GETTING CONNECTED

1 Why is it important to be connected to Christ?

JOHN 15:4-5 "Abide ____ Me, and I in you. As the branch _____ bear fruit of _____, unless it _____ in the _____, neither can you, unless you abide _____ Me. (5) 'I am the vine, you are the branches. He who _____ in Me, and I in him, bears _____ fruit; for _____ Me you can do _____.'"

As the branches need sap to nourish and grow fruit, we need sap flowing from Christ, the living Vine for nourishment and growth. Any attempt to grow without connection to Christ, will only last for a short time, and will be met with disappointment.

2 What did Jesus tell His disciples about their absolute need for connection to divinity?

MATTHEW 19:26 "But Jesus looked at them and said to them, 'With _____ this is _____, but with _____ all things are _____.'"

There is a limit to human ability. We may exert the greatest effort to keep ourselves pure and holy, but apart from God there is no lasting success. He is our sufficiency. He alone replaces human frailty with divine vitality. Never rely on willpower or inner resolve, rely totally on Christ.

3 How does the apostle Paul reveal the possibilities available only through connection with Christ?

PHILIPPIANS 4:13 "I can do _____ things through _____ who _____ me."

The apostle Paul's secret was simple; he could accomplish everything through Christ, the One giving him strength. Paul knew he could face anything because he knew the Lord would carry him through. In all of his challenges, Paul accepted the grace of Christ as sufficient for him.

4 As the apostle Paul grew in his Christian journey, what did he rely on as assurance in times of weakness?

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9 "And He said to me, 'My grace is _____ for you, for My _____ is made perfect in _____.' Therefore most gladly I will rather _____ in my _____, that the _____ of _____ may _____ upon me."

When we fail to acknowledge our human weaknesses, we meet with failure and disappointment. When we accept salvation from the condemnation of sins, we are delivered from the penalty of sin. This daily deliverance from the penalty of sin is the power of sanctification, available when we remain connected to Christ.

5 How does the Bible explain why we need to remain reliant on Christ, even after we are forgiven and born again?

ROMANS 6:12 "Therefore do not _____ sin reign in your _____ body, that you should _____ it in its _____."

We are still living in a world of sin even after we are forgiven and delivered from the penalty of sin. Being born again is just the start of our battle against sin and our consciousness of sin's power and need of divine strength.

6 What kind of language did the apostle Paul use to symbolize the battle against the power of sin?

EPHESIANS 6:12 "For we do not _____ against _____ and _____, but against _____, against _____, against the rulers of the _____ of this age, against _____ hosts of _____ in the _____ places."

Without commitment to Christ and rebirth there is no desire to wrestle against sin; sinful practices are the way of life. When we are born again, our eyes are opened to the battle, not against the existence of sin, but against sin's desire to become the controlling factor, once again, after our new birth. We are made spiritually by the righteousness of Christ, but because we are still mortal, we are susceptible to the intrusion of sin wrestling us away from Christ.

7 What does the Bible describe as our defense system against the intrusion of sin?

EPHESIANS 6:10-11 "Finally, my brethren, be _____ in the Lord and in the _____ of His might. (11) Put on the _____ armor of _____, that you may be able to _____ against the _____ of the _____."

Only the Lord's armor ensures victory against the devil. Therefore Satan goads us to fight him in our own strength, where we are easily defeated without the strength of the Lord. After Jesus rose from the dead and demonstrated His power over Satan, He proclaimed, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." (Matthew 28:18). The only authority the devil fears is the authority of Jesus.

8 What else besides His armor does a connection to Christ give His disciples?

LUKE 10:19 "Behold, I give _____ the _____ to _____ on _____ and _____, and over _____ the power of the _____, and _____ shall by any means _____ you."

Although some believe that from this passage God intends for us to literally handle serpents and scorpions, God is giving us the authority to be victorious over Satan's symbolic serpents and scorpions. For this breaking of sin's hold over His disciples, we rejoice.

9 What did Jesus do to break the power of the enemy?

HEBREWS 2:14 "Inasmuch then as the _____ have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise _____ in the same, that through _____ He might _____ him who had the _____ of _____, that is, the _____."

Jesus fought the battle against the devil on the same field on which we face him, the field of human flesh and blood. Because of our fallen nature, Jesus became like us, to face the satanic artillery that we are helpless against. And He won! His win is recorded in Hebrews 4:15, "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin."

10 Following Jesus' victory what is now available to us?

EPHESIANS 6:13 "Therefore take up the _____ armor of _____, that _____ may be _____ to _____ in the _____ day, and having done _____, to _____."

Without the "Whole armor of God" we are vulnerable. We need the armor as long as we remain in human flesh and are mortal. Christ' righteousness, however, is sufficient to empower and enable Christians to live a spiritual life in a natural body.

THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD

1. Belt of Truth - God's truth will sustain us in times of testing.
2. Breastplate of Righteousness - The law of God in our heart.
3. Feet covered with the Gospel of Peace - We walk in peace.
4. Shield of Faith - The darts of the enemy cannot penetrate our faith.
5. Helmet of Salvation - Represents Christ our Head that covers us.
6. Sword of the Spirit - It cuts away error and false teachings.
7. Praying Always - Unceasing prayer keeps us open to commune with God.
8. Being Watchful - Keeps us alert to the wiles of the enemy.

11 Through what means do we maintain the Christian victory?

1 CORINTHIANS 15:57 "But thanks be to God, who _____ us the _____ through our _____ _____ _____."

Joshua also wrote about God's protecting care. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9 (NKJV).

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

12 How does Christ impart His daily power to us?

ACTS 1:8 "But you shall receive _____ when the _____ _____ has come _____ you; and _____ shall be _____ to _____ in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Dr. Luke points out, when we receive the Holy Spirit, we will be witnesses "to Jesus" not just "for Jesus." Many desire to witness for Jesus, but our first priority is to witness to Jesus: to reflect what Christ has done in our life, character, words, and deeds. The Holy Spirit first worked on us to bring us to Christ, then in us to reflect Christ and finally through us to share Christ.

13 Why is the Holy Spirit's work in us vital to our witness?

TITUS 1:16 "They _____ to _____ God, but in _____ they _____ Him, being abominable, disobedient, and _____ for every _____ work."

Before we are qualified to work for Christ, a work must first be done in us. Christ qualifies us by developing His character in us, before He imparts His gift of the Spirit.

14 What is the first evidence that we are developing Christ's character?

MATTHEW 7:20 "Therefore by their _____ you will know them."

A tree without fruit is an unproductive tree; a Christian without fruits is not developing a Christ-like character. As we look for fruit on a tree, Jesus looks for fruit in the lives of His children.

15 What are the fruits of the Holy Spirit in us?

GALATIANS 5:22-23 "But the fruit of the Spirit is _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, (23) _____, ____-_____. Against such there is no law."

The indwelling Christ is revealed through the character traits emanating from Him. The fruit of the spirit are not human qualities, but evidence of Christ being alive and present in His children.

16 What does Christ see in those without a Holy Spirit-developed Christ-like character?

LUKE 13:6 "He also spoke this parable: 'A certain man had a fig tree planted in his _____, and he came seeking _____ on it and found _____.'"

The people of God are synonymous to Christ's Vineyard. As the owner, Christ longs to find our lives bearing fruit. The absence of fruit on examination indicates Christ's absence in our lives.

17 What does Jesus teach is the reason His character is absent in those claiming to be connected to Him?

MATTHEW 7:17-18 "Even so, every _____ tree bears _____ fruit, but a _____ tree bears _____ fruit. (18) A good tree _____ bear _____ fruit, nor can a _____ tree bear _____ fruit."

The law of righteousness is illustrated in the nature of the tree: "bad tree, bad fruit, good tree, good fruit." Even in the same manner, Christians are not to be identified by their work, but by their fruit: Christ-like character, good fruit; substitute work for Christ's character, harsh and unchanged bad fruit. The latter cloak their identity by being works oriented. But Christ sees otherwise.

18 Why is it imperative that our Christian character accompanies our Christian works?

MATTHEW 7:21-23 "Not everyone who _____ to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall _____ the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the _____ of My Father in heaven. (22) Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not _____ in Your name, cast out _____ in Your name, and _____ many _____ in Your name?' (23) And then I will declare to them, 'I never _____ you; _____ from Me, you who practice _____!'"

Salvation is not by works. Don't become content working for Christ and loose your focus on the Holy Spirit's development of Christ's character within. Doing so is counterfeit Christianity. The proof of our connection to Christ is, His character will be revealed in us through participation with the Holy Spirit.

19 How does the Bible reveal the divine possibilities in those that are connected to Christ?

EPHESIANS 3:20 "Now to _____ who is able to do _____ _____ above _____ that we _____ or _____, according to the _____ that _____ in us."

When we quit obstructing the Holy Spirit's work, there is no limit to what Christ can accomplish. He is looking for availability, not ability. We don't work through Christ; He does His work through us. When Christ is resident, His presence is evident.

20 What assurance does Jesus give those connected to Him?

PHILIPPIANS 1:6 "Being _____ of this very thing, that He who has _____ a _____ work ____ you will _____ it until the _____ of Jesus Christ."

Jesus will not only finish His work in us, He will finish His work through us. As Jesus fills us with His Holy Spirit we are transformed and qualified to work connected to Christ.



Finding Peace in Getting Connected

How to Grow in Christ

Have you ever seen a tree grow without connection to its source of nourishment? Have you ever seen fish swimming without water? Have you ever seen a deep-sea diver dive without carrying oxygen to sustain him in deep water? In the same way it is impossible to enter the Christian Life without connection to life-sustaining power from somewhere or someone other than us.

Many people join the church or say they are following Christ without connection to Christ, the only source empowering us to live a Christian Life.

Life, without the Holy Spirit's power, is like a major city experiencing a power outage or a car unable to start, because the battery has died: no power no life. Flowers nourished through their roots and Christians planted in Christ will grow and flourish.

Getting connected is just the beginning. Bible study, prayer, Christian service, and the exercise of spiritual gifts must be incorporated in daily living and worship to continue to grow in Christ. This outline has been designed to lead you into learning the important elements of your connection and growth in your Christian walk. The promise is, "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure." Philippians 2:13 As you study, you will discover that there is no greater joy than growing and sharing your faith in Jesus.