



*Your
New Beginning
in Christ*

GBILE AKANNI

A follow-up Material from Peace House Discipleship Work

Your New Beginning In Christ

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WHAT GOD DID IN YOU



There Is A Great Change . . . !

Having repented from your sins and surrendered to Christ, something new has begun in you. You have been ushered into a new life entirely, since the day you believed in Christ and that His death on the Cross of Calvary was to take away your sins and save you. Having repented from your sins and confessed Him as your Lord and Saviour by surrendering the control of your life to Him, you have been born again.

Your first birth into this world gave you the natural human life, but this second birth (the new birth) gives you a spiritual birth in Christ Jesus. You have now become a child of God. (Jn1:12). And you are welcome into the family of God.

The kingdom of God is now yours (Jn. 3: 3-6). You are no more the person you used to be. There is a great change inside of you now.

We shall now examine what happens when anyone becomes born again.

2Cor. 5:17 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold all things are become new.

1. "OLD THINGS . . ." 2COR.5:17.

What are these old things that have passed away? You need a clear understanding of what God has accomplished in your life to maximize what has already occurred!

(A) YOU WERE A SINNER BEFORE GOD, BEING CONTINUALLY UNDER GOD'S JUDGMENT.

PS 51:5; ROM 3:23; ROM 3:5-6.

You were a sinner not just because of the sinful things that you did but because you were born a sinner. Every man born naturally by human parents, inherited the nature of sin and so cannot please God. *All have sinned and come short of God's glory.* The wrath of God had kept hanging on your life because of this, even if you had actually not begun to commit sin. You were not a sinner because you sinned; you actually had no alternative to committing sin because you were born a sinner.

(B) BEING ENSLAVED BY SIN AND SINFUL HABITS, YOU WERE UNABLE TO PLEASE GOD.

ROM 8:8-9; JN 8:34; 1COR 2:14; ISA 59:1-2.

Anyone who sins is a slave of sin, is bound to sin and is unable to please God. It is sin that brings separation between God and man. As a servant of sin, you were bound to commit sin by nature.

(C) YOU WERE IN DARKNESS UNDER THE DOMINION OF SATAN.

1JN 5:19; 2COR 4:4; PROV 4:19; JN 3:19-20.

All sinners are under the kingdom and control of Satan. He keeps them in darkness so that even if they stumble they would not know what makes them to stumble. He blinds and covers people's minds so that they will not see the light of the gospel of Christ and be free. That was your condition before now.

2. “. . . HAVE PASSED AWAY”

2Cor. 5:17 says, old things have passed away; not that they are passing away. How did it happen?

(A) YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN.

PROV 28:13; 1JN 1:9; EPH 1:7; HEB 8:12.

God is faithful, just and merciful. Having confessed your sins to Him, He has forgiven you. No matter how terrible your sins have been, He has had mercy on you and forgiven you as He promised.

(B) YOU HAVE BEEN CLEANSED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST. 1JN 1:7; HEB 9:13-14,22.

Soap and water cannot wash away sin. Neither can the blood of bulls, goats and rams. Having come to believe in Christ and having come to Him for forgiveness, you have been cleansed by the blood He shed for you at Calvary.

(C) YOU ARE NOW DECLARED “NOT GUILTY,” i.e. YOU ARE NOW JUSTIFIED BEFORE GOD.

ROM3:24-25(NIV, LB), ROM 5:10.

“And are justified freely by His grace through the

redemption that came by Christ Jesus.” **Rom 3:24 (NIV).**

“Yet now God declares us “not guilty” of offending Him if we trust in Jesus Christ who in His kindness freely takes away our sins.” **(LB).**

As far as God is concerned, because of what Christ did for you on the cross in taking your punishment upon Himself, you are free. You have been declared “not guilty” before God. You have been reconciled with God. You are now free to walk closely with the Lord and serve Him with nothing between.

(D) THE SINFUL HEART IN YOU HAS BEEN REMOVED

EZEK 36:25-27; ROM 6:6 NLT; GAL 5:24.

There was a heart in you before now that used to make you sin and disobey God. It is called the heart of stone, the human nature. It is the nature you were born with by your human parents. Now that you have come to Christ, it has been taken away. Old things have passed away. Your old life has passed away with its passions and desires!

3. “BEHOLD ALL THINGS HAVE BECOME NEW”

(2 COR. 5:17.)

Something definite has happened to you. “Behold” means a definite change which can be seen by people all around you, has taken place in your life.

(A) YOU NOW HAVE A NEW HEART.

EZEK 36:26; 1JN 3:9; GAL 2:20.

God has removed from you the heart of stone, the sinful nature which loves to sin. He has replaced it with a new heart, an obedient heart that loves God and

hates sin. He has put in you His own very nature (seed). This is what makes you a child of God now.

(B) CHRIST LIVES IN YOU NOW.

GAL 2:20; 1COR6:19.

Your old self, your old life (nature) has passed away. Christ lives in you now. And He did not come into you as a visitor. He came to dwell in you. All you need to do is to allow Him. Let Him talk, sleep, wake up, sing, eat and work in you. It is such a glorious life that nothing can compare with it.

(C) GOD HAS CHANGED YOUR SPIRITUAL LOCATION

COL 1:12-13; ROM 11:17,24.

As soon as Christ saved you, He did not leave you in the kingdom of darkness and under the control of Satan. And He did not just stand and command you to move out by yourself. *He has delivered you from the power of darkness and translated you into the kingdom of God in the light.* There in Christ, Satan cannot reach you.

He Himself removed you and completely planted you in His own kingdom. You are free from Satan's control. Whatever rules and reigns in his kingdom cannot affect you any longer. You have been cut off from the wild olive tree and grafted into the holy olive tree (Jesus Christ Himself). You are free! Hallelujah!

(D) YOU ARE NOW A CHILD OF GOD, A NEW CREATION, A NEW MEMBER OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD. *JN 1:12-13; 2COR 6:18; ROM8:29.*

Having repented from your old ways and received Christ into your life, you have been given the right, the power to become a child of God. You are now God's

child, a member of God's family. In that family, Jesus Christ is the firstborn. All other believers, including yourself, are brothers and sisters. You now have the Almighty God as your Father. You can now call Him "Father". Praise the Lord !

(E) YOU ARE A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN.

PHIL 3:20; JN 17:15-16; LK 10:20; JN 14: 2-3; REV 20:15.

Your name is written in the Lamb's book of life. Though you live in this world, you are no longer of this world. You are a citizen of heaven. Heaven is your home and Christ is there, preparing a place for you, Hallelujah!

(F) FROM NOW ON, YOU MUST GROW IN CHRIST.

ROM 8:29; 2PET 3:18; 1PET 2:1-2; COL 2:6-7;

You were predestined to become like Jesus. Every baby has a potential to become great in the future if he grows steadily. In the same vein, as a baby in Christ, you need to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. The word of God is the spiritual food (milk) for your new life in Christ Jesus. Study it prayerfully everyday.

Relate with your heavenly Father day by day in prayer, in the study of His word and in obedience to Him. In doing this, you will be growing in conformity to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

MEMORY VERSE: 2 COR 5:17 (NKJV)

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new."

CONCLUSION

All of these, God has already done for you as a true believer. And He did it for you free of charge. You must learn to give thanks to God for the free gift of salvation.

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

- ⇒ *Describe how you were before you had this saving encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ.*
 - ⇒ *What changes have you noticed inside your heart since you became born again and as you surrendered to Christ?*
 - ⇒ *Share with us your personal experience now with Jesus Christ.*
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2

WHAT YOU MUST DO



Repentance From Dead Works . . . !

Immediately after a genuine salvation encounter with the Saviour, Jesus Christ, a child of God is expected to start bearing fruit by his or her life. Having been **delivered** from the kingdom of darkness and **translated** into the kingdom of His dear Son (Col 1:13), the new creation life in Christ Jesus begins.

The lifestyle in the kingdom of God is quite different from and opposite to the one you lived in the kingdom of darkness. Therefore there must be no carry-over or mixture of the two lifestyles! As soon as the new birth takes place, the old life is terminated and the new life begins!

But every tree is known by its fruits (Matt 7:16). One of the first fruits that show the presence and identity of the new life is the fruit of repentance. You cannot be said to be born again until these fruits start manifesting in your life, Matt. 3:8 says,

“Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance” (KJV).

“Do those things that will show that you have turned from your sins” (GNB).

Having surrendered your SELF to Christ sincerely, confessing your sins to Him and receiving His forgiveness, we shall in this study, look at what it means to repent and what we must repent from.

We shall study God's response to a "repented soul" and the danger of refusing to repent from certain sins. May the Lord open your eyes of understanding and cause you to be fruitful in Jesus' name. Amen.

1. WHAT DOES "REPENTANCE" MEAN?

☞ a. Dictionary Meaning:

To repent means to think with regret or sorrow over something that one has done.

☞ b. Biblical Meaning:

Prov. 28:13; Matt 3:5-8; 2Cor.7:10.

To repent means to confess your sins and to forsake (turn from) them as a result of sorrow over those sins. Not only that, it also involves bearing fruits that will show that you have repented.

To confess your sins and stop sinning is not enough, because you would then be left in a vacuum. Having stopped sinning (i.e. having forsaken your sins), you must start doing something else: bearing fruits worthy of repentance.

So there are three actions that make up repentance: Confession of your sins, forsaking of your sins and bearing of fruits to show that you have turned from your sins. Let us now look at what it means to repent in a little more detail.

I. REPENTANCE IS THE FIRST STEP THAT MUST BE TAKEN TO RECONCILE WITH GOD.

Isa 59:1-2; Rom 3:23; Matt 4:17; Lk 13:1-5; 2Tim 2:19.

What separates a man from God is his sin. It is the only quarrel that man had with God from the beginning of creation. It becomes necessary therefore for each one to repent from his sins and turn to God in order for his fellowship with God to be restored.

Do you desire your link with God to be restored so that God will be for you and not against you? The first thing to do is to repent.

II. OPPORTUNITY FOR REPENTANCE COMES BECAUSE OF GOD'S GOODNESS AND MERCY:

Rom 2:4; 2Pet 3:9; Heb. 12:16-17; Matt 9:13.

However, not everyone makes use of that privilege. Ever before anyone makes a move to repent and turn to Christ, God would have been already at work to make it possible. He provides the opportunity, removes the veil and gives understanding about what Christ did for us at Calvary. And He is ever ready to give courage to the sinner and encourage him/her to take the step of faith to repent.

In His mercy, He also sends preachers to call people to repentance. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But that opportunity will not be forever. It has a time limit, though that limit is unknown.

Esau sold his birthright for a spoon of pottage. But the result and reality of that action did not show, until sometime later, when the father was about to die and sent for Esau to come and take the blessings.

The time between the day he committed the sin and the day he actually missed the blessing of his father is a period of privilege earmarked for repentance.

But since he did not repent during that period of grace, he lost his inheritance even though thereafter he sought for it diligently later with tears.

Many end their lives in sin having not made use of the opportunity and grace given them by God to repent. This may be your own opportunity. May you not procrastinate your repentance in Jesus' name.

III. IT IS NORMALLY PRECEDED BY THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF ONE'S SINS & SINFUL SITUATION.

Ps 32:3-5; Ps 51:3-4; Jer. 3:12-13.

Without this, there can be no genuine repentance.

IV. REPENTANCE INVOLVES DEEP THOUGHT AND SORROW OF HEART OR MOURNING OVER ONE'S

SINS. *1Kgs 21:20-29; Matt 5:4; 2Cor 7:1; Matt 15:18-20.*

As sin starts from the heart, genuine repentance from sin also starts from the heart. It is in the heart that sin is conceived ever before it is born. Of necessity, therefore, the heart must be touched before there can be sincere sorrow leading to repentance.

That is what gives rise to an inner conviction, a resolution and motivation to confess and forsake such sins. Where the heart is not touched, repentance is not genuine.

There may be confession of sins with the mouth but there will be no forsaking of such sins. Is your repentance genuine? Are you sincere?

V. REPENTANCE MAY INVOLVE WEeping AND FASTING.

Joel 2:12-14; Jonah 3:4-10; Lk. 7:37-38.

Anything that touches the heart of a man touches his emotions. God is not embarrassed by your emotions as you come to Him in repentance. It may also involve fasting.

VI. REPENTANCE INVOLVES CONFESSION WITH ONE'S MOUTH.

It involves confession of sins, on the one hand and confession of the Lordship of Jesus Christ over one's life on the other hand. *Prov. 28:13; Matt 3:5-8; Rom 10:9-10; Matt 9:12.*

Even though you sincerely feel sorry from your heart for your sins, confession with your mouth to the one against whom you have sinned is necessary in order to evoke forgiveness.

This confession includes:

☞ (a) **CONFESSION TO GOD**

Ps 32:3-5; 1Jn 1:9; Lk 18:13; Phil 2:10-11; Rom 10:9.

Primarily, every sin is first against God. It is against Him that we have sinned and it is to Him we must first confess our sins and ask for forgiveness. Secondly, recognizing Jesus Christ as Lord happens in the heart but you must also make that confession to God.

☞ (b) **CONFESSION TO MAN.** *James 5:16; Lk 15:1; Matt 5:23-24; Mk 8:38; Lk 19:5-10.*

Where necessary, especially where a fellow human being is injured (physically or spiritually), or offended as a result of your sins, genuine repentance involves

confession of such sins not only to God but also to such person(s).

God may have forgiven, but if man holds grudge against you, your prayer will still be hindered. It may also involve restitution as in the case of Zacchaeus. It was only after that decision to restore what he got fraudulently, that Christ declared that salvation has come to him and his house.

It is also necessary to confess your faith in Christ and His Lordship over your life before men. All shame must be thrown away.

(VII) REPENTANCE IS ONLY COMPLETE WHEN:

- ☞ (a) **SIN AND SINFUL HABITS ARE COMPLETELY FORSAKEN.** *Prov. 28:13; Isa 55:7; Jn. 5:14; Tit 2:11-12.*

If you are sincerely sorry for your sins then you should stop sinning. Grace (divine or supernatural ability) to say “no” to sin comes at the point of salvation. You are free to stop sinning now if you have sincerely repented and received Christ.

- ☞ (b) **FRUITS, WHICH SHOW REPENTANCE, ARE BROUGHT FORTH.** *Matt. 3:5-8; Tit 2:11-12; Matt 21:28-29; Eph 4:28-32.*

The grace of God that brings salvation comes along not only with the ability to say ‘no’ to sin but also the ability to say ‘yes’ to godliness and right living. If you have truly repented, you will not only stop sinning but start living God’s way in obedience to His word. That is what will show that you have truly repented.

Repentance, therefore, involves genuine heartfelt sorrow over your sins and sinful habits, confession of such sins with your mouth to God and where

necessary, to man.

It may sometimes be so deep that it involves weeping and fasting, not because these can take away sin, but because weeping is one way of expressing sorrow of heart.

However, repentance is not complete until sin is forsaken and sinful living is replaced by godly living. Repentance comes from the heart but manifests through our actions.

**Can you truly say you have repented?
What is the evidence?**

2. DANGERS OF COVERING UP AND NOT REPENTING FROM OUR SINS AND DEAD WORKS.

(A) IT RESULTS IN SEPARATION FROM GOD AND GOD'S PRESENCE.

Isa 59:1-2; Rev 2:5; Rev 21:8; Gen 3:1-9.

Sin creates a separation, a barrier between God and man. As soon as you sin whether in thoughts, words or deeds and at whatever level, it cuts you off from God's presence automatically. Even if God goes ahead to look for you, sin would push you farther and farther away from appearing before God as it happened to Adam and Eve in the garden.

As they covered themselves and their sin of disobedience, sin pushed them away from God's presence and eventually out of God's garden, His protection and His purpose for their lives. To repent costs you nothing except your pride. But to cover your sins will cost you your eternity with God in heaven.

Please Repent.

(B) IT ATTRACTS GOD'S WRATH. ROM 1:18; NUM 14:11-12; LK 13:1-5; REV 2:16.

Sin attracts God's wrath to the sinner. Each day God sees you in sin, His wrath is aroused and will be released against you if you continue in sin and die without repenting of your sins. He sends warning signals which come in various ways and with various calamities. It does not profit to continue in sin. May you not harden your heart when you hear His voice.

(C) IT OPENS THE DOOR FOR SATAN TO ATTACK
Eccl. 10:8; Jas 5:16; Jn. 5:14.

As mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds His people (Ps 125:2). But sin breaks down the wall of protection and snakes (demons) get access to attack the sinner. You cannot tell the extent of the damage that the devil will do at any singular opportunity. Repent from all sins and turn to Christ. He is waiting in mercy to receive you.

3. EXAMPLES OF DEAD WORKS TO BE

REPENTED OF: 2COR 6:16-18; 2COR 7:1; GAL 5:19-21.

As soon as we become born again, God's plan is to dwell in us and walk among us. His promise is to become a Father to every such person and have an intimate family relationship with him. But because God our Father is holy, we have also to be holy, not by personal struggles but by the grace made available to us in Christ Jesus.

Repentance is the first step in restoring and

maintaining a sweet relationship with the Lord. Every sin and filthiness of the flesh and spirit must be repented of with all sincerity. These include dead works and sins of the flesh that destroy the body (2Cor 6:16-17; 1Cor 6:18-20) e.g. sexual immorality, smoking, friendship with unbelievers, alcoholism, etc. Do not waste time in turning away from them.

(A) IN OUR THOUGHTS. *Matt 12:24-25,31; Isa 55:6-7; Matt 5:27-28; Matt 15:19.*

There are certain sins that do not express themselves in visible action but in our thoughts, yet God regards them as sins of no less gravity and no less consequence than those committed physically. They are dead works and you must repent of them.

Wrong thoughts about others, lustful thoughts, impure and immoral thoughts, evil thoughts of all kinds which often result in evil deeds are all sinful and are capable of separating you from God.

Pause here!

What are the sins that has taken root in your thoughts? Dig into all the recesses of your heart and repent of them all with a sincere heart. As you do so, you shall surely obtain mercy.

B. IN OUR WORDS.

Prov. 10:19; Matt 12:36-37; Eph 4:29.

Lying, gossiping, talkativeness, idle words, abusive words, cursing etc. are examples of sins committed through words. *By your words you shall be condemned and by your words you shall be justified.*

Are you guilty of sinful speech? They are powerfully

capable of sending you to hell. Confess and forsake them with all sincerity and the Lord will have mercy and grant you deliverance from all such sins.

(C) IN OUR DEEDS.

Isa 55:6-7; Gal 5:19-21; Rom 1:29-32; Col 3:5-9; Matt 5:23-24; Matt 6:14-15.

The list is endless. This is just a list. What are the wrong deeds you are personally involved in? You know them. Anyone who does such things cannot inherit the kingdom of God. You must repent immediately. Whosoever covers his sins shall not prosper, but whosoever confesses and forsakes them shall obtain mercy.

MEMORY VERSE: Prov. 28:13.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whosoever confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.

CONCLUSION

It was sin that brought a quarrel and separation between God and man. But Jesus Christ came and died on the cross, shedding His blood in order to pay the price for our sins and settle the quarrel. It is, however, only by a sincere and deliberate personal repentance from our sins that the reconciliation He paid for, can become a reality in our lives.

Repentance is the first step to take in order to remove the barrier between God and you.

You may receive healing, miracles or divine solution to problems, but all these are acts of God's goodness. They do not remove the barrier of sin between your soul and the Saviour.

Search your heart and repent from every dead work. Enthroned the Lord in your heart and make Him Lord in every situation of your life. You will find a deep joy and sweet communion with the Lord.

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

- ⇒ 1. We learnt in this Bible study that repentance involves acknowledging your sins, a feeling of sorrow over your sins followed by confession of those sins to God and where necessary to man.
 - ⇒ What are the sins you have truly repented of? How did you come to that point of repentance?
 - ⇒ (b) Have you recognized any of your sins that you need to confess to a fellow human being that you have offended? What are those sins? What steps have you taken to confess them?
 - ⇒ (c) As you look inside your heart, are there any of such sins that you find difficult to completely stop practicing, either in your thoughts, words or action? List them. What difficulties do you experience as you try to stop them?
 - ⇒ 2. Repentance is not complete until your sinful living is replaced by godly living and you start bringing forth fruits to show that you have truly repented.
 - ⇒ (a) Have you started manifesting fruits of repentance?
 - ⇒ (b) What are those fruits you have noticed in your thoughts, your life, words, behaviour, relationships, dressing, activities, etc.?
 - ⇒ (c) Share with us briefly your personal experience with the Lord Jesus now.
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3

PRACTICAL MEANS OF GROWING IN CHRIST



God's means of achieving His purpose!

The pursuit of God is an eternal pursuit. It is a spiritual matter and it can only be done spiritually. The Lord, who is the object of our pursuit, is Spirit and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and in truth.

"The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. The things that pertain to God cannot be obtained by natural means" (1 Cor. 2:11-15).

We shall, therefore, seek to understand some practical spiritual means of pursuing and getting to know God progressively and more intimately and particularly to know our inheritance in Christ Jesus. May God give you understanding. Amen.

BIBLICAL MEANS OF KNOWING GOD

1. THE WORD OF GOD

The word of God is very central in seeking to know God. The Person of God is revealed in His word. It is

God's means of achieving His purpose. By the word of God, the worlds were framed (**Heb. 11:3**) and by it, God's servants (vessels) are thoroughly furnished for every good work (**2 Tim 3:16-17**).

A deep longing for, a progressive learning from and a total submission to the word of God, is therefore necessary in knowing God and obtaining the things of the kingdom. This is because:

(A) IT IS THE WORD OF GOD THAT TESTIFIES ABOUT HIM. *Jn. 5:39; 2Cor 3:18; Jas 1:23-25.*

Discuss this with reference to its importance in knowing God. The word of God tells us who God is. It acts as a mirror through which we behold the glory of the Lord, thereby showing us who God is. It is God's testimony about Himself and everything He has made.

This mirror also shows us our own true condition. It shows us what is wrong with our lives as well as what is required of us. As He reveals His will to us by His Word, we are continuously changed into His likeness from one degree of glory to another. It is therefore necessary for us to diligently keep studying and looking into the perfect law of liberty in order to grow in our knowledge of God and become progressively changed into His likeness as we walk with Him.

(B) OUR INHERITANCE IN CHRIST JESUS IS PARCELED AND KEPT IN THE WORD OF GOD.

2Pet 1:3-4; Jn. 5:39;

Check the following examples and see how what each of them would become, was spoken in God's word ahead of time.

- ⇒ **ABRAHAM:** *Gen. 12:1-3;*
- ⇒ **JESUS CHRIST:** *Isa. 61:1-3, Luke 4:17-19*

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- ⇒ **MARY:** Luke 1:26-38;
⇒ **SARAH:** Gen. 18:9-10, Heb. 11:11

What then should your attitude be towards the word of God? For any believer to be able to possess his possession, he must pay attention to what God says to him in His word.

When God was planning to make Abraham great, He spoke to him. For Jesus Christ to be what God wanted Him to be, He received it through the word of God. For the virgin Mary to conceive and bring forth the Savior of the world and for Sarah to conceive in her old age and to receive what God had promised, God had to speak His word to them.

No one can become what God wants him to be without paying a close attention to the written word of God. Progressive knowledge of the Lord and His word is what will make you become fit to handle your divine inheritance.

(c) GOD'S WORD IS GOD'S MEANS OF MAKING (MOLDING) HIS VESSELS. 2Pet 3:18; 2Tim 3:16-17KJV, LB; Isa 28:9-10; Acts 2:42.

The precepts upon precepts that form concepts for living and for practical walk with God are only found in the word of God. God's word is His comprehensive equipment to straighten out our lives and correct every error in our hearts.

It is the light that illuminates our path in life. It is by it that God's servant is instructed and kept from presumptuous sin. There is no other means by which God fashions His vessels apart from His infallible Word. If you desire to become a useful vessel in God's hands, you must pay attention to whatever God says to you in

His word. Take time out to study it, listen to it, receive it, keep it in your heart and persevere with it until it brings forth fruit in your life (Lk 8:15).

(D) CONSISTENT AND PROGRESSIVE STUDY OF GOD'S WORD IS A NECESSITY IN SEEKING THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Josh 1:8; Rom 10:17; Neh. 8:1-16; Dan 9:1-2; Isa 5:13-14. **WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?**

DISCUSS.

Neglecting to study the word of God will only result in a lack of the knowledge of God. This in turn will cause hell and Satan to enlarge themselves in your life.

Many people suffer unnecessary hardships today from man and the devil because they do not know God enough as to be able to know what steps to take in time of need. They run from pillar to post, being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine and false teachers take advantage of this and make a living out of their lives.

To prosper in life and in the purpose of God, you must be a consistent student (a learner) of the Holy Scriptures as faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God. A consistent study, meditation in and understanding of the word of God, will make the kingdom of God and His righteousness to progress in your life.

BIBLICAL MEANS OF KNOWING GOD

2. PRAYER

This is another important means of pursuing the knowledge of God and for obtaining things in the

kingdom of God. Prayer means communing with God. We speak to God and God speaks to us in the place of prayer. *Ex 31:18; Lk 11:1-13; Dan 6:10; 1Thes5:17; Isa 26:3 (GNB,LB).*

(A) BY PRAYER, OUR KNOWLEDGE OF GOD IS ENHANCED. *Ex 33:12-23. DISCUSS THIS.*

(B) BY PRAYER, WE MAKE OUR REQUESTS KNOWN TO GOD. *Phil 4:6-7; Jas 4:2; 1Sam 1:10-12.*

What does that imply?

This gives us opportunity to know Him and experience Him as He answers our prayers. Hannah neither quarreled with Peninnah nor retaliated the vexation with which she vexed her sore because she was barren. She prayed and made her request known to God. The Lord answered her prayer and gave her a son. This became a great experience of God for her, and this is clearly written in **1Sam 2:1-10**.

(C) BY PRAYER , WE PURSUE THE PURPOSE OF GOD FOR OUR LIVES.

Lk 3:21-22; Lk 6:12-13; Lk 2:36-38; Dan 6:10; Dan 9:2-7,19; Eph 6:18.

The men and women of old sought God's face in prayer to understand and fulfill God's purpose for their lives. As God's purpose becomes fulfilled in our lives, our knowledge of Him is enhanced.

Prayer is not something to be taken lightly at all in our pursuit of the knowledge of God. No one can grow in the grace and knowledge of God without relating consistently with God in the place of prayer. Even for our Lord Jesus Christ, praying was His personal lifestyle. It must also be our way of life if we must succeed in

our pursuit of God and His purpose for our lives.

BIBLICAL MEANS OF KNOWING GOD

3. FASTING

(a) FASTING MEANS ABSTAINING FROM FOOD OR OTHER PLEASURES FOR A PERIOD OF TIME FOR KINGDOM PURPOSE. *Matt 4:1-2; Lk 4:1-2;*

Dan 9:2-3; Dan 10:3.

Fasting is not done arbitrarily. It is often combined with prayer so that the purpose of engaging in it can be achieved. *Mk 9:29; Neh. 1:3-4; Dan 9:2-4; Dan 10:1-5.*

☞ It is a very important means of knowing God and experiencing Him. *Matt 4:1-2; Lk 5:34-35; Joel 1:13-14; Dan 9:2-3; Isa 58:6-9; Lk 2:37; Acts 10:30.*

Discuss this in line with the above Scriptures.

Fasting helps to make us spiritually sensitive. It helps to make our hearts concentrate on the Lord as we seek to know Him.

The elders who have gone ahead of us pursued God and His purpose with prayer and fasting and great exploits were done by their hands. We cannot do less and expect the same results.

BIBLICAL MEANS OF KNOWING GOD

4. PRACTICAL OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD

This is another crucial means of knowing God.

Ex 19:5; Isa 1:19; Isa 66:2(b); Jn. 15:7; Phil 2:8-11; Heb. 5:7-8; Gen 12:1-4; Acts 4:18-20; Acts 5:29; Heb. 3:17-18 (NIV).

Growth in life and in the knowledge of God comes as

we obey Him. Obedience to the Lord and His word gives us practical experience and spiritual maturity. As we walk in obedience to God's word, the Lord is drawn towards us. Promotion also comes to us as we make obedience our lifestyle.

Even our Lord Jesus Christ had to prove Himself perfect in obedience before He became the Author of eternal salvation to those who obey Him. Obedience is an important key to progress in knowing God.

BIBLICAL MEANS OF KNOWING GOD

5. FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER BELIEVERS

This is yet another important means of knowing God. Even though we have been called by God into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, yet there are many FELLOWS in this same SHIP. *1Cor 1:9; Eph 2:18-19; Eph 4:4-6.*

What do you understand by this?

(B) UNITY, PROGRESS AND KINGDOM TREASURES ARE RELEASED TO US AS WE FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER BELIEVERS *Ps 133:1-3; Dan 2:13-19; Acts 2:41-43; Heb. 10:24-25; 1Jn 1:3.*

Discuss how this happens practically?

As we share our lives, experiences and possessions with other believers and others also share with us, our knowledge of God increases. God sometimes reveals Himself to us through other believers. We are members of one another and we are dependent on one another.

You cannot be doing things to tamper with your fellowship with other believers and think that God will

have fellowship with you. You cannot be a good child of God when you are a bad brother or sister to His other children.

We have one God and are members of one Body. Our fellowship with other believers enhances our fellowship with God. In your pursuit of God, you must pursue genuine fellowship with other Christians, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. It is an important means of knowing God.

BIBLICAL MEANS OF KNOWING GOD

6. DISCIPLESHIP

This is yet another very crucial means of pursuing the knowledge of God and obtaining the treasures of the kingdom.

(A) GOD DOES NOT COMMIT ETERNAL TREASURES INTO THE HANDS OF BABES.

GEN 2:8; EX 2:14; GAL 4:1-4; ISA 28:9; MK 4:11.

Kingdom treasures such as the knowledge of God, the mysteries of the kingdom and our divine inheritance are only handed over to people who have been formed (made, moulded), people who have quit childish things. Many men and women today are babes in their thoughts and actions because they are not committed to the Lord in discipleship. If God will reveal Himself to you and hand over your own inheritance in Christ to you, you have a need to . . .

⇒ *(i) submit your daily life and direction to following in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus in thought, word and deed . . . and then also . . .*

⇒ (ii) *submit to the moulding hands of tutors, trustees, guardians and even the fellowship of believers in discipleship relationships that helps you follow the Master.*

(B) MEN AND WOMEN OF OLD WHO MADE GOD THEIR PURSUIT, ALSO WALKED ON THIS SAME PATH OF DISCIPLESHIP.

RUTH 1:15-17; 1SAM 3:1-11; MATT 11:28-40; 4:19-22; MK 3:13-15; MATT 5:1-2; 10:1, 5; 20:21; ACTS 1:14; ACTS 6:1-3.

Discipleship is God's method of making His men. It is as you willingly and submissively learn of Christ under the hands of more matured Christians that your own inheritance will be handed over to you, since in discipleship you have the privilege of being tried, trimmed and approved.

CONCLUSION

Seeking to know God is not done arbitrarily. God has His own way of doing things. It takes God to reveal Himself to a man before he can gain an intimate knowledge of Him. He will not reveal Himself unless you seek Him with all your heart.

These means are God's means and provisions to place your feet on the path of knowing Him. You cannot pursue the things of the kingdom of God in your own way and hope to achieve God's kind of results. At the end you will only be like one who has been shadow – boxing , running aimlessly.

Your life would have been spent in vain. If your desire is to pursue the knowledge of God and have Him as your portion of inheritance, you must pay

attention to His own means of achieving His own purpose. Each of these means will push you a distance in knowing God, if you apply yourself to them with all diligence.

PERSONAL ASSESSMENT

- ☞ 1. Discuss practically, your personal experience on how each of the following has helped you so far in enhancing your knowing and experiencing God :
 - ⇒ (a) The word of God
 - ⇒ (b) Prayer
 - ⇒ (c) Fasting
 - ⇒ (d) Practical obedience to God's word
 - ⇒ (e) Fellowship with other believers
 - ⇒ (f) Discipleship
- ☞ 2. Is there any of the above (a) to (f) that you are yet to experience? What are your conflicts (if any), in utilizing any of these means of knowing God?
- ☞ 3. What decision(s) have you taken since going through this study and how will you pursue them?
- ☞ 4. What other lessons have you learnt from this study?

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