

SPIRITUAL FORMATION SERIES

Course: The Nature of God

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Session One

Introduction

The purpose of this lesson is to bring clarity to the term ‘God’ and identify the natures of the Father, Son, and Spirit who make up the *corporate* title of God (e.g., Genesis 1:26 & 3:22; John 14:11). At first, the question “Who is God?” could seem to be an easy one to answer. A quick response may resemble, “I pray to God and love Jesus.” But, the answer would be too simple and very incomplete! All Christians must have a thorough fundamental understanding of the overarching title of God and the role each entity it comprises plays in salvation.

Because Christians don’t usually learn about the title God that comprises the Father, Son, and Spirit and their natures, we often misunderstand them and their parts in our restoration. For instance, some people see the God of the Old Testament as a different entity than that of the New Testament (Covenant). Others imagine that the Father has somehow changed from being vengeful and mean-spirited with the Israelites to resembling a cuddly ‘daddy’ figure in today’s Christian culture. Others don’t understand how Jesus could have been both God and man at the same time. Clarity is necessary!

In bringing clarity and a solid understanding of God to the learner, this lesson will inherently answer other questions and topics pondered by most Christians: “Why do bad things happen?” “I thought God is love, but a *good* God ...” “How can God be Father, Son, and Spirit?” “How could Jesus have been human and God at the same time?” “I hear the terms sanctification and justification but don’t understand what they mean. Help!” What they will learn is that death and bad things happen because humankind walked away from God the Father’s protection, provision, and access to the Tree of Life to pursue our desires. However, He wants us back and plans to restore the earth and humankind to its prior perfection through His, the Son, and the Spirit’s participation. And, God *is* love, but not our romanticized love: God’s love is actionable and just. He will do what He says and fulfill His promises. The result will be eternal life for some who have chosen to devote themselves to the Father and punishment and death for others who have chosen poorly and lack the devotion that brings life.

And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." —Revelation 21:3-5.

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. ... I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost."

—Revelation 22:12-17.

Session One

What to Know First: Justification, Sanctification, & Salvation Defined

Justification, sanctification, and salvation are three words Christians should know well but don't if at all (especially justification and sanctification). Each is critical to our reconciliation with God and facilitated by the Father, Spirit, or Son. The Son voluntarily gave His life to satisfy our debt of sin to a just Father. The Spirit guides the faithful in what should be the constant pursuit of holiness – being 'set apart' through the devotion of all we are and have for good works and spiritual maturity out of faith. That same Spirit of God raised Jesus from the dead and will also raise us for eternal life in the last days. Jesus' resurrection and our future redemption make possible our salvation (rescuing from the Father's coming punishment) and the eternal life just mentioned.

- **Justification.** Synonymous with vindication, freed, acquitted, and righteousness, justification implies that humankind has been rendered innocent through Jesus' death and the fruit (works) of faithful followers. His death was the sacrifice that only a perfect human could make to satisfy (pay) the debt of sin owed to God for everyone for all time. Although we have the way to return to the Father, we must respond in faith and through obedient action (sanctification) to complete the relationship.

Read:

- Romans 8:5-10 (Justification, reconciliation, and salvation)
- James 2:24 (Justification complete through the deeds we do out of faith)

- **Sanctification.** The term means to be made holy – to set apart our bodies for God's purposes (righteousness). Just as Jesus was sanctified (set apart) by the Holy Spirit to become our Savior, we must set ourselves apart for good works in faithful response to God's invitation to become His. In this sense, sanctification, justification, and righteousness are related.

Read:

- Romans 6:19-22 (righteousness, sanctification, and salvation are related)
- 1Thesalonians 4:3-7 (sanctification is our goal and the opposite of immorality)
- 2Timothy 2:21 (we are useful to God only when sanctified for good works)

- **Salvation.** As you may have already learned from the *Christians Foundation* course, salvation comprises the future rescuing from the Father's wrath (punishment by Hell) and our eternal life in God's re-creation of perfection.

Question for the Learner: Have you heard the terms sanctification and justification in the past? How have the definitions you just learned helped or changed your understanding, if so?

Corporate God: Elohim

Our employers often expect us to be their representative and face to the public. The organization expects us to perform according to their mission and values and guidelines and faithfully represent them to others. Therefore, it is not uncommon for those employees to present themselves as emissaries of their companies. For instance, someone working for Dell Computers may introduce themselves, especially in a business context, as being of (or from) Dell. In this way, they are the company; it is them, and they are it so-to-speak.

It may help to think of God in a corporate sense when wondering how the term relates to three discrete entities, each with a distinct role in our salvation. The Bible is very clear that God has had a plural nature from our beginning as indicated by Hebrew *Elohim* (e.g., Genesis 1:1-2 & John 1:1-14) and through many descriptions of their actions on our behalf and interactions with one another. You'll see a great representation of this relationship between Elohim Father, Son, and Spirit in John Chapter 14.

In John Chapter 14, we find several examples of the relationship of Father to Son and vice-versa as they 'abide' in one another. But, to ensure we don't fall into the trap of believing that the Father, Son, and Spirit are somehow just different sides of the same being, it is good to remember that even in John Chapter 14 we see them performing separate roles.

Introduction to the Father, Son, & Spirit

- **Father:** The *Father of spirits* (Hebrews 12:9) who gives us the Spirit (**Luke 11:13**) and **forgives** (**Matthew 6:14-15**) and saves by way of the Son's death and resurrection.
- **Son:** The son who obediently came to earth and took human form (spirit within flesh like us) to become the sacrifice for all. He has earned the right to rescue us from judgment and sits in the Kingdom of Heaven at the right side of God the *Father* (Ephesians 1:19-20).
- **Spirit:** Described as the '*Breath of God*,' He is currently on earth to guide and instruct those who follow Jesus (John 16:13) in His absence and until our Savior returns at the end of this age. The Holy Spirit is one of two gifts given to us by Jesus as His 'bride' (the other is righteousness, which goes hand-in-hand with our sanctification, or cleansing, for Him).

Read:

- Genesis 1:1-2 & John 1:1-14 (Elohim together in our creation and salvation)
- Hebrews 12:9 (God as the *Father of Spirits*)
- Luke 11:13 (Jesus referring to the Father who gives the Spirit)
- Matthew 6:14-15 (the Father who forgives)
- Ephesians 1:19-20 (Jesus raised from the dead by God and placed in authority)
- John 16:13 (Jesus speaks of the Spirit who will teach us truth)
- John 14:15-17 (our obedience proves love for God; the Christ, the Father, and the Spirit work within the same context)

For the Learner: Freely explore your understanding and thoughts of the Father, Son, and Spirit. There's no wrong answer at this point.

Roles in Justification, Sanctification, & Salvation

As we've previously discussed, corporate Elohim comprising Father, Son, and Holy Spirit has always worked on our behalf from creation and will to re-creation. The Father's just nature and justice itself demand recompense for our rebellion through the first man, Adam. God cannot lie and, therefore, waiver in His resolve. Therefore, the debt owed God by humans had to be satisfied by a *blameless* human; Jesus became that sinless sacrifice for our benefit.

Once a person believes in God and the sacrifice made by Jesus and then devotes their entire soul comprising body, mind, and spirit to God as a result (the covenant of which you've likely read) they must be set apart for God's use. This 'setting apart' is known as *sanctification* through the constant and continuous pursuit of purity and perfection. The result is true worship of God whereby our bodies are useful for doing good works for God's purposes; these actions prove our faith and are the true love Jesus described (e.g., in the caring for humankind). Of course, we're unable to be successful in the endeavor without God's help by the Holy Spirit, who teaches us and provides gifts and tools with which to carry out our sanctification and persevere until Christ's return and the end of this age.

In summary, the Father demands justice, which Jesus provided through His sacrifice. In return, He who raised Jesus from the dead to become a sign to all who will believe and follow, will give them His Spirit and raise them in the new age. In this, the Father, Son, and Spirit seek to restore us to the perfection we once enjoyed before humankind's rebellion.

Read:

- 1John 3:1-10 (pursue purity and righteousness; no one of God **practices** sin)
- Matthew 5:48 and John 17:23 (pursuit of perfection)

Question for the Learner: What questions, if any remain about the differences between God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit? Explain in your own words the role of each and the differences between justification, sanctification, and salvation.

Preview of Session Two: The Father

In the next module, you'll learn more about the nature and characteristics of God the Father. For instance, we will identify many of the roles He fills including the judge, provider, healer, and shepherd. Additionally, we'll discuss the Father's nature and contrast it with our perceptions of judgment and hell besides also addressing *why bad things happen*.

Session Two

Review: Elohim

Let's do a quick review of corporate God before we examine the Father's characteristics and nature. Elohim is a Hebrew word that can represent God in plurality as it does in Genesis 1:1-2. In fact, we find that the Father, Son, and Spirit were together at the time of creation as evidenced in the previous module. Each one works on our behalf and, indeed, on that of all creation to restore everything to perfection at the end of human time as we know it (end of the current age). Their primary roles are as follows:

- **Father:** Creator, judge, provider, healer, etc. All things are meant to work together for His purposes. Even the Son was obedient to the Father, who gave His life willingly for us.
- **Son:** We know Him as Jesus (Joshua, actually) and the One who inhabited human form to be the perfect sacrifice the Father required because of His just nature. His death has justified humankind before the Father (providing *justice*) and resulted in the forgiveness of sinful behavior that began with Adam. However, His resurrection by the Spirit makes salvation from God's coming wrath and *our* eventual resurrection possible when we respond out of faith and devote our lives to Him.
- **Spirit:** He is our connection to the Kingdom of God until we and it coexist physically in the new creation after Jesus's return. As such, the Spirit facilitates prayer with the Father and equips us through *Gifts of the Spirit* for good works and righteous behavior others see as *Fruits of the Spirit*. **Important to understand:** No faith and resulting actionable love, no Spirit. No Spirit, no eternal life or salvation!

Now, we'll look closer at the Father, His characteristics, and His nature.

God the Father

Contrary to our tendency to try and describe Him in a single word or phrase such as, "God is love!" or "He is compassionate!" we must understand that God the Father is complicated and multi-faceted as are we! His nature at any given time will depend on the recipient and where they're at relative to His covenant. He can save us because of Jesus' sacrifice (Matthew 1:21) and gives His Spirit to humans who devote their lives to Him out of faith (Luke 11:13). Also, He forgives us of our sinful behavior when we're faithful to forgive others for what they've done against us (e.g., Matthew 6:14). Does He have a name other than God or Heavenly Father? Absolutely!

The Father explained to Israel that His name is *Jehovah*. He also revealed to Abraham that He is *ehyeh* which properly translates to “I will be what I will be” (Exodus 3:13-14, for instance). The “I will be” meaning is significant considering God’s constant offer to be the “God who will [if we will].” Stay tuned for more on this in a future lesson on the covenant and its marriage-like relationship. Meanwhile, let’s consider a few of Jehovah’s characteristics.

Characteristics of the Father

Although Jehovah has exhibited many emotions and behaviors throughout our history, there are a few attributes that stand out:

- Creator & the Father of spirits (Genesis 1:1 & 27, Ecclesiastes 12:5-7 & Hebrews 12:9)
- Ruler of the Kingdom of Heaven (Acts 17:24 & Matthew 5:34)
- Shepherd (Jehovah-Rohi) (Psalm 23:1)
- Healer (Jehovah-Rapha) (Exodus 15:26)
- Provider (Jehovah-Jireh) (Genesis 22:14)
- Judge of the world through Jesus the Christ (Acts 17:30-31)

Perhaps the greatest attribute of the Father and the least-understood is His love for us. Our limited understanding and emotional makeup lead us to think of God’s love in a romantic light fueled by our desire for good feelings. However, this is not the nature of the love primarily presented by the Bible.

Read:

- Matthew 1:21 (Jesus our Savior)
- Luke 11:13 (the gift of the Holy Spirit by God)
- Matthew 6:14 (the Father will forgive those who forgive others)
- Genesis 2:4 (Elohim at creation)
- Genesis 6:7, Ecclesiastes 12:5-7 & Hebrews 12:9 (Creator & the Father of spirits)
- Acts 17:24 & Matthew 5:34 (God as ruler of the Kingdom of Heaven)
- Psalm 23:1 (Shepherd, Jehovah-Rohi)
- Exodus 15:26 Healer, Jehovah-Rapha)
- Genesis 22:14 (Provider, Jehovah-Jireh)
- Acts 17:30-31 (Judge of the world through Jesus the Christ)

Question for the Learner: What do you think about the many roles of God the Father? Do you see similarities in how God is with us versus how our earthly fathers should behave?

The Father's Love

First and foremost, the Father is the perfect father and judge who has our best interests at heart. He is slow to anger and is indeed compassionate as shown by His desire for us to choose salvation from coming wrath and enter the new age with Him in our midst. As the perfect father, He cares enough to discipline those “whom He loves.” And, as with our children, there’s comfort and freedom in knowing His boundaries and consequences so we can choose our actions wisely. So, if God’s love brings discipline and isn’t a ‘warm-n-fuzzy’ romantic love, what is it?

You’ll learn during another lesson that the word *agape* (noun) or *agapao* (verb) represent the Father’s love for us and our love for Him and each other and denote action. For instance, “God so loved that He *gave* ...” and “If you love me, you will *obey* ...” and “Faith without *action* is dead ...” and so forth. You can sum it up in this way: It is doing the right thing for the right reason no matter how we feel. How does this relate to God – especially regarding the phrase we hear, “God is love!”?

God’s love for us is action born of a just nature. He will keep His word. In other words, unlike humans and our unstable nature, God will consistently do what He says He will do: Save or destroy depending on *our* choices. This understanding of choice and consequence should lead to a healthy ‘fear’ of God and a *working out our salvation in fear and trembling* as a result.

Unfortunately, we tend to take 1John Chapter Four (verses 8 and 16 in particular) out of context to enable an emotional high. However, the theme/context of 1John Chapter Four presents a fair and just God that will judge the world, save the righteous, and allow the destruction of the rest. The text serves as a reminder that our actionable love, which is obedience to Jesus’ commandments out of our faith, mirrors God’s just nature and is the basis for our coming salvation. Here’s a breakdown of the verses we often abuse to claim that *God is [an emotional] love*.

- Verses 1-6: Differentiating ourselves from the world.
- Verses 7-17: God is actionable love. He has promised a savior for and kept that promise. We should be like Him and actionably love one another because He has done the same for us as we abide in Him and He abides in us through the Spirit.
- Verses 18-21: A sobering reminder that **actionable love born of our faith is critical to salvation – rescuing** from God’s judgment to come. Being nice, feeling spiritual, belief alone, or having lots of knowledge about the Bible kept private and without application are of no use to God, our Christ, or the Church.

Read:

- 1John 4:1-6 (differentiating ourselves from the world)
- 1John 4:7-17 (God is actionable love)
- 1John 4:18-21: (**actionable love born of our faith is critical to salvation**)

For the Learner: Think about and discuss what you now know about how the love of God, especially in the context of salvation and judgment, compares to previous understandings. Do you believe there's any place for an emotional, feeling-based love in our relationship with God? If so, where, how, and to/from who (e.g., you may feel that emotions from us to Him are alright, but that God doesn't have emotions toward us). **Hint:** There's no right or wrong answer, but we *do* know that the Father exhibited emotions in His relationship with Israel.

Now that we have a clearer understanding of the Father's love and His just nature, we'll be in a better position to make sense of the existence of Hell and punishment – consequences for rejecting God (either outright or passively through a lack of devotion or the practicing of sinful behavior).

Hell: Why Judgment & Punishment Exist

If you're wondering, as many people do, "Why would a good God send people to Hell?" it's important to understand that God didn't create Hell as a destructive punishment with its eternal separation for humans. There's no room in a perfect world for evil. Therefore, God created hell as a destination for *all* disobedient spirits starting with Satan and his angels. Wrath and Hell aren't what the Father desires for us! He wants to reconcile us. However, our free will enables us to choose sinful behavior and destruction in the same way Adam's rebellion resulted in separation from God and the Tree of Life.

Along the same lines, we often think of or say things like, "Why would a good God allow people to die of cancer?" So, why *do* bad things happen to seemingly good people? Although a more thorough answer will exist in a future lesson, a brief response will help us stay laser-focused on God's true nature and ours.

Read:

- 2Corinthians 5:18-20 (God's desire for our reconciliation to Him)
- 2Peter 3:9 (God's patience in our reconciliation)
- Matthew 25:41 & 46 (Hell was not created for humans but will be the home of all disobedient spirits)

Questions for the Learner: What have you heard about hell? How does that compare to what you now know? What questions if any remain?

Why Bad Things Happen [to Good People]

The first thing to understand is that there is none good but the Father alone (Matthew 19:17 and Mark 10:18) and we live in a sinful and corrupt world (e.g., Genesis 6:11-13 & Psalm 14:1-3) because of bad choices made by humans beginning with Adam. So why *do* bad things happen in our sinful world? Here's a summary:

- Things just happen (rain and sunshine on everyone - Matthew 5:44-45)
- We suffer from the consequences of others' actions
- We suffer from the consequences of *our* actions
 - Those who live by the sword will die by the sword (e.g., those who drive in the car may die by the car – most occupations have inherent risks!) (Matthew 26:52)
 - Negative effects of technology (e.g., cancerous toxins or accidents)
 - The earthly cost of our covenant with Jesus (as with the martyrs) (cf. Luke 14:27-30; Matthew 24:9 & Revelation 6:11; Acts 14:19; 2Co 11:24-27)
 - We can restrict God's ability to work in our lives through our sinful and rebellious nature (e.g., 1Peter 3:7)
- God may be in the process of answering prayer and what *seems* bad may be a process we must go through for healing, growth, or prosperity (as with a desire for a new job)
- God disciplines and refines those whom He loves (Hebrews 12:5-13)

Hopefully, you now understand that God isn't to blame for our painful situations and that He often assists us through the provision, healing, and other miraculous works of the Spirit.

Read:

- Matthew 19:17 and Mark 10:18 (none good but the Father alone)
- Genesis 6:11-13 & Psalms 14:1-3 (we live in a sinful and corrupt world)
- Matthew 5:44-45 (things happen)
- Matthew 26:52 (risk inherent in our jobs, etc.)
- Luke 14:27-30; Matthew 24:9 & Revelation 6:11; Acts 14:19; 2Corinthians 11:24-27 (inherent risks of following Jesus)
- 1Peter 3:7 (restrict God's aid by practicing sin)
- Hebrews 12:5-13 (refinement by God)

Question for the Learner: Think about an instance (or times) when you may have blamed God (even privately) for misfortune or problems. What do you think would be a proper response when something we believe to be bad is happening (or has happened) to us?

Preview of Session Three: The Son

The next module will provide a basic understanding of the Son and His role in our sanctification (growth and proof of our devotion to God) and salvation (the outcome of our sanctification). Our Savior, Joshua, fulfilled the role as our Passover Lamb and paid the penalty for our sin. Jesus has authority over Heaven and earth, which He has passed to us by the Spirit.

Session Three

Review: The Father

God the Father, *Jehovah*, is our creator, healer, provider, and savior through the Son. He is just, patient, and compassionate. As such, He is love – actionable love that we are to mimic with the help of the Spirit. He is the only good being, and He doesn't tempt us or cause us to stumble. And although there may be exceptions to the rule for our benefit or refining, He doesn't **make** us go through challenging times or trouble. We create plenty of grief and hardship for ourselves and suffer from the consequences of our bad actions and decisions, those of others, and a variety of other causes such as technology and occupational risk.

On the other hand, the Father created us for fellowship, and He desires for us to return to Him. To enable that reconciliation, the Son gave His human life to pay our penalty for rebellious sin, and the Spirit equips us to be set apart from worldly corruption so we can persevere until salvation at Jesus' return and the end of this age. Speaking of Jesus (or Joshua if you prefer an English version of His Hebrew name *Yeshua*), let's learn more about Him and the Spirit who equipped Him while He was on earth in the same way He equips us.

The Father's Son

Our Savior, Jesus, is the only Heavenly host born of human flesh, which is why the Bible refers to Him as the *only begotten son of God*. As such, He fulfilled the foreshadowing of our Passover Lamb and the ultimate sacrifice that justified the world to the Father by paying our penalty for sin. In return, the Father has given Him complete authority over Heaven and earth; He has passed that authority to His true followers through the Spirit.

Characteristics of the Son

Most of what we understand about the Father can be applied to the Son because the Father created, loves, judges and saves through Him. This understanding should also help us put into perspective Jesus' comments about their abiding in one another. However, you *could* sum up Jesus' character while a human with the non-romantic version of actionable love accompanied by the emotion of *compassion*. We've seen evidence of His love and compassion in several ways.

For instance, He actionably loved us enough to offer His life for ours in becoming the Passover Lamb promised by the Father through the prophets. And the Bible teaches us that while on earth Jesus felt *gut-wrenching* compassion as indicated by Greek *splagchnizomai* (Matthew 9:36, 14:14, and 15:32, for instance) and responded in true love by healing, feeding, or teaching. We also find a consistent, righteous man in human Jesus. Besides the love and compassion just

mentioned, you'll also see bold action in giving the truth and holding people accountable (disciples and Pharisees alike). Another manifestation of boldness and strength and righteousness in Jesus' character was in His encounter with Satan in the desert. Although tempted in several ways, Jesus stood firm and defended his steadfastness with Scripture (something we are to do also!). Additionally, the Bible uses several names to describe His roles and characteristics.

First and foremost, Jesus is our *Bread of Life* (John 6:35) and Redeemer (Isaiah 59:20 and Ephesians 1:19-20). How? He was obedient unto death (Philippians 2:8 and Romans 5:19) to become the [Passover] Lamb of God (John 1:29 and 1Corinthians 5:7) that brings spiritual life. He was called Immanuel (Matthew 1:23), which means *God with us*, because of his appearing on earth in the flesh to satisfy our debt of sin to the Father. He is the *Word* of God (John 1:1-3 and Revelation 19:13), because He manifested God's word (message) of reconciliation, and was with Elohim from the beginning (*alpha*) of creation.

As the righteous Judge and King (2Timothy 4:8 and Matthew 25:31-46), Jesus will also be the end - *omega* (Revelation 22:13). Meanwhile, He, seated to God's right in a position of authority, is in Heaven preparing a place for us (John 14:2-3 and Ephesians 1:19-20). Finally, the prophet Isaiah foretold of Jesus being a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, and Prince of Peace to the faithful (Isaiah 9:6). Conversely, Peter said that He is a *precious and living cornerstone, one of stumbling and offense to the disobedient* (1Peter 2:4-8). Let's now look at just a few of the many prophecies Jesus fulfilled and is still fulfilling.

Read:

- Matthew 9:36, 14:14 and 15:32 (gut-wrenching compassion by Jesus)
- John 6:35 (Jesus is our Bread of Life)
- Isaiah 59:20; Ephesians 1:19-20 (Jesus is our Redeemer)
- Philippians 2:8 and Romans 5:19 (Jesus was obedient unto death for our sakes)
- John 1:29 and 1Corinthians 5:7 (Jesus was the [Passover] Lamb of God)
- Matthew 1:23 (Jesus was called Immanuel, *God with us*)
- John 1:1-3; Revelation 19:13 (Jesus is called the *Word* of God)
- 2Timothy 4:8 and Matthew 25:31-46 (Jesus as our righteous judge and King)
- Revelation 22:13 (Jesus will also be the *alpha* and *omega*)
- John 14:2-3; Ephesians 1:19-20 (Jesus, seated to God's right in a position of authority, is in Heaven preparing a place for us)
- Isaiah 9:6 (foretelling of the Christ as a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, and Prince of Peace to the faithful)
- 1Peter 2:4-8 (Jesus as a *precious and living cornerstone, one of stumbling and offense to the disobedient*)

Question for the Learner: Which of these roles or titles are new to you? Discuss differences in what you've believed or heard and those listed here.

Sample Prophecies the Son Fulfilled

Some estimates of the number of prophecies Jesus fulfilled by His coming to earth are in the several hundred. Regardless, one thing is for sure: He fulfilled many very specific foretellings spoken by multiple prophets.

For instance, Daniel prognosticated the Messiah's first coming and death roughly 500 years before Jesus' birth (Daniel 9:25). The prophecy predicted that the Messiah would appear on the scene 69 weeks of years (483 years) after the command to rebuild the wall surrounding Jerusalem. The prophet also reiterated something spoken by King David in a Psalm 400 years before the prophecy: Jesus' throne will be eternal (Psalm 45:6; Daniel 2:44 and 7:18 & 27). Additionally, we find at least one prophecy that Jesus was to be born of a woman (Genesis 3:15, confirmed by Paul in Galatians 4:4-5) and a virgin at that (Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:23). The Bible tells us Mary's impregnation to produce the only begotten Son of God was made possible by His Spirit and not through human male intervention (Luke 1:34-35).

We have explored some of Jesus' characteristics and titles and will now seek to understand what is meant by the *name* of Jesus.

Read:

- Daniel 9:25 (Daniel prophesied the timing of Jesus' birth)
- Psalm 45:6; Daniel 2:44 and 7:18 & 27 (Jesus throne will be eternal)
- Genesis 3:15, confirmed by Paul in Galatians 4:4-5 (Jesus would be born of a woman)
- Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23 (Jesus would be born of a virgin)
- Luke 1:34-35 (Mary's impregnation was made possible by the Spirit)

For the Learner: Discuss any prophecies not listed here that you've heard of in the past.

His 'Name'

You'll hear references to Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, His Christ, our Christ, and Jesus Christ. It is important first to understand that His name isn't *Jesus Christ* – this is a designation. Humorously, it isn't as though someone named Jesus was born to Mr. and Mrs. Christ. His name is just a loose translation of Greek *Iēsous* for Jehoshua, Jesus' proper Hebrew name we pronounce as Joshua in English as we have already discovered.

The word *Christ* is a title, not a proper name, which comes from Greek *Christos* – anointed one, or Messiah. So, Jesus Christ is a loose translation of Jehoshua the Messiah. Whether someone calls Him Jesus, Jesus Christ, the Christ, Joshua, or Jehoshua doesn't matter. What *does* matter is that we know of whom we speak and follow and that we don't misuse the authority He

has given us through the Spirit. This is where we need to differentiate between what we call Jesus and the *name of Jesus*. Seem confusing? Let's explore!

We find several references to *Jesus's name* in association with asking for something or performing with the aid of the Spirit. In context, the *name* indicates an action or word *by the authority of Jesus*. For instance, Jesus prophesied that on the day of judgment some would erroneously assume they should be saved from wrath because they said or did things by His name but not *in His authority by the Spirit* (Matthew 7:22-23).

Jesus explains that He will say that He *never knew them* as a result in verse 23. The idea should be sobering since Jesus implies, as Paul and James reiterate, that our knowledge of God alone is worthless in salvation – God must *know us* too (James 2:19-20; Galatians 4:9)! This knowledge of us requires our devotion and operation by the Spirit (1Corinthians 8:3) and, therefore, in heavenly authority. The theme of misusing Jesus' *name* also appears in Matthew 24:5 where Jesus prophesies that people will claim wrongly to come in the authority of Christ or to claim to be him. And, Jesus tells us in John 14:13 that He will grant us whatever we ask when properly requested with a pure heart and right motives by the authority we have through the Spirit.

He had received this authority from God, and He gives it to anyone who follows Him through that same Spirit (Matthew 28:18; Luke 9:1 and 24:49; Acts 1:8). So, if anyone is exercising the authority – name – of Christ, they are doing so because the Spirit is at work in their lives. The power they exhibit to receive or perform miracles comes not from voicing “Jesus” but from that Spirit that connects them with the Kingdom of God. Unfortunately, our tradition is to say “... in Jesus' name!” or end a prayer in the same way as though the utterance carries magic. The habit is akin to saying, “God bless you!” when someone sneezes, which is a tradition that has nothing to do with God but comes from the Middle Ages and is just habit.

Still a bit fuzzy? Don't worry – we're so steeped in the idea that saying a name brings magical power that the truth of Jesus' name may take a bit to sink in. Another relationship that may help make sense of the topic is that of a King and his emissaries. Pick an ancient story or movie with a king, and you'll probably see or hear something like, “We come in the *name* of the king” The emissaries (representatives) of the king carried the authority, or power, of that king when operating on his behalf. It is no different in the case of God, our King, and Savior through Jesus. We are representatives of His Kingdom on earth and carry the power and authority of the Kingdom when the Spirit dwells within us. But, remember, only those people who are obedient out of their belief receive the Spirit! In the next session, we'll delve deeper into that third member of Elohim.

Read:

- Matthew 7:22-23 (actions by the name of Jesus but not by His authority; not known)
- James 2:19-20; Galatians 4:9 (God must know us too)
- 1Corinthians 8:3 (knowledge of us by God requires our devotion and operating by the Spirit)
- Matthew 24:5 (people will claim wrongly to come under the authority of Christ)
- John 14:13 (Jesus will grant us whatever we ask when operating under His authority)
- Matthew 28:18; Luke 9:1 and 24:49; Acts 1:8 (Jesus received His authority from God, and He gives it to anyone who follows Him through that same Spirit)

Question for the Learner: How has this short lesson on the name of Jesus helped or hurt your understanding of how we pray, our authority in Jesus, or any Christian traditions or phrases? Feel free to discuss your thoughts, concerns, or any confusion openly.

Preview of Session Four: The Spirit

The next module will provide a basic understanding of the Spirit and His role in our sanctification (growth and proof of our devotion to God) and salvation (the outcome of our sanctification). He is our connection to the Father and His Kingdom and enables us to please God out of faith. We display ‘fruits of the Spirit’ when we operate in His enablement.

Session Four

Review: The Son

Jesus the Christ was with the Father and the Spirit from the beginning of creation, and He was the only human begotten of the Father to enable Him to redeem humankind by giving His life for us. The price He paid on our behalf has earned Him the right to save us and rule as King. His first appearance on earth fulfilled several prophecies hundreds of years old; His return at the end of the age will fulfill the remainder. Meanwhile, anyone who devotes their life to God and obediently and actionably loves out of faith will receive the Spirit and, as a result, gifts to help persevere until His return.

The Father's Spirit

This *breath of God* is our connection to the Father while we remain on this earth and anticipate the physical presence of God's Kingdom in the new age as its ambassadors (2Corinthians 5:17-21). Meanwhile, the Spirit enables us to please God out of faith by teaching us and providing various gifts. We must use and share them to produce fruit, or characteristics, of Elohim at work in our lives. Let's examine some characteristics and ancient experiences of the Holy Spirit.

Characteristics of the Spirit

The Old Testament prophets made clear that the appearing of the Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit would inaugurate the coming Kingdom of God. The Christ would initiate the 'age of the Spirit of God' wherein all of God's people, not just a select few as was the case in the Old Testament era, could be filled and empowered by His Spirit. God's presence as manifested by His Spirit would no longer be relegated the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem. Now, He is in *all* His people to enable them all to be "a holy priesthood" endowed with the power and gifts of His Spirit (consider Isaiah 11:1-2, 42:1, and 61:1; Joel 2:28-32).

Today, He serves to instruct and convict us in addition to giving wonderful gifts to those followers of Jesus who ask for them. His conviction and instruction, freely given to those who follow the Christ, can help us see our way through murky behavioral waters when we would otherwise be blind or misguided. The Spirit of God brings us comfort, knowledge, and the ability to discern between right and wrong when we allow.

Read:

- Genesis 1:1-2 (God's Spirit was with us at the creation of the heavens and earth)
- Exodus 31:3-5 (filled the Jews with wisdom and craftsmanship)
- Numbers 11:25-29 (enabled the Israelites to become God's prophets)
- Isaiah 11:1-2, 42:1, and 61:1 (enabled Jesus to bring the Good News)

- Joel 2:28-32 (Prophecies of an outpouring of the Spirit at the Messiah's first coming)
- 1Peter 2:5-12 (all people can have the Spirit and be part of a Holy Priesthood)
- Luke 11:13; Acts 2:38 & 19:2 (given by God the Father at the moment of true belief)
- John 14:26 & 16:13; 2Peter 1:21 (Teacher & helper to Jesus' Followers)

Question for the Learner: What did you know about the Holy Spirit before this lesson?

Gifts of the Spirit

Gifts given by the Spirit include the languages of men (for preaching and teaching those of other nations) and angels along with interpretation, wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, and the discerning of spirits (Acts 2:4 – 13; 1Corinthians 12:7-11). Read the rest of 1Corinthians Chapter 12, and you'll learn that these gifts are for the benefit of God's community, the Church (note the capital 'C' used to denote the universal assembly of followers, not local collectives/churches).

We find a reiteration of some of these gifts and their use to unify and train the Church in Ephesians 4:1-6. One important note: The Spirit gifts us according to the *Father's* purposes, not ours. We may be enabled to use one or more gifts any given time, but appointing ourselves as apostles, healers, or miracle workers, etc. as if we are assigned permanent gifts may be prideful and could restrict God from working through us dynamically. God will do what He will do through the Spirit to suit *His* good pleasure (will). Next, we'll discuss the discernable effects of our walking by the Spirit and what the Bible calls the *fruit of the Spirit*.

Fruit: Proof of the Spirit at Work

Any Christ follower operating by the Spirit will consistently display certain characteristics. The Bible calls them 'fruits' of the Spirit of God: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-24). Just look for these attributes (characteristics) that reflect involvement in God's covenant and Kingdom if you're unsure of whether someone has devoted themselves to God and is walking by His Spirit.

Do you see a commonality in the fruits? They reflect motion or action. Someone *is* benevolent in actionable love, or not. Their relationship with God *produces* joy and, as a rule, *they are* at peace. An individual walking by the Spirit will, for the most part, *be* patient and kind. They *will be* consistent and their approach and *reproach* gentle. And, in true spiritual worship, they *control* their bodies in sexual purity and for good works (see also Romans 12:1-2). These displays of action or application will be normal behavior for the true follower of Jesus, and there can be no mistaking who they are as a result.

The good news is that determining whether someone is ‘saved’ or not isn’t your responsibility. Being able to recognize the fruits of the Spirit is for *your* protection so that you can be “wise as a serpent but gentle as a dove” (Matthew 10:16) and continue your walk of righteousness (sanctification) without being deceived by false Christians. On a side note, you must grow spiritually continually and then mentor (disciple) others as we’ve seen in Paul’s exhortation to the church in Ephesus (e.g., Ephesians 4:11-16). In other words, keep reaching higher!

Read:

- Acts 2:4 – 13 (the Spirit gave the ability to speak other languages to preach the Gospel)
- 1Corinthians 12:7-11 (manifestations/gifts of the Spirit for the common good of the Church)
- Ephesians 4:1-6 (use the Spirit’s gifts for God’s purpose and unity within the Church)
- Galatians 5:22-24 (gifts of the Spirit)
- Romans 12:1-2 (self-control of our bodies in true worship of God)
- Matthew 10:16 (being wise as serpents and gentle as doves)
- Ephesians 4:11-16 (using spiritual gifts and talents to equip the Church)

Questions for the Learner: Did you know about the gifts of the Spirit previously? If not, what do you think now? What are some examples of manifestations (fruits or signs or effects) of the Spirit at work in a follower’s life? For instance, you could comment about what being gentle or kind might look like today.

Reaching Higher

We pray this course has provided a solid foundation in your understanding of the nature of God as a whole and the Father, Son, and Spirit in particular. Again, what you’ve learned is meant to inspire a passion for serving God and others in your covenant with Him and provide basic guidance. But, don’t stop here!

We must continue to study and grow and apply what we learn while following Christ out of our love for Him and the Father; Mentoring and discipleship will help in this process. Then, you’ll train and reproduce godliness in others by mentoring them. Think of it as a never-ending process that will begin with training such as what you’ve received in this lesson.

Crosswalk church utilizes the First Steps one-on-one discipleship system. We encourage you to ask for a disciple-maker who will partner with you to continue your training and prepare you to then disciple others. The First Steps process will train at a deeper level spiritual disciplines we introduced to you such as dealing with temptation, prayer, bible study, and fellowship. Then what?

Reaching higher yet, you'll want to spend the rest of your life in daily prayer and Bible study, accountability for and to others in fellowship and growth, disciple-making, and ongoing spiritual formation.

May God richly bless you with your spiritual walk!

Instructor Guidance

First and foremost, this course is meant to be a high-level introduction. So don't go deep 'into the weeds' theologically-speaking or allow the learner to derail the training. Encourage a separate one-on-one meeting if they'd like to ask more questions or have a deeper discussion than time allows.

Second, and related to the first point, keep to the outline and plan as much as possible! Each point and their order intentionally provide a strategic system to train the learner and provide a clear theological foundation.

Third, avoid the temptation to inject personal bias and private theology into the training plan. If you don't agree with any portion of the plan or theological points, privately note and bring them up to the Pastor or training staff. We understand that not everyone will agree with all theological points represented in this course; however, their formation and order have been part of a well-vetted and carefully thought out process. Disagreeing or correcting them overtly, especially when training, will do nothing but cause confusion, division, and potential disengagement from the church by the learner.

Finally, please prepare for the training sessions by reading all text and verses in advance. Doing so will help ensure your and the learner's success.

Have fun and may God richly bless you for your spiritual maturity and contribution to His Kingdom!

Session One: 45 minutes

1. Open with **prayer**.
2. Read the **introduction**.
3. **Set expectations**. Attend every session if possible, as they build on one another to create a wonderful and complete "What now?" picture. Encourage the learner to read the material and Bible verses in advance to leave more time for discussion during your sessions together.
4. Read '**What to Know First**,' each portion and the Bible references (such as Justification) in order.
 - Contrast justification, sanctification, and salvation. Ensure the learner understands that this is something of a sequence by which God loved us first through Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection and then we commit ourselves to Him and to be 'set apart' from sinful ways. The result will be salvation at Jesus' appearing and the gifts of the Spirit and righteousness in the meantime.
 - Engage with the learner through questions and discussion from **Question for the Learner**.
5. Read '**Corporate God: Elohim**' and then the Bible references.

- Then read the **Introduction to the Father, Son, & Spirit** along with the Bible references.
 - Engage with the learner through a discussion of **For the Learner**.
 - Then read **Roles in Justification, Sanctification, & Salvation** and the Bible verses.
 - Engage with the learner through questions and discussion from **Question for the Learner**.
6. Read '**Preview of Session Two: The Father**' to introduce the next session.
 7. **Summarize.** Tie together the Father, Son, and Spirit as Elohim and how they work together for our reconciliation with the Father. Feel free to introduce the human concept of the *Trinity* as long as you maintain clarity in the existence of each member and their roles. Muddying the waters by trying to push a theology of one being that somehow dies and raises himself and plays all three roles would be confusing and contradicts the Bible. Reiterate Jesus' sacrifice that made humankind justified before the Father but also reiterate the need for us to respond and devote ourselves and all we are and have to God. Ensure the learner knows the difference between occasional sinning and repentance versus *practicing* sin and the eternal separation from God the lack of devotion and self-control will bring.
 8. Close in **prayer**.
 9. Encourage the learner to become familiar with Session Two throughout the week, and pray for strength and guidance.

Session Two: 45 minutes

1. Open with **prayer**.
2. Read '**Review: Elohim.**'
3. Read '**God the Father.**'
4. Read '**Characteristics of the Father**' and then the Bible references.
 - Engage with the learner through questions and discussion from **Question for the Learner**. If you have the time, spend a few minutes comparing and contrasting our heavenly Father with an ideal earthly father.
5. Read '**The Father's Love**' and then the Bible references (1John 1-21). Explain to the learner that there are two main objectives in this portion. First, to learn more about God's love and ours. Second, to use this opportunity to show how important is careful, methodical, and thorough Bible study! Remind them that they will encounter many examples of *bad* Bible study and misleading church traditions like this one, so a priority must be to learn how to study and then practice, practice, practice.
 - Engage with the learner through **For the Learner**. Encourage the learner to openly discuss how they imagine human emotion and God's love may be related and whether God has emotions. Help them understand that they must be careful not to mistake emotion for Spirit or 'God speaking to them.'
6. Read '**Hell: Why Judgment & Punishment Exist**' and then the Bible references.
 - Engage with the learner through the questions and discussion from **Questions for the Learner**. Allow them to voice their beliefs and encourage further study and

dialogue if necessary, but don't discourage open dialogue if their views differ from what the lesson teaches.

7. Read '**Why Bad Things Happen [to Good People]**' and the Bible verses. The goal here is just to introduce the idea that humans or chance cause our demises. God is never to blame, and Satan gets way too much credit for the consequences we suffer. Keep this portion short as a separate lesson will allow for more study and discussion on this topic.
 - Engage with the learner through **Questions For the Learner**. Manage the time, as this discussion could go on for an extended period (everyone has had trouble, and we all question why at times!). Encourage a side discussion during a separate meeting if appropriate – especially if mentoring and encouragement is needed.
8. Read '**Preview of Session Three: The Son.**'
9. **Summarize.** Remind the learner that God is our just creator, and His love is actionable as shown by His desire to reconcile us and the price paid by Jesus to bring us back to Him. He doesn't cause bad things to happen to us; however, we suffer primarily because of many other causes due to our sinful and rebellious nature. Finally, the Father didn't create Hell for humans, but all disobedient spirits will end up there at the end of this age through their bad choices.
10. Close in **prayer**.
11. Encourage the learner to become familiar with Session Three throughout the week, and pray for strength and guidance.

Session Three: 45 minutes

1. Open with **prayer**.
2. Read '**Review: The Father.**'
3. Read '**The Father's Son**' and '**Characteristics of the Son**' and then the Bible verses.
 - Engage with the learner through **Question For the Learner**. The goal here is to help the learner internalize Jesus' roles, so they are comfortable with the part He plays in the salvation of humanity.
4. Read '**Sample Prophecies the Son Fulfilled**' and then the Bible verses.
 - Engage with the learner through **For the Learner**. Perhaps they have heard of other prophecies or have questions.
5. Read '**His 'Name**' and then the Bible verses. There is a very important goal here: Help the learner separate church tradition from biblical truth. In this case, believing that verbalizing 'Jesus' will somehow carry magic or authority is a very real possibility and happens way too often! The learner must understand that Jesus' point is that we are to ask or do by the authority of heaven, not by uttering something. Bottom-line: The Spirit brings and gives that authority; A person is either operating within it or isn't. Keep things very simple and clear for the learner to aid them in being a follower, not just a believer! Additionally, the misguided and dangerous idea that closing a prayer or claiming stuff in Jesus' name somehow makes the desire come true is the product of bad or no Bible study and propagated through human tradition. The tendency is something we must guard against through ongoing study and prayer just as we saw in the previous section on the Father's Love.

- Engage with the learner through **Question For the Learner**.
- 6. Read '**Preview of Session Four: The Spirit**.'
- 7. **Summarize**. The Son has redeemed us for the Father by living and dying in human form so the Father could raise Him on the third day as a sign to all who will believe and follow. Upon ascending to Heaven to prepare for an eventual return and new age, Jesus gave His followers the Spirit of God to guide and instruct them until that time. Those with that Spirit operate within the authority of the Kingdom of Heaven and often enjoy the gifts of the Spirit to accomplish God's desires during our existence on earth.
- 8. Close in **prayer**.
- 9. Encourage the learner to become familiar with Session Four throughout the week, and pray for strength and guidance.

Session Four: 45 minutes

1. Read the '**Review: The Son, The Father's Spirit, and Characteristics of the Spirit**' and then the Bible references.
 - Engage with the learner through **Question For the Learner**. You will likely find that the learner has had little if any training about the Spirit.
2. Read '**Gifts of the Spirit and Fruit: Proof of the Spirit at Work**' and then the Bible references. An important point to stress is that Christians receive gifts and abilities by the Spirit to accomplish God's desires, not ours. So, they may be sporadic or will change.
 - Engage with the learner through **Questions For the Learner**. Many Christians erroneously learn that the Spirit no longer offers these gifts and abilities (such as prophecy and speaking in other languages). Encourage dialogue to see if this is the case. If so, share your own experiences and those of others if you have them.
3. Read 'Reaching Higher' and encourage the learner to continue their training and spiritual formation. The ongoing study, prayer, and accountability are essential for growth!
4. Close in **prayer**.

Scripture References (taken from the NASB)

What to Know First: Justification, Sanctification, & Salvation Defined

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. **However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.** But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. If Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of **righteousness.** —**Romans 8:5-10.**

You see that a man is **justified by works and not by faith alone.** In the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also **faith without works is dead.** —**James 2:24.**

I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to **righteousness,** resulting in **sanctification.** For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in **sanctification,** and the outcome, **eternal life.** —**Romans 6:19-22.**

For this is the **will of God, your sanctification;** that is, that you **abstain from sexual immorality;** that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For **God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification.** —**1Thesalonians 4:3-7.**

Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, **sanctified,** useful to the Master, prepared for every good work. —**2Timothy 2:21.**

Introduction to the Father, Son, & Spirit

In the beginning **God created** the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the **Spirit of God** was moving over the surface of the waters. —**Genesis 1:1-2.**

In the beginning was the **Word**, and the Word was **with God**, and the **Word was God**. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and **the world was made through Him**, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And **the Word became flesh**, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. —**John 1:1-14.**

Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the **Father of spirits**, and live? —**Hebrews 12:9.**

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly **Father give the Holy Spirit** to those who ask Him? —**Luke 11:13.**

For **if you forgive** others for their transgressions, your heavenly **Father will also forgive you**. But if you **do not forgive** others, then your **Father will not forgive** your transgressions. —**Matthew 6:14-15.**

... and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and **seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places** —**Ephesians 1:19-20.**

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, **He will guide you into all the truth**; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. —**John 16:13.**

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. I will ask the Father, and He will give you another **Helper**, that He may be with you forever; that is **the Spirit of truth**, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because **He abides with you and will be in you**. —**John 14:15-17.**

Roles in Justification, Sanctification, & Salvation

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. You know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. No one who abides in Him sins; **no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him**. Little children, make sure no one deceives you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. **No one who is born of God practices sin**, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. —**1John 3:1-10**.

Therefore you are to be **perfect**, as your heavenly Father is perfect. —**Matthew 5:48**.

I in them and You in Me, that they may be **perfected in unity**, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me. —**John 17:23**.

Session Two

Characteristics of the Father

She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for **He will save** His people from their sins. —**Matthew 1:21**.

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly **Father give the Holy Spirit** to those who ask Him? —**Luke 11:13**.

For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your **heavenly Father will also forgive you**. —**Matthew 6:14**.

This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were **created**, in the day that the **LORD God made** earth and heaven. —**Genesis 2:4**.

The LORD said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.” —**Genesis 6:7**.

Furthermore, men are afraid of a high place and of terrors on the road; the almond tree blossoms, the grasshopper drags himself along, and the caperberry is ineffective. For man goes to his eternal home while mourners go about in the street. Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and **the spirit will return to God who gave it.** —Ecclesiastes 12:5-7.

Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the **Father of spirits**, and live? —Hebrews 12:9.

The **God who made the world and all things** in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands —Acts 17:24.

But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the **throne of God** —Matthew 5:34.

A Psalm of David. The LORD is my **shepherd**, I shall not want. —Psalm 23:1.

And He said, “If you will give earnest heed to the voice of the LORD your God, and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put on the Egyptians; for I, the LORD, am your **healer.**” —Exodus 15:26.

Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will **Provide**, as it is said to this day, “In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.” —Genesis 22:14.

Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will **judge the world in righteousness through a Man** whom He has appointed, having furnished **proof** to all men by **raising Him from the dead.** —Acts 17:30-31.

The Father's Love

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. **1John 4:1-6.**

Beloved, let us love one another, for **love is from God**; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for **God is love**. **By this** the love of God was manifested in us, that **God has sent** His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that **He loved us and sent His Son** to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time; **if we love one another, God abides in us**, and His love is perfected in us. **By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit**. We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. **God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God**, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, **so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment**; because as He is, so also are we in this world. **1John 4:7-17**.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. **We love, because He first loved us**. If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him, that **the one who loves God should love his brother** also. **1John 4:18-21**.

Hell: Why Judgment & Punishment Exist

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that **God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself**, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us **the word of reconciliation**. Therefore, **we are ambassadors** for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God**. —**2Corinthians 5:18-20**.

The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance**. —**2Peter 3:9**.

Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the **eternal fire** which has been **prepared for the devil and his angels**’ —**Matthew 25:41**.

These will go away into **eternal punishment**, but the **righteous into eternal life**. —**Matthew 25:46**.

Why Bad Things Happen

And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is **only One who is good**; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” —**Matthew 19:17**.

And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? **No one is good except God alone.**” —**Mark 10:18**.

Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for **all flesh had corrupted** their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me; for **the earth is filled with violence because of them**; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.” —**Genesis 6:11-13**.

For the choir director. A Psalm of David. The fool has said in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds; There is no one who does good. The LORD has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men To see if there are any who understand, Who seek after God. They have all turned aside, together they have **become corrupt**; **There is no one who does good, not even one.** —**Psalm 14:1-3**.

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for **He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.** —**Matthew 5:44-45**.

Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword.” —**Matthew 26:52**.

Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and **calculate the cost** to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ —**Luke 14:27-30**.

Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be **hated** by all nations **because of My name.** —**Matthew 24:9**.

And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the **number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been**, would be completed also. —**Revelation 6:11**.

But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, they **stoned Paul** and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead. —**Acts 14:19**.

Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine **lashes**. Three times I was **beaten** with rods, once I was **stoned**, three times I was **shipwrecked**, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in **dangers** from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; I have been in labor and **hardship**, through many **sleepless** nights, in **hunger** and **thirst**, often without food, in **cold** and **exposure**. **2Corinthians 11:24-27**.

You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your **prayers will not be hindered**. —**1Peter 3:7**.

and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “**MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES**.” It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are **without discipline**, of which all have become partakers, then you are **illegitimate children** and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much **rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live**? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but **He disciplines us for our good**, so that we may **share His holiness**. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, **afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness**. Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed. —**Hebrews 12:5-13**.

Session Three

Characteristics of the Son

Seeing the people, He felt **compassion** for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. —**Matthew 9:36**.

When He went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and felt **compassion** for them and **healed** their sick. **Matthew 14:14**.

And Jesus called His disciples to Him, and said, “**I feel compassion** for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and **have nothing to eat**; and I do not want to send them away hungry, for they might faint on the way.” —**Matthew 15:32**.

I am the **bread of life**; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst. —**John 6:35**.

“A **Redeemer** will come to Zion, And to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” declares the LORD. —**Isaiah 59:20**.

and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and **seated Him at His right hand** in the heavenly places — **Ephesians 1:19-20**.

Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming **obedient** to the point of death, even **death** on a cross. —**Philippians 2:8**.

For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the **obedience of the One** the many will be made righteous. —**Romans 5:19**.

The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, “Behold, the **Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world!” —**John 1:29**.

Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For **Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed**. —**1Corinthians 5:7**.

“BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME **IMMANUEL**,” which translated means, “**GOD WITH US**.” —**Matthew 1:23**.

In the **beginning was the Word**, and the **Word was with God**, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things **came into being through Him**, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. —**John 1:1-3**.

He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and **His name is called The Word of God**. — **Revelation 19:13**.

in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the **righteous Judge**, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have **loved His appearing**. —**2Timothy 4:8**.

But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me something to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me." ... Then He will also say to those on His left, "Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me nothing to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me nothing to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me." ... These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life. —**Matthew 25:31-46.**

I am the **Alpha** and the **Omega**, the **first** and the **last**, the **beginning** and the **end**. —**Revelation 22:13.**

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

and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and **seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places** —**Ephesians 1:19-20.**

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called **Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace**. —**Isaiah 9:6.**

And coming to Him as to a living stone which has been rejected by men, but is choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," and, "A **STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE**"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. **1Peter 2:4-8.**

Sample Prophecies the Son Fulfilled

So you are to know and discern that **from the issuing of a decree** to restore and rebuild Jerusalem **until Messiah** the Prince there will be **seven weeks and sixty-two weeks**; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. —**Daniel 9:25**.

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom. —**Psalms 45:6**.

In the days of those kings the **God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed**, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will **itself endure forever**. —**Daniel 2:44**.

But the saints of the **Highest One will receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever**, for all ages to come. —**Daniel 7:18**.

Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; **His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom**, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him. —**Daniel 7:27**.

And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel. —**Genesis 3:15**.

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth **His Son, born of a woman**, born under the Law, so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. —**Galatians 4:4-5**.

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a **virgin** will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. —**Isaiah 7:14**.

“BEHOLD, THE **VIRGIN** SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,” which translated means, “GOD WITH US.” —**Matthew 1:23**.

Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I am a **virgin**?” The angel answered and said to her, “The **Holy Spirit** will come upon you, and the **power of the Most High will overshadow** you; and for that reason the holy Child shall be called the Son of God.” —**Luke 1:34-35**.

His 'Name'

Many will say to Me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not **prophecy in Your name**, and **in Your name cast out demons**, and **in Your name perform** many miracles?” And then I will declare to them, “**I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.**” —**Matthew 7:22-23.**

You believe that God is one. You do well; **the demons also believe**, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? —**James 2:19-20.** But now that you have come to know God, or **rather to be known by God**, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again? —**Galatians 4:9.**

but if anyone **loves God, he is known by Him.** —**1Corinthians 8:3.**

For many will **come in My name**, saying, “I am the Christ,” and will mislead many. —**Matthew 24:5.**

Whatever you **ask in My name**, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. —**John 14:13.**

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” —**Matthew 28:18.**

And He called the twelve together, and **gave them power and authority** over all the demons and to heal diseases. —**Luke 9:1.**

And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city **until you are clothed with power from on high.** —**Luke 24:49.**

but **you will receive power when the Holy Spirit** has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth. —**Acts 1:8.**

Session Four

Characteristics of the Spirit

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and **the Spirit of God was moving** over the surface of the waters. —**Genesis 1:1-2.**

I have **filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom**, in understanding, in **knowledge**, and in all kinds of **craftsmanship**, to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship. —**Exodus 31:3-5**.

Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to him; and He took of **the Spirit** who was upon him and **placed Him** upon the seventy elders. And when the Spirit rested upon them, they **prophesied. But they did not do it again**. But two men had remained in the camp; the name of one was Eldad and the name of the other Medad. ... and **they prophesied** in the camp. ... “Would that all the LORD’S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them” —**Numbers 11:25-29**.

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The **Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him**, The spirit of **wisdom** and **understanding**, The spirit of **counsel** and **strength**, The spirit of **knowledge** and the **fear of the LORD**. —**Isaiah 11:1-2**.

Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put **My Spirit upon Him**; He will bring forth **justice** to the nations. —**Isaiah 42:1**.

The **Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me**, Because the LORD has anointed me To **bring good news** to the afflicted; He has sent me to **bind up the brokenhearted**, To **proclaim liberty** to captives And freedom to prisoners ... —**Isaiah 61:1**.

It will come about after this That I will pour out **My Spirit on all** mankind; And your sons and daughters will **prophesy**, Your old men will dream **dreams**, Your young men will see **visions**. —**Joel 2:28-32**.

you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ... But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION ... but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation. —**1Peter 2:5-12**.

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly **Father give the Holy Spirit** to those who ask Him? —**Luke 11:13**.

Peter said to them, “**Repent**, and each of you be **baptized** in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**.” —**Acts 2:38**.

He said to them, “Did you **receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?**” ... —**Acts 19:2**.

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 that I said to you. —**John 14:26**.

But when **He, the Spirit of truth**, comes, He will **guide** you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will **disclose** to you what is to come. —**John 16:13**.

for no **prophecy** was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved **by the Holy Spirit spoke from God**. —**2Peter 1:21**.

Fruit: Proof of the Spirit at Work

And they were all **filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues** ... “And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs – **we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God**.” —**Acts 2:4 – 13**.

But to each one is given the **manifestation of the Spirit for the common good**. For to one is given the word of **wisdom** through the Spirit, and to another the word of **knowledge** according to the same Spirit; to another **faith** by the same Spirit, and to another gifts of **healing** by the one Spirit, and to another the effecting of **miracles**, and to another **prophecy**, and to another the **distinguishing of spirits**, to another various kinds of **tongues**, and to another the **interpretation** of tongues. **But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills**. —**1Corinthians 12:7-11**.

Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the **unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace**. There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all. —**Ephesians 4:1-6**.

But the **fruit of the Spirit** is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control**; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. —**Galatians 5:22-24**.

Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to **present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice**, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of **worship**. And do not be conformed to this world, but **be transformed** by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. —**Romans 12:1-2**.

Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so **be shrewd** as serpents **and innocent** as doves. —**Matthew 10:16**.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. —**Ephesians 4:11-16**.