

Sons and Daughters of God our Father

Salvation and Sanctification

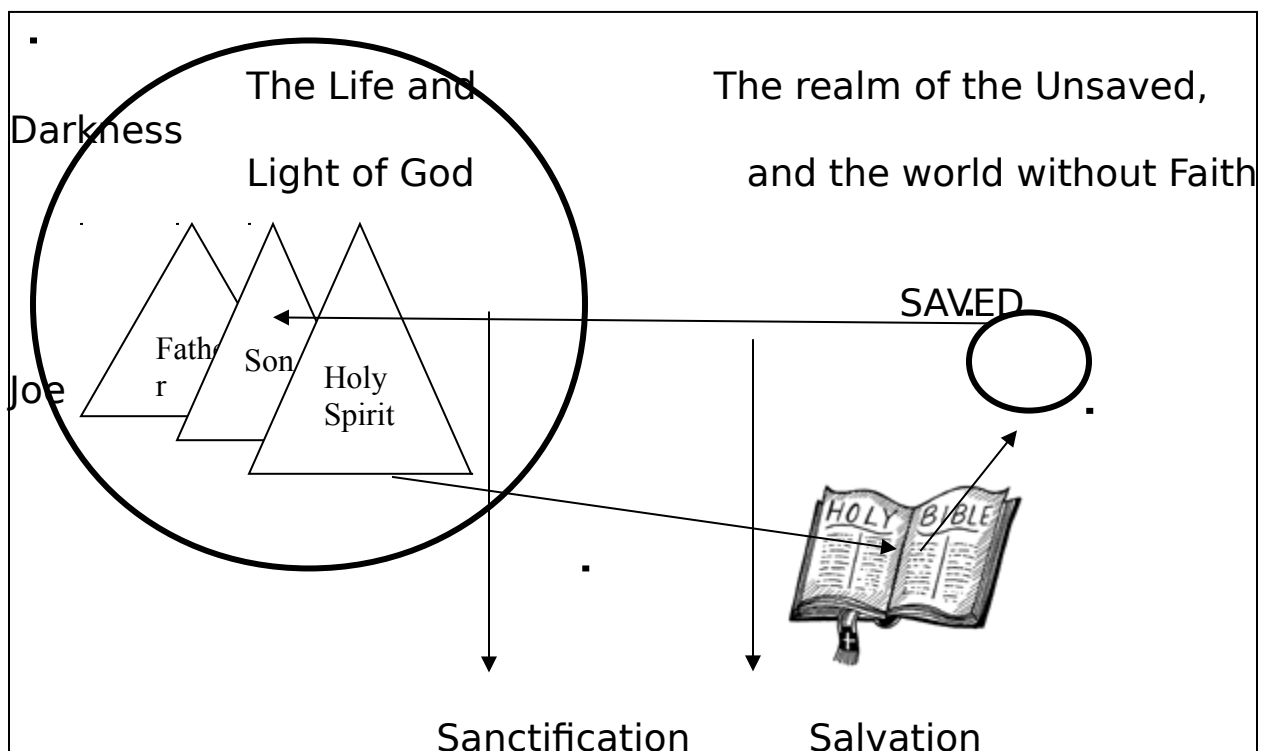
Introduction:

The reason why God created man was so that man would know, love, serve and enjoy God forever as His child, and to love one another, as he loves himself. This is the way God our Father purposefully intended and designed man to live in the world as His child. Man is truly fulfilled when he lives a life of (1) knowing, depending on, loving and trusting God, (Father, Jesus, Spirit), (2) properly loving himself, (3) loving others, (4) his work, and (5) God's creation. These are the five fulfilling pursuits of life.

The central reason for God's creation of man is to share His love and life with many sons and daughters who are living in a faithful Father-child fellowship with God as He intended people to live.

The plan, principles, assumptions, understandings and perspectives established by the Father for living as his child are revealed in the Bible. The Bible gives a worldview based on a strong conviction that this is God's world and all people are God's people, and that God has a plan for the world and for all people, and is actively involved in unfolding His plan in the world and in each individual life. This is shown throughout the whole Bible in events, in the lives of many people, and in the words recorded.

This biblical worldview—including the entrance of sin into life- helps us to understand the true meaning and purpose of problems, difficulties, tragedies, and trials in the human life experience. In a biblical worldview, problems not only have immediate causes, but have spiritual – even eternal- meanings and purposes.



+God is and dwells in the realm of Life and Light

+The world is a realm of darkness, sin and Satan [John 12:31, 1 Cor 2:12, Gal 1:4, 1 John 2:15-17, Eph 4:17-18].

+Joe lives in the realm of darkness, but one day [John 1:5, John 3:13, 2 Cor 4:4].

+The Holy Spirit brings Joe in contact with the Bible, the Word of God and the Light shines upon him and within him [John 12:36, 46; 1Pet 1:23].

+And Joe by God's grace and faith receives Christ as his Savior [Rom 10:17, John 4:6].

+Joe is saved and enters the realm of God's Life and Light and Love [John 8:12, John 12:35,45].

+And his sanctification begins.

What is Salvation? Salvation is the moment in which a person by faith through grace believes and receives Jesus Christ as God and Savior, is born anew (regenerated), and begins a relationship as a son or daughter of God the Father (Jesus, Spirit). [John 1:12; Rom 10:9-10].

What is Sanctification? Sanctification is the process of experiencing increasing closeness and intimacy in our relationship as a son or daughter with God (Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit), and with each Person of the Godhead, by being transformed into the likeness of Christ.

[1 John3:2, John 17:17, Eph 4:15, Eph 5:26, 1 Thes 5:23].

What we can do to come closer to God.

Let's look at the specific spiritual things which help you maintain and grow closer to God the Trinity. They are sometimes called the disciplines of sanctification. Just as the beginning of our relationship with God depends totally on what God has done through Jesus Christ, so the power to live and grow in the Christian life also comes from God. To live the Christian life as God intends, we must continually draw upon the Holy Spirit's power and guidance.



There are essentially **Six Spiritual Activities** that draw upon God's Holy Spirit power. Think of them as pillars that hold you up as the Temple of God. For that is what you are, as it says in **1 Corinthians 6:18-20**. The first two are activities through which the Spirit helps you maintain your life as a CHILD OF GOD. The second two are activities that maintain your life WITH THE CHILDREN or FAMILY of GOD. The last two activities maintain your life of SERVICE for GOD [both to the family of God and to the world].¹

Maintaining your life as a CHILD OF GOD:

Pillar 1. By Personal, private Prayer – Do you make time for private conversation with God each day? How easy this is to do, but how hard it is to do consistently and sincerely. It is very easy to talk with God. But God is Spirit and He is out of sight. Out of sight, out of mind! Yet our Father takes great delight in hearing from us as His children. He looks forward to the times or even brief moments when we seek Him and speak with Him. They may as brief as “Praise You Father!” “Thank You God!” With a little more time, we can tell Him what we need, how we're feeling, what's been on our minds. We can admit our failings to Him, ask His forgiveness and help, and ask Him to bless those we love.

Pillar 2. By Bible reading, study and reflection – Do you make daily (or at least weekly) time for Bible study and meditation? Without time spent in the Word of God, we soon find our spiritual relationship to God becoming dry, disatisfying and disinteresting. The Holy Spirit is the Voice of God Who can be heard through the inspired Word of God. The Holy Spirit is the life, light and love of God Who is embedded in the Bible. To stay alive spiritually we must stay in the Word regularly. [Ps 119:105, Is 40:8, Jer 15:16, Luke 8:21, 2 Tim 3:16].

Four ways to interpret the Word of God: Psalm 119:105 “Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, a light for my path!” acronym L.A.M.P.

- a. Literal letter. It means exactly what it says. What is the exact or primary meaning of the word or words? What is the actual event or information given or revealed by God? What are its facts? What is its **biblical and historical context**? What are the time, circumstances, era, other **surrounding events**,

¹ There are other disciplines or exercises like fasting, solitude, retreats, simplicity, confession, guidance and counsel.

cultural and social picture of what was and is happening? Is it historically accurate, factual, actual, authentic, and genuine? Who is the **human author**? What did the human author bring to his/her writing and thinking? That is, what do we know of the author's culture, use of language, customs of the period, practices, lifestyle, what knowledge was available to the author? What have the sciences contributed to our understanding of these things? (for instance, geology, philology, sociology, cosmology, anthropology, biology, archaeology, astronomy, etc.) What purposes did God have in the way He may have inspired this particular author?

- b.** Aim, intent or underlying meaning. What meaning is the author under God's inspiration trying to convey? What is the underlying message, point, principle, value, rule or standard does God want us to understand in the passage?
- c.** Metaphorical, allegorical, literary figure of speech meaning. Can you see parables, symbolic language, allegory, metaphor, figurative language, similes; even mythical or legendary meanings in it?
- d.** Personal, Devotional and Spiritual meaning to yourself by the Holy Spirit. What meanings and affects does this have upon the heart, mind and soul of the person? Since all scripture is revealed and inspired purposefully by God for our spiritual learning and growth, what spiritual impact might this passage have? What application can you make to your own personal devotional life? What does God want you to know, appreciate, or understand personally? Especially, what do you hear the Holy Spirit or Spirit voice of Christ speak to you in this passage you are studying? Typically, it will be one or more of these: **He counsels, corrects, convicts, converts, comforts, cleanses, convinces, causes us to confess sin, communes with us, and conforms us to the restored image of God!**

Ex: **Matt 5:30, 18:8; Joshua 6:15-21, Mark 4:1-8, Romans 8:28.**

Maintaining your life with the FAMILY OF GOD:

Pillar 3. By Worshipping together – Do you share time of worship in a good church community where the Name of Jesus is honored, the Word of God is the heart of instruction, where the gospel is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit is realized, and the Father is praised? A church

in which the music and liturgy ushers you into God's presence and lifts your heart to God? [John 4: 21-24, Col 3:16].

Pillar 4. By Fellowship together – A church community is so important for the growing life of family of God. There we find mutual ministry, encouragement, support, counsel, love, learning, correction, enjoyment, prayer and many other blessings. [Acts 1:14].

Maintaining your life of SERVICE FOR GOD:

Pillar 5. Through Ministry to the family of God – There are many ministries shared in a community of Christians. There are ministries to youth and children, the elderly, visitation of the sick, support and counsel, good listening, music, care-giving, encouragement, hospitality, ushering, church maintenance, tithing, and many charities locally and internationally which support the worldwide family of God. Have you discovered your spiritual gifts and ministry? [Eph 4:11-13].

Pillar 6. By Witnessing and Service to the world– In small, spontaneous and indirect ways, as well as planned, organized, and direct ways, every Christian should witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Every Christian has a testimony that can be shared with non-Christians and unbelievers. **1 Peter 3:15** says, “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect”. Also every Christian is an example of Christ's love through his good works and service to others. [Matt 25:40].

God is not easy to know, but He is knowable!

He has provided seven means or ways of knowing that he exists and real, and that he seeks to reveal Himself to us. We know God exists and is real by faith! (Hebrews 1:1) Christian faith means to be fully convinced of the truthfulness and reliability of that in which we believe. But it is not blind faith. It is faith based on God's revelation of Himself:

There are seven elements in a Christian's relationship to God which gives the Christian confidence that there is a God, and that this God is the Creator of the universe and our loving Father. Taken together, these seven elements form a mutually supportive theistic worldview based on:

(1) Observations in nature. (Rom 1:18-20)

(2) Observations of my own human nature and the human condition. (Acts 17:28)

(3) Historically reliable writings, the Bible scriptures. (2 Tim 3:16; Mark 13:31; Rev 3:17)

(4) Convictions (leading to new birth) about the only and outstanding God-man (Jesus Christ) who lived among us 2000 years ago; a man with clear, convincing credentials concerning his deity. (John 14:6; Luke 4:22,32).

(5) The personal experience of Christ's Spirit (the Holy Spirit) operating in my life. (Rom 8:9-11; Gal 4:6)

(6) The desire to serve others from a love that flows over from God's love for me. (Matt 25:45)

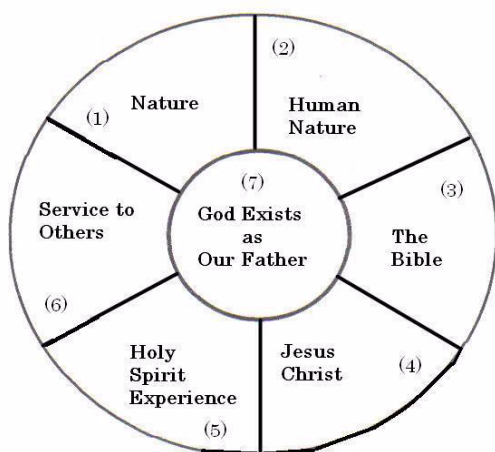
(7) The demonstration of a loving God who is Father-like in his love and care for me! (John 14:21-23)

Each one of these is a whole integrated system. Each one is a whole of parts that relate, dovetail, connect, and support each other part as one system. Example: The Holy Spirit has many ministries, gifts and fruit, but He is one, and one of three Persons in God (Trinity). (1Cor 12:8-13).

Each of these is a means God chooses to speak to us. They are all instances of His words to us. They are his revelation to us. He reveals himself in each. Example: The Bible is God's written Word; Jesus is the living Word to us. When Jesus spoke, God the Father spoke. (John 14:10, 24). No one of these

stands alone, or can be understood without the others. When explaining the Christian faith, we must show how one relates to and relies on the others.

Example: We cannot understand the Bible unless we have the Holy Spirit. (1Cor 2:6-16). We do not have an authentic Christian worldview or an authentic faith unless we believe and accept all seven of these elements. (1Cor 12:20). In each of these is God's (the Trinity's) love shown to us. (Ephes 2:4-10).



As I have said above, together, these seven elements form a Christian worldview which initiates and develops a faith of assurance and confidence. They do not stand alone, but are woven together into a strong chain of evidence which forms a solid relationship between the believer and God.

The diagram above represents a way of describing the seven elements which make up the Christian faith in God. The circle shows the seven elements with an emphasis on the reality that the Christian faith is centered on God the Father and our Father-child relationship.

(1) In **NATURE**. By **Nature**, I mean everything from the smallest microscopic subatomic particle to the vastness of the universe. Nature points to God's existence!

Nature is a revelation of God by which he makes himself known to us. God speaks to us in nature! But it is a vague source of evidence for God! Yet it provides very strong hints and clues about the existence of a Creator. However it gives us little understanding of the nature of God, his thinking or personhood.

How does nature speak to us of God's existence? Let me speak in the first person singular!

Nature shows me that ***I am intimately connected to the universe***. I am connected not only to the family of man in every nation, but I am connected to the formation of mankind through millions of years of evolution. I am completely dependent on and interdependent with my environment.

When I observe and reflect on nature, it fosters responses in me which we associate with the supernatural or spiritual. When I observe what has been learned by science of our vast universe; when I look at mountains, rivers, flowers, oceans, the sky, the undisturbed snow, trees, forests, animals, the moon and the sun, ***I am filled with wonder. I experience joy, amazement, thankfulness, harmony, peace, beauty, majesty, awe, glory and splendor***. These are for me strong hints of an intentional and purposeful Creator, who has provided such gifts for our pleasure and learning.

The Bible puts it this way in **Romans 1:19-20**, "what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

If God created the world we would expect it to bear his likeness in some way. We say we recognize an artist by his familiar way of painting, a composer by the style of his music, a poet by the subject he often writes about.

Nature is like a somewhat blurred picture of God. He's there, we can recognize he's there, our mind and spirit can respond to his presence, but God does not speak very clearly in nature. His voice is soft and gentle and subtle. We may not hear His voice clearly in nature or human nature, but it is there. Yet if we listen to our heart as it responds to the beauty of the world around us, we know we have experienced the Creator.

(2) In **HUMAN NATURE**.

By human nature I mean the physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual capacities that make up a human being. Michael Eastcott says that man is the most complex of all things on earth. He can be likened to a set of Russian dolls, one body enclosing another, which encloses another, and so on.

God speaks to us through our human nature. The Creator is reflected in our creation and something inside us (the spirit) understands and recognizes this intuitively. There is a connection between us and God. We feel a need for God, an Ultimate One who can explain all the mysteries of life that we can't explain. We expect there is One who can answer the deep questions of life which all people want answered. What is life about? What is its purpose? Why suffering, war, pain, tragedies? Why death? What happens after death? What can I believe in, hope for, trust and love?

There is also something about God's presence in human nature. Our hearts remain forever empty until we fill them with God. There is a demanding desire for God, because we are formed in his image, an incomplete and broken image which is longing for restoration. Paul says, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies." We know we are incomplete.

Human nature calls out to the one we call God.

(3) In the **BIBLE**

The third way of experiencing God is through the Bible which we consider to be God's own inspired and revealed words to us. We believe that the Bible is

1. **Inspired** The Spirit inspired its writing. It is not solely the work of human authors. The Spirit inspired its interpretation over the years; the Spirit inspires us today when we read it with the eyes of faith,
2. **Inerrant** It is without error in conveying God's thought and will, and
3. **Infallible** It has been truthfully, flawlessly conveyed and preserved. See the Dead Sea scrolls.

How God Speaks Through Bible Study

The Psalmist posed the question, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" to which he offered the immediate reply, "By keeping it according to Thy word." (Ps 119:9) In the same psalm (119:105) it says "Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

That Word we have in what is commonly called the Bible. The Bible has been used in many ways and for many purposes over the ages, but to the child of God it is God's word imparted to men. God speaks to us in the words of the Bible. In this written word God has graciously told us about Himself and what He expects of us. The vital nature of this word is seen in the words spoken by Moses to the Israelites as they were ready to cross the Jordan. "For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you shall prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess." (Deut 32:47).

In 2 Timothy 3:16 the Bible says of itself, "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good

work.” (2 Tim 3:16,17) This cannot be said of other books. The world abounds with books, many of them religious in character, but to the Bible alone belongs this distinction, that God has inspired it, and speaks in it. It is inerrant and infallible.

When we study the Bible, therefore, we should be aware that we are doing more than making an increase of information. Something much more important than that is taking place. **God is actually speaking to us through the words of the Bible.** How does God speak to us through Bible? Consider the following ways we ponder His word and make it part of our lives.

Bible study involves an eager and lively **examination of the text.** In Acts 17:11ff we read that the Bereans received the word with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures daily to confirm what Paul and Silas spoke. By careful and diligent study of the word, comparing text with text, and weighing the words written, we come to an understanding of God’s revelation to us. Our prayer should be as that of the psalmist, who prayed, “Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Thy law.” (Ps 119:17)

Good Bible study will also involve **memorization of the text.** By memorizing the text, one will have that text at hand for such meditation, even when a printed copy is not available. The psalmist wrote, “Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee.” (Ps 119:11) God has revealed His will in His word, and when we memorize that word God can speak to us when we are faced with that which could potentially result in sin.

Again, Bible study involves **meditation on the text.** In Psalm 1 we read that the man blessed of God is he who delights in the law of God and meditates on it day and night. (Ps 1:1,2) By meditating on the text, contemplating its message and pondering its meaning, we become better familiar with it and its meaning for us as God’s people. By meditating on God’s word, spending time with it, one can glean the meaning that will not be realized by a cursory scan of the text.

Finally, God speaks through Bible study by **directing us to Jesus Christ.** Jesus’ rebuke to the Pharisees and Sadducees was that, though they thought they knew the scriptures, searching those scriptures would prove that they speak of Him. (John 5:39) When he walked with the two on the road to Emmaus, he explained from the scriptures all the things concerning Himself. (Luke 24:27) Peter, when examined by the chief priests, proclaimed to them, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) When God speaks to us through Bible study, He will not only show us our need, but He will show us the remedy for our need. Praise be unto God!

(4) In the person of **JESUS CHRIST**

The fourth is through Jesus Christ, who we believe to be God in the flesh, who came to live among us in order to restore mankind to God our Father.

Romans 8:1 says, “So now there is no condemnation for those who

belong to Christ Jesus. 2 And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death. 3 The law of Moses was unable to save us because of the weakness of our sinful nature. So God did what the law could not do. He sent his own Son in a body like the bodies we sinners have. And in that body God declared an end to sin's control over us by giving his Son as a sacrifice for our sins. 4 He did this so that the just requirement of the law would be fully satisfied for us, who no longer follow our sinful nature but instead follow the Spirit."

Romans 10:8-13 says, "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: ⁹That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. ¹¹As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." ¹²For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, ¹³for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

We believe that Jesus is God! Take for example Jesus' words in John 10:30, "I and the Father are one." When first encountered, this might not seem to be a claim to be God. However, when we look at the Jews' reaction to His statement, "For a good work we stone thee not; replied the Jews, but for blasphemy; and **because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.**" (John 10:33). Now we see an actual claim. The Jews understood Jesus' statement to be a claim to be God. In the following verses, Jesus never corrects the Jews by saying, "I did not claim to be God." That indicates Jesus was truly saying He was God by declaring, "**I and the Father are one**" (John 10:30).

John 8:58 is another example. Jesus declared, "I say unto you, **Before Abraham was, I am.**" Again, in response, the Jews take up stones in an attempt to stone Jesus (John 8:59). Why would the Jews want to stone Jesus if He hadn't said something they believed to be blasphemous, namely, a claim to be God? John repeatedly tells us of the Lord's connection to "I Am". See John: 4:26, 8:24, 8:28, 8:58, and 13:19. The Apostle Paul tells us that Jesus "...is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Colossians 1:15-17)

John 1:1 says that "**the Word was God.**" John 1:14 says that "**And the Word was made flesh**, and dwelt among us" This clearly indicates that Jesus is God in the flesh. Acts 20:28 tells us, "...Be shepherds of the church of God, which He bought with His own blood." Who bought the church with His own blood? Jesus Christ. Acts 20:28 declares that God purchased the church with His own blood. Therefore, Jesus is God!

(5) In the personal experience of **GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT** in oneself

When I turn to the book of Acts and the letters of Paul, Peter, John, James, and Luke, I am thrilled with the work of the Spirit in my heart and life. I see how the Spirit of Christ carries on the work of Christ of the Gospels in my own life.

The Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of love, life and light; the Spirit of Truth and sanctification; the living Spirit of Jesus Christ and the Father, dwells in the believer (the saints). It is the Holy Spirit Who is responsible to transform and grow the life of Christ in the believer. The believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit in whom God is worshipped, and is a House of Prayer. Some of the many things the Spirit does are: He converts, causes the believer to confess the name of Jesus, convicts, cleanses, counsels, convince, corrects, confirms, cautions, comforts, conforms us to the image of Jesus, and communes with us in such a way that the believer experiences the joyous, glorious presence and closeness to the Father and to Jesus Christ.

(6) In the **LOVE** we experience for and from each other.

Love is the greatest force and need in every person. If God is Love and we are fulfilled by receiving and giving love, then love is itself an experience of God and of His reality. If Jesus died for the love of mankind (no greater love than a man lay down his life for a friend) and God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, then love is an experience of God.

(7) In our relationship with **GOD THE FATHER**

The Name FATHER [see: <http://www.seekgod.org/bible/fathergod.html>]

"Father!" How sweet, tender and stirring this word has become for me. What packed meaning and feeling is contained in this one word. Though God has many names, the name of Father is the most tender for me. It is the name which Jesus, the perfect Son used to describe his relationship to God, the Eternal King and Creator. It is the name which he taught us to speak from the heart when he taught us to pray "Our Father".

God's name is to be honored and revered; it is a glorious name and a fearsome name; it is to be loved and hallowed, never used vainly. It is a strong tower and shall endure forever. So the scriptures tell us.

Scripture tells us what God the Father is like. He is a Father:

- Who takes pity or compassion on us (Ps 103:13,14)
- Who knows what we have need of before we even ask (Matt 6:8)

- Who, as a Father, knows all that happens, and is even aware of the tiniest sparrow, and much more is aware of us. (Matt 10:29)
- Who wills that no one should perish (Matt 18:14)
- Who loves the Son and has placed all things in his hands (Jn 3:35)
- Who works to this very day and hour, as does the Son (Jn 5:17)
- Who is the husbandman or gardener (Jn 15:1)
- Who is the Father of all things on earth and in heaven (1 Cor 8:6)
- Who is the giver of every good and perfect gift (James 1:17)

What it means that God is our Father

(1) It means that by creation; it is he that has made us: 'We are also his offspring.' Acts 17: 28. 'Have we not all one Father?' Mal 2: 10.

Has not one God created us? But there is little comfort in this; for God is Father in the same way to the devils by creation; but he that made them will not save them.

(2) It means that God is a Father by election, having chosen his children, upon whom he will entail heaven. 'He has chosen us in him.' Eph 1: 4.

(3) It means that God is a Father by special grace. He consecrates the elect by his Spirit, and infuses a supernatural principle of holiness, therefore they are said to be 'born of God.' I John 3: 9. Such only as are sanctified can say, 'Our Father which art in heaven.'

What is the difference between God being the Father of Christ, and the Father of the elect?

He is the Father of Christ in a more glorious and transcendent manner. Christ has the primogeniture; he is the eldest Son, a Son by eternal generation; 'I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was.' Prov 8: 23. 'Who shall declare his generation?' Isa 53: 8. Christ is a Son to the Father, as he is of the same nature with the Father, having all the incommunicable properties of the Godhead belonging to him; but we are sons of God by adoption and grace, 'That we might receive the adoption of sons. Gal 4: 5.

What is that which makes God our Father?

'Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.' Gal 3: 26. An unbeliever may call God his Creator, and his Judge, but not his Father. Faith legitimizes us, and makes us of the children of heaven. 'Ye are the children of God by faith.' Baptism makes us church members, but faith makes us children.

How does faith make God our Father?

As it is a uniting grace. By faith we have coalition and union with Christ, and so the kindred comes in; being united to Christ, the natural Son, we become adopted sons. God is the Father of Christ; faith makes us Christ's brethren, and so God comes to be our Father. Heb 2: 11.

Why Jesus called God "Father"!

Jesus placed a consistent emphasis upon "the Father" (Matt 11:27; 28:19; Mk 13:32; John 1:14,18; 4:21,23; 5:19-23,26,30,36,37,45; 27,37,44-46,57; 8:18,27,29 etc.). Seventy-two times Jesus referred to "THE FATHER." Personalizing it, in relation to Himself, He referred to "MY Father" 47 times (i.e., Matt 7:21; 10:32-33; Matt 11:27; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10,19 etc.).

A Personal Spiritual Experience of God

I believe that there is really only one way of knowing Him in the final analysis. The only way to know for certain that God exists is by having a **personal spiritual experience** of him. In fact my definition of an atheist or an agnostic is someone who has never had a personal spiritual experience of God. Let me explain what I mean by a personal spiritual experience. All three words are important.

Everyone who has ever come to know God with any certainty and committed belief has had such an experience. They have come to know God's existence as someone who is objectively real. What is this personal spiritual experience like?

See John 3:1-15

It's an Experience!

First, I can only be sure of knowing God by experiencing him. Definition: Experience as a general concept comprises knowledge gained through involvement in or exposure to that thing or event.

Experience of God is the kind of knowing of Him that comes from actual encounters or involvement with God. I meet people on the internet all the time; people who I will most likely never see in person. Yet our "experience" of each other gradually produces a relationship that is very real and genuine. In some cases there is the desire to meet them in person because the bond of friendship has become so meaningful and real. We have "experienced" each other for real. Our relationship with God can be that kind of experienced reality.

This is very different from the kind of knowledge that comes from intellectualizing and reasoning about him. We can know a lot about God and never know him. There's a world of difference between knowing a theoretical idea of God, and knowing him as a living, caring, loving person.

I'm hoping that God has revealed himself experientially. That is, from an

encounter with him that is real and unmistakable. That experience usually involves feeling, insight, knowing, realizing, understanding and being "touched" deeply by His love and care for you in some very personal way. It is often a full person (body, soul, spirit) encounter, so to speak. You'll know it when you know it! It will stand out and be recognizable, though it need not be dramatic or noticeable to anyone else. It can happen for you.

It's a Spiritual Experience!

Secondly, it has to be Spiritual. Definition: Spiritual means non-physical, a realm of reality that is not directly perceived with the senses but perceived with non-physical "senses" such as faith, hoping, trusting, loving, longing, imagining, discerning; hearing and seeing with the "heart", intuitively. Not by the natural ways of perceiving but by supernatural ways.

Jesus spoke to a Samaritan woman one day who had come to the well of Jacob to get water. (John 4). His lengthy conversation with her concludes with questions about God. He tells her,

"Believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem....a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship Him (know and experience Him) in spirit and in truth."

It's a Personal experience!

Third, it has to be Personal! This means that in some way the experience of God has a tag with your name on it just for you. You will know it was God because of the personal nature and meaning of God's revelation to you personally. Thousands of people will tell you that they have had this kind of very personal experience with God.

Sure, God can reveal himself in general ways and to groups and masses of people, as for instance, when he revealed himself to the Old Testament Hebrews in parting the Red (Reed) sea in a miraculous way so that they could escape the pursuing Egyptian army. In this miraculous intervention of God in their lives, they knew that it was God's doing and they never forgot it. (Exodus 15:1-10).

But God also desires to reveal himself to us as persons, as individuals; because He is most interested in having a personal relationship with you. When He reveals himself to you as an individual, you will know that He is talking to you personally. He'll say or do something that is very personal and unique to you. There will be some identifying tag with your name on it. Here is a biblical example! (Gen 32:24-28).

What God does to help us come closer to Himself.

+God the Father

1. His Love and Goodness

2. His Providence
3. His Protection
4. His Prescriptions
5. His Preservation

+God the Son (Jesus)

When I spend time in the blessed Gospels I meet again a wonderful Savior whose teaching and preaching is so sound and full of spiritual wisdom. His healing and deliverance of those with evil spirits shows me God's compassion. His power and authority to walk on water, calm the seas, and order the money changers from the Temple, amaze me. His forgiveness of sins and ability to save souls, as with Nicodemus, Zachariah, and the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, the raising of those from the dead, renews my own desire to reach out to Jesus because I also feel empty, lost, sinful and confused.

1. His Teaching and Preaching
2. His Healing and Deliverance
3. His Saving and Sanctifying
4. His Power and Authority
5. His Return and Judgment

+God the Holy Spirit

When I turn to the book of Acts and the letters of Paul, Peter, John, James, and Luke, I am thrilled with the work of the Spirit in my heart and life. I see how the Spirit of Christ carries on the work of Christ of the Gospels in my own life. He counsels, corrects, convicts, converts, comforts, cleanses, convinces, causes me to confess sin, communes with me, and conforms me to the restored image of God in Christ.

The Holy Spirit, Who is the Spirit of love, life and light; the Spirit of Truth and sanctification; the living Spirit of Jesus Christ and the Father, dwells in the believer (the saints). It is the Holy Spirit Who is responsible to transform and grow the life of Christ in the believer. The believer is a temple of the Holy Spirit in whom God is worshipped, and is a House of Prayer. Some of the many things the Spirit does are: He converts, causes the believer to confess the name of Jesus, convicts, cleanses, counsels, convince, corrects, confirms, cautions, comforts, conforms us to the image of Jesus, and communes with us in such a way that the believer experiences the joyous, glorious presence and closeness to the Father and to Jesus Christ.

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Converts | 8. Confirms |
| 2. Confess the Name of Jesus | 9. Cautions |
| 3. Convicts | 10. Comforts |
| 4. Cleanses | 11. Conforms to Jesus |
| 5. Counsels | 12. Communes |
| 6. Convinces | |
| 7. Corrects | |

The Three Enemies of our relationship to God!

a. The Devil –

- +Oppression (nagging nuisance),
- +Regression (to immaturity),
- +Depression (discouraged, down, hopeless),
- +Obsession (habits and addictions, mental illness).

b. The Flesh – wounded, broken, sinful human nature prone to temptation and sin. Psycho-emotional wounds in need of healing. One is only as mature spiritually as he is psychologically.

c. The World –Test the spirits [1 John 4:1-4]. Anti-Christ(ian)

+The Temple of Secular Humanism – 8 Pillars

- 1) Post-modernism – truth is only my truth
- 2) Hedonism – whatever is pleasurable is best
- 3) Narcissism – Whatever is good for me is best
- 4) Pragmatism – Whatever works best is best (abortion)
- 5) Relativism – The situation determines what's best
- 6) Humanism – Man (without God) determines what is best
- 7) Non-judgmentalism – don't make moral judgments
- 8) Tolerance – everything goes if doesn't harm anyone

What Spiritual State are you experiencing?

- a. **Fervent, faithful fellowship**? Actively pursuing God (disciplines). Gal 5:25 - If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Rom 8:9 - But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.
- b. **Floating**? Neglecting consistent disciplines of your relationship to God. 1 Tim 4:14. Do not **neglect** the spiritual gift you received through the prophecy spoken over you when the elders of the church

laid their hands on you.

Heb 10:25. And let us not **neglect** our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near. Gal 3:3 - Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

- c. **Forgetting?** Indifferent to your relationship with God, He is out of mind.

Rev 3: 15 "I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish that you were one or the other! ¹⁶ But since you are like lukewarm water, neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth! ¹⁷ You say, 'I am rich. I have everything I want. I don't need a thing!' And you don't realize that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. ¹⁸ So I advise you to buy gold from me—gold that has been purified by fire. Then you will be rich. Also buy white garments from me so you will not be shamed by your nakedness, and ointment for your eyes so you will be able to see. ¹⁹ I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be diligent and turn from your indifference."

- d. **Floundering?** Living in un-confessed sin, harboring sin, no disciplines at all. 1 Peter 1:14 - So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your **old ways** of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. Luke 9:62 - Jesus replied, "No one who puts a **hand** to the **plow** and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God."

Matt 3:16

Mark 3:16

Luke 3:16

John 3:16

Romans 3:16

Acts 3:16

1 Cor 3:16

2 Cor 3:16

Galatians 3:16

Ephesians 3:16

Philippians 3:16

Colossians 3:16

God the Father is frequently misunderstood. Many are aware of Christ's mission to save mankind, and of the Holy Spirit's role within the individual, but what has the Father to do

with us? Is He, in contrast to the gracious Son and Spirit, totally removed from our world, the absentee Landlord, the unmoved First Cause?

Hebrews 1.1,2...God spoke through both Old and New Testaments

The Old Testament alludes to the Persons of the Triune Godhead, but it doesn't distinguish Them. In fact the New Testament suggests that even in the Old Testament the portrait of God the Father was often conveyed to us through the agency of the Son. (John 1.1-3; Colossians 1.16)

1 Corinthians 10. 1-4...Christ's role in the Exodus

2 Corinthians 5.19...God was in Christ

God the Father in the Old Testament...

- a God of mercy...Exodus 34.6,7
- a Covenant Keeping God...Genesis 9.1;12.1-3; Exodus 19.5,6;
- a Redeemer God...Psalm 8. 3,4; 18.1,2; Isaiah 44.6
- a God of Refuge...Psalm 27.5; 36.5-9; 46.1; 62.8;
- a God of Forgiveness...Psalm 51.1,11; 1-3.11-14
- a God of Goodness...Psalm 146.7-9 What a fantastic picture of God in the Psalms!
- a God of Faithfulness...Isaiah 41.9,10; 44.21,22; 45.22
- a God of Salvation and Vengeance...Isaiah 35.4 The Old Testament description of God as a God of vengeance must be seen in the context of the destruction of His faithful people by the wicked.
- a Father God...Deuteronomy 32.6; Isaiah 64.8 (63.16); Malachi 1.6; 2.10

God the Father in the New Testament...

The God of the OT does not differ from the God of the NT. God the Father is revealed as the Originator of all things, the Father of all true believers, and in a unique sense the Father of Jesus Christ.

- Father of all creation...1 Corinthians 8.6 (Hebrews 12.9; John 1.17; Ephesians 3.14,15)
 - Father of all believers...Matthew 5.45; 6.6-15; John 1.12,13; Galatians 4.5,6; Romans 8.15,16
 - Father revealed through the Son...John 1.1,14,18; 14.9 – to know Jesus is to know the Father. Hebrews 1.1-3
1. a God who gives...creation, Bethlehem, Calvary (The Father, being divine, suffered the pain of being separated from His son – in life and death – than any human being could ever understand. And He suffered with Christ in like measure. The cross reveals – as nothing else can – the truth about the Father.
 2. a God of love...Matthew 44,45; Luke 6.35,36; Luke 15 – three parables portray God's loving concern for lost humanity.

Father of the Second Coming...Matthew 16.27; 26.64; Revelation 6.16

God Your Father

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God (1 John 3:1)

(Genesis 1:27) So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

(2 Samuel 7:14) I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men.

(Psalms 68:5-6) A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. {6} God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

(Psalms 103:13-18) As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; {14} for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. {15} As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; {16} the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. {17} But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children-- {18} with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.

(Psalms 139:13-14) For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. {14} I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

(Proverbs 3:11-12) My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, {12} because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

(Isaiah 9:6) For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

(Isaiah 64:8) Yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

(Matthew 5:44-45) But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, {45} that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

(Matthew 6:3-4) But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, {4} so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

(Matthew 6:6) But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

(Matthew 6:9-15) "This, then, is how you should pray: "'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, {10} your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. {11} Give us today our daily bread. {12} Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. {13} And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.' {14} For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. {15} But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

(Matthew 7:7-11) "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. {8} For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. {9} "Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? {10} Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? {11} If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

(Matthew 10:19-20) But when they arrest you, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, {20} for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

(Matthew 12:50) For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."

(Matthew 13:43) Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

(Matthew 18:10) "See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven.

(Luke 11:13) If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

(John 4:23-24) Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. {24} God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

(John 5:19) Jesus gave them this answer: "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

(John 6:44-45) "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. {45} It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me.

(John 8:28-29) So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. {29} The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him."

(John 8:42) Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but he sent me.

(John 12:24-26) I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. {25} The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. {26}

Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

(John 14:6-21) Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. {7} If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." {8} Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." {9} Jesus answered: "Don't you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? {10} Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. {11} Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. {12} I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. {13} And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. {14} You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. {15} "If you love me, you will obey what I command. {16} And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever-- {17} the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. {18} I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. {19} Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. {20} On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. {21} Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him."

(John 14:26-27) But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. {27} Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

(John 15:7-14) If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. {8} This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. {9} "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. {10} If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. {11} I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. {12} My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. {13} Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. {14} You are my friends if you do what I command.

(John 15:16) You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit--fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.

(John 16:24-28) Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. {25} "Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. {26} In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. {27} No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. {28} I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father."

(John 17:20-23) "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, {21} that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. {22} I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: {23} I in

them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.

(John 20:17) Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

(Acts 17:24-28) "The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. {25} And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. {26} From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live. {27} God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. {28} 'For in him we live and move and have our being.' As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'"

(Romans 8:13-18) For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, {14} because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. {15} For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." {16} The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. {17} Now if we are children, then we are heirs--heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. {18} I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

(2 Corinthians 1:2-4) Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. {3} Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, {4} who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.

(2 Corinthians 6:17-18) "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you." {18} "I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

(Ephesians 1:3-6) Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. {4} For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love {5} he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- {6} to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

(Ephesians 2:18-19) For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. {19} Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

(Ephesians 3:14-19) For this reason I kneel before the Father, {15} from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. {16} I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, {17} so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, {18} may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, {19} and to know this love that surpasses knowledge--that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

(Ephesians 4:4-6) There is one body and one Spirit-- just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- {5} one Lord, one faith, one baptism; {6} one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

(Colossians 3:17) And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

(Hebrews 12:5-11) And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, {6} because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." {7} Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? {8} If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. {9} Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! {10} Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. {11} No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

(James 1:17) Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows.

(1 John 1:2-4) The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. {3} We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. {4} We write this to make our joy complete.

(1 John 2:15-17) Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. {17} The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

(1 John 2:22-23) Who is the liar? It is the man who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a man is the antichrist--he denies the Father and the Son. {23} No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.

(1 John 3:1-3) How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. {2} Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. {3} Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

(Revelation 21:6-7) He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. {7} He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.

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