministries**

Reaching Across Ministries has its base in San Antonio, Texas, and has the objective of providing assistance to churches in need of discipleship training material. The Ministry focuses on promoting the Great Commission through material published in Spanish and English.

The most popular method of distribution of the material is to a groups of pastors who meet periodically in different cities to review the studies and share how these can be applied to meet their local cultural needs. Much of the distributed material is published internally by the ministry and is edited using simple vocabulary therefore making it also suitable for readers that have not received extensive Bible training or advanced academic levels as is the case in remote areas where the ministry also operates. Many of the studies are selected through consultation with the pastors in order to meet the needs of their congregation in a more practical manner.

The ministry began informally in the year 1998, and in 2006 was officially registered in the State of Texas as a 501c3 non-profit religious corporation. Financially, it relies on donations from churches or individuals who value the approach and vision of the ministry. Since its inception, the ministry has maintained a Christian, Evangelical, and non-denominational position. All studies distributed have a biblical basis and are made available to all denominations.

If you want more information, would like to support the ministry or desire to order additional copies of this study for your church, small study groups or individuals, please contact:

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