

LIVING JESUS

*Growing In The **LIFE**
We Were Made To **LIVE***



Christian Families Today

A Christian Counseling and Training Ministry

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GRAND SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

“I have come that they might have life, and have it abundantly”

Jesus (John 10:10b)

You have probably heard the phrase “the gospel of Jesus Christ” if you have spent any time in a Christian church. The word “gospel” means good news. So what is this news about Jesus Christ? What makes it so good?

If you were to ask these questions to a sample of Christians today, you would probably hear the news that Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world. You also might hear the news about how, through placing your faith and trust in Jesus, you can escape hell and enjoy heaven forever and ever with God. While these bits of news are very exciting and are wonderful parts of the gospel, they are merely prologue and post script. The real immensity of the good, glad, happy news of Jesus Christ is the abundant life He offers right now to all who believe.

The whole story of God’s interaction with mankind is about life: God is it; Adam and Eve were given it; by sinning, they lost it; none of their descendants could re-access it; God promised to restore it; Christ came to give it; by faith we accept it; and moment by moment we now walk in it.

God is life, and He designed all humans to operate in His life. As humans, we experience abundant life by having a close relationship and intimate fellowship with the God of life. When His Spirit is living in us and we are enjoying His presence, we can experience love, joy, peace, satisfaction, and fulfillment even in the midst of life’s stress, pain and trials.

Jesus once said that the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart and the second greatest is to love your neighbor as you love yourself. The life of Christ is the only thing that makes these commandments possible. God is love, and His life in us empowers us to love Him, love ourselves and love others. Living out of His life is the only real way to experience internal health and relational harmony.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is life transformation. Our desire is for all believers to understand who God is, who they are in Christ, and how to live out of Christ’s life on a moment-by-moment basis during their time on this earth.

For this reason, we focus on the abundant life of God throughout all sessions. The study starts by looking at God, who is the source of life. We will then systematically look at how humanity was created for abundant life, how that life was lost, and how God restored life. In the remaining sessions, we discover how we can experience His abundant life moment by moment right now in our personal lives and social interactions.

Each session is a stepping-stone to the next. As such, the sessions have been designed to be completed in order. Our journey leads us into the mechanics of what broke in Adam and Eve. From there we gain an understanding of the work Jesus needed to accomplish so that He might give His life back to us. We talk about the old identity and the new identity, as well as the old covenant and the new covenant. Many Biblical truths are discussed to guide us into a practical understanding of how to experience Christ’s abundant life while we are living here on earth. To help us conceptualize these spiritual truths, we have included many diagrams that we use daily in our discipleship counseling and coaching at Christian Families Today. It is going to be fun.

INTRODUCTION

IS THIS STUDY FOR ME?

Everyone can benefit from this study.

Maybe you are just starting to explore the Bible and want to know about Jesus and what He offers. This study will show you clearly what Jesus came to do and will describe the wonderful abundant life He offers you.

Maybe you are a young believer who wants to grow more in knowledge about what has just happened to you when you were saved. A person who is born again spiritually can be compared to a baby who will grow to maturity. This course will give you a great foundation of who you are now in Christ and how to experience victory over your enemy Satan.

Maybe you have followed Christ for some time now. When you surrendered to Christ and trusted Him to be your Lord and Savior, you may have thought the “abundant life” would be blissfully experienced all the time. At first, that may have been your experience, but after a short while, the struggle began. You may have had questions such as, “Why do I keep committing the same sin over and over again?” or “Why can’t I be good enough?” or “What is wrong with me?” Many Christians struggle with these inner conflicts. This course is designed to help you answer those questions and to give you the truth you need to fight the lies you face.

Maybe you are a mature believer who has walked intimately with God for many years. If so, you know good news never gets old. We all benefit greatly from feeding on the truth every day. This course may present things in a different way than you have heard before. It could be like looking at the same diamond with a different light source. The beauty of the gospel may shine forth in a new way for you.

Wherever you find yourself in life, our prayer is that this study will lead you into experiencing more freedom, more health and more wholeness through deeper intimacy with God. May He amaze you with His grace, kindness, power and generosity toward you in Christ. We pray the time you invest in this course will help you practically as you seek to express the life of God to those around you.

ENJOY THE JOURNEY OF LIVING IN JESUS...

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

While you may benefit from going through this book by yourself, “Living in Jesus” is not designed to be a “stand-alone” learning experience. It is specifically designed to be used together with another person or a small group of people. To this end, we have divided each session into four sections:



CONNECT

Each session will begin with a time to connect with the other person/people. As your time together begins, the first question in this section gives you a chance to share experiences or revelations since your last time together. Then, the questions will lead you into a short conversation about the topic for the day. It may also be good to use this opening time to build upon the last session by reviewing together the “Transform” section from your last session.



RENEW

This section contains the content of the session and is designed to renew the mind through studying and meditating on the truths of God’s word. The truths found in each session are organized under subheadings. Our hope is that you will both read through the information and then discuss each subheading. When you come to a question, take time to answer it before moving on. Conversation and interaction on the content will assist greatly in moving from simply knowing to truly believing the truths. Visual illustrations are provided to aid understanding. This section has purposely been filled with scriptures and references so you can trace everything back to God’s written word. We encourage you to take the time to look up the references so you will be like the noble-minded Bereans in Acts 17:10-11.



TRANSFORM

This third section is an opportunity to individually process the session’s truths. Each person should answer the questions individually and spend time in conversation with the Holy Spirit to allow Him to move the truths studied from “information” to “transformation.” Space is provided to record answers and thoughts, but feel free to use your own additional paper if needed to continue journaling as the Holy Spirit leads. You can then share your thoughts with the other person/people as time allows.



PRAY

We have included prayers at the end of every session to stimulate your conversation with God about His truths that are covered in each session. Our prayers are not magical. Praying is just a two-way conversation between you and God. You may use these prayers as a guide, but feel free to talk with God about whatever the Spirit is placing on your heart and then listen for what He wants to say to you. We encourage you to pray both individually and together with the person/people whom you are meeting with for this study.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL



CONNECT

- What has God revealed to you in your personal journey since we last met?
- What is the difference between life and death?
- What does it mean to be “separated” from God?
- What happened to humanity when Adam and Eve chose to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?



RENEW

TEMPTED BY SATAN

In Genesis 3:1-5, we read where Satan appeared to Eve as a serpent. He questioned her understanding of God’s commandment that was given to Adam, “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?’” (Gen. 3:1). Through this question he paved the way to deceive Eve. His goal was to simply get Adam and Eve to disobey God by eating a piece of fruit.

After Eve repeated God’s commandment to Satan, he placed a temptation in her mind. Satan said to her, “You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:4-5). In this temptation he mixed truth with a lie. It was true that their eyes would be opened and they would know good and evil. However, the big lie was, “You surely will not die!”

The way Satan hooked her was through the phrase “you will be like God.” The truth was they were already like God. God had put His life in them, and they expressed His life in

*“The serpent said to the woman, ‘You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’”
- Genesis 3:4-5*

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”

- Ephesians 2:1-3

their behaviors. Satan’s deception appealed to every aspect of her design. Noticing that the tree was good for food appealed to her physical makeup (body), noticing that it was pleasing to the eyes appealed to her soul, and noticing that it was desirable to make her wise appealed to her spirit (Gen. 3:6). The truth was they had an abundance of food, of beauty, and of wisdom. After all, God met all their needs through His life.

Once Eve bought into the lie and then believed it was what she wanted (free will), she ate the fruit and gave it to Adam, and then he ate (Gen. 3:6). Now we will look at the consequences of their choice.

LIFE LEFT ADAM AND EVE - DEATH ENTERED HUMANITY

God told Adam he would “surely die” if he ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16 -17). You may have noticed there was no funeral mentioned in Genesis 3; the physical bodies of Adam and Eve continued to function. So, in what way did they die? Remember they were created spiritual beings as well as physical. Adam and Eve still had a spirit, but without God’s life they were now spiritually dead. Death is the absence of life. After the Holy Spirit left, they no longer contained God’s life (John 6:63; 1 John 5:12). God’s life can be described as eternal love, joy, peace, fulfillment, purpose, enjoyment, value, meaning, completion, abundance, rest, fullness, and satisfaction. Spiritual death is the absence of these qualities.

ADAM AND EVE WERE SEPARATED FROM GOD

Did God separate Himself from Adam and Eve when they sinned? Absolutely not! God went looking for them in their fallen state (Gen. 3:9). God did not change (2 Pet. 3:9); Adam and Eve changed. They separated themselves from God (Isa. 53:6a; 59:2).

Their separation was going from light to darkness; life to death; full to empty; freedom to bondage; love to hate. This separation caused their perception to forever change. They did not lose their memories of the garden or their relationship with God, but their understanding or perception of those memories were twisted and no longer understood through life (Rom. 1:20-22).



Death is the absence of life just like darkness is the absence of light. When Adam and Eve rebelled against life Himself, they cut themselves off from containing the life and light of God.

BODIES BEGAN TO DECAY

Because of Adam and Eve's sin, when their physical bodies ceased to function, their spirit and soul ejected, leaving their bodies to return to dust (Gen. 3:19; Eccles. 12:7; 2 Cor. 5:1-4).

IDENTITY CHANGED

Were Adam and Eve still considered children of God? Without God's life (Holy Spirit), they could not retain their original identity. Having been fathered in nature by Satan, they became children of the devil (John 8:44; Rom. 5:19; Eph. 2:1-3; 1 John 3:10). They were now sinners with a sin nature.

When they were alive, godliness and righteousness were natural to their character. After the Fall, the most natural thing for them to do was to sin.

NEEDS NO LONGER MET

Did God stop meeting Adam and Eve's needs? After the Fall, God prohibited them from living in the garden, but He did clothe them with animal skins (Gen. 3:21). He gave them property to cultivate for food (Gen. 3:23) and did not stop communicating with them (Gen. 4:6-7). However, because they were spiritually dead, they were not able to receive God's life.

They pursued meeting their needs through their own power and resources. Instead of depending on God to meet their needs and living from the inside out, they now had to live from the outside in. Unfortunately, they were empty vessels unable to produce life for themselves. Without God's life, their deepest needs went unmet (Jer. 2:13; 17:5-6).

LAW (PRINCIPLE) OF SIN ENTERED

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they "sinned." Sin can be described as "missing the mark." Before their fall, Adam and Eve always hit the "mark" of holiness and righteousness because they operated out of God's life. Now as a result of their spiritual death, indwelling sin entered their physical bodies.

Paul referred to this indwelling sin (Rom. 7:17, 20) as the "law of sin" in Romans 7:23. Indwelling sin can be compared to gravity. Just as gravity pulls our physical bodies downward, so indwelling sin pulls us downward to gratify the sinful desires of the flesh.

PROGRAMMED FLESH DEVELOPED

When Adam and Eve were "alive," they did not need to "do" anything to meet their own needs. They did not need to protect or defend themselves; God established them and protected them (Ps. 36:7-10).

*"By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread, Till
you return to the ground,
Because from it you were
taken; For you are dust, And
to dust you shall return."*

- Genesis 3:19

*"Thus says the LORD,
'Cursed is the man who
trusts in mankind And
makes flesh his strength,
And whose heart turns
away from the LORD. For
he will be like a bush in the
desert And will not see when
prosperity comes, But will
live in stony wastes in the
wilderness, A land of salt
without inhabitant.'"*

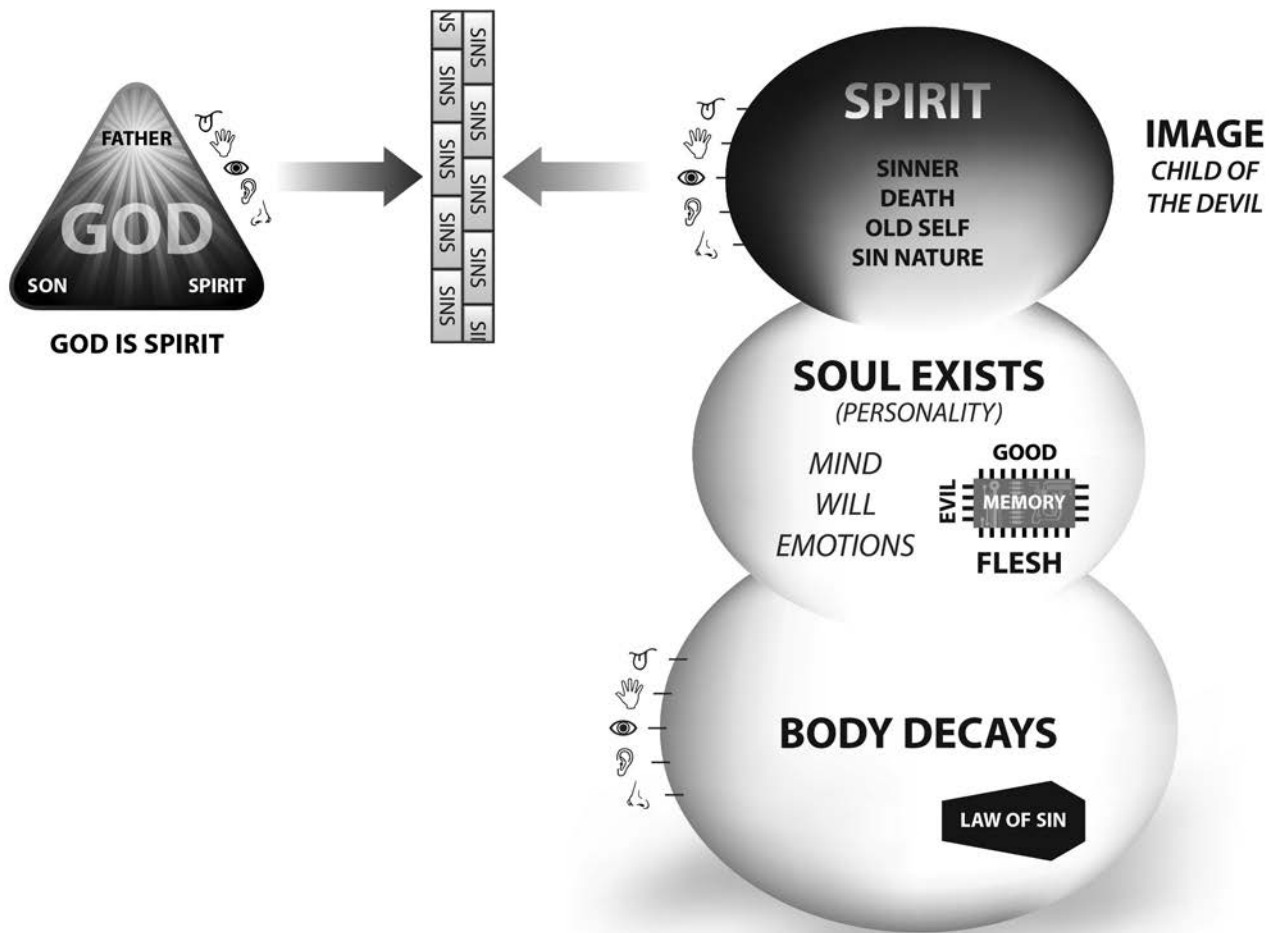
- Jeremiah 17:5-6

“Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices.”
 - Ecclesiastes 7:29

After Adam and Eve lost life, they developed coping mechanisms to meet their own needs (Eccles. 7:29). The first thing they noticed was their nakedness. Since they felt shame because of their nakedness, they covered themselves. Then they hid from God when they heard Him walking in the garden. They were afraid of God because of their guilt. Finally, when confronted with their sin, they blamed someone else for their sin. Eve blamed the serpent, and Adam blamed Eve and God. Their coping mechanisms immediately manifested as covering, hiding, and blaming (Gen. 3:7-12).

In his letters, the Apostle Paul refers to these coping mechanisms that turn into habit patterns as “the flesh” (Rom. 7:18; 8:3-8).

ILLUSTRATION: MAN AFTER THE FALL



CONDEMNED

Adam and Eve were ejected from the garden (Gen. 3:24). They were no longer able to experience life in the way they had formerly known. They stood condemned and lived under condemnation because they were guilty of sinning against God (Rom. 5:16).

“...judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation...”

- Romans 5:16a

ALL HUMANITY AFFECTED

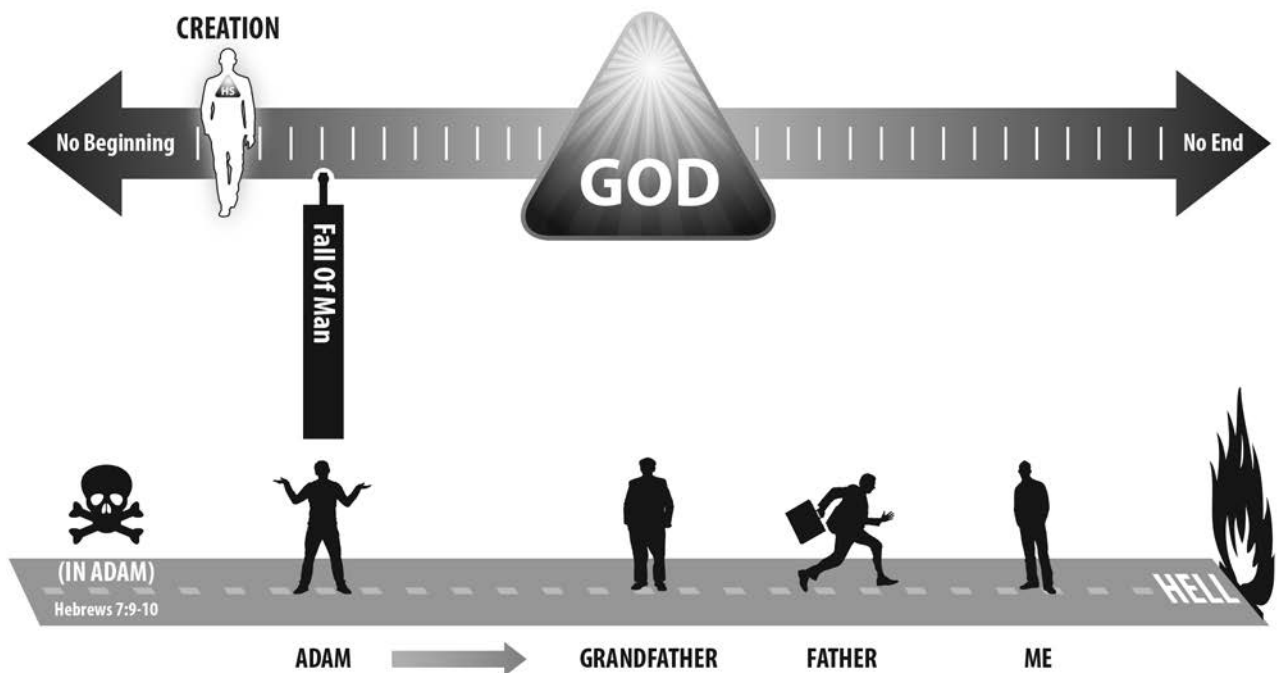
Because the entire human race has descended from Adam and Eve, the Bible teaches that humanity was in Adam and Eve when they sinned against God. As a result:

- When Adam died spiritually, all of humanity died spiritually (1 Cor. 15:22a).
- When Adam became a sinner, all of humanity became a sinner (Rom. 5:19a).
- When Adam’s needs went unmet, all of humanity’s needs went unmet (Jer. 2:13).
- When Adam was condemned, all of humanity was condemned (Rom. 5:18).

“For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners,”

- Romans 5:19a

ILLUSTRATION: HUMANITY DIED IN ADAM



A BROKEN SYSTEM OF EXISTING EMERGES

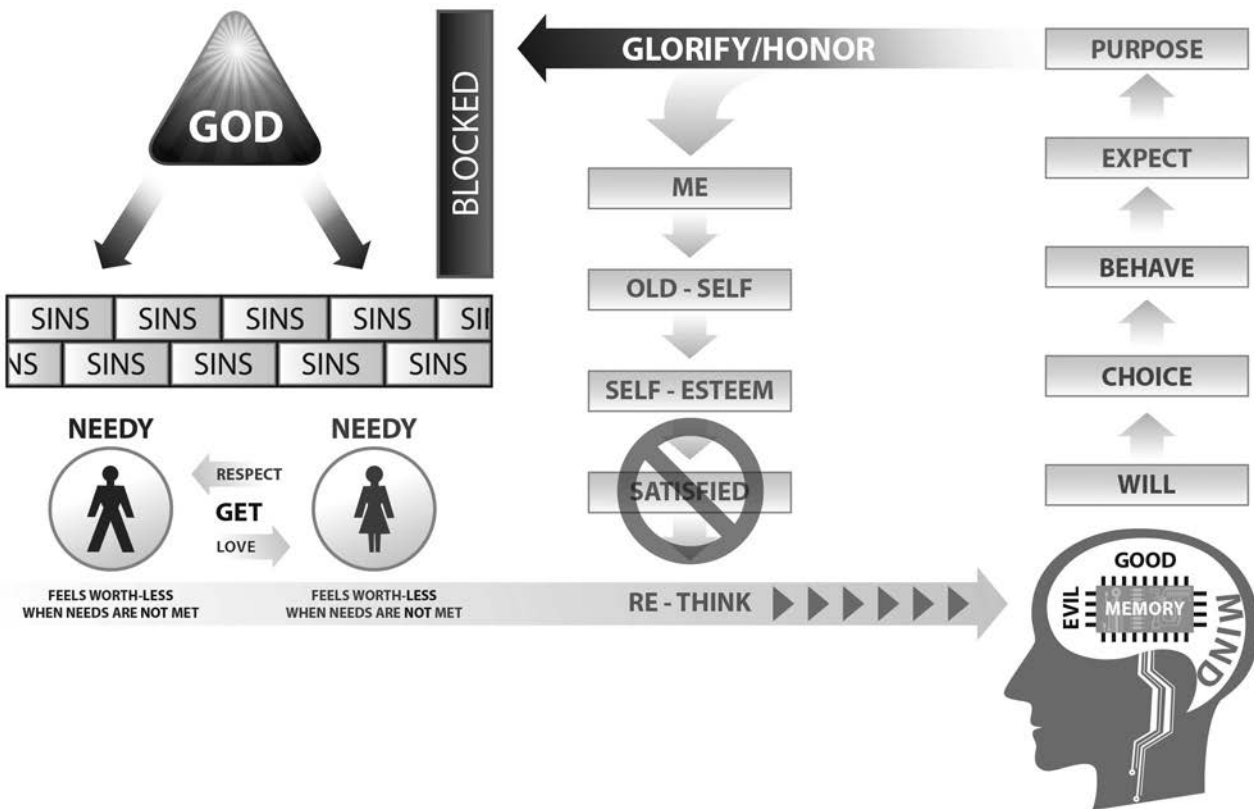
“There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.”
- Proverbs 14:12

The original system of “life” was nothing like the broken system of existing after the Fall. The original system could be described as “freedom”, which was generated by God’s life in Adam and Eve. Every thought, feeling, and choice was reflective of God’s life in them.

After the Fall, their broken system could be described as a system of “choice.” The knowledge of good and evil replaced God’s life. The quality of their existence was now dependent on their choices. If they chose good, they might experience pleasure; if they chose evil, they would experience unpleasant consequences of their choice. Without God’s life initiating their thoughts, emotions, and will, they depended on their flesh to navigate the choices before them. (Judg. 17:6; Prov. 14:12)

This broken system produces laws, rules, guidelines, boundaries, principles, precepts and ultimately religion to help guide one toward hope for success. However, there is no “life” in this system (Col. 2:8, 20-23).

ILLUSTRATION: A BROKEN SYSTEM OF LIVING



SUMMARY

As a result of the Fall, Adam and Eve lost God's life, which caused them to experience spiritual death and separation from God. Their physical bodies began to decay, and they began to look for sources other than God to meet their needs. Their spiritual death produced a sin nature that reflected their changed identity from children of God to children of Satan. The law of sin entered their bodies, and programmed flesh became their operating system to meet needs. Their fallen (condemned) condition has been passed down through Adam to all humanity.



TRANSFORM

1. What was my life like before receiving God's salvation?

2. What are my thoughts when I feel "dead" or empty?

3. At what times in my life have I felt shame and condemnation?

4. How does knowing the consequences of the Fall change the way I see others who are not Christians?

5. Take some time and listen. What is the Holy Spirit telling me in this session?

6. How will my beliefs, choices and behaviors be impacted by what the Holy Spirit is revealing to me?



PRAY

Father, I acknowledge You as the giver of life. Apart from You, I cannot meet my own needs. I cannot control anyone or anything around me in order to experience freedom in this world. Thank You for the freedom You give me through Your life giving Spirit in me. Today, reveal to me the ways I may default to my flesh to get my needs met. Thank You Father that Your grace is sufficient and Your power is perfected in my weakness. Instead of being immobilized by having to make the right choice, I will trust in You and surrender my will to Your leading. Amen.

GRAND SUMMARY

GOD'S ORIGINAL DESIGN (HOW GOD MADE US)

God is life, spirit, and love. He is also the creator and the personal relator. All He creates flows out of His essence.¹ God uniquely designed humans as living beings who are each a spirit and soul (in His image), dwelling in a physical body, expressing themselves (thoughts, emotions, choices and behaviors) through their soul and body (according to His likeness).² He designed humanity with needs that only He can meet. This design establishes a relationship characterized by God's provision and man's dependence, which enhances intimacy in that relationship. Adam and Eve lived in a healthy relationship with God (loving Him), with themselves (loving themselves), and with each other (based on unconditional love and enjoyment of His overflow to each other).³ Man and woman were created to glorify (display) God by hearing God's voice, submitting to His will and carrying out actions empowered by the Holy Spirit. This process defines what it means to love God, and in turn, love others as yourself. When Adam and Eve rested in God's provision and moved out under His direction, they lived from the inside out and enacted His purposes upon the earth.⁴

HUMANITY'S FALL (WHAT WENT WRONG)

The two trees in the middle of the Garden of Eden represent a choice between two systems. The tree of life represents an option to completely trust God and His word in order to realize a life of meaning, purpose, and fulfillment. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents an option to rely on perception, experience and self-reasoning apart from God.⁵ Adam and Eve chose to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. As a result of their choice (the Fall), they lost God's life, which caused them to experience spiritual death and separation from God. Their physical bodies began to decay, and they began to look for sources other than God to meet their needs. Their spiritual death produced a sin nature that reflected their changed identity from children of God to children of Satan. The law of sin entered their bodies, and programmed flesh became their operating system to meet needs. Their fallen (condemned) condition has been passed down through Adam to all humanity.⁶ Born with a nature that is hostile toward God's love, acceptance, and value, everyone develops ways (flesh patterns) to make life work and get his/her needs met apart from God.⁷

LIFE RESTORED (HOW GOD MADE US RIGHT)

God, in the person of Jesus, has resolved the two problems that kept us from an intimate relationship with Him. First, He dealt with the problem of our sins by becoming flesh and blood, fulfilling the requirements of the Law, and paying the penalty for sin through the sacrifice of Himself. Second, He dealt with the problem of our fallen and natural identity in Adam by crucifying our old self in Christ. Our response is to believe and receive God's provision for our salvation.⁸

At the moment of salvation, we were made new creations indwelt by the Holy Spirit and entered into a new covenant with God characterized by abundant life. The old sinful nature (old self) was exchanged for a new nature so we could naturally and uniquely express Christ's life in our behavior. We were given a full spiritual inheritance with the guarantee that all needs will be met in Christ.⁹ We exchanged fathers - from Satan to God. Changing fathers produced a family exchange - from Adam's family to God's family. Because we were "born again" of God, our identity is now a child of God. As God's children, we have a nature that is defined by who HE is and by HIS opinion of us.¹⁰

LIFE EXPRESSED (HOW WE EXPERIENCE LIFE EVERYDAY)

God has designed us to uniquely express Christ's life. The Bible calls this expression "bearing fruit." Christ's life in us is our life and flows out from us naturally and spontaneously as we submit our will to His will. Every believer is endowed with unique talents, abilities, and spiritual gifts that enable him or her to be that unique expression of Christ's life for the benefit and edification of Christ's body - the church. Our expression of Christ's life is most evident when we are mentally focused on the truth and enjoying intimacy with the Father.¹¹

While our spiritual growth comes from God, we can nurture this growth in many ways (sometimes referred to as spiritual disciplines). These disciplines can include Bible study, prayer, confession, fasting, etc. Spiritual disciplines will foster growth only when they lead to deeper intimacy with God. Engaging in these disciplines does not earn God's acceptance or achieve for us righteousness through self-effort. Spiritual disciplines, when carried out under the direction of the Holy Spirit, become enjoyments of His presence and means of knowing Him more intimately.¹²

Christ secured the victory once and for all at the cross, but He has not yet banished Satan and the forces of evil in this world. God made us new spiritually but left us temporarily in our dying bodies with a choice to live either from the inside out or from the outside in. God has not wiped our memory clean, but instead He asks and instructs us to consider ourselves dead to the old fleshly ways and alive to His life inside us. The war is being waged each and every day in our mind. When we reject the lies, believe the truth, and move out under the direction and power of the Holy Spirit, we walk in the victory that is ours in Christ.¹³ Understanding our flesh is crucial to recognizing the lies from the enemy. We can then take those lies captive and believe the truth revealed by the Holy Spirit.¹⁴

Because we still live in a fallen world and we sometimes choose to walk after the flesh, we will face difficulties. God uses these difficulties or burdens in our lives to bring about brokenness. In the midst of brokenness and suffering He often reveals counterfeit "need-meeters" and how we are depending on our own resources and not on Him. God leads us to surrender our rights to Him and allow Him to give us what we need. As we surrender rights, we will experience the love, joy, and peace found in Christ's life.¹⁵

When we walk after the flesh, we hurt and offend each other. God's full forgiveness and our true nature in Christ enable us to forgive. We can choose to forgive the offender by releasing the debt owed and letting go of the hurt and anger. When we offend another, we can seek forgiveness by taking responsibility for our action and asking for forgiveness. We can choose to surrender to the Holy Spirit and express Christ's life through forgiveness whether a relationship is reconciled or not.¹⁶

Our relationship with God is no longer administered by the system of Law, or Old Covenant (our performance for Him). We who are in Christ can now enjoy a relationship characterized by God's grace. This New Covenant is determined by who HE is and what HE has already accomplished (performed for us) and then given to us in Christ.¹⁷

Now that God relates to us through grace, the Holy Spirit leads us to relate to others in the same way. Relationships based on expectations (laws) are unhealthy and will produce anger, hurt, frustration and sorrow. Relating to others out of grace releases relationships from the performance expectations of living under law. Giving grace to others fosters healthy relationships by providing an atmosphere where intimacy can flourish and other people can grow in Christ.¹⁸

As we come to know and believe the truth of who God is, how we are designed, and our relationship with God in Christ, a burning desire will grow for others to experience Christ's life in this way. To this end, the Spirit empowers us to be life equippers who make disciples through multiplying and maturing the body of Christ.¹⁹

** The notation numbers are the session numbers from which the summary was taken.*

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

This “Living IN Jesus” study has been written by the combined effort of the counseling and coaching staff at Christian Families Today (CFT). CFT exists to educate and encourage men, women and children in how to build biblically healthy lives and families. The truths found in this study are distilled from our 10-month Advanced Discipleship Training course and from over 35 years of experience in counseling and coaching individuals in how to live out of Christ’s life. CFT is a member of the Network 220 (www.network220.org). Some diagrams and content in this publication have been adapted from Network 220 conference materials. Network 220 (named after Galatians 2:20) is an international network of churches, counseling ministries, and training ministries who are committed to the life-changing message of our new identity and life in Jesus Christ.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

TO FURTHER EQUIP THE LIFE EQUIPPER, THE FOLLOWING ARE AVAILABLE:

The “Living IN Jesus Equipper’s Guide”: a supplement to the Living IN Jesus Participant’s Guide that provides tips and insights for the Life Equipper

Grow in Grace Seminar: an expanded teaching of Romans 5-8 which sets forth a believer’s identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection (Through understanding how to appropriate one’s identification in Christ, believers not only begin to understand the Exchanged Life, but also learn how to bring life’s trials and tribulations to resolution.) (presented quarterly at Christian Families Today’s office in Newnan, GA)

Advanced Discipleship Training (ADT): provides a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of The Exchanged Life through teaching a believer’s identification in Christ, learning how to build biblically healthy relationships based upon a believer’s identification in Christ and how a believer can effectively share his or her identification in Christ with others (conducted at Christian Families Today’s office in Newnan, GA)

For more information on these opportunities and our other resources, visit our website at:

www.ChristianFamiliesToday.org