

The Miracle Path

Overview

The Miracle Path is a simple but comprehensive method of accomplishing the goals of Miracle Place Church. We call ourselves a “**3-D Church.**”

The goals of our Church are:

DELIVERANCE DEVELOPMENT DEPLOYMENT

I. Deliverance

This involves every aspect of salvation. Salvation encompasses more than just going to heaven when I die. The biblical idea includes life here on earth, as well as, eternal life. Jesus told his followers,

“The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy: I have come that you might have life more abundantly.” (John 10:10)

We believe that deliverance and salvation include three aspects:

A. Past– We have been saved and delivered from the **PENALTY** of sin.

“For the wages of sin is DEATH, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

“But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive in Christ even when we were dead in our transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.” (Ephesians 2:4-5)

Because of sin, all of us fall short of God’s perfect plan and deserve the “wages of sin” – which is **DEATH**. Because of God’s love, mercy and grace, he paid the price for our salvation. We have the privilege of being in the family of God. We were (past tense), dead in sin but now (present tense), we are forgiven, cleansed and given a new opportunity to live a life for God.

B. Present - We are now in the process of being saved from the **POWER** of sin.

“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (II Corinthians 5:17)

“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and goodness. Through these He has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and ESCAPE the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.” (II Peter 1:3-4)

Once we have received Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, our entire life changes. Old habits, behaviors, and attitudes **“are passed away.”** We become a **“new creation”** in Christ. Some of these things will just simply drop off of us. Imagine taking a shower after a long day of digging in dirt. Some of the dirt easily washes away with just the power of the water running over our body. Some of it may require scrubbing with soap and a washcloth. Some of the habits and behaviors have become such a part of our life they require some effort, and possibly some help, to break free of them.

The story of the resurrection of Lazarus in *John 11* is a good illustration. Lazarus had been dead and buried for more than four days. When Jesus gave the command, Lazarus was raised from the dead and came walking out from the tomb. He was alive but still bound by the wrappings and clothes of death. He was not free. Jesus commanded his followers **“loose him and let him go.”** Sometimes deliverance includes a **loosing** from the old things of the life we were living in order to truly live the life God has for us. God has given us everything necessary to live a successful Christian life here on Earth.

C. Future – We will one day be removed even from the PRESENCE of sin.

“Brother, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him... After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.” (I Thessalonians 4:13-14,17)

“And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and He will be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be No more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things have passed away.’” (Revelation 21:3-4)

We do have a future that is bright! One day, we will be with Christ in heaven. That may happen through the return of the Lord for His people. It may happen through the door of physical death, as it has for millions of others who have lived their lives before us. Either way, God has promised that we will **“ever be with the Lord.”**

II. Development

This involves growing in Christ. God desires for us to mature and to develop the various gifts and talents He has given us for use in His service. We believe every believer should grow in the same four areas Jesus grew in as outlined in the Bible.

“And Jesus increased in WISDOM, and STATURE, and in FAVOR with God and man.” (Luke 2:52)

A. Wisdom – Increasing in wisdom is a process that includes instruction as well as inspiration. We grow in knowledge through Bible study, group discussion, and one-on-one mentoring.

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever.” (II Peter 3:18)

B. Stature – We believe physical development is part of the process of spiritual growth. We must take care of our physical bodies to be able to better serve the Lord.

“And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and BODY be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Thessalonians 5:23)

C. Favor with God – God desires to have a relationship with us as friends. The Lord has given us the opportunity and freedom to develop an intimate relationship with Him.

“You are my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know His master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything I have learned from my Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:14-15)

D. Favor with Man – As we develop our relationship with God, it will influence every other relationship in our life. Men become better fathers and husbands and sons. Women become better mothers and wives and daughters. It should affect our working relationships as employers, partners, and employees. Favor with man is an integral part of bringing others to Christ.

“For brethren, you have been called unto liberty; only use not your Liberty for an occasion to the flesh; but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; ‘thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself.’” (Galatians 5: 13-14)

III. Deployment

This involves preparation for service and leadership in ministry. We believe every Christian is a servant and a minister. The Bible teaches that there are different roles in the church.

“It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, Some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” (Ephesians 4:11-12)

A. Every member is a minister.

B. The roles of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher are gifts given to specific people in the church.

C. These God-given offices are responsible to raise up and release people into ministry.

D. The goal is a strong, healthy church where people are encouraged to become all God desires them to be.

We have developed a process to accomplish these goals in the lives of every person who becomes a part of Miracle Place Church. We call it ***The Miracle Path***. Each person will be encouraged to join us on the path to becoming all God wants for our lives. ***The Miracle Path*** is designed separately to meet the needs of adults, youth, and children.

It consists of three sessions of six weeks each. Each session will involve individual study along with a class and group discussion. The sessions are designed to implement the ***3-D Vision***. We will be following the pattern outlined in the Bible found in *Hebrews 6:1-2*.

*“Therefore, let us leave the elementary teaching about Christ and go on to **MATURITY**, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God, instruction about baptisms, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment.” (Hebrew 6:1-2)*

Series One – The Miracle of Growing Closer to God

1. Putting Off the Grave Clothes – Lazarus
2. Becoming a Friend of God – Abraham
3. Into what then were you baptized? – Paul
4. Passing on the Blessing – Israel
5. The Resurrection from the Dead – Jesus
6. And after this, the Judgment – John

Series Two – The Miracle of Loving God and Your Neighbor

1. The Apostle's Teachings
2. Fellowship and the Breaking of Bread
3. Prayer
4. Walking in Unity
5. Praising God
6. Who is My Neighbor?

Series Three – The Miracle of Finding Your Place in the Church

1. Spiritual Gifts in the Body of Christ
2. What is My Gift?
3. How Can I Develop My Gift?
4. How Can I Use My Gift?

The Miracle Path

The Miracle of Growing Closer to God

Lesson One- Putting Off the Grave Clothes

The first step in growing closer to God is putting away the things of the past. Many people get hung up and distracted from their relationship with God by allowing the habit, attitudes, behaviors, and relationships of the past to influence them in the wrong direction. The story of the resurrection of a young man named Lazarus found in *John 11* gives a good illustration of how this happens. I encourage you to stop right now and read this story for yourself before continuing. The point of using this illustration is found in *John 11:44*

“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Take off the grave clothes and let him go.’”

Lazarus was wrapped and bound for burial. His face was covered, and his hands and feet bound. What a sight that must have been to see him hopping out of that tomb without seeing where he was going! He was **alive, but he was not free**, and it was almost impossible for him to free himself from the bindings of death. He needed some help from Jesus and his followers.

This is the thought behind this lesson. You and I have a new life given to us by Christ, just like Lazarus. And just like Lazarus, you and I have things from our past that limit us in our new life. These are the grave clothes of being dead in sin. God’s Word has other references to “putting off” that will give us instruction into the things that need to be taken away, so we can be successful in our life with Christ. We will study these Scriptures to discover what the grave clothes are for each of us. The decision to obey God’s Word will be left up to each one of us individually.

***Ephesians 4:17-31* – All of these scriptures that use the words “put off...,” “let no...,” “...be put away from you...” are in the tense of “once and for all time.” This is a decision that must be made in each area “once and for all.”**

1. **Put away LYING** – This includes all forms of deception and falsity. One of the Ten Commandments given by God was “*You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*” God hates lying – even “little white lies.” His desire is that we speak the truth.
2. **Put away Anger** – The scriptures use several different words to describe anger. There is the explosive, violent type of anger. There is a destructive, quarreling type of anger. There is malicious and hurtful anger that has the idea of a premeditated, “I have a bad temper,” or “I just lost my cool.” Both of these are behaviors and attitudes that must be dealt with positively. They must be “put off.”
3. **Put away Stealing**- The Ten Commandments also address this area. “*You shall not steal.*” There is no doubt, to most people, that stealing is wrong. God says to stop.
4. **Put away Corrupt Speech** – the Amplified Bible reads “let no foul or polluting language, nor evil word nor unwholesome talk (ever) come out of your mouth.” That just about covers everything from gossip and slander to cursing and abusive language.

Colossians 3:1-10 – These verses are “put off” verses also. They add a few things not covered in Ephesians. Verse 5 says “Put to death, therefore...” the scriptural idea of putting to death a behavior or attitude is ‘to deprive of power or opportunity.’ We should not give these destructive habits, behaviors and attitudes an opportunity to show themselves. We cut the power to them when we choose to walk in love and compassion.

5. **Put away Sexual Immorality** – This scripture includes lustful desires, the activity of sexual misconduct inside and outside marriage, adultery, and all other impurity. One man with one woman in a marriage is God’s plan.
6. **Put away GREED**- The Ten Commandments address this as coveting. This is an unholy desire for possessions and money. The message of the gospel is one of sacrifice and giving, not getting for personal gain.

I. The Process of Putting Off the Grave Clothes

- A. Make a decision to obey the Word of God.
- B. Repentance involves a conscious decision to completely change direction.
- C. Search the Scriptures to find instructions in the other areas where you continue to struggle.
- D. Seek godly help to assist you. Sometimes deliverance requires help from others who are experienced.

II. The Promise of Putting Off the Grave Clothes

- A. Growth in your personal character.
- B. Feelings of increased personal worth and strength. Guilt feelings associated with wrong behaviors will begin to vanish.
- C. Increased understanding of God's Word.
- D. God will hear your prayers. Sin hinders our prayer life.
- E. Opportunity to share the gospel freely without feeling any inner guilt.

Personal Study – Lesson One

Answer the following questions honestly about yourself. These answers are for your personal use only. If you need to write your answers, do it on a separate piece of paper that can be destroyed when you have completed the assignment.

1. Have you found yourself in a position that required you to tell someone a lie to protect yourself from embarrassment or correction in the last month? Week?
2. Have you filed false reports for your job or some other organization?
3. Have you had an episode of explosive anger in the last month? Week?
4. Do you find yourself continuously quarreling with others?
5. Is there anyone that causes you to feel angry just at the mention of their name or when seen?
6. When you become angry, do you “blow up” or “shut up?”
7. When you become angry, do you find yourself saying hurtful things to others?
8. Is there someone you have angry, malicious feelings toward now?
9. Have you taken anything that does not belong to you without permission in the last month? Week?
10. Have you taken supplies or tools from work not purchased for your use in the last month? Week?
11. Have you found yourself telling or participating in off-color conversations or jokes in the last month? Week?
12. Have you been critical, sarcastic, or abusive in your speech in the last month? Week?
13. Have you struggled with foul language and cursing in the last month? Week?
14. Have you found yourself participating in pornography or other sexually-oriented behaviors in the past month? Week?
15. Do you find yourself viewing the opposite sex in inappropriate ways?
16. Have you ever participated in an affair with another person to whom you were not married? Are you continuing that behavior at present?
17. Have you struggled with impure thoughts or tendencies?
18. Have you had difficulty dealing with a desire for riches?

19. How many times have you put your own desires and ambitions ahead of others in the last month? Last week?
20. Do you struggle or disbelieve in giving back to God from your paycheck?

If you answered yes to these questions, these are symptoms of areas in your life that need to be “put off.” Use your Bible to find other scriptures that deal with area(s) that you are struggling with. Ask God for His help. You may need to make an appointment with a Pastor to help you. Being honest with yourself is the key. You may look really funny “hopping around” in those old grave clothes. Bring your notebook with your scriptures to the next class.

Lesson Two – Becoming a Friend of God

The next step in growing closer to God is developing a growing, vibrant friendship with Him. Some people have a problem believing that the God of the universe wants to have a relationship with them. Although He cannot be seen or touched physically, God can and does desire to walk with us in the cool of the evening in the same way he enjoyed fellowship with Adam and Eve.

“But you, Israel, My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, descendant of Abraham MY FRIEND, you whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called you from its remotest parts, and said to you, ‘You are my servant, I have chosen you and not rejected you.’” (ISAIAH 41:8-9)

Abraham is an interesting character to study. He is the man called, “The friend of God.” His life has many examples of great faith and trust in God. It also has many examples of failure to trust God at times. His testimony is that he trusted God. I believe that as we study some experiences of Abraham’s life we will gain a better understanding of the phrase “faith in God.”

I. He Left His Past Behind

In *Genesis 12:1-9*, we read the story of Abraham’s decision to move his remaining family from his homeland to a place he had never even seen. Take a few moments to read this story to become familiar with it.

First, you can read that Abraham left his country and his family and everything familiar to him behind at the instruction of God. His decision was made without fully knowing all of the consequences. The one thing Abraham knew for certain was that he could trust God. How Abraham came to this conclusion in a pagan land we don’t know. We do know that Abraham trusted that God would provide for him and his family.

The first step in becoming a friend of God is a decision to leave the past behind. Old relationships and familiar surroundings can many times distract a person from keeping his focus on his new friend. If you desire to be a friend of God, you cannot be a friend of the world at the same time.

“Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.” (1 John 2:15-16)

“You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore, whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God.” (James 4:4)

II. He Moved Toward the Will of God

“So, Abraham went forth as the Lord had spoken to him...” (Genesis 12:4)

Becoming God’s friend is dependent upon one thing – our complete obedience to His plan. God is looking for people who will leave the past behind and begin to move toward His will for their life. Just stopping old habits is not enough. We must start to develop new habits and practices that bring us into line with God and His plan for our life.

God speaks to us through His Word, the Bible. As we read and study the Bible, God shows us areas in our life that have changed by our decision to follow Him. The Word corrects, instructs, inspires and develops us into mature Christians. The Word becomes a mirror that gives a true reflection of who we are and areas in our life that need change.

We speak to God in prayer. Prayer is not a religious ritual to be practiced without feeling. It is rather a powerful tool of communication and communion with God. True prayer is personal, practical, and worshipful. We can actually share our hearts with God just like an intimate friend here on earth.

III. He Committed to Follow the Lord

“And the Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To the descendants I will Give this land.’ So, he built an altar there to the Lord...” (Genesis 12:7)

The Lord is looking for people just like Abraham that He can communicate with on a personal basis. Abraham showed his desire to follow the Lord by

building an altar at that spot. It was a place of personal worship and a reminder of his commitment.

A personal commitment to God is necessary for all of us. The life we live must be built on the foundation of a personal experience with the God we serve. Abraham did not have “second-hand faith.” He followed the Lord because he knew Him in a one-on-one way. This is one of the greatest joys of life – to have a friendship with God.

Personal Study – Lesson Two

Write your personal experience with God in about 50-100 words. Start with leaving your past behind. Describe the life you lived briefly, but don't over-emphasize how "bad" you were before. Then tell the steps you took in moving toward the will of God in your life. Share any scriptures that spoke to you in this process. Close out with how you have experienced a friendship with God in a new and personal way.

Look up and write out the following scriptures. Write a brief explanation of how each of these verses could be helpful in developing a friendship with God.

1. *James 4:4*

2. *John 15:12-15*

3. *Romans 8:31-32*

Lesson Three – “Into what then were you baptized...?”

The issue of baptism is a basic concept in the Christian faith. Many people are confused by the term “baptism” because it is used many different ways in the Bible and it has many different forms in the church. The term has been brought over from the Greek language. “Baptizo” in the Greek language means “to dip under.” It was a form of identification with many groups besides Christians. To be baptized identified a person with the teaching and philosophies of the group doing the baptizing.

The forms of water baptism used by different denominations in the Christian church developed over time because of necessity. Water baptism became recognized as a “sacrament” of the Roman Catholic Church. This meant that salvation was connected with being baptized by the organized church. As Christianity moved throughout ancient Europe and Middle Eastern countries, it was impossible to baptize everyone individually. It became common practice to “sprinkle” water over the massive crowds and those who found it impossible to be dipped in water because of sickness, injury, or age. It became common practice to baptize by sprinkling infants during the Middle Ages because of the spread of terrible plagues and the high infant mortality rate. Many of these practices became accepted by the church and part of common practice.

Water baptism is only one of the topics discussed relating to baptism. We will look at each of the four baptisms taught in the Bible. These things are necessary for us to know so we can move on to maturity.

I. Baptism into the Body of Christ

“What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in the newness of life. For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection...” (Romans 6:1-5)

“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (I Corinthians 12:13)

The baptism described here is not something we do or experience. This is a part of the salvation process that God does when a person repents and receives Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We are identified with the work that Christ did on the cross. He took our personal sins in his own body, died for those sins, and was resurrected to overcome the power of death and sin. Somehow, in the mind of God, we are “baptized” or placed into Christ at that point. Everything that happened to Him became our experience, too. As a result of this joining together, we are now a part of His body, the Church. These truths are not experiential, but they affect how we are to behave.

Romans 6:6-10 reads “**Knowing this...**” The first step that results from our baptism into Christ is a new revelation and knowledge of who we are and where we are. Verses 11 and 12 describe the act of “**reckoning...**” or a decision to account and accept that work done by Christ as being done for me in my life today. We are to “account” or consider ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God. Finally, we are encouraged, as a result, to “**yield your members...**” in verses 13 and 14. We are to present our members – our mouth, eyes, ears, hands and minds – to God for His use and purpose. Being part of the body of Christ changes our associations, behaviors, and attitudes.

II. Baptism in Water

The previous discussion dealt with how various churches have arrived at different forms of baptism. God’s Word is very clear that Jesus wants His followers to be baptized as a means of identifying with Christ’s work. (*Matthew 28:19, 20*) The idea that baptism washes away our sin is addressed in *I Peter 3:21*.

“...and corresponding to that (Noah and his family being saved from the flood in the ark), baptism now saves you – not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,”

The Dake's Bible commentary on this verse states:

*“Baptism in water does not save the soul, but faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, that of which **baptism is a figure of**, does save the soul.”*

Baptism in water does not “put away the filth of the flesh.” It does identify us in a physical way with the “death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.” It is a physical act of faith that helps us in our commitment to Christ. It is important because believer's baptism sets us apart in our mind and heart that our life is for God and his work. We can't go back to the world because we have made a public declaration that we are dead to that old way of living and alive to Christ's new way of life.

III. Baptism in the Holy Ghost.

The baptism in the Holy Ghost is a powerful experience in God. There is some confusion about what this baptism is and what happens to the person through this experience. The Bible gives us the answer in the Gospel of John. In Chapter 4, Jesus tells the woman of Samaria”

*“Everyone who drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I give him shall become **IN** him a well of water springing up into eternal life.”*

The emphasis of this move of the Holy Spirit is **IN** a person. This signifies the **NEW BIRTH ANOINTNG**. The water of life is in the person and springs up to eternal life.

*“Now on the last day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the scripture said, from **OUT** of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.’ But this he spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (John 7:37-39)*

Here the Spirit is flowing OUT of the person. This signifies a different work. Jesus said that this speaks of the releasing of the Holy Spirit's power through the believer's life. This signifies the BAPTISM of the HOLY GHOST. This is for every believer who wants to have power to live a victorious Christian life. This is the PROMISE of POWER spoken of in *Acts 1:8*:

“...but you shall receive power when the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and you shall be MY witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

This promise was given by Jesus when he said,

“...for John baptized you with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.” (Acts 1:5)

The promise was fulfilled in Chapter 2 just ten days later.

“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.” (Acts 2:4)

This experience was also seen in Acts 8 when Philip preached in Samaria and people received the message of the gospel. The same Spirit fell upon them and they began to speak in other tongues. Peter witnessed the same thing when he preached at Cornelius' house. Cornelius was not even a Jew but the Spirit came upon them in the same way (*Acts 10*). Paul prayed for some believers in Ephesus who had only been baptized in water. These men were prayed for and the Spirit of God fell on them, too. They began to speak in other tongues, just as the others.

Peter explained on the day of Pentecost that this experience was prophesied long ago:

“And it shall be in the last days, God says, ‘that I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all mankind; and your sons and daughters shall prophesy...’ (Acts 2:17)

The baptism is a real experience that is available for every believer and is necessary for us to be able to do the work of witnessing for Jesus Christ.

IV. Baptism in Fire

The baptism in fire prophesied about Jesus in *Matthew 3:11* is another experience of every believer:

*“As for me, I (John the Baptist) baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and **FIRE**.”*

We believe this baptism signifies the TRIALS of LIFE that each of us must endure as Christians. A life lived for God does not promise to be easy or without difficulty. As a matter of fact, the opposite is true. (*II Timothy 3:12*) Even Jesus went through tests and trials. After he was baptized in water and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, He was lead of the Spirit into the desert to be tempted of the devil. God allows things in our life to cleanse and purge us, not to hurt and destroy us. All of the great saints of the Bible experienced fire in their life.

Peter writes to Jewish Christians scattered throughout the Roman world:

“In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by VARIOUS TRIALS, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though TESTED BY FIRE, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ:” (I Peter 1:6-7)

These first century Christians were enduring persecution, imprisonment, and even death because of their faith. Peter didn't try to tell them their faith had failed, or they were in sin because they were suffering, as many teach today. Being a Christian doesn't make us exempt from hard things in life; that is exactly why they come. God is using the situations and circumstances of life to purify our faith.

Personal Study – Lesson Three

1. Some people teach that you must be baptized in water to be saved. Look up *Luke 23:39-43* and write down your thoughts about this topic.

2. Look up *I Peter 4:12-19* and explain how the baptism in fire is used in a believer's life. Write a few ways that God has used situations in your life to change you.

3. Have you experienced the baptism in the Holy Ghost? If not, what are the reasons that would keep you from receiving? Write them down so we can pray together about them.

Lesson Four – Passing the blessing on....

Another step toward growing closer to God happens when we understand the simplicity of the teaching of the Bible about laying on of hands. Some denominations practice laying on of hands while others think this is an outdated custom. The Bible teaches that this is still a very important and valuable practice for today's Christian. It is used and taught in both the Old and New Testaments. We will examine the three major purposes for laying on of hands.

I. Laying on of hands for Blessing and Impartation

Old Testament

In Genesis, the story of Israel describes the power of blessing bestowed through the laying on of hands. As a young man, Israel, formerly known as Jacob, stole the blessing reserved for the firstborn son through deceit. Esau became distraught over losing the blessing stolen by Israel. (*Genesis 27:30-45*) Once the blessing was given, there was no other blessing to duplicate it. The blessing was prophetic and powerful. Later, Israel, the aged father, spoke blessings over each of his twelve sons and laid hands upon them. Each blessing was distinct and spoke of a future for that son, and the tribes that grew out of their families. Imparting blessings was a powerful tool to prepare a person for the plan God had for their life.

The people were responsible for bringing offerings for atonement to the priests. When offering these for their sins, they laid hands on the head of the goat or bull and confessed their sins to God. This symbolized that their sin was placed upon the offering. The animal was killed so the blood atoned for their sin. (*Leviticus 4:4-7*) Their sins were "imparted" to the sin offering and then the sin offering was destroyed by fire.

Joshua, an apprentice to Moses in the wilderness, was blessed by Moses and the Spirit imparted to him so he could lead God's people in Moses' place. (*Deuteronomy 34:9*)

New Testament

In the New Testament, Jesus prayed for children who came to Him. He laid his hands upon their head and blessed them. (*Matthew 19:13-15*) This was more than a simple prayer. Jesus didn't do anything to simply do it. He had a purpose.

Timothy was a young apprentice to Paul. He became a young minister. In his first letter of instruction to the young man, Paul instructed Timothy about neglecting “*the gift which is in you* (that special inward endowment), *which was directly imparted to you* (by the Holy Spirit) *by prophetic utterance when the elders laid their hands on you.*” Paul also reminded Timothy to stir up the gift of God that was bestowed on him when Paul laid hands on him. (II Timothy 1:6)

Paul told the church at Rome that his desire was for their spiritual growth and establishment in the faith. “*For I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end you may be established.*” (*Romans 1:11*)

These people we read about in the New Testament were operating by faith in areas and ways that had been used for centuries. They did not consider themselves to be in a different dispensation or time. Laying on of hands is a powerful tool of blessing that is available to parents, spiritual leaders, and the church. Imparting a ministry is a necessary function of the church for continuing the work of God.

II. Laying on of Hands for Sanctification & Service

OLD TESTAMENT

The term “sanctification” means “set apart unto.” The root idea involves holiness and readiness to serve the Lord. Those who were called into the ministry of the Lord were placed into their particular place of ministry by the laying on of hands. This act symbolized the placing of God's anointing on the man of God for His ministry.

Moses was commanded by God to lay hands upon Joshua so that the people would know that God had placed Joshua in a position of leadership. (*Numbers 27:18-23; Deuteronomy 34:9*) He was “set apart unto” his ministry position.

Aaron, the High Priest, was told to sanctify the Levites as servants to the priesthood. He was instructed to have the people lay hands on them at the doorway to the Tent of Meeting to set them apart for their work.
(*Numbers 8:10-11*)

NEW TESTAMENT

The laying on of hands found in the New Testament is seen in the choosing of the first deacons. (Acts 6:6) These seven men were chosen by the people and set apart by the apostles to do their work.

Paul and Barnabas were sent out by the Holy Spirit as missionaries by the church at Antioch. After fasting and worshiping, they were lead to set them apart. The church leaders “*put their hands on them and sent them...*” (*Acts 13:1-5*)

Paul wrote his young apprentice in the ministry two separate letters to instruct and encourage him in the ministry. In *I Timothy 4:14 (Amp.)*, Paul writes:

*“Do not neglect the gift which is in you, (that special endowment)
which was directly imparted to you (by the Holy Spirit)
by prophetic utterance when the
elders laid their hands on you (at your ordination).”*

This impartation was given to enable Timothy in his ministry. In the next chapter, Paul warned Timothy against laying hands upon someone hastily and becoming a partaker in sins they might commit. (*I Timothy 5:22*) In his second letter (*II Timothy 1:6*), Paul encourages Timothy to “*stir up the gift of God which is in you by the laying on of my hands.*” This was because he had been set apart for special ministry that required a special ordination. Paul also instructed another of his apprentices to “*ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you.*” (*Titus 1:5*) This ordination would follow the same pattern used by Paul in ordaining Timothy and Titus. These men would then be set apart for the work of the ministry.

III. Laying on of Hands for Healing

The New Testament gives enough evidence to support the practice of laying hands for healing. Jesus used many “unorthodox” methods when praying for the sick. He made mud with spittle and anointed one man’s eyes; he prayed for one man a second time who could not see clearly after the first prayer; He touched Peter’s mother-in-law on the hand and the fever left her.

*“...Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.
He who has believed and been baptized shall be saved;
but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned. And these signs
shall accompany those who have believed: in my Name they will cast
out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents,
and if they drink any deadly poison, it will not hurt them;
they will lay hands on the sick and they will recover.” (Mark 16:15-18)*

These were instructions to the disciples who were present at the resurrection of Jesus. Many churches disagree with these verses applying to us today. We believe that these teachings are in line with other scripture and therefore apply to us. We are not comfortable with picking and choosing which scriptures should apply today and which should not.

Even if these verses did not apply to us today, there is no going around the instructions given in *James 5:14*:

*Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church,
and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil
in the name of the Lord.”*

Personal Study – Lesson Four

1. Look up the following scriptures to see which type of laying on of hands was used and why.
 - A. *Acts 8:17-18*

B. Acts 9:11-19

C. Acts 19:1-7

2. Read the verses about Israel's blessings spoken over his sons found in *Genesis 48:8-20*. Why was it important to Joseph that Israel crossed his hands in blessings Joseph's two sons?

Lesson Five – The Resurrection from the Dead

The resurrection from the dead is the single-most important difference between Christianity and other world religions. Many other religions had powerful leaders and teacher? Christ is the only one who claimed to be the Son of God and demonstrated the truth of his claim by rising from the dead. This is a powerful statement of faith, but it is considered to be an elementary principle in *Hebrews 6*. We will examine the New Testament teaching on the resurrection by studying the two major passages dealing with it.

I. I Corinthians 15:1-58

A. Resurrection of Christ (15:1-19)

1. Proof of the Resurrection (1-8)

The proof of the resurrection was eyewitness evidence. It was proclaimed by scripture in *Psalms 16:8*. Jesus appeared to Peter, then the Twelve (disciples), then to more than 500 brothers at one time at his ascension into heaven. Then he appeared to James, his half-brother, who became one of the leaders in the early church. He appeared to Paul himself on the Damascus road. This evidence is strong enough to be presented in court, even if the court denied the truth.

2. Principle of the Resurrection (9-19)

The resurrection is so basic to Christianity that Paul challenged why some were preaching that there is no resurrection. If resurrection is not possible, then Christ himself was not raised from the dead. If Christ was not raised, then the message and power of the gospel is a farce. “Gospel” means “good news”. The “good news” is Jesus lives! Living a life that pleases God would be a waste of time if there is no resurrection. We would be people of no hope.

B. Order of Resurrection (29-49)

1. Promise of Resurrection (20-28)

The promise of resurrection for us is wonderful. “*In Adam all die, so also all will be made alive in Christ.*” (15-22). One day this life will end, and Christ will once again reign over all of

creation. This will be discussed in more depth in a following section.

2. Pictures of the Resurrection. (29-49)

Paul uses the picture of a seed being sown into the earth as a parallel to describe the resurrection. *“That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies...” (15:36)*. Each seed reproduces itself in a plant that bears many times more seeds than were sown. Each reproduces a different type of “body.” Wheat is different from an apple tree, but both start with a seed being sown into the earth. He uses the differences between the flesh of birds and fish and men to describe the differences between the mortal body and the resurrected body. He also employs the picture of the difference between the sun, the moon, and stars to compare the difference between the perishable earthly body we inhabit now to the imperishable heavenly body we will receive in the resurrection. These pictures are earthly examples to help us to understand these deep spiritual insights given to Paul.

3. Pattern for the Resurrection (50-58)

The future resurrection is our blessed hope. *“We will not all sleep, but we shall be changed...” (15:51)*. The order of our future resurrection or the rapture, is described here and in *I Thessalonians 4:13-18*. The truth of the resurrection gives comfort in knowing that whether we already died or remain until that great day, we will receive a glorified, imperishable, resurrected body just like Christ’s. *“Death is swallowed up in victory. “Oh death, where is your victory? Oh grave, where is your sting?” (15:54-55)*

II. Revelation 20:1-15

A. Resurrection of the Righteous (1-6)

The final resurrections spoken of in the New Testament deal with two groups of people. The first group is made up of people who have given their hearts to Christ and served the Lord in this life. Jesus said,

“I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believes in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.” (John 11:25-26)

Those who are the **righteous** will rule and reign with Christ. We who have placed our trust in Christ as our Savior will be part of this group. We will join others who have given their lives as martyrs for Christ during the Tribulation. *“Blessed is he who has part in the first resurrection: on these the second death has no power, but they shall become priest of God and Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.” (1:6)* This is the promise of the resurrection. We all want to be part of this resurrection.

B. Resurrection of the Wicked (7-15)

This is commonly understood as the Great White Throne judgment. This is the time when those who have chosen to rebel against Christ and not serve God will be resurrected unto final judgment. (More time will be given to explain this judgment in the next lesson.) The devil and his angels, the beast, and the false prophet will already be consigned to **the lake of fire**. All of the people who have lived will be judged to see if their names are written in the Book of Life. Those who are not found recorded in these books will be cast into the lake of fire along with the devil. This is called **the second death**.

One thing that is obviously excluded from these two groups are those who **“did not know,”** or **“were not sure,”** or **“were not ready to make a decision,”** or **“wanted to wait until the right time.”** There is only a resurrection to death. The decision must be made willingly and followed through here on earth. Those who are waiting will one day find out that it is **too late**. Don't be one of those people.

Lesson Six – “...and after this, the judgment.”

Judgment is not a favorite topic of most Christians, but it is a basic part of the message of the Bible. A brief examination of the scriptural teaching on judgment reveals many different types of judgment. We will look at four major teachings in this study.

I. The Judgment of Jesus Christ

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ came into this world to “*destroy the works of the devil.*” (*I John 3:8*) We have already discussed the truth of the gospel message – “*that Jesus Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*” (*I Corinthians 15:3-4*). That is the basis of the message. The Bible teaches us also that sin must be judged for forgiveness to be complete. When Jesus Christ was on the cross, “*He became sin for us who knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*” (*II Corinthians 5:21*) Jesus said, “*My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?*” (*Matthew 27:46*) God actually turned his back on His Son Jesus when he was on the cross because Jesus became the sin offering to satisfy God’s righteousness. This is explained in full in *Hebrews 9:11-22*. Jesus took the punishment for our disobedience, so we could receive the reward of his obedience – eternal life.

II. The Judgment of the Believer’s Life

The Bible also teaches that we who are believers have entered into a new relationship with God. Part of the responsibility is judging ourselves. God has given us His Word to light our path and His Spirit to illuminate our hearts. *Matthew 7* states that it is our responsibility to remove the “*beam*” or “*log*” from our own eyes before trying to remove a “*speck*” from our brother’s eye. *I Corinthians 11:28* reads, “*but let a man examine (or judge) himself...*” We are to look at our lives to see if there are areas that are keeping us from serving Christ fully and surrender those areas to Him. We are encouraged in every one of the letters written by the apostles of the New Testament to examine our life and to walk in a way that is worthy of the sacrifice that Jesus Christ gave for us. If we do not judge ourselves, or do not judge ourselves rightly, we are in danger of falling under the judgment of God.

“For it is time for judgment to begin with the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who obey not the gospel of God?” (I Peter 4:17)

III. The Judgment Seat of Christ

The Bible teaches that there will be a future judgment for believers when we will give an account for the way we have lived our lives.

II Corinthians 5:10 reads:

*“For we must all appear before **the judgment seat of Christ** (the bema seat), that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”*

Jesus taught many parables about the end of the age when each servant would be called to give an account for his stewardship. Jesus is the master who has entrusted us with abilities and gifts that we use every day. We will be called to show the return for His trust.

I Corinthians 3:10-15 clearly explains how we will be judged for the works of our life. Every man will have his works judged by fire. If any man’s work endures the test of fire, it will be gold, silver, precious stones and there will be a reward. If any man builds with wood, hay, and stubble, it will be consumed by the fire and there will be loss.

This judgment is not for sin. That has already been done. This judgment is only for those who have committed their lives to Christ. Every man will give an account for his work.

IV. The Judgment of the Great White Throne

Revelation 20:11-15 describes the final judgment for sinners. The Bible says that the small and great will be gathered together before the throne of God. The books will be opened. Any man whose name is not found in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire. This will be the second death.

In the gospels, Jesus talked about the final days of the age when God would separate the sheep from the goats. Those who had been faithful and obedient were sheep and were gathered to His right side. The ones who were disobedient were called goats and were separated from God.

The judgments taught in the Scripture are there for our good. God does promise abundant life for those who follow Him. He also provides rewards for us who are faithful in the stewardship of life. But God is also a God of righteousness and His righteousness demands our very best. God is not a coke machine that dispenses His blessings without any regard to our behavior and responsibility. It is good to take some time to examine ourselves, so we will not be ashamed at the last day.

Personal Study – Lesson Six

1. Look up the following passages and write down your thoughts about what type of judgment this speaks about.

Matthew 25:14-30

Matthew 25:31-46

Matthew 21:33-44

2. Take a few moments to read *Ephesians 4:17-5:17*. Allow the Lord to use these Scriptures to reveal any area in your life that may need to be prayed about.
3. Look up *Hebrews 9:11-22* and write a brief overview of how Christ was judged for our sin and made our salvation possible.

The Miracle Path

Join us on a wonderful course to spiritual discovery on the ***Miracle Path***. Every Christian is a participant in the process of growing to become more like Christ. Many people are moving along through life hoping they will be successful in their Christian walk; the ***Miracle Path*** is a tool to help every believer rise to their full potential in Christ. It is a miracle when God takes an everyday, common person and transforms them into a mighty, committed, powerful warrior for Christ. This is the ultimate goal of the ***Miracle Path***.

Series One- *The Miracle of Growing Closer to God*

Topics Covered-

- ❖ *Putting Off the Grave Clothes*
- ❖ *Becoming a Friend of God*
- ❖ *Into What Then Were You Baptized?*
- ❖ *Passing On the Blessing*
- ❖ *The Resurrection from the Dead*
- ❖ *And After This, the Judgment...*

Series Two: *The Miracle of Loving God and Loving Your Neighbor*

Topics Covered-

- ❖ *The Apostle's Teachings*
- ❖ *Fellowship and the Breaking of Bread*
- ❖ *Prayer*
- ❖ *Walking in Unity*
- ❖ *Praising God*
- ❖ *Who is My Neighbor?*

Series Three: *The Miracle of Finding Your Place in the Church*

Topics Covered-

- ❖ *Spiritual Gifts in the Body of Christ*
- ❖ *What is My Gift?*
- ❖ *How can I Develop My Gift?*
- ❖ *How can I Use My Gift?*