

LIVING AS A CITIZEN OF
**God's
Kingdom**

Embrace His Blessings, Fulfill His Calling



TIMO GROOT

Timo Groot

Living as a Citizen of God's Kingdom
Embrace His Blessings, Fulfill His Calling
By Timo Groot

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GOD'S KINGDOM

Commission of the kingdom

PART 3



3

C13 HOSTILE KINGDOMS

In the spiritual world, we distinguish between two Kingdoms. One of these Kingdoms is well-known to us, but what about the other? The Kingdom of the opponent? The Bible proclaims that there are two Kingdoms in total and that all are part of God's Kingdom or the Kingdom of Darkness. This chapter will examine the Kingdom of Darkness and discover how it functions. It is important to know what kind of kingdom we will deal with in the next chapters.

The Spiritual Battle

Because we tend to have a superficial and human perspective, we often see people as our enemies. One country opposes another, and in our private situation, there may be people who drive us mad. Occasionally, there is a battle between people. Yet Paul says we shouldn't fight against people, and we should not see them as our enemies. It is a spiritual battle at the root of this.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)

Our battle is against the spiritual beings of the Kingdom of Darkness. These include demons, fallen angels, the devil, and other spiritual beings. Spiritual beings can cause damage to areas or countries but can also work through people. In the book of Ephesians, Paul calls us to put on our spiritual armor of God, which enables us to stand firm against these terrifying beings. We do this by faith, the truth of God, bringing the gospel, and having Jesus' righteousness, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit. It is essential to properly gear up our defenses to stand firm against the devil and his accomplices.

Simultaneously, the gospel of God doesn't only involve defending. It often creates an image where the devil is continuously firing arrows at us, and we are busy defending all the time. It is presented as a one-way traffic. If we look at Jesus's life, we

see He had to defend Himself when He was challenged in the desert. Jesus did this by speaking the Word of God and not responding to the devil's temptations. But we also see that Jesus went on the attack in full force, sending the demons out of oppressed people. In other words, Jesus enlarged God's Kingdom by conquering the territory of the Kingdom of Darkness. Furthermore, Jesus and the disciples proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom and caused many to be converted and transferred from the Kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of God.

He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the Kingdom of the Son of His love. (Colossians 1:13)

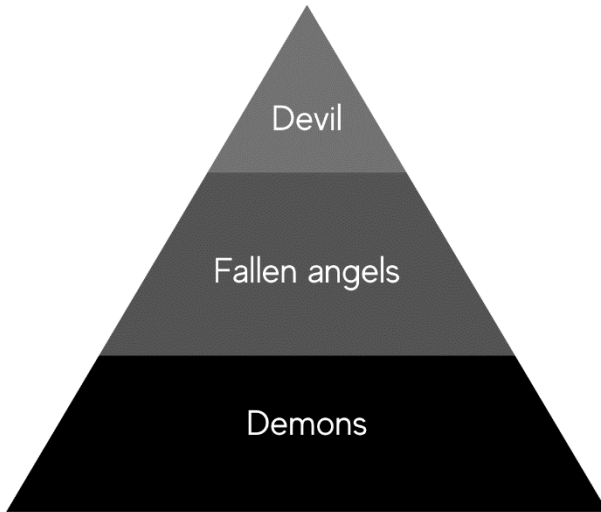
Jesus and the apostles weren't just defending; they were attacking. Similarly, we, too, may both defend and attack. In this section, we will study Jesus' mission and learn that we may attack the Kingdom of Darkness and free those currently oppressed by darkness from their evil ruler, in Jesus' name. Jesus has given us power and authority to rule over darkness.

The Kingdom of Darkness

To begin, let us explore how the Kingdom of Darkness functions. In Chapter 1, we see that the devil made Adam and Eve eat the fruit of the tree and thereby disobey God. The devil is the leader of the Kingdom of Darkness. But the devil isn't alone. In his fall, he took angels and other spiritual beings who served with him. The Kingdom of Darkness is a realm with a hierarchy. This means that a spiritual being is given a specific purpose or area, and he is under another being and controls other beings.

If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his Kingdom stand? (Luke 11:18)

Looking at the hierarchy in the Kingdom of Darkness, we end up with the following pyramid.



The devil rules the Kingdom of Darkness and controls the fallen angels and demons (Luke 11:15). He has been the opponent and is a defeated rebel. The fallen angels, along with the devil, have betrayed God. They chose the side of the devil and served him. Some fallen angels have become the rulers of empires on earth, as we can read in the book of Daniel. This isn't a human ruler but a spiritual ruler.

Then he said to me: Do not fear, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart to understand, and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard; and I have come because of your words. But the prince of the Kingdom of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; and behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left alone there with the kings of Persia. (Daniel 10:12-13)

We read about two princes in the text above. Prince Michael is an archangel of God and assists the people of Israel. The prince of Persia obstructs God's work, and because of this prince, Daniel had to wait twenty-one days for his answer. Today, too, we can face struggles against the princes of heaven, the rulers, and their

powers. Our task is to stand firm and overcome them with our armor of God (Ephesians 6:12).

Among them, we find the demons. These are spiritual beings who are out to make people not believe in Jesus, and they want to torment people with terrible diseases and thoughts. Should anyone come to faith, they want to ensure he forms as little impact as possible. Later in this book, we see that our job is to cast out demons from people. In the next section, we will discuss demons and their actions. This will help us know what we need to cast out.

What are Demons?

Demons are spiritual beings without bodies. In the book of Matthew, Jesus explains how a demon lives. In the Bible, they are often referred to as evil or unclean spirits.

When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says: I will return to my house from which I came. And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation. (Matthew 12:43-45)

A demon or unclean spirit lives its life on earth. It can be found at first in barren places to seek rest. This could include desolate areas such as swamps or deserts (Isaiah 13:21, 34:14). However, a demon cannot find rest there because he wants to dwell in a person and provoke the person to do terrible things. A demon is looking for an empty dwelling. This is an indication of the absence of the Holy Spirit. The demon will leave if the Holy Spirit dwells in the house and no door is open. If the Holy Spirit is absent, the demon enters and takes its friends with it. The reason why we need to send demons out of people is because demons like to live in people.

Besides, a demon has a personality. It isn't a power or a name to indicate evil. Every demon, like humans, has a personality and has feelings, a mind, and a will. In Matthew, we read that a demon wants to dwell in a human being. It acts by its own will. Let us look at the texts that say a demon has a mind (can speak), feelings, and self-awareness.

Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, saying: Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are the Holy One of God. (Mark 1:23-24)

The demon had a mind. He knew who Jesus was and could speak through the man. The demon even knew that Jesus was the Holy One of God before people did.

You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble. (James 2:19)

The demons tremble before God. Tremble means 'to shiver with fear', which is a strong emotion. Demons have feelings and can transmit feelings to people—for example, fear or anger.

Then He asked him: What is your name? And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many. (Mark 5:9)

The demon knew he existed. After all, he gave himself a name. Besides, he knew he wasn't alone. For he said, there were many living in the man. He was aware of himself but also aware of other spiritual beings.

The Work of Demons

Knowing now what demons are, we look at what demons do. Demons are terrible creatures who want to torment people and divert them from the truth of Jesus. For the rest of the book, we must know who we are against and what our enemies do. Demons work in the following ways, among others:

Demons lie

Demons tell lies, keeping people from the truth. We observed this with Adam and Eve when the devil lied about the consequences of taking the fruit. Besides, the devil is the patriarch of lies. When the devil lies, we may assume his accomplices do the same.

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. (John 8:44)

Every Christian must keep watch for the lies of the enemy. Sometimes, a thought can arise saying, "You can't trust God this time" or "Now God won't forgive you." These are lies of demons.

Demons Deceive or Seduce

Besides lying, demons can deceive and seduce us. This occurs not only in the world but, unfortunately, also in the church. Terrible deceits of demons sneaked into certain churches. A well-known example is the buying off of sins that the Catholic Church introduced in the Middle Ages. Paul calls these teachings of demons and misleading spirits.

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons (...). (1 Timothy 4:1)

Demons Torment Mentally

Demons can torment mentally. Let's consider thoughts of depression or anxiety. Demons attempt to put people in isolation. It can be mental isolation by keeping secrets and doing sneaky things that shouldn't be done. It can also be a physical isolation by which people withdraw from the civilized world, as we see in the book of Mark. The Lord Jesus encountered a possessed man, and the possessed man had the following lifestyle:

And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. (Mark 5:5)

Beating yourself with stones and living in the tombs isn't an everyday human occurrence. The demons tormented this man so much that they caused him to go into isolation.

Demons can Force

Demons can force people to do something. In this respect, we can think of Judas and murderers. Some explain that things turned black before their eyes, and they no longer knew what they were doing. This can be a spiritual power that temporarily takes over someone's life.

Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. (Luke 22:3-4)

Demons can Make Addicts

In 1 Corinthians, Paul summons us to avoid bringing ourselves under a power. For example, if we use alcohol or drugs to feel good, we are dependent on them. This can put us under a demonic power, and it is challenging to break free from it.

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. (1 Corinthians 6:12)

Demons can make People Sick

I believe demons make people sick; however, I don't think every illness comes from a demon. Sometimes, it comes from our choices, like going outside without a coat when it is minus 10 degrees Celsius (14 degrees Fahrenheit). Yet illness and demonism often go hand in hand in the Bible, and frequently, a demon has to be sent away before healing takes place. I do believe that God wants to heal all diseases; whether it is because of demons, our own choices, or some other problem, it does not matter in this regard. Let us look at one Bible text where a demon caused the disease.

As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a man, mute and demon-possessed. And when the demon was cast out, the mute spoke. And the multitudes marveled, saying: It was never seen like this in Israel! (Matthew 9:32-33)

Demons Can Tell Fortunes

Some demons are called fortune-telling spirits. They are eager to prophesy about people. A demon's prophecy may only sometimes be correct. Demons like to scare us and want us to believe things. A well-known speaker who often sent demons out of people heard a demon say during a deliverance service: 'Within two weeks, you will drive into a tree.' This is a prophecy from hell. We can do two things when a demon prophesies: believe it, allowing it to happen, or not believe it, preventing it from happening. The speaker decided not to believe in this prophecy and didn't drive into a tree. We see a fortune-telling spirit in the Book of Acts, for example.

Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. (Acts 16:16)

Demons Can Make Humans Super-strong

Demons can give supernatural strength. A well-known example is the Book of Mark, where Jesus encounters a possessed man and sets him free.

And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him. (Mark 5:2-4)

We have no reason to fear demons if we stand in Jesus' authority. We have received the authority to cast them out.

Demons Can Make You Anxious

Demons like to scare people into not daring to do everyday things. Especially in God's Kingdom, it is essential to avoid fear and instead preach God's gospel to all people. We haven't been given a spirit of fear but the Holy Spirit of God.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Demons Can Connect with People

Demons often connect with people through an intermediate form. Examples include fortune-tellers, crystal balls, tarot cards, music, films, or summoning spirits. We see this in the case of King Saul, who went to a fortune-teller to contact a dead person. Obviously, this is strictly forbidden, and we shouldn't engage in demonism or enter the spiritual world without the Lord Jesus.

So Saul disguised himself and put on other clothes, and he went, and two men with him; and they came to the woman by night. And he said: Please conduct a seance for me, and bring up for me the one I shall name to you. (1 Samuel 28:8)

These are a few examples of what demons are capable of doing. It is important to realize who our enemies are and what they do. With this information in mind, we will know better how to fight the enemy and his allies.

Who Has the Power?

We addressed two Kingdoms. God's Kingdom with its blessings and the Kingdom of darkness with terrible creatures that wish to torment our lives. But which Kingdom is more powerful? In the section 'The power of the King,' we notice that Jesus has all the power.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying: All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18)

Knowing this is vitally important. Because when confronted with darkness, we may know that Jesus has all power. The Lord Jesus doesn't keep this power to Himself but shares it with His disciples. We may operate on earth in the name of Jesus and fight against the Kingdom of darkness. Jesus says we must do so. After saying He has all power, Jesus said:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20)

We may teach all people and remember that Jesus is always with us. This means that the One with all power always dwells in us. We are in Christ, and therefore, we have received authority to proclaim to the world that Jesus lives. This happens not only with words and love but also with miracles and signs. In the book of Mark, we read:

And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. (...) And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen. (Mark 16:17-20)

This applies to all believers. In the name of Jesus, demons are cast out, and the sick are healed. In verse 20, we read that the disciples preached the gospel of the Kingdom, and Jesus confirmed the Word by the accompanying signs. When we preach God's Word, signs should take place that confirm the Word. In other words, the Kingdom of God is expected to gain ground and the Kingdom of Darkness to lose ground. As the sick are healed, demons are cast out, and people become disciples; therefore, the Kingdom of God wins. We dwelt on this in the chapter on: in Christ: a life with authority. Yet we cannot stress the following often enough:

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (John 14:12-13)

Christians are neither losers nor people without power; Christians have been given power and authority! With such power and authority, we can accomplish the same as Jesus and even greater things. If Jesus could heal people on earth, we can heal people in the name of Jesus today. If Jesus could cast out demons on earth, we can cast out demons in the name of Jesus today. God has given believers power. Paul prayed for good reason that we would realize the power at work in us. It must become a revelation, causing us to stand in authority and spread God's Kingdom worldwide. I pray that people today will say, "Do you want to recognize a believer? These are the signs by which you can recognize them: they always walk in love, they cast out demons, they speak in foreign languages, nothing will harm them, and the sick are healed." With God, this is not impossible but one hundred percent possible. Indeed, God wants this to happen because Jesus did this, and He is the perfect image of the invisible God.

God's Kingdom and its inhabitants have been given all power, and the Devil's Kingdom has already been disarmed and put to shame.

Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. (Colossians 2:15)

Summary

In the spiritual world, we distinguish two kingdoms: God's Kingdom and the Kingdom of Darkness. God's Kingdom is full of blessings, which we discussed in parts 1 and 2 of this book. The Kingdom of Darkness is one of misery, with the devil as its ruler. Under the devil, we find different kinds of spiritual beings, such as fallen angels and demons. We have to battle the fallen angels, and we can stand firm through our armor of God. The demons in the Kingdom of Darkness are spiritual beings without bodies who

seek a body to live in. Demons do terrible things and want to torment people and cause them to avoid knowing Jesus. If we look at the question of power, God's Kingdom and its inhabitants have all the power. The Kingdom of Darkness has already been shamed and disarmed. This means that in Jesus' name, believers can heal the sick, cast out demons, and proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom to all people.

C14 PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL

So, let us look at the commission of God's Kingdom. Just before Jesus left Earth during the ascension, He gave His disciples an important assignment. A task that is still valid today and will last until Jesus returns. Let us read the various texts that describe this moment.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying: All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen. (Matthew 28:18-20)

And He said to them: Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. (Mark 16:15-18)

Then He said to them: Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:46-47)

(...) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

This is the critical commission of God's Kingdom. When we read the section on the blessings of the Kingdom, we observed blessings for ourselves. God wants to bless us in abundance, and ideally, God wants to bless everyone. However, many people don't know this, so Jesus sent us all to tell the world the good news. We

cannot do this alone because Jesus and the Holy Spirit will be with us daily. The Lord Jesus will empower the gospel we bring so that everyone will see that we are speaking the truth. He does this through healings, deliverances, supernatural protection, and the power of the Holy Spirit, among other things. We receive blessings from God to distribute in the world and bring hope to all people. God's Kingdom has a great commission. Will you join us in completing this? After all, it is our responsibility to be a witness of Jesus in the world.

You cannot dissect Jesus' commission. One goes with the other. Yet, we are going to do it to keep this study practical. In this section, we will cover the following parts of the commission.

- Preaching the gospel and being a witness.
- Healing the sick and casting out demons.
- Discipleship and baptizing people.
- The Holy Spirit: encouraging each other through spiritual gifts.
- Fighting against the Kingdom of Darkness as victors.

Of course, the Lord Jesus may ask us other things we failed to include in the list above. But if every believer started with the list mentioned above and Jesus confirmed our work, the world would already improve significantly, and everyone would know that Jesus lives. One last thing: the above list doesn't have to be done in that order. For example, it is possible that someone might be healed of a disease first and then the gospel of God preached.

Proclaiming: Tell What Jesus Does

Let us start by proclaiming the gospel of God. It is tremendously valuable to tell people about Jesus' outstanding work and what Jesus wants to do for them. It is often said that we should be a testimony and that no words are needed. I believe we should be a witness in our lives and actions, but it should not be at the expense of proclaiming the gospel.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
(Matthew 28:19)

Jesus said, “Go and make disciples.” Jesus didn't say, “Live well, and people will automatically come to you to ask why you live well. Then say it is because of Me, but don't push it too much either.” Our job is to preach His gospel to our fellow human beings and the world. Of course, not every believer manages to communicate personally to the whole world that Jesus lives. That is why the church of Christ is one body, and the body helps each member-part to achieve this critical purpose. It is everyone's mission to proclaim the gospel, except for a Japanese in Japan, a Brazilian in Brazil, and a Dutchman in the Netherlands. (Or, of course, you are a missionary.) Proclaiming the gospel is also not just for the Billy Grahams, Reinhard Bonnkes, etc., but for every individual believer. Everyone was tasked with reaching out with the gospel of the Kingdom. The gospel is so good and contains many blessings, so why keep it to yourself? Why are we sometimes so hesitant to spread the good news? Jesus says: “Go and do.”

The first thing we may proclaim is everything the Lord Jesus commanded and taught the disciples. We may share these blessings and commands of Jesus with our family members, friends, acquaintances, colleagues, neighbors, and all others. Knowing the Bible and what Jesus taught His disciples and people are essential. We also use this message to preach the gospel. That is the beauty: we don't have to fabricate our gospel or method; we may directly copy the words, phrases, and actions of Jesus and the disciples. The question is often asked: 'How can we reach people with the gospel of God?' Even I sometimes wonder. The answer is directly in the gospels and the book of Acts. We may use everything Jesus and the disciples did to reach people in their time to achieve the goal of reaching people today. Sometimes, our thoughts and methods can be very creative, and we invent modern ways to preach the gospel. Think, for example, of Christian movies on YouTube. I am very much in favor of using technology and creativity to proclaim the gospel, but at the same

time, this should be an addition to the book of Acts and the methods of Jesus, not something that has replaced it. If Jesus had not arrived two thousand years ago, but today, He would have done the same thing. He might have used technology and media channels, but the message and the working out of the message would have remained the same.

Preaching and proclaiming the gospel can seem foolish to the world. However, this isn't something that only applies to this age, as Paul also says in his Corinthian letter.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (...) For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18-24)

When we proclaim the gospel of the Kingdom to the world, we don't need to fabricate all sorts of things to make it look wise. We may 'just' tell the gospel, where the Lord Jesus died to make atonement for the world. This is terrific news because anyone can proclaim the gospel. You don't have to take four years of theology or Bible college to receive wisdom to proclaim the gospel; you may start preaching the gospel as early as day one of your faith life with Jesus. Sometimes, it is better not to be wise according to the worldly definition of wisdom. Tell very simply what the gospel of God means and that Jesus brings reconciliation between people and God.

Testimony: Everyone has a Unique Story

(...) But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

Every believer has a story about how they got to know Jesus and what Jesus is doing in their lives. It is essential to testify about the miracles and signs Jesus has performed in our lives. People must see that Jesus wasn't just a Man from two thousand years ago who lived well, but that Jesus is today, living and establishing a personal relationship with people. We are privileged to be witnesses and proclaim to people the amazing things Jesus accomplished for us.

In Acts 1:8, the Lord Jesus instructed the disciples to be His witnesses. After all, they had seen Jesus and saw with their eyes that He was alive. They often proclaimed this gospel to the people of the world.

This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. (Acts 2:32)

The disciples saw Jesus for themselves and were qualified to be a witness to Him. They told everyone what they saw Jesus do. Even though we don't see the Lord Jesus with our physical eyes, we, too, can be His witnesses. We do this by telling what Jesus did for us and showing how Jesus saved us from our problems. For example, consider a drug addict who quit his addiction overnight, a blind man who can see again, or a woman who is set free from depressive thoughts. Trust the promises of God so that you can be a witness of faith and be an example to the world. We see this in the heroes of faith in the book of Hebrews. None of the heroes of faith experienced Jesus' life on earth, yet they were all witnesses of faith and served as examples for us. This is because they trusted in faith in the promises God gave to them.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (...). (Hebrews 12:1)

Through their faith, the heroes of Hebrews 11 still bear witness to God's goodness today. May we, through our faith and God's grace, be a testimony to God and an example to the world.

Be a Testimony

In conclusion, it is important to tell and be a testimony. It is vital that people can see from you that Jesus lives in you. We do this through the blessings God has given us, such as sanctification and the power of the Holy Spirit. Through these, we show the world who Jesus is and what Jesus does. When Jesus walked on Earth, everyone could see the character of God. Jesus was the visible form of an invisible God.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (Colossians 1:15)

Currently, the world is unable to see Jesus' face to face, and people have yet to learn who Jesus is and what Jesus does. It is wonderful to walk in Jesus' footsteps and see what Jesus is like! Just as Jesus was a picture of the invisible God, may our lives be a picture of Jesus's life. Just as God sent Jesus to show the world what God is like, Jesus now sends us into the world to show who He and God the Father are.

So Jesus said to them again: Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you. (John 20:21)

James discusses the faith we have and the works associated with it. James teaches that faith without works is a dead faith.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? (James 2:14)

The moment we come to faith; then new fruit grows. We have tasted God's goodness and grace, causing our minds to be born again. As a result, we have repented and changed our minds. An important implication of our conversion is that we are given a heart of love. The two most significant commandments in the Bible are love for God and love for our fellow man. During conversion, a (small) fruit develops with love for each other and God. This tiny fruit must grow increasingly, creating more and more love in our hearts. What is the consequence of this love?

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. (1 John 2:5-6)

When we observe all the words and commandments of Jesus and walk in Him, our love becomes perfect. This is a point we may grow towards—throughout our lives. The first issue that makes us witness is when we do what Jesus says, making the whole world experience God's love. The second point is when we have works that are consistent with love. Here, you can think of caring for people experiencing poverty or helping those in need. James elaborates on this.

If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. (James 2:15-17)

It is imperative to do good deeds. How else can people know who Jesus is? In the section on proclaiming the gospel, we discovered the importance of preaching the Word, which we cannot replace with good habits or our works. When we study the Bible, preaching and doing good works is vital. We see this in the lives of Jesus and the apostles. They taught people about God's Kingdom and practiced it through their works. Here, we can think of 'normal' works, such as feeding the hungry or supporting the poor, and 'supernatural' works, such as healing the sick and delivering people from demons. We must believe and express our faith through the works and fruits we produce.

But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. (...) Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? (James 2:18-22)

Do you remember the chapter featuring the two hostile Kingdoms? By proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom, we tell the inhabitants of the Kingdom of Darkness that there is a better King and a better Kingdom. Our testimony, both in Word and deed, shows that this isn't a fictional story but a reality. God wants to free as many people as possible from the Kingdom of darkness and transfer them to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Preaching the Word and being a witness are essential tools to achieve that.

Summary

The first task of the Kingdom we discussed is proclaiming the gospel. It is crucial to reach people with the good news of God and proclaim the things we have personally experienced with God. We may be witnesses to the world around us, both in Word and deed. James says that work matters and that believing and taking proactive actions work well together. As a result, we may share the good news with many people.

C15 TO HEAL AND DELIVER

Let us further explore two other assignments of God's Kingdom. Although many people say that God's Kingdom is not about healing or miracles, we often see this in the life of Jesus. Even if we look at the apostles a little further in time, we see that many people were healed. God's Kingdom is also about healing, and for God, His followers must perform this task so that Jesus is glorified through our work. In this chapter, we first look at the task of healing people and then at the task of delivering people.

And He said to them: Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. (...) And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons: (...) They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. (...) They went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen. (Mark 16:15-20)

Heal the Sick

Looking at the gospels, we see that God's Kingdom and healing the sick are connected. One belongs to the other. When Jesus walked on Earth, He proclaimed the gospel of the Kingdom and healed the sick.

And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. (Matthew 4:23)

If we desire to imitate Jesus in His words and deeds, this includes looking after and healing the sick. Not only was this something Jesus could do, but He also commissioned His disciples to do the same. He not only gave them the command, but He also gave them the power to heal the sick.

And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all

kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. (...) And as you go, preach, saying: The Kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. (Matthew 10:1-8)

According to this text, Jesus and the disciples could heal the sick, not some diseases but every disease and every condition. An explanation for this is that Jesus gave the disciples power to do so. Instead of power, we can also say a power of attorney. In other words, they could heal the sick on Jesus' behalf. It isn't their strength or power but the power of Jesus Christ. They received authority to heal people of their diseases and conditions in His name.

Now comes the best part. This text mentions a select group of 12 people, but Jesus gives these disciples an essential command in Matthew 28.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying: All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:18-19)

The Lord Jesus summoned the disciples to teach all nations what He commanded them. What did Jesus command the disciples to do? That is to preach the gospel and heal the sick. Jesus still wants to use people to heal the sick. What a great and gracious God we have! We see this in Mark 16:15-20, where Jesus says people can recognize believers by healing the sick. Jesus didn't stop healing the sick in the first century AD; Jesus continues to do so. He needs people willing to carry out this mission and perform it in faith. Jesus says in the book of John that we can do the same works as Him.

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (John 14:12)

The Lord Jesus had a fantastic ministry in which He revealed God's Kingdom. Jesus says that we can and should do all the work He accomplished. This is also about the healing and miracles Jesus had done in His life. It isn't merely about the first century's disciples but everyone who believes in Jesus. Everyone has received the power and authority from Jesus to heal the sick. The only problem is that many Christians have yet to receive revelation and need to know what they can do through the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul knew this and prayed for revelation so we would realize the tremendous power given to Christians (Ephesians 1:19). This also applies to healing the sick. God has given us, through the Holy Spirit, the power to heal the sick, not some diseases, but all diseases.

How to Heal the Sick?

Let us focus on healing the sick. First, I don't want to put God in a box. We cannot limit God to a roadmap; God has free will to heal. Yet God works with some key characteristics to heal sick people through you.

First of all, faith is most important. God rewards those who seek Him in faith; the same applies to the healing ministry. If we pray for non-believers, the non-believer doesn't have faith in healing. This isn't a problem for God if you believe in a miracle. By God's grace, He wants to reveal Himself to non-believers and heal sick non-believers. Because of this, the person will realize that Jesus lives. Faith is essential to receive revelations from God. Revelations from God work beautifully. On the one hand, the Holy Spirit gives us revelations. But on the other hand, God's revelations work in a relationship. If I never pay attention to God, never read the Bible, nor pray, then I cannot receive any (or few) revelations either. If I spend a lot of time with God, then God is likely to speak more often in my life, allowing me to receive more revelations and create more faith for a healing or miracle from God in the lives of others. The moment I pray for someone, I am always taking time to listen to the Holy Spirit. I often receive words of wisdom, allowing me to know exactly what to pray for, say, or do. If we look at Jesus' life on Earth, we see that every

healing is unique, and Jesus doesn't always act similarly. Therefore, the course of action to heal people may change, so it is essential to listen to the Holy Spirit and do what He tells us to do.

Secondly, it is essential to know God's will. We recognize God's will by studying the Word of God and listening to the Holy Spirit. It is necessary to realize that the Holy Spirit and the Bible are always in harmony. The Holy Spirit never says or commands anything against God's Word. When we read the Bible, we see that God wants to heal people. We see this in the ministry of Jesus and in the teachings of the prophets and apostles. In the book of Exodus, God reveals Himself as a 'Healer' and says He will not bring any disease upon us if we obey Him.

And said: If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you. (Exodus 15:26)

This demonstrates God's will. God doesn't take pleasure in sickness and misery but in health and obedience. We see this in the blessing and curse in the book of Deuteronomy. Sickness is a curse and not a blessing. God wants us to live in blessing and not under a curse (Deuteronomy 28). God is a God who does great miracles and signs. God wants it and does it.

You are the God who works wonders; you have made known your might among the peoples. You with your arm redeemed your people, the children of Jacob and Joseph. Selah. (Psalm 77:14-15)

God has and will continue to do great wonders and signs. God's goodness did not stop in the first century of Christ, and His goodness endures forever.

Will the Lord cast off forever? And will He be favorable no more? Has His mercy ceased forever? Has His promise failed forevermore? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Has He in anger shut up His tender mercies? Selah (Psalm 77:7-9)

Of course, the answer to this Psalm's question is no. God remains eternally good and always does what He promises.

Third, we must go out and do what Jesus asks of us. At first, it may be challenging to pray for the sick, and we may sometimes get disappointed because little or almost nothing happens. Please refrain from letting this discourage you, but seek God, read the Bible, and build faith. We may grow in our ministries and tasks on earth, and if we proceed with the right desire, God will help us grow.

Cast out Demons

Jesus commands us to cast out demons. As Jesus says in the book of Matthew, casting out demons and God's Kingdom go hand in hand.

But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the Kingdom of God has come upon you. (Matthew 12:28)

The Lord Jesus cast out demons, and so did the seventy disciples. They had received power from Jesus to cast out demons and were under Jesus' authority.

Then the seventy returned with joy, saying: Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name. (Luke 10:17)

Here, we see that demons must listen to the Name of Jesus. If we stand in Jesus' authority, we have received the power and strength to cast them out of people. This applies not only to the time period of the disciples but also to today.

And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons (...). (Mark 16:17)

Also, this doesn't just apply to pastors, elders, and the pastoral team; it applies to every believer.

First, let us look at how to spot demonism in people. It is essential to learn to distinguish spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). In this case, the Holy Spirit tells you that someone is suffering from

demonism or demonic influences, or you identify evil spirits. This may be a certain feeling, revelation, or the voice of the Holy Spirit. Demons can also be recognized by some nasty character traits in people. In Chapter 13, we read about what demons can do to people and how we can spot them by their strange behavior. During deliverance prayers or praying in tongues, specific complaints or negative characteristics may worsen in the person. We call these demonic manifestations, and because of this, we know for sure that someone is influenced by demons. Another form of manifestation is the changing of the eyes. During the deliverance prayer, the eyes can change to very dark or evil eyes. In your mind, you can see the demons sitting in the eyes, as it were. This helps us see a clash between God's Kingdom and the Kingdom of Darkness. It is critical not to stop when we see such manifestations but rather to send the demons out of the person. For example, if a person has a foul spirit, it can worsen during prayer. When the demon reveals itself, that is the perfect time to send it away and not the time to stop the deliverance.

How to Cast out Demons?

So, how do I cast out demons in other people? In Chapter 8, we read how we can be freed from demons ourselves. It works similarly; only now you teach someone else how to become free. At its core, Jesus' command is straightforward. After all, Jesus says: 'Cast out demons; I have given you the authority.' We don't find lengthy walkthroughs in the Bible with hundreds of steps to follow first. If we look at some ministries, every demon requires special treatment, and it is challenging to remember it all correctly. Sometimes, trajectories can take months or years. Even though some of these have good results, and I don't want to be pessimistic about these ministries, it should be possible to simplify things. Indeed, in Jesus's life, He was never in a long discussion with a demon, and the demons flew out within seconds. Jesus didn't have a questionnaire, but He had faith and authority. I long for this, and I believe it is possible. Jesus has given this power to all His followers. The following points are significant for being in the deliverance ministry.

Be Under the Authority of Jesus Yourself

It is essential to be under the authority of Jesus and a believer before you can cast out demons. Casting out demons isn't a particular ritual or formula that anyone can do. It involves authority and faith. In the Bible, we find a story where people copied Paul in casting out demons without being under the authority of Jesus. They mentioned the name of Jesus and Paul's name, but the name of Jesus only helps if you are under the authority of Jesus. It can be dangerous if you do this without the authority of Jesus.

Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying: We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches. Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so. And the evil spirit answered and said: Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you? Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. (Acts 19:13-16)

So, it is essential to be in Christ and have His authority. If we have His authority, we won't have to fear because we know that the One who is in us is greater than the one in the world (1 John 4:4). This applies to the prayer and the receiver. The receiver needs to realize that Jesus delivers him and that you do not deliver him. Here, you can ask that person to put their faith in Jesus.

It is also vital that it is in a confidential environment. This means that the information and events are not shared with everyone. Of course, discussing specific details with a pastor or elders or asking for advice is good, but gossiping about it with other people is not the intention.

Have Certain Sins Confessed

Demons don't enter a person without a reason. A significant cause through which demons can enter is serious sins or repeated sins. It is essential that the person first confesses his sin(s) before the demons are cast out. This is because the demons have been given the 'right' to operate in a person because the person has let them in—through action. The perfect way to remove this foundation is

to confess the sin and ask for forgiveness from God. As a result, there is no more legal ground, and the demon cannot cling to anything. Being honest about sins is very important, and creating an atmosphere of trust is good.

He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)

Let the Person Break Away from Occult Matters

The person must break away from occultic activities. This could include Buddha sculptures, dream catchers, certain music, videos, games, and objects of other religions. All these must be discarded, destroyed, or burnt, and the person must have nothing more to do with them. We can also consider certain curses or religions this person has acquired or practiced. The person should also dissociate himself from these curses and religions and ask Jesus to take them away from him. For example, a person must repent from all occultism and all spiritual traditions practiced in the family. If a person is set free and does not repent, the chances are high that the demons will return and reinforce their oppression.

Let the Person Forgive Everyone

It matters that the person has forgiven everyone in their life. We already read that God can only forgive us if we forgive others. Without forgiveness, a spiritual obstruction is present, which can stop deliverance. For this reason, it is important to forgive everyone, regardless of what has happened. If there is sincere forgiveness, the demon no longer has power over one's life and is set free (Luke 6:37).

Send Away the Demon

After this is done, it is time to send the demon away. You can do this simply by addressing the demon and telling it to get out in Jesus' name. Usually, you experience immediately that something happens or the atmosphere changes. Now is also a proper time to listen to the Holy Spirit, so you may also have moments to listen to the Holy Spirit's voice. The Holy Spirit will tell you what to do and when you are done praying. Deliverance prayer doesn't always have to be a session of hours; it can last just a few minutes.

While praying, you can ask what the person is feeling. This can help you pray more deeply and know what is happening. If you have never done this, walk with a brother or sister who has experience. They can explain how to do certain things, and you can see how it works. In addition, deliverance service is a learning process. More and more, you learn to understand the voice of the Holy Spirit and know what to do.

Don't Fear Manifestations

During deliverance prayers, demons may begin to manifest in a person. This may manifest, for example, in screaming, frothing, rolling on the ground, aggression, and fear. This is what they do to intimidate, deceive, or distract us. Through the deliverance prayer, they notice they must leave a person. In their last minutes in a person, they try to make us anxious, causing us to stop praying and allowing them to stay in the person a little longer. This is something we shouldn't be afraid of. In the name of Jesus, we have been given all authority and power.

Don't Put Too Much Pressure on It

A delivery service may sound super intense and can cause anxiety for many people. This isn't meant to be. So don't put extra pressure on it, don't start shouting at demons, and always keep the peace and tranquility of God. From this peace, we may operate, and we may deliver people. Sometimes, a person is still not wholly delivered after the deliverance service. Then give homework and say, for example, what this person can do in the coming week to progress. This could include fasting, studying the Word, praying, or stopping certain sins. Also, be aware that you are not the deliverer but Jesus. Only some people want to be honest, and some, for example, don't confess essential sins. This prevents them from being set free, and it is crucial to put in some time so they can grow with Jesus.

Summary

This chapter deals with two supernatural commands of God's Kingdom that apply to every believer. The first command is to heal the sick. In Jesus' ministry, we preach the kingdom and heal

the sick—simultaneously. Everywhere Jesus went, the sick was healed. Jesus' apostles continued this pattern, and we also see many healings and miracles in their lives. In Jesus' teaching, we see that healing the sick was not just for the first century AD but applies to every believer. It is key to build faith and to know God's will well. Then, we may learn and grow by doing it. The second command is to cast out demons and set people free. This task also goes together with preaching the kingdom, which the Lord Jesus often did. The disciples, too, had to deal with this many times, and we can see from Jesus' teaching that this command also applies today. Jesus' command is straightforward. Namely, Jesus says, "cast out demons." Important concepts surrounding this command are repentance, forgiving people, and stopping occultism.

C16 BAPTISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

We aren't finished after proclaiming the gospel. After all, it is crucial for people to hear about Jesus and decide to follow Him, as well as to receive good discipleship and baptism to receive the blessings of God. The local church should be a place where new disciples are trained every year to ensure that they are well-positioned in the blessings and commandments of God and that they are trained to fulfill God's commission. If this is adequately facilitated, new people will join the congregation each year, and they will invite new people to come. On the one hand, this is something the congregation itself may do, but on the other hand, this is a mission for all believers. Educating people about God and being a good example to these people is an important task. In this chapter, we look at the command to baptize and the command to make disciples.

Start Baptizing People

We find the command to baptize people in the Book of Matthew.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.
(Matthew 28:19)

It is a mission for everyone, not just a select few, to urge people to be baptized. Your local church may hold baptismal services; it is a welcoming and accepting place to send people to. It's not necessary to baptize everyone who has come to repentance through your help. Others may also take over this part. For example, we see this in the lives of Paul and Jesus. Paul brought the gospel worldwide but often left baptizing people to others. Paul believed strongly in baptizing people and the blessing this brought. Still, it was not always his job to do this (1 Corinthians 1:14). I believe it is crucial to encourage people to be baptized and tell them about the beautiful blessings that baptism brings.

Let us look at a situation where a person wants to be baptized directly by you, or you decide to baptize someone yourself.

The place of baptism does not matter. It can be in the church's baptismal pool, a bathtub, a river, or any other place with sufficient water. The key is to ensure the person can be fully submerged, from head to toe. It is not necessary to stand in the water yourself; you can just stand next to it. This is especially useful with a bathtub; otherwise, it will be very cramped.

We now turn to the question of determining when to baptize someone. Many congregations have developed special baptismal courses that should be followed, or Christians are required to believe for several months or years. Attending a course on a biblical subject is always good, but it is not necessary from a biblical standpoint to participate in a course before someone is baptized. The same goes for the length of time between conversion and baptism. The Bible states one condition of water baptism: believing in Jesus Christ. We see this in the story of Philip and the eunuch.

Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said: See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized? Then Philip said: If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said: I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. (Acts 8:36-38)

You may baptize people as soon as they believe (in their hearts) in Jesus. Furthermore, baptism may happen immediately. If someone gives their life to Jesus, they qualify and can be baptized. The Bible doesn't teach a "probationary period" of a few months or years in which we can choose an additional faith upgrade with water baptism. The Bible teaches that a person may be baptized immediately after conversion. Paul also says this in the book of Acts.

Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)

If a person fulfills this condition, then he may be baptized. There are no required courses or life skills; a person may be baptized immediately after conversion.

This is a condition that applies to everyone. This means that everyone independently makes the decision to be baptized. Consequently, it is not Biblical for babies or young children to be baptized. They don't fulfill this condition, so they cannot be baptized at this stage. When they reach an age where they can make a decision, they may be baptized.

Next, we consider how baptism should take place. Is it by sprinkling with water or by immersion? The Greek word for "baptize" is "*baptizo*" which means "immersion." Baptism in the Bible is immersion. This means that a person is put into the water from head to toe and then stands up again from the water. In the Bible, we don't read about a bowl of water or sprinkling someone during baptism. In the Bible, we read that people walk into the water to be baptized.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. (...) When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water (...). (Matthew 3:13-16)

So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him. (Acts 8:38)

The person receiving baptism enters the water, is immersed in it, and, after a few seconds, rises again from it, just like Jesus did. Jesus went into the Jordan River, was baptized by John the Baptist, and rose again from the water. The baptized may imitate Jesus and be immersed just like Jesus.

When the person undergoing baptism is in the water, we should baptize that person in the name of Jesus. In the Bible, we read precisely what to say to baptize someone. It is essential to realize that it isn't you who is the Baptist but that Jesus is working through you to baptize someone. This is why we baptize people in the name of Jesus. On behalf of Jesus, we get to fulfill this mission and welcome them into the kingdom of God. The person being baptized proclaims his faith in Jesus. The significance of

this is very profound. A person is baptized because of faith in Jesus, and by believing in Jesus, a person becomes blessed. During baptism, the person being baptized proclaims his belief in Jesus Christ.

And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the Lord Shall be saved. (Acts 2:21)

We also encounter this in Acts 22, which can be said in the water or just before.

And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:16)

In response, we baptize the person in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:19)

During water baptism, the baptized person becomes one in Christ. An additional prayer inviting the Holy Spirit to fill the baptized person is required to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. This is performed immediately after water baptism by laying one's hands on them. The baptized person may already be filled with the Holy Spirit before experiencing water baptism.

Baptism is one of the essential parts of the gospel of God. We come into Christ through water baptism, which we dealt with in the previous section. Therefore, baptizing people as soon as possible is a big deal, rather than waiting months or years. Even in Jesus' important commission, water baptism comes up, showing that it is not a ritual but a vital part of the Christian life.

Giving Discipleship

Before we discuss this subject, let us first see what a disciple is. The word "disciple" comes from the Greek word "*mathētēs*"

which means "disciple," "follower," or "disciple." Through discipleship, you teach other people to be followers of Jesus. You accomplish this by being a good role model or "master" yourself and encouraging people to live similarly. You are the master, and others are disciples who learn from you. A good master shows Jesus in his teaching and actions and teaches his disciples to become like Jesus.

Giving discipleship is another component that fits into an excellent local congregation. It matters to have a congregation that is actively engaged in discipleship and teaching people to observe the commandments of Jesus. This is the primary calling for some, while others find it difficult. Yet, teaching discipleship is deeply meaningful and part of God's mission for all of us. We don't have to know or have the ability to do everything before we can disciple young believers, nor do we have to teach long hours of courses to a group of young believers. Discipleship goes further than that and is about personally mentoring and teaching people what Jesus asks of us. It also involves leading by example and sometimes engaging in conversation to ask if there are problems. Discipleship isn't only about learning; it's about doing and building God's kingdom together, with one person teaching the other and demonstrating the right way. We can see this often in the Bible, and the nice thing is that it happens in a small group, so there is a great deal of personal attention. For example, think of Jesus and the twelve disciples or Elijah and his disciple, Elisha. Jesus and Elijah took their disciples by the hand, demonstrated what to do, and taught them all kinds of things. The remarkable thing is that Elisha and Jesus' disciples also received disciples, so more people became active in God's kingdom. This is how a church can grow properly because each disciple has his own "master" or "teacher" who gives him a lot of attention to grow. As time passes, these disciples will be "masters" or "teachers," helping to build God's kingdom quickly.

We'll begin to examine some of the points of giving discipleship. There are different ways and sizes of giving discipleship. The most familiar form of discipleship is the pastor teaching the congregation the Word of God on Sunday mornings. In addition, we can think of smaller groups, where a small group finds each other for more in-depth Bible studies and personal questions.

While the Sunday morning service is extensive, professional, and with a good speaker, the small group is small and informal, and each member can share something. You may find that your pastor or another leader asks you to prepare something from the Word of God, share a testimony, or give some other kind of teaching or study. In that case, you are, for a moment, a "master" teaching spiritual things to "disciples." However, this is not always something for everyone and may be a specific calling for some believers.

For now, let us look at discipleship that anyone may give. This is personal discipleship, in other words, one-on-one discipleship. Whether you realize it or not, you are a "master" anyway. People, within and outside the church, watch you and see how you live in the world. You affect your colleagues, family members, and congregation members. Let's take an example to make this clear. Suppose you work as a receptionist in a hotel. Every day, you are moody, and everyone wishes to avoid you. One day, you tell your non-believing colleagues that you are a Christian. As a result, the colleagues unconsciously learn that a Christian is always moody and unlikable. But what if you are always cheerful, help everybody, and let all of them know that you have integrity and trustworthiness, and then tell them you are a Christian? This unconsciously teaches colleagues that a follower of Jesus is cheerful, helpful, and trustworthy. That's already a lot better! Let's go further. What if, through your prayer, your non-believing colleagues are healed of diseases and experience God's love and goodness? As a result, people come to faith and want what you have. They watch you and want to imitate your actions and walk. In other words, they have become your disciples; you must show them Jesus. In this process, you have influenced your colleagues to come to know God and want to follow Him, and then you can further influence them to go to a church. This is Jesus' plan, and Jesus can only work through us to accomplish this.

Let's proceed one step further. Your colleagues have experienced God, learned that God does miracles, and faithfully attend church. The key is to disciple them. It is essential that these disciples also become "masters" and, in turn, tell other people about Jesus. You can accomplish this by introducing them to the provisions and commandments of God's Word. For example, you

can teach people that through faith and in the name of Jesus, people are healed of diseases. Through this teaching, and this doesn't have to be super professional, you create a new generation of "masters," each one training new disciples.

Let us look further at Jesus' command about making disciples.

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying: All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. (Matthew 28:18-19)

Its purpose is to teach nations all that Jesus commanded. Of course, each believer and "master" also remains a disciple of Jesus. Each day, we learn more and walk deeply in His calling. It is essential to realize that the believers of the early churches were referred to as disciples.

Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7)

We all remain disciples of Jesus Christ. Despite this, God appointed people to teach the disciples. In the earliest congregation, these were the apostles of Jesus, and in later ones, these were people who had been specifically appointed to do so, such as Timothy. So, what should these disciples teach? Everything that Jesus commanded! Often, challenging and complicated topics are handled in the congregation. Nothing is wrong with this, except that the key is first to teach people the simple things about what Jesus commanded. Give the disciples some milk first, and when they can digest it, provide them with solid food afterward. In other words, cover the basics of Jesus and His commands first, and after that, you can move on to solid food with difficult questions of faith. It's better to believe every word of the "simple part" of Jesus' teachings than to know everything but have no faith. I think the teaching on solid food comes primarily from Bible teachers God has expressly appointed. This is because God has given Bible

teachers specific insight, and they have been given specific talents to keep track of difficult questions of faith. The teaching of milk can be offered to everyone in word and deed. This, in turn, has everything to do with giving personal discipleship. On topics belonging to the milk, consider the work of Jesus on the cross, the promise of the Holy Spirit, repentance from dead works, etc. (Hebrews 6:1-2). This can occur in small groups, home circles, or private one-on-one conversations.

To conclude, let us elaborate more on the private one-on-one conversation of discipleship. A focus on each other characterizes this free form and interpretation. Here, you can think of two brothers doing fun activities together and, during these activities, asking each other how things are going. For example, one may have a gaming addiction, and the other brother can help him beat this gaming addiction. Of course, Jesus is the only and the best answer to addictions, but Jesus often works through brothers and sisters, and it is excellent and essential to confess one another's sins. I understand that not all people are comfortable confessing their sins on stage in a congregation of one hundred and fifty people, but one-on-one, this is confidential and is done more often. Notice that the text below mentions the prayer of one righteous person. It is in singular form, and it is unnecessary to notify a hundred people and ask them to pray before God intervenes. God also listens to the prayer of one righteous person.

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:16)

The one-on-one relationship facilitates confessing one another's sins and praying for one another. This is, therefore, an invaluable part of personal discipleship. It should be a confidential environment where these sensitive topics can be discussed. In addition, people can address individual questions or doubts, and they learn from each other how best to fulfill Jesus' mission. One might be further along in faith. He can demonstrate how best to achieve specific commands and tasks of Jesus. We find this in the story of Elijah and Elisha, where Elijah teaches Elisha (1 Kings 19:19-21). Finally, this is also a place to admonish one another should

anyone (un)consciously make a mistake. This allows us to save people from death.

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins. (James 5:19-20)

We recognize this in the life of Jesus as well. After Peter betrayed Jesus, Jesus took time to teach Peter one-on-one discipleship. Jesus led a group of 12, but sometimes, He would take one person separately to learn extra. This also applies to our discipleship today. We can lead a small group and sometimes give individual attention to a believer. Let's look at the "discipleship conversation" between Jesus and Peter.

So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter: Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said to him, Feed My lambs. He said to him again a second time: Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? He said to Him, Yes, Lord; You know that I love You. He said to him: Tend My sheep. He said to him the third time: Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time: Do you love Me? And he said to Him: Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You. Jesus said to him: Feed My sheep. (John 21:15-17)

This was both a beautiful and challenging conversation. A few days earlier, Peter betrayed Jesus three times, and now he needed to say he loved Jesus three times. Discipleship may sometimes hurt, as long as the end goal is achieved, which is to resemble Jesus and follow Him.

Summary

We dealt with two significant commands of Jesus: baptizing people and giving discipleship. Baptizing people involves immersion, and any born-again Christian may baptize people. The condition for baptizing someone is for that person to believe in Jesus.

No special courses or studies are required. By baptizing people, they receive the blessings of God's kingdom and come into Christ. The practice of discipleship is something any born-again Christian can do. Sometimes, this is unconscious, and occasionally conscious. Everyone watches you; you are an example to your family, co-workers, friends, and church members. While some are called to lead large groups of people, every other believer is called to give one-on-one discipleship to the new converts. One-on-one discipleship can also happen unconsciously. This is when you ask about the well-being of a new convert and encourage and exhort one another.

C17 ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER

Let us look at another assignment of the kingdom of God. First, we focused mainly on Jesus' missions to reach people to proclaim and introduce the gospel of God to them. This primarily aims to reach people who aren't yet believers through the gospel. At the same time, God asks that we treat the brothers and sisters in the local church well. We may encourage and serve one another with the gifts we have received from God. We are one family with each other, and taking good care of the family is essential.

Commands for Encouragement

There are many Bible verses about encouraging one another in the Bible. God has called us a family, and we may treat each other as a proper family in love and faithfulness. If you are a good father, you wish your children to thrive. You want them all to have the best, and should they get into trouble, you do everything possible to resolve it. God intends for a family to love each other and raise children in safety and love. So, it is with the church of Christ. God has given us to each other, and we must love and care for each other. This can be with material goods, such as food, clothing, and shelter, but these can also be words of encouragement. Let us first look at material goods. It is important to meet the needs of church members who are in need. The "rich" of the congregation donate possessions, and the congregation passes them on to those in need so that no one suffers a deficiency. We find this principle in the first congregation.

Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. (...) Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need. (Acts 4:32-35)

Do you notice the extraordinary nature of the first church of Christ? The believers had all in common, so no one was lacking.

God doesn't want any of His children to suffer deficiency. We see this in a typical family. As a child, you may use your parents' couch, television, refrigerator, microwave, bed, food, etc. The home is "communal," and your parents don't want you to starve while food is abundant. This thought also belongs in the church. We are one big family and do not want our brothers or sisters to go hungry or lack clothing. We may encourage and bless one another with material possessions. Of course, this can be done one-on-one, where the giver gives it directly to the recipient, but this can also be done through the congregation. For example, the giver gives two hundred dollars to the congregation, and the congregation buys food from this and gives it to those in need. We also see this principle in the first congregation (Acts 6:1-6).

Besides, help can be given to more than just the local congregation. It is also Biblical to bless other congregations with possessions when needed. We see this in the Book of Acts. The prophet Agabus predicted a great famine, and in response, the believers decided to set aside money to send to the brethren in Judea. They cared for people experiencing poverty in other congregations.

And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul. (Acts 11:27-30)

In conclusion, let us read some verses urging us to care for one another.

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. (Philippians 2:3-4)

In this regard, Paul also speaks of the needs of others. We must look not only at our own needs but also at the needs of others (in the church).

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)

Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:10)

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. (1 Timothy 5:8)

1 Timothy 5 is about caring for family or household members. If they cannot care for themselves, our job is to properly care for or support them.

Let us now consider the words of encouragement. In addition to giving material goods, encouraging or comforting one another with our words is a big deal. The following Bible passage is about the fact that we will see our deceased believers again during the rapture of the church.

Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

In the book of Hebrews, Paul also calls us to encourage one another in the meetings.

And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25, NAS)

The key is to watch out for one another. Paul doesn't mean here that we criticize and condemn one another; Paul intends that we encourage one another to do good works and to maintain love. We are to build each other up and not burn each other down. This is best accomplished in a congregation, so it is essential not to

neglect meetings. The meetings are meant to encourage one another to do good work in a loving way.

(...) and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

In this Bible verse, Paul encourages us to be kind, merciful, and forgiving. These are three great qualities of a local congregation. Through love among congregation members, people outside the congregation will see that God is alive.

So, how can I encourage people? In the beginning, we should know people's needs. For example, one person may need more food. You can encourage such a person by sharing your food. Another, for example, may be sad because her husband has died. Then, we must listen to her story and speak words of comfort. In addition to human encouragement and gestures, we can encourage people with words from the Bible or words the Holy Spirit speaks to us. We can also encourage people with the gifts God has given to us, which the next paragraph talks about.

Gifts of the Spirit

The gifts of the Spirit are supernatural gifts that the Holy Spirit bestows on the believer. Initially, these gifts are given to the church of Christ so that everyone can contribute something valuable to the services and to help so that the church functions well. 1 Corinthians 12 talks about the gifts of the Spirit and shows several spiritual gifts.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

All the gifts are supernatural gifts that the Holy Spirit is giving. There are various gifts, but it is always the same Holy Spirit who bestows the gifts. This is also true of the ministries and works associated with the gifts. The ministries and works differ, but they come from the same source. What I love about this text is that the

Trinity "works together" to equip people with the gifts and causes miracles and signs to happen. Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father are actively working to bless people with supernatural signs and wonders. This shows that the Trinity is one of will.

But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all. (1 Corinthians 12:7)

The gifts of the Holy Spirit aren't given to you personally. The gifts are to bless and help to encourage others. Essentially, they are for blessing the brothers and sisters in the church (1 Corinthians 14:26) and allowing them to strengthen their faith. This verse says that the gifts of the Spirit are given to everyone. Every believer baptized with the Holy Spirit has a claim to one or more gifts. The ability to function with all gifts is possible; it is just that some gifts will be stronger than others. Sometimes, the gifts of the Spirit blend. Let us first look at the gifts in this chapter.

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. (1 Corinthians 12:8-10)

It would take us too long to study all the gifts in this book. A miracle or revelation may require different gifts. For example, the gift of healing may cooperate with the gift of faith and the gift of a word of knowledge.

But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

The Holy Spirit gives the gifts and hands them out to everyone as He wills. This doesn't mean we can lean back quietly. The Holy Spirit gives the gifts as He wills, but our job is to strive to provide the best gift.

So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:31)

Striving for the best gift does not suggest that one gift is better. Striving for the best gift means that at a certain moment, you strive for the gift that is most needed. If someone wants to be healed, having the gift of interpreting languages makes no sense. At that moment, you need the gift of healing. Thus, we may strive for the best gift in every situation. Let's compare this to the natural. A carpenter has several tools. The moment he needs to saw, a drill is of no use to him. He then needs a saw. The moment he wants to drill screws, he needs a drill and not a saw. It depends on the situation and whether he needs a saw or a drill. This also applies to the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

These gifts come for the congregation and only apply to congregational service. It is everyone's mission to heal the sick, but in the congregation, you can have a bunch that has the gifts of healing and a bunch that does not, or less so. God instituted this to keep order. One is appointed for this and the other for that. It is essential to distinguish congregational service from "normal" life; otherwise, there will be great misunderstandings. Let us look at the texts that show that the gifts are given to the church.

And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way. (1 Corinthians 12:28-31)

The above Bible text speaks specifically about the congregation. In the church, there is a division of ministries. In "normal" life, the assignment is the same for everyone. Out of love, we may talk about Jesus' work and show why He went to the cross. Out of love, we may get out, both in the church and in the outside world. Through His love and goodness, we may walk in love.

Even so you, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification of the church that you seek to excel. (1 Corinthians 14:12)

In the text above, Paul again connects the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12 with congregational life. When Paul wrote about the spiritual gifts, he did so in light of congregational life. Then Paul explained how the spiritual gifts belong in the church and that each is needed.

How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. (1 Corinthians 14:26)

Every gift and every believer are necessary. Let us build the congregational service together and encourage one another with what God has specifically given us.

Taking Care of the Body of Christ

After Paul summarized the spiritual gifts, he talked about the body of Christ. In this context, caring for one another is essential, just as you would caring for your own body. We must know that each part of the body functions differently. With the ear, we can hear, and with the eye, we can see. It would be useless if the eye could listen because it is not the purpose of the eye to hear. So, it is with the body of Christ, the church. In the church, you can find many people, all with diverse ministries. Each ministry is equally important, and we need everyone in the body. We must take care of the body of Christ. You may serve this body with the ministry and talents you have received from God. If you are an encourager, then you encourage people in the congregation. If you are a speaker, you speak in the congregation. If you are a teacher, you teach in the congregation. If you have talents in cleaning, you help clean up the congregation. If you have skills in engineering, you help in engineering. This is how we care for one another and ensure the body of Christ functions appropriately. This is not possible without each other.

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. (1 Corinthians 12:12)

Every believer is a unique creation and is precious in God's eyes. Every believer is a member of the body, and together with the other members of the body, we take care of the body of Christ together. Only together and not alone.

Summary

God positioned us all in one body, the body of Christ. Therefore, it makes sense to encourage and help one another in our walk on earth. If someone is struggling, supporting them with material goods and/or encouraging words is good. We all need to be encouraged, and we may encourage other people with our words or actions. We also encourage one another with the supernatural gifts that God has given us, and together, we build up a congregational service.

C18 THE VICTORS

In the past chapters, we saw the missions of the gospel of the kingdom. You may think: ok, I will start working on these commands immediately. Perhaps fear or guilt overwhelms you because you feel you are falling short. Whatever feeling you read the assignments with, it is essential to realize that we are more than conquerors, and we need not fear the kingdom of darkness. Despite the difficulties and persecution on earth, Jesus has made us more than conquerors. Sometimes, it seems just the opposite. Especially when we look at countries where there is much persecution of Christians and Christians have to fear for their lives every day. Despite everything Paul says:

As it is written: For Your sake we are killed all day long; We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (Romans 8:36-37)

Wow! Despite it all, we are more than conquerors. No matter what happens, you may realize you are more than victorious. This is because we may stand in the victory of Jesus Christ, and since Jesus overcame the world, we have also overcome the world through our faith.

For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:3-5)

Fulfilling the mission of Jesus, we may realize that we may accomplish this mission in victory. Perhaps the persecution may seem so great at times, yet we are the conquerors of the world.

Don't Fear the Enemy

Let us look one more time at Jesus' commission.

And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. (Mark 16:17-18)

God promises us supernatural protection from the enemy. Hence, it isn't our task to pick up poisonous snakes and drink something that will kill us. By all means, don't do that! But God promises here that the serpent, a sign of the devil, cannot bring anything harmful to believers. In the command to cast out demons, for example, we don't have to fear the demons and the devil, but we know they can do nothing. This is because God protects us supernaturally. In addition, we read that Paul was protected when a viper bit him. We can also be protected from material or earthly dangers.

But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand. (...) But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm. (Acts 28:3-5)

We need not fear the enemy because we are more than conquerors.

Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. (Luke 10:19)

What a tremendous promise! Again, the Lord Jesus didn't refer literally to serpents and scorpions. So don't go to the pet store to step into a terrarium of scorpions. Jesus meant spiritual beings and demons here. In the time of Jesus, snakes and scorpions were very dangerous. If someone was on the road, he could be bitten by these animals, and some of the bites were deadly. When Jesus says that we can step on serpents and scorpions, it means that we are supernaturally protected and have been given power over

these terrible creatures. We have been given the power to send the demons out of people in Jesus' name.

I often had to deal with scary creatures in my room when I was young. As a child, I didn't know how to cope with this. My mother, fortunately, knew this. I often called my mother in the middle of the night because there were scary creatures. These creatures stayed in my room, even with the light on. They also stayed in their places when my mother came into my room. Only the moment my mother started praying did they disappear in an instant. I learned through this that what Jesus says is true. We have been given power over the enemy through the blood of Jesus Christ. We don't have to be afraid or be fearful. No matter what happens, Jesus is always with us and has given us power. So often, we can be discouraged and become afraid in a given circumstance. Jesus knows this about us and says the following:

Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. (Matthew 10:29-31)

Living in Victory

So, we need not fear the enemy and may live a life of victory. We are more than conquerors in Christ and not losers. In the difficulties and tribulations on earth, we may invariably realize that Jesus has won the victory; in this victory, we may live.

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

God gave us victory through Jesus Christ. This implies that we will not be defeated, no matter what happens. Even (spiritual) death has lost its power, and we no longer have to be afraid. For a Christian doesn't die, a Christian changes location. We may already walk in this victory today. Even though our life does not always feel like a victory, God rewards us today and will also reward us for "our" victory in the future.

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. (Revelation 3:21)

What an incredible promise from the Lord Jesus! We may sit with Jesus on His throne if we live in victory. What undeserved grace!

How can we live a life of victory? Let's examine some Bible verses to discover how to do so in our daily lives.

The first step in leading a victorious life is, of course, faith in Jesus Christ. Because we are part of Jesus, we are already conquerors. It is essential to realize this and see ourselves as overcomers. Even though it may not feel that way, we are conquerors. This principle can cause a conflict in our thinking. It is a matter of realizing that we are more than conquerors and that this seeps into all our thoughts and souls. It is crucial to break down all false thoughts and lies and fill our minds with the truths of God.

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled. (2 Corinthians 10:3-6)

The false thoughts may disappear, and we may fill ourselves, for example, with the following truth:

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? (1 John 5:4-5)

We gain victory in our thoughts. If our thoughts are under the rule of Jesus, then we are absolute conquerors. We get to think about the things of God and then carry them out.

If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)

Remember the good and pure things of God. The letter to the Philippians explains exactly what this means.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. (Philippians 4:8)

Reflect on all the good things of God. This may include spiritual things, such as the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and the revelations of God through the Bible, but we may also think about more 'earthly things.' It is okay to fill our minds with God's beautiful creation, the family we have received, our partner, work, relationships, and so much more, as long as they are reasonable, pure, and beautiful thoughts.

Let's look at another characteristic to live in victory. It is vital to overcome evil with good. Maybe you have an annoying colleague who constantly insults and belittles you. Or a family member keeps you small and doesn't believe in you. We can discover "enemies" in our lives who do not have our best interests at heart. How can we overcome these enemies? By doing good. Are your enemies short of food? Then, feed them. Do they need encouragement? Then give it to them. By this, we overcome our enemies and place burning coals on their heads, as they were. This involves hurting their conscience with shame and repentance for that which they do. Do not repay evil with evil, but repay evil with good. This is an essential step in living a life of victory.

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)

Finally, our faith is a struggle. Some started with faith but abandoned it in the meantime. To be victorious, it is important to be

persistent and persevere in God's good characteristics, such as righteousness, godliness, love, and gentleness. Faith can sometimes be a struggle, and fighting the good fight of faith is essential.

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. (1 Timothy 6:12)

But how do you fight the good fight of faith? First of all, we should always focus on Jesus. Jesus is the Perfecter of faith. Therefore, it is good to keep looking forward and focus on Him. Forget what is behind you and look at what is before you. Secondly, knowledge about the Word of God is essential. In the verses before, Paul talked about teachers of error and how these teachers of error seek to make money by twisting the Word of God. It is essential to decipher if something is a doctrine of error, and important to know God's Word and listen carefully to the Holy Spirit. As a result, we aren't bounced back and forth from one error doctrine to another but stand firmly grounded in the truth.

Summary

God has called us as victors. We serve a victorious God who wants to share this characteristic with His children. Because we are children of God and believe in Jesus Christ, we are victorious over the world. Because of this, we don't have to fear the ruler of this world, the devil. We need not fear the enemy because God has given us the power to tread on serpents and scorpions. To be a conqueror, it is essential to think like one. This is because the battle takes place in our minds, and it is necessary to make our minds captive to Jesus Christ. We do this by thinking about the good things of God and not the bad earthly stuff with all the wrong lusts. In addition, we overcome evil on earth by doing good and putting burning coals on the heads of our enemies. Finally, faith can be a struggle. We must fight the good war of faith by keeping our eyes on Jesus and knowing what the Word of God says.

A FOLLOWER OF JESUS

Now that we have covered all these topics and the blessings of God, there is only one question left. Do you want to become a follower of Jesus so you can become a blessed son or daughter of God? You may have already made this choice. If so, I hope this book has been a revelation to you. Maybe you still need to make a choice. Know that everyone can and may come to Jesus. It doesn't matter what you have done wrong: Jesus wants you to become a child of God—but how do you become a child of God?

The Gospel of God

The Bible refers to the gospel of God. Gospel means good news, but why is this good news? And does this good news follow bad news?

Bad News

The Bible says that everyone has sinned. This implies that everyone has acted in naughty and incorrect ways. This could include a mass murderer who committed an attack, but also someone who stole candy from grandma's closet or lied to his wife. Everyone has sinned, and therefore, no one can come to God in their strength (Romans 3:23).

The Bible teaches us that Adam and Eve, the first two humans, walked with God. It was perfect, and they had a beautiful relationship with God. But Adam and Eve decided to do wrong. They did not listen to God, so Adam and Eve could no longer walk with God. God is so good and holy that anything that comes near Him that is not good and holy falls dead immediately. In other words, it had become impossible for Adam and Eve to walk with God, and so it is also impossible for us to walk with God. Finally, sin has significant consequences. Sin must be condemned because otherwise, there is no justice. Today, we see injustice happening everywhere. Murderers, thieves, rapists, and swindlers come before the judge, and the judge decides the punishment they must bear. Thus, after death, everyone comes before the Divine Judge. Jesus condemns sin, and since Jesus and God the Father

are good and holy, every sin is subject to eternal punishment full of pain and sorrow (Romans 6:23 and Revelation 20:11-15).

Good News

However, the story doesn't stop with the previous sentence because God Himself (the Lord Jesus) has provided a just solution through which the penalty of sin is paid, and people have a hopeful future. In other words, Jesus is both a righteous and gracious Judge simultaneously.

Jesus did the following: He set aside His divinity and entered the world as a man (Philippians 2:6-7). In the world, the Lord Jesus did everything right: He did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). This means that the Lord Jesus does not deserve punishment and may "just walk" with God the Father, as Adam and Eve did in the garden. But the Lord Jesus considered man and decided to bear the penalty of sin for all men so that man would no longer have to do this themselves. The Lord Jesus had Himself crucified and died on the cross. At that point, the Lord Jesus bore the penalty of sin (Ephesians 1:7-8). Then, the Lord Jesus rose from the dead and was given control over who would be judged and who would walk with God. In other words, people no longer have to suffer eternal punishment but may walk with God.

Your Choice

God gives man the choice to utilize the payment of the Lord Jesus. Anyone who believes that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God and trusts in the work of the Lord Jesus does not have to bear the penalty of sin (Romans 3:23-27). However, anyone who does not believe in the Lord Jesus is already condemned (John 3:18). God wants no one to be condemned but everyone to walk with Him. God says, "Come!" What are you doing? (2 Peter 3:9 and Revelation 22:17.)

I Want to Follow Jesus!

The Bible says, "If your mouth confesses that Jesus is Lord and your heart believes that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9, NBV). It helps to pray to God in faith, and I want to help you with a simple sample prayer that you may say out loud:

Father in heaven,
I have made mistakes, and I have sinned against You. I am unable to come to You on my own strength. I believe and trust in the work of the Lord Jesus, and I believe that Jesus is the Son of God. Will You forgive me for all my faults and sins? And will You come and live in me and help me to live a good life? Lord Jesus, teach me to follow and obey You, and thank You for allowing me to become a child of the Most High God!
In the name of Jesus, Amen.

If you have prayed this with a faithful heart, you have become a child of God now! Getting to know God better and believing in the Lord Jesus is essential. You do this mainly by reading the Word of God because this is where the stories and texts describe God and show what God does. In addition, we worship a living God, meaning God wants to speak to us. You do this in your quiet time. Also, find a church near you and seek out Christians. They can help you with your questions about God and the Bible. Also, we should know that a follower of Jesus is always growing. If you have prayed the sample prayer, you have begun your beautiful walk with God here on earth. In addition, it is essential to be baptized.

LIVING GOSPEL

In this chapter, I want to tell you about myself and Living Gospel.

Who Am I?

My name is Timo Groot, and I grew up in a Christian family. From childhood, I attended several evangelical churches, where I experienced many beautiful sermons, good testimonies, and fellowship with my dear brothers and sisters. But the best part is that God moves in the churches and works through sermons, testimonies, and contacts! In my life, I have experienced and discovered God in various ways.

At the moment, I am working alone on this ministry and the books. Since the age of eight, I have experienced the Holy Spirit leading me to study the Bible. That year, I had read the Bible entirely for the first time, and as time passed, I read it a few more times. I have a love for God and God's Word, and I want to share God's Word with anyone interested. Many who read the book think I am an older man with his whole life behind him. This isn't the case. You may think I am old, but I was only born in 1999. I do everything voluntarily and have a part-time job besides everything I do for Living Gospel. I desire to build God's Kingdom full-time, and that time is bound to come! I want to see the world changed and for the world to be overflowing with the knowledge and power of God. People need Jesus, but many don't know it yet. With God's power, I want to reach people so that they make a radical choice for Jesus. In addition, I want to train people to evangelize and walk in God's kingdom.

Currently, I make videos with a Biblical topic and write books on Biblical topics. In these tasks, I see that God's Word is more relevant today than ever, and we have a God of miracles, and His love extends to all people. I desire to reach people with the Word of God and show that God is a living God working in believers today, as Mark 16 tells us.

And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no

means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover. (Mark 16:17-18)

Origin and Social Media

Living Gospel was established in April 2020. We have since reached hundreds of thousands by teaching the Gospel of God through Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and the website www.TheLivingGospel.org. We look forward to the future and what God will do for the world!

You can watch Living Gospel through the following channels.

Website

On the website www.TheLivingGospel.org you will discover God's Word and see that the Bible is relevant today. On this website, you can watch videos and read Bible studies. While making the videos and Bible studies, I assume that God's Word is one hundred percent inspired by the Holy Spirit and that every Bible text can be used to learn from and educate us to live a good life. I hope this website will make you grow in faith and get to know God as He reveals Himself in the Bible. You can also find my books on the website.

YouTube

Living Gospel videos are available on YouTube. YouTube is the first channel where I started posting videos, and you can find an overview of all my videos here.

Facebook

Living Gospel has its own Facebook page! All videos are posted on this Facebook page, and it is possible to get in touch with me. You can find my page on Facebook via the link on my website.

Instagram

Instagram is also an option to follow me. All Living Gospel videos are posted on Instagram, and I send short messages and images of current events and encouraging quotes from the Word of God.

TikTok

Short videos about faith and the Bible appear on TikTok, and you receive short, encouraging quotes.

E-mail

For questions, comments, or words of encouragement, please use the e-mail address info@TheLivingGospel.org.

Vision, Goals, and Working Together

Living Gospel's vision is to ensure that you live in God's perfect grace, distribute God's grace to those around you, and live in God's perfect will and calling.

Grace: I mean all of God's gifts of grace, including:

- Forgiveness
- Redemption and righteousness
- Being in Christ
- Intimacy with God
- Baptism and fruits of the Holy Spirit
- Deliverance (Being free from demonic powers)
- Healing
- Provision and prosperity
- Speaking in tongues
- A life in authority.

Perfect will and calling: This is God's specific calling and plan for your life. Living Gospel wants to teach and train you to know and carry out God's plan for your life. This is achieved by:

- Uploading short Bible study videos.
- Written Bible studies and Bible subjects on the website, Biblical Characters, and commentaries on the books of the Bible.
- Writing books on Bible topics and commentaries.
- Using social media channels to spread God's word.

Are you blessed by this (e-)book and want to help me reach and equip many more people with the Gospel of God? Then, become a Living Gospel partner or make a one-time donation. Becoming

a partner can help build God's kingdom and reach people with the Gospel of God. Give your gift through the following link.

www.TheLivingGospel.org/giving

It is also possible to make a one-time donation. You can do this by using the same link. And, of course, thank you for reading this book. God's blessing!

Book A Revelation of the End Times



The Rapture of the Church is a remarkable prophecy from the Word of God. Due to the numerous theories and ideas about this event, many no longer know what is and isn't biblical. Timo Groot takes you through the Biblical data on the Rapture and why the Rapture is more relevant today than ever before. The Rapture is the hope of escaping the horrors that will occur on Earth and is the moment when the Church will see the Lord Jesus face to face in the Father's house.

The Second Coming of Christ is often confused with the Rapture. However, these are two different events. This book explains what the Second Coming is and what will happen after His coming. The Lord Jesus will physically return and establish a thousand-year reign on Earth. After reading this book, you will learn and understand future times and look forward to the soon coming of Jesus.

You can order this book at:
www.TheLivingGospel.org/webshop