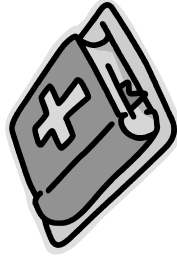


# Your New Life in Christ

1

The train will run with or without the carriage. However, it would be useless to attempt to pull the train by the carriage. In the same way, do not depend on feelings. The promise of God's Word, not your feelings, is your authority.



But what if you don't feel like a Christian tomorrow? Place your faith in the faithfulness of God Himself and the trustworthiness of His Word. The more you learn of His Word, the more you will be able to answer any doubts with solid facts. Your feelings will begin to respond to the truth of God's Word and not your circumstances. You can also tell God how you are feeling and ask Him to help you.

## 4 - GROWING IN YOUR NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

Since you have...

- ... trusted in Christ's payment for your sin,
- ... understood the basis of your relationship with God,
- ... looked at the five truths about your relationship with God...

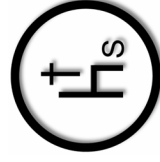
... you can be confident in your relationship with Christ.

**Begin to make these five truths part of your life this week as you grow in Christ:**

- 1 - You are forgiven: Colossians 2:13, 14; Hebrews 10:15-18; Ephesians 1:7
- 2 - You are a child of God: John 1:12, 13; Romans 8:15-17; 1 John 3:1
- 3 - Christ will never leave you: Hebrews 13:5; Colossians 1:27
- 4 - You have new life: 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:4, 5
- 5 - You have eternal life: 1 John 5:11-13; John 5:24; John 10:27-29

Take one truth each day and reflect on it. Read the verses listed by each truth. Thank God that this is now true of you. Knowing these essential truths is critical to your growth in Christ. Read the gospel of John each day and tell someone this week that you have a relationship with Christ.

**What happens when we fall short in our attempts to live the Christian life?**



*Knowing Jesus Christ is the most exciting relationship you can have. It is the beginning of a tremendous adventure with an all-loving, all-powerful God.*

The *Knowing God Personally* booklet explains all a person needs to know to begin a new life in Christ. A brief review of these will help us as we look at some principles of growing in your relationship with Christ:

- Point 1** God loves you and created you to have a personal relationship with Him.
- Point 2** We are sinful and guilty before God, who is perfect and just. Sin has separated us from God and the relationship between God and us is broken.
- Point 3** Jesus Christ is God's only solution for our sin. Through Him you can have a personal relationship with God.
- Point 4** We must each respond to Jesus Christ by placing our trust in Him as our Saviour and Lord. Then we can know God personally.

## Key Question

How can a person who has received Christ know with certainty that they will spend eternity with God?

You can know that you have a secure personal relationship with God...

## 1 - CONFIDENCE IN YOUR NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

You can be confident in your new relationship with Christ because you have been completely forgiven and accepted by God. Only Christ's death on the cross is sufficient to provide this proper relationship with God.

Read Ephesians 2:8,9

Three important words in these verses explain the basis of our acceptance before God:

**GRACE:** Unmerited favour, an undeserved gift  
*What role did grace play in establishing your relationship with God?*

**SAVED:** Rescued, spared from disaster  
*What do think this verse means by saying you are saved? From what are you rescued?*

**FAITH:** Belief, trust, commitment of mind, attitude, action  
*What does faith have to do with receiving Christ?*

### 🔑 Key Question:

Suppose you were standing before God and He asked you, "Why should I let you into heaven?", what would you say?

## 2 - UNDERSTANDING TRUTHS ABOUT YOUR NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

There are many exciting things that are true in your relationship with Christ. Understanding these truths will help you build a firm foundation on which to grow.

### Christ Forgave Your Sin

Read Ephesians 1:7. When you trusted Christ for the forgiveness of your sin, all your sins were forgiven... past, present and future.

*What difference do you think it makes to know that all of your sins have been forgiven?*

### Christ Made You a Child of God

Read John 1:12,13. *What took place in order for you to become a child of God?*

### Christ Will Never Leave You

Read Hebrews 13:5. *According to this, how many times is it necessary to receive Christ?*

### Christ Gave You New Life

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. When you trusted Christ to be your Saviour and Lord, you began a new spiritual life. God will increasingly produce many new qualities in you as you grow in Him.

## Christ Gave You Eternal Life

Read 1 John 5:11-13 (Note: John was writing to a group of Christians).

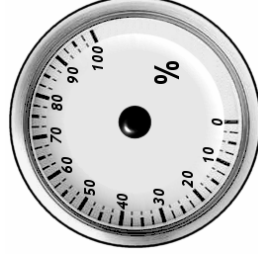
*In whom is eternal life found? Who has eternal life?*

**Note:** In the New Testament to **believe** refers not just to intellectual belief but active belief. **Name** carries with it the idea of authority (eg, "In the name of the King..."). So to **believe** in the name of the Son of God means to submit to the authority of Jesus as Lord in my life.

*Do you believe in the name of the Son of God?*

### 🔑 Key Question

If you were to die tonight, how sure are you that you will spend eternity with God on a scale of 0 to 100? (You can draw your answer on the diagram below)



These wonderful benefits are based totally on Jesus Christ. None of them can be earned. You received them the moment you placed your faith in Christ.

*Are any of these truths especially meaningful to you right now? If so, why?*

## 3 - DEALING WITH DOUBTS IN YOUR NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST

Even though feelings are important, your relationship with Christ is based on facts, not feelings that can change daily. Doubts, questions and varying emotions are common parts of everyone's life, but they are very unreliable gauges of anyone's relationship with Christ.

This train diagram illustrates the relationship between fact (God and His Word), faith (your trust in God and His Word), and feeling.



# Your New Life in God's Love

2

## Confession - Experiencing the Results.

What should you do if you still feel guilty after you have confessed your sins?

Read Psalms 32:5; 103:12 and Isaiah 43:25

*What do these passages say about guilt and forgiveness?*

*How would your life be affected by these truths?*

In light of what we have looked at concerning guilt and forgiveness, how could you complete this statement?

"When I have confessed all my sins, I \_\_\_\_\_"

## 4 - GROWING IN GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

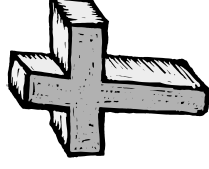
Take some time before you go to bed tonight to apply the things you have learned about God's love and forgiveness. Make a sin/cleansing list as explained in point 3.

Try to spend 15 minutes or so each day alone with God in Bible reading and prayer (often called a Quiet Time). There are many resources available to help you have a Quiet Time each day. Here are some examples...

1. Read the story of the young man who ran away from his father and wasted his inheritance. The story was told by Jesus and is found in Luke 15:11-32. *What does this story illustrate about our relationship with God, our forgiveness, and our fellowship with Him?*
2. Read Galatians 5:16-23. Notice the different that will take place as you cooperate with God's work in your life. As you become aware of an area of your life that displeases God, deal with it according to 1 John 1:9 and enjoy your fellowship with God.
3. Read Psalm 32. *What was David's experience with confession in this Psalm? How did he feel before he confessed his sin? How did he feel after confessing his sin?*

Understanding God's great love and forgiveness allows Christians to enjoy a growing fellowship with Him.

*Why, then, are many Christians not experiencing the power God has made available to live the Christian life?*



**Remember: Your relationship with God is secure, through Christ, you are forgiven and accepted by God.**

In addition to providing this secure relationship, God also desires for you to walk closely with Him and communicate with Him each day. This is called fellowship.

When we choose to sin, our relationship (our position as God's children) is not affected, but our fellowship is interrupted.

Father-child example: Your relationship with your earthly father is permanent. No matter what you do, you will always be his child. But, suppose you rebelled against your father and angrily left home in spite of his efforts to reconcile your grievances.

*Would you still be your father's child?*

*What would happen to your fellowship?*

Compare your relationship with God to your fellowship with God:

Relationship with God	Fellowship with God
Began when you received Christ (John 1:12)	Began when you received Christ (Colossians 2:6)
Is everlasting (1 Peter 1:3,4)	Can be hindered (Psalm 32:3-5)
Maintained by God (John 10:27-29)	Maintained in part by us (1 John 1:9)
Never changes (Hebrews 13:5)	Changes when we sin (Psalm 66:18)

Though all Christians have a relationship with God, not all Christians are experiencing fellowship with Him.

*How can we constantly experience fellowship with God?*

## 1 - THE NEED FOR GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

Sin is a barrier for both Christians and non-Christians. Sin keeps us all from experiencing God's love. But many people are confused about what sin is and what it is not.

**What is sin?** It's more than cheating, lying, immoral behaviour, etc. These actions are only the result of an attitude of sin. A simple definition of sin is: doing what we want instead of what God wants - both in our actions and attitudes.

*What are the results of sin?*

For non-Christians, sin prevents a **relationship** with God.

Read Romans 3:23 and 8:7,8

*What about people who try to reach God through living a good moral life? Are they separated from God? Why or why not?*

For Christians, sin inhibits **fellowship** with God.

Read 1 John 1:6-8

**Summary:** All of us sin. Therefore, you and I both need to experience God's forgiveness for our attitudes and actions.

## 2 - THE BASIS FOR GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS

Christ's death is the basis for forgiveness to bring us into a proper **relationship** with God.

Read 1 Peter 3:18.

Christ's death is also the basis for forgiveness in our daily **fellowship** with God.

Read Colossians 2:13,14.

*"You were dead in sin and your sinful desires were not yet cut away. Then He gave you a share in the very life of Christ, for He forgave all your sin, and blotted out the charges proved against you, the list of His commandments which you had not obeyed. He took this list of sin and destroyed it by nailing it to Christ's cross."* (Living Bible)

In the day when this was written, "list of sins" meant an itemized bond nailed to the prison cell door. It listed every crime for which the prisoner had been convicted. When the sentence was served or restitution paid, the authorities removed the list and wrote "paid in full". The prisoner used this as proof that he could never be tried for those crimes again. The believer who trusts Christ's payment for sin can never be tried again. You have full pardon from God.

*What has God done with your sin? (Psalm 103:10-12)*

*How many of your sins did Christ die for?*

*What difference will it make in your daily life to know that you are completely forgiven?*

## 3 - YOU CAN EXPERIENCE GOD'S LOVE AND FORGIVENESS EVERY DAY

Even though you are totally forgiven, you still need to deal with your sins on a day-to-day basis in order to experience continuing **fellowship** with God.

Put yourself in the father-child illustration.

*What would you do to restore fellowship with your father?*

Let's look at how you restore your fellowship with God.

Read 1 John 1:9.

**Confession - Means Agreeing with God about Sin.**

When God brings your attention to the fact that something you have done is sin, confess it. This confession involves at least 3 factors:

1. Agree with God that you have sinned.
2. Agree that God has forgiven you on the basis of Christ's death on the cross.
3. Cooperate with God in His desire to change your wrong attitudes and actions.

By turning back to God and away from your sin, you will experience His love and forgiveness provided by Christ's death on the cross. Instead of feeling guilty or condemned, you can know that your fellowship with God is restored.

**Confession - A Sin/Cleansing List.**

1. Ask God to reveal sin in your life.
2. List these on a piece of paper. Be completely honest as this is just between you and God.
3. After completing your list, write over it the promise of 1 John 1:9.
4. Thank God for the forgiveness He has provided for you through what Christ did on the cross.
5. Tear up the list and throw it away.

Consider how God would have you deal with this situation in the future.

*How often do you need to confess your sin to God?*

# Your New Life in the Spirit

3

*"Dear Father, I acknowledge that I have sinned against You. Thank you that you have forgiven my sins through Christ's death on the cross. I now invite Christ to take His place on the throne of my life. Fill me with your Holy Spirit as you commanded me to be filled, and as you promised that you would do if I asked in faith. I pray this in the name of Jesus. As an expression of my faith, I now thank you for directing my life and for filling me with the Holy Spirit".*

*How accurately does this prayer reflect the desire of your heart?*

If this is the desire of your heart, you can pray this prayer and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

## 4 - YOU CAN BE CONTINUALLY EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

This week, if you find that you have retaken control of your life through sin - any definite act of disobedience - simply breathe spiritually (exhale the impure and inhale the pure). This important exercise will enable you to continue to experience Christ's loving control in your life:

**Exhale** - Confess your sin (1 John 1:9, Hebrews 10:1-25)

Remember the three factors involved in confession

1. **Agree** with God that you have sinned.
2. **Agree** with God that He has forgiven you on the basis of Christ's death on the cross.
3. **Agree** to cooperate with God in His desire to change your wrong attitudes and actions.

**Inhale** - Yield control of your life to Christ (Romans 12:1,2)

**Surrender** the direction of your life to Christ.

**Trust** that He now directs and empowers you.

Continue to spend 15 minutes alone each day with the Lord in Bible reading and prayer, using the material you have chosen. Here are some additional suggestions.

Read Ephesians 5:18-21 and Colossians 3:12-17. Compare these two passages in what they say about the Spirit-filled life.

Read Paul's prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21. *What is the "power" that he desires for his friends?*

*From where does this power come? And what will He do for us?*

Read the story of the disciples in the storm when they doubted His care (Mark 4:35-41).

*Why were they afraid? What did they doubt about God?*

**SUMMARY:** The Spirit-filled life is a practical experience. As you trust Him, God's Spirit will produce the character of Christ within you and empower you to be His witness. You can only trust someone as much as you know them. How has God planned for you to get to know Christ better so you can grow in the Christian life?



**Remember: In order to experience God's love and forgiveness you must confess your sin as you become aware of it, and turn again to your heavenly Father.**

An amazing transformation has begun to take place since you received Christ as your Lord and Saviour.

You are now beginning to live the Christian life, which isn't a standard of performance or a code of ethics, but a vital relationship with a loving God.

Read John 7:37-39

Unfortunately, not every believer experiences the power to live this life as God intended.

Just as our relationship with God is totally dependent on what God has done through Jesus Christ, so the power to live a dynamic Christian life also comes totally from God.



This computer has all the potential to do what it was created to do, but it has no power of its own.

Similarly, through your new identity in Christ, you have all the potential you need to live as a new creation in Christ.

But, you must continually draw from the proper source of power.

## 1 - THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE POWER SOURCE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

*Who is He?*

Read 2 Corinthians 3:17,18.

*Why did He come?*

1. To glorify Christ. (John 16:14)
2. To lead you into all truth. (John 16:13)
3. To convict the world of sin and justice. (John 16:8)
4. To dwell in you. (Romans 8:9)

What part does the Holy Spirit play in your relationship with God?  
Read Romans 8:14-16.

What does He produce in your life?  
Read Galatians 5:22,23.

How do you think these qualities of God's character (fruit of the Spirit) will grow in your life?  
Read John 15:4,5.

What does Jesus say we are to do in order to see this fruit produced in us?

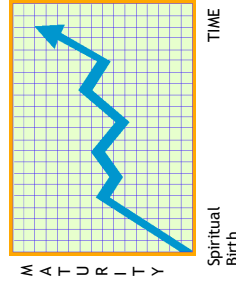
Which of these qualities would you most like God to begin developing within you?

What does He desire to equip you to do?  
Read Acts 1:8.

What is a witness?

What does it mean to you to be a witness for Christ?

Why do you think the Holy Spirit's power is needed to be a witness?



The degree to which these traits are manifested in the life depends upon the extent to which the Christian trusts the Lord with every detail of their life, and upon their maturity in Christ. One who is only beginning to understand the ministry of the Holy Spirit should not be discouraged if they are not as fruitful as more mature Christians who have known and experienced this truth for a longer period.

## 2 - MANY CHRISTIANS ARE NOT EXPERIENCING THE HOLY SPIRIT'S POWER

You became a Christian through the Holy Spirit's work (John 3:1-8).

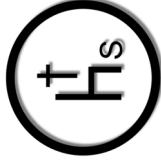
From that moment you have been indwelt by the Spirit (John 14:16,17).

Although the Holy Spirit lives within all Christians, not all Christians are directed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

The Bible tells us that Christians can be living in one of two states.

**The Spirit-Directed Christian**  
(1 Corinthians 2:12-16)

Those who have trusted Christ as their Saviour and who are cooperating with the Holy Spirit who empowers them to live the Christian Life.



† = Jesus Christ  
S = Self

**The Self-Directed Christian**  
(1 Corinthians 3:9-13)

Those who have trusted Christ to pay for their sins, but who think their ongoing acceptance by God is based on how they perform.



Which of these circles better represents your life?

## 3 - YOU CAN BE FILLED WITH (DIRECTED AND EMPOWERED BY) THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Spirit-filled life is the Christ-directed life in which we actively cooperate with Christ. As we do so, He directs and empowers us by the power of His Holy Spirit. You can be filled with the Holy Spirit only by faith, by cooperating with God who will produce in you the fruitful life He promised.

You can be filled with the Spirit if you:

1. **Desire sincerely to be pleasing to God.** (Matthew 5:6)  
*Why do you think it is important to "hunger for righteousness" in order to be filled with the Spirit?*
2. **Confess all known sin.** (1 John 1:9, Psalm 66:18)  
*Why do you think it is important to confess all known sin in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit?*
3. **Yield your total life to Christ.** (Romans 12:1,2). (Yielding involves your willingness to obey God in anything He has shown you to do).  
*What do you think yielding every area of your life to Christ would involve?*

**You must respond by faith, trusting the Holy Spirit to empower your life for Christ.**

1. God has commanded you to be filled with His Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)
2. God has promised to answer all your requests which are in accord with His will. (1 John 5:14,15)

# Growing in Your New Life

4

### 3 - WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT AS YOU GROW IN CHRIST?

List some characteristics that you expect to occur as God produces growth in your life.

2 Peter 1:5-9 and Hebrews 12:1:3 give us a picture of growth.

According to these passages, what is the primary hindrance to growth?

REMEMBER, God loves you unconditionally, just the way you are. His boundless love toward you is not dependent upon the amount of your growth.

### 4 - WHAT CAN YOU DO NOW?

Set aside time and a place for daily personal Bible study and prayer.

Here is an example of what to do.

A good passage is John 15:1-17.

As you read, underline particularly meaningful verses.

When a verse makes a lot of sense to you:

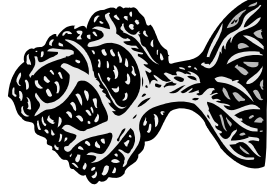
1. Copy the verse onto a sheet of paper.
2. Summarise what the verse means.
3. Write down how you can apply that verse to your life.

VERSES	MEANING	APPLICATION

Some additional suggested passages for study are Colossians 1:9-12; Matthew 7:7-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Psalms 1; 34, 103, 145; John 15:1-7 and Luke 9:23-26.

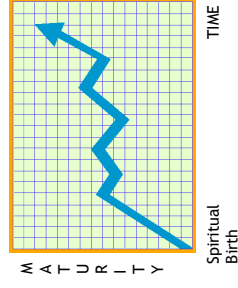
Join a Bible study group where you can enjoy fellowship with others who are also learning more about this new life in Christ. Student Life Core Groups are great place to start.

Remember to talk to someone about Christ this week.



**Remember: The Holy Spirit can empower you to live a Christ-directed life. As you continue to breath spiritually (exhale - confess your sins; inhale - yield control to Christ), you will experience a deepening fellowship with God enabling you to grow in Christian maturity.**

Maturity takes time - there are no shortcuts. It is a lifelong process.



### 1 - WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO GROW IN CHRIST?

It means to increase in knowledge of Christ and love for Him.

Read John 17:3

What does Jesus say is the essence of eternal life?

Read Matthew 22:37,38

There are more than 600 commands in the Old Testament. Why do think Jesus singled this one out?

How would loving God with all your heart, soul, and mind affect your life?

Read John 14:21

What will be the result of your growing love for Him?

Just as it is a natural process for a child to grow in a loving relationship with a parent, so it is also natural for you to grow in your love relationship with God.

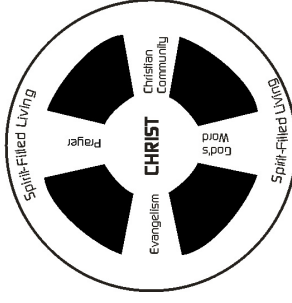
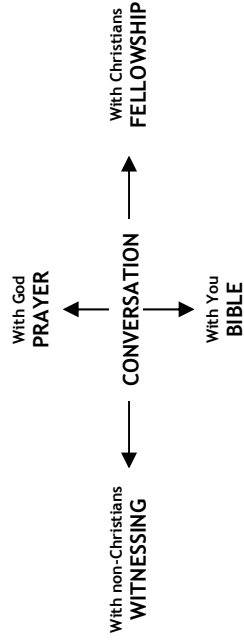


## 2 - HOW CAN YOU GROW IN CHRIST?

If you met someone who you liked, what would you do to get to know that person better?

Communication is vital to any relationship, including your relationship to Christ. Since communication must be two way to be effective, you need to let Him speak to you and you need to speak with Him.

There are four aspects of communication that will help you grow in your relationship with Christ as you walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. They are:



God communicates with you through the Bible, revealing His character and His will.

Read 2 Timothy 3:16,17

How would you define each benefit described?

Which of these benefits would be most helpful to you right now?

How would you evaluate the helpfulness of the Bible reading you have done so far?

You communicate with God through prayer, sharing your thoughts, your needs and your desire to do His will.

Read Philipians 4:5,6 and 1 John 5:14,15.

What do these verses tell us about prayer?

What are some things you can be praying about?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:18 and Ephesians 5:20.

Why is it important to be thanking Him?

You communicate with Christians (fellowship), gaining from their experience and helping them through yours.

Several logs burn brightly together, but put one aside on the cold hearth and the fire goes out. So it is with your relationship to other Christians.



Read Hebrews 10:25

Why is it important to spend time with other Christians?

Why would this be important for you now?

Read Acts 2:42-47

Where could you find supportive Christian fellowship on a consistent basis?

The Greek word for fellowship, *koinonia* means "sharing in common". We need desperately to share our Christian experience with others who love God and walk with Him, and likewise allow them to share with us. The church where we can meet other Christians and hear God's Word is God's appointed place for Christians to meet. Bible studies and meetings on campus are also extremely helpful.

- Dr. Bill Bright

You can communicate with non-Christians by witnessing - sharing about your relationship with Christ.

Read Acts 4:12

What would motivate you to tell another person about Christ?

Who would you like to tell about what Christ has done in your life?

Would you like to have help sharing this good news?

**SUMMARY:** Read 1 Corinthians 3:6,7. God is the source of your growth. You cannot develop spiritual maturity just by "trying real hard". As you read the Bible, pray, tell people about Christ and spend time with other believers, God will be at work in you producing fruitfulness and maturity.



#### 4 - YOUR NEW LIFE IN RELATIONSHIPS

Our new life in relationships begins with a decision to live a life pleasing to Him.

Read Daniel 1:8

"But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with wine which he drank; so he sought permission from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself."

**KEY WORD:** Defile - to become impure.

*What was Daniel's decision?*

*What was the result?* (Read Daniel 1:9-16)

Read Hebrews 13:4

*Starting today is it your desire not to defile yourself and remain pure until marriage?*

Yes! \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

The following will help you maintain relationships that please God.

#### A. Prayer and Bible Study

Regularly spending time with God will help you understand and live out His priorities for your life. Psalm 1:1-3; Ephesians 5:8-10; Jeremiah 9:23,24

#### B. Spirit Filled Life

The Holy Spirit empowers us to live a life pleasing to God. Galatians 5:16

#### C. Accountability

Our accountability to another person helps maintain our accountability to God. Ecclesiastes 4:9,10; Proverbs 27:17; Ephesians 5:21

#### D. Fellowship

Seek fellowship with godly people who support and strengthen your convictions. Hebrews 10:24,25; 2 Timothy 2:22

As you grow in Christ, you will see how God's commandments are given with your best interest in mind. Because this is true, choosing to wait is the most rewarding decision we can make.

# Your New Life in Relationships

5



**Remember: As you grow in your new relationship with God, He will reveal His character and His will. The Holy Spirit enables us to live a life which reflects both.**

A father will tell his child not to touch a hot stove top. He does so not because he wants to squash his child's curiosity or take away her fun. Rather, he gives the prohibition because he knows that the stove will burn his child. His motivation is to protect his child from harm as well as provide safety. Just as this is true with earthly fathers, so it is true in our relationship with our Heavenly Father. God's guidelines for relationships are an expression of his love.

#### 1 - GOD'S COMMANDS: BOTH TO PROTECT YOU & PROVIDE FOR YOU

Behind every negative command are two positive principles. One is to protect us, the other is to provide for us. In other words, when God says, "You shall not commit adultery," He is not being a cosmic killjoy, as we shall see. These are some of the ways that God's commands protect and provide for us:

- Protect:** Your mind from images of past relationships. **Provide:** Freedom to enjoy your future spouse without detracting mental images.
- Protect:** You from mistrust and suspicion in relationships. **Provide:** A foundation of trust for your current and future relationships.
- Protect:** You from confusing the intensity of sex with the intimacy of love. **Provide:** You with intimacy - true knowledge of the other person outside the
- Protect:** You from the fear and consequences of sexually transmitted diseases. **Provide:** You peace of mind as you enter a marriage commitment.
- Protect:** Your Christian testimony. **Provide:** Integrity in your Christian witness that ministers to others.
- Protect:** Your fellowship with God. **Provide:** The abundant life.

Why do think that God wants to protect and provide for you? Look at the following verses and answer in your own words. Romans 8:38-39, Psalms 103:17-18, Deuteronomy 10:12.

God protects us by giving us boundaries and limitations to our activities. They are an expression of His love and wisdom, to keep us from doing ourselves harm. Not only do his commands keep us safe from harm but they are also targeted to provide for us in specific ways.

## 2 - WHY WAIT FOR SEX? > BECAUSE GOD SAYS TO WAIT

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

The apostle Paul was complementing the Thessalonians on their walk with God. Because their desire was to walk with and please God, Paul was encouraging them to "excel still more". His emphasis was in the area of purity in relationships and, specifically, the sexual area.

*By whose authority is this commandment given?*

*What is God's will?*

### KEY POINTS:

A. God desires our comprehensive sanctification. In other words, it is His will that we develop His character in every area of our lives. Purity and holiness are part of God's character.

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, you abstain from sexual immorality..."  
1 Thessalonians 4:3

B. God desires Christians not to defraud each other in relationships. We defraud someone when we cause them to step outside the boundaries that God has established.

"See that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter..."  
1 Thessalonians 4:6

On the surface, The Bible appears to be full of negative commandments which seem imposing and dreary. However, we need to remember that God only has one motivation - love. When we understand that He always seeks what is best for us, these commands become positive.

## 3 - CLEAN HEART FOR A NEW START

One of the greatest mistakes people can make is to assume that since they have failed to keep God's command regarding sex, God wants nothing to do with them. That is simply not true. God is well aware of our sinful tendencies: that is why Jesus Christ came. For King David what began with a stare led not only to adultery, not only to an unwanted pregnancy, but also to murder (2 Samuel 11:1-26). David really blew it. But consider what happened next.

Read Psalm 51:1-17

David admitted his sin and asked God for forgiveness. Like David we can receive God's complete forgiveness and make a clean start.

**Here are several important steps to take.**

### A. Confess the sin.

Specifically name your sin before God and ask His forgiveness. 1 John 1:9

### B. Forgive yourself.

If you are not willing to forgive yourself, you are saying two things to God:

1. Christ's death was not enough for your sins; and
2. you are a higher judge of what can be forgiven than God is. God's grace is extended to you out of His heart of love. When you do not forgive yourself, you throw God's grace right back into His face. If God's grace can't cover your sin, it can't cover any sin. Romans 8:1.

### C. Be filled with the Holy Spirit.

Allow God's Spirit to fill you with His power to say no to future temptation. Ephesians 5:18

### D. Show fruits of repentance.

Repentance means turning around, changing one's mind. Matthew 3:8 says, "bear fruits worthy of repentance." This might mean breaking off a relationship or perhaps making a decision not to be alone together. It might be something else. Whatever it is, your actions should show you have changed. The person who professes to be a Christian but who continues to practice sin should realize that they may not be a Christian at all. John 14:21, 1 John 2:3

God's complete love and forgiveness enables us to make a clean start and live a life pleasing to Him.