

# BIBLE STUDY

2023 THEME

KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY  
AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

KINGDOM CITIZENS  
UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE  
AND FUNCTION OF THE  
HOLY SPIRIT



**KEY WORDS / PHRASES:**  
Spiritual Truth, Liberator,  
Manifest, Born Again

July 2 - When the Spirit of Truth  
Comes (John 16:12-15)

July 9 - The Liberating Power of the  
Holy Spirit (Acts 2:17-18)

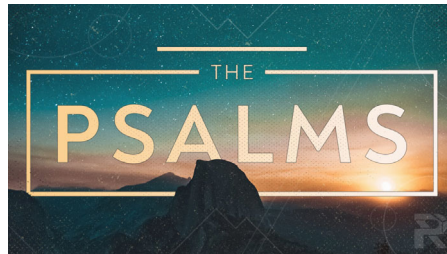
July 16 - Spiritual Help During  
Times of Weakness (Romans 8:26-  
27)

July 23 - The Manifestation of the  
Holy Spirit (Acts 1:6-9)

July 30 - Born Again in the Spirit  
(John 3:1-8)

Hymn - Victory In Jesus

KINGDOM CITIZENS  
PREPARING MIND, BODY  
AND SPIRIT - SPIRITUAL  
ENCOURAGEMENT FROM  
THE BOOK OF PSALMS



**WORDS/PHRASES:** Vigilance,  
Patience, Shepherd, Strength

August 6 - Our God is Ever  
Vigilant (Psalm 121:1-8)

August 13 - Wait Patiently on the  
Lord (Psalm 40:1-3)

August 20 - God is Our Refuge  
and Our Strength (Psalm 46:1-3)

August 27 - He is Our Shepherd  
(Psalm 23)

Hymn - No Never Alone

KINGDOM CITIZENS PRE-  
PARING BODY, MIND AND  
SPIRIT - SPIRITUAL EM-  
POWERMENT FROM THE  
ULTIMATE POWER  
SOURCE



**WORDS/PHRASES:** Recharge,  
Empower, Spiritual Boost,  
Struggle

September 3 - Strength Through  
Struggle (Jeremiah 29:11-14)

September 10 - The Lord Will  
Strengthen You (Isaiah 41:10-13)

September 17 - Perfection Power  
(II Corinthians 12:1-10)

September 24 - Power to See  
Right (Mark 10:46-52)

Hymn - I Must Tell Jesus

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be  
ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

II Timothy 2:15

## KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

### **JULY EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens must know that the power of the Holy Spirit dwells within them. We must seek to understand who the Holy Spirit is and how He can help us prepare mind, body and spirit for post-pandemic living.

**WORDS/PHRASES:** Spiritual Truth, Liberator, Manifest, Born Again

### **LESSON TWENTY-SEVEN: WHEN THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH COMES**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Name three works, characteristics or attributes of the Holy Spirit.
2. Identify a time and your response to a time when you shared or wanted to share information with someone who appeared to have had no understanding about what you were telling them.
3. What are some reasons that could cause a person to not understand/comprehend what is being said to them?

#### **TEXT: JOHN 16: 12-15**

### **HEART OF THE LESSON: GOD UNDERSTANDS HOW MUCH YOU CAN BEAR.**

**INTRODUCTION:** Jesus said in John 16:7 that it was to our benefit that He was going away so that the Holy Spirit would come. The Holy Spirit came, yet so many people still do not know Him or much about Him. Therefore, during the month of July, our emphasis and focus will be on the third person of the Holy Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Each lesson will focus on and seek to clarify and identify the attributes, as well as the role and function of the Holy Spirit in the lives of both believers and non-believers to transform them into the likeness of Jesus. Our hope is that after these studies, you will have a desire to learn more about Him and will seek to know Him more intimately.

### **1. EVERY KINGDOM CITIZEN SHOULD SEEK TO KNOW AND BETTER UNDERSTAND THE PERSON AND WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

The Holy Spirit appears in nearly every book of the Bible and has interceded and operated in the lives of mankind throughout history. Among the many things that the Scriptures give witness to and teach us about the Holy Spirit are: (1) He is the third person of the Holy Trinity, equal with the Father and the Son. (**Mt 3:13-17; John 14:8-9**) (2) He is God, He is the Spirit of God, and He has always existed. He was present “**In the beginning**” and has interceded in the life of mankind throughout history. (**Gen. 1:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:17**) (3) He has the attributes of a person. (**Gen. 15:2; John 14:26; 16:7**) (4) He inspired Holy men of old to write the Scriptures. (**2 Tim. 3:16**)

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THAT GOD KNOWS JUST HOW MUCH THEY CAN BEAR.**

Have you ever felt compelled to say to someone, “I would like to tell you something, but you can’t handle the truth, yet.” In essence, this is what Jesus said to His disciples. After Jesus delivered some devastating and terrifying news about events that were going to happen to His disciples, they were very grieved. “He said to them, **“They will put you out of the synagogue; ...the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are doing a service to God. Soon you won’t see me, ...and soon after that you will see me, .... you will cry and lament, and the world will be happy. You will be sorrowful, ... A time is coming when ...each of you will be scattered to your own homes and you will leave me alone.”** (John 16:2-3; 17-10; 32) Then Jesus told them that He knew that they were full of grief because of what He had just said to them, and then He comforted them with these words, **“Now is your time of grief, but your grief will turn to joy. (V 20)** The news that Jesus told the disciples caused them to be very grieved; it was very hard for them to comprehend and accept all the things that Jesus had told them, so when they began to question each other and Jesus, He said to them, **“I have much more to say to you, more than you can bear now. But when He, the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all truth.”** (John 16:12-13) In essence, Jesus was telling them that although they didn’t understand what He was telling them, nor could they handle any more of the truth now, they would understand everything later. At that present time, Jesus couldn’t tell them more because He knew that they could not bear to hear more. The disciples were already having problems understanding what they had already been told and were deeply grieved by it. They were not really getting it and were not yet ready to bear the burdens that lie ahead. The things that Jesus still needed to tell them would require supernatural understanding. This was the thing they currently did not possess. They would, however, possess it very shortly once they all received the Holy Spirit. (V 13) At times, we all will face situations and things that seem too much to bear or too hard to comprehend, i.e., loss of a job, reputation, health, wealth or loved ones (through death, divorce, substance abuse), etc. However, the good news for us is that we will never have to bear our unbearables alone. We have the Holy Spirit with us and in us.

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS SHOULD FIND COMFORT AND GREAT JOY IN KNOWING THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME AND THAT HE WORKS IN THE LIVES OF BOTH THE BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS.**

Because we were not always saved, we should all rejoice knowing that the Holy Spirit has come and worked in our lives while we were still sinners to lead us into the truth of repentance and to sanctify us. The Holy Spirit also works in the life of each individual unbeliever. He exposes their false righteousness and sin and the fact that judgment and condemnation are coming for all who are not in Christ. The sin that the Holy Spirit convicts the world (unbelievers) of is not any one specific sin, but the one which will keep them from getting to heaven— *the sin of unbelief*.

## KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

### **JULY EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

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**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens must know that the power of the Holy Spirit dwells within them. We must seek to understand who the Holy Spirit is and how He can help us prepare mind, body and spirit for post-pandemic living.

**WORDS/PHRASES:** Spiritual Truth, Liberator, Manifest, Born Again

### **LESSON TWENTY-EIGHT: THE LIBERATING POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. In what ways does the presence of the Holy Spirit encourage you to live for Jesus Christ?
2. How is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit manifested in your life? What is some of the evidence?
3. Do you know anyone of whom you believe has the gift of prophesy?

**TEXT: ACTS 2:17-18**

### **HEART OF THE LESSON: UNDERSTANDING PROPHECY**

**INTRODUCTION:** Acts 2:17-18 shows that that Joel's prophecy (**Joel 2:28-29**) had a partial fulfillment on the day of Pentecost. The promise of Jesus is finally realized as the Holy Spirit comes upon and dwells in **all** believers.

#### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT BREAKS DOWN WALLS THAT SEPARATE PEOPLE.**

**“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.”** (**Acts 2:17-18**)

In these passages of Scriptures, Peter was announcing to the Jews that through Jesus, God had now brought in the promised new covenant. This meant that the Holy Spirit is poured out on all kinds of people regardless of gender (“sons and daughters”), age (old and young), or social class (includes slaves). Afterwards, for those who had not received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached to them, **“Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children (Jews) and for all who are far off (Gentiles)—for all whom the Lord our God will call.”** (**Acts 2:38-39**)

This meant that from that time forward, all those who accept God’s gift of salvation through Christ would receive the Holy Spirit. In verse 17, **“Your sons and daughters will prophesy....”** doesn’t mean that every believer has the gift of prophecy nor should every believer prophesy (preach or teach). Instead, the New Testament teaches that each believer will have at least one spiritual gift and is empowered by the Holy Spirit to use that gift for the Glory and Kingdom of God. The word **“prophesy”** in this passage refers to the *speaking and proclaiming of the greatness of God for the sake of “upbuilding and encouragement and consolation”* (1 Cor 14:3) Warnings to believers concerning prophecy are: **“Believe not every prophecy”**; **“Be aware of false prophets”**; and if a “prophetic” message is presented to you that is contrary to the word of God, don’t believe it. (2 John 1:10-11; 1 John 4:1-6) For a sum of money, there are some who claim to be prophets who will prophesize to you whatever they think that you want to hear. *The word “all” in “...I will pour out my Spirit on all people” refers to all believers as one body in Christ Jesus.* (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11)

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS ARE “SPIRITUAL BEINGS” OF ANOTHER WORLD.**

The Spirit of God has come, and He is a permanent resident in us, empowering us each and every day to do great things which glorify and advance the Kingdom of God. When the Holy Spirit dwells within us, we become new creatures. And though we still live in this “world”, we are not of this “world”. We become citizens of the Kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit takes control of our lives daily, and we willingly submit ourselves under the authority, power and control of the Holy Spirit. Spirit-filled believers bear witness to the lyrics of the song: *“Something (Someone) within us holds the reins”*. As Spirit-filled believers, our hopes, desires, thoughts and focus will increasingly be more and more on spiritual things as we grow in grace and the power of the Holy Spirit. The good news is that the Holy Spirit is still being poured out. However, the sad news is that neither the manifestation, work, nor fruit of the Spirit are evident in the lives of many who claim to be “born again, Spirit-filled Kingdom Citizens”. When we receive and have been empowered with the Holy Spirit, nothing in the present can ever be the same for us again. All things become new. We seek to live Spirit-filled lives which glorify and build up the Kingdom of God by witnessing and building up the world around us.

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS NOW HAVE A PERMANENT RESIDENT, THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

After His resurrection, the Lord Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to His followers, so they could be His witnesses. (Acts 1:7-8) As stated in one of our previous lessons, before the day of Pentecost, the empowering of individuals by the Holy Spirit was selective and temporary. The Holy Spirit only empowered specific people to do particular tasks, and when the task was accomplished, the Holy Spirit would leave that person. (Ps. 51:11; 1 Sam. 16:13-14) Now that the Holy Spirit has come and lives in us, He uniquely positions us to be used by God.

## KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

### **JULY EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

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**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens must know that the power of the Holy Spirit dwells within them. We must seek to understand who the Holy Spirit is and how He can help us prepare mind, body and spirit for post-pandemic living.

**WORDS/PHRASES:** Spiritual Truth, Liberator, Manifest, Born Again

### **LESSON TWENTY-NINE: SPIRITUAL HELP DURING TIMES OF WEAKNESS**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. How can praying out loud help those around us?
2. Why is it so important for the Holy Spirit to be involved in our prayers?
3. Have you ever gone to God in prayer and you were not sure of what to pray for?

#### **TEXT: ROMANS 8: 26-27**

### **HEART OF THE LESSON: OVERCOMING OUR WEAKNESSES THROUGH PRAYER**

**INTRODUCTION:** This lesson will continue our study on the person, presence and power of the Holy Spirit; it is the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead and who one day will also raise us up. During this lesson, we will explore other ways in which the Holy Spirit works in the lives of believers than those already expressed in previous Bible study lessons. The main focus of Romans 8:26 - 27 is prayer, and it is intended to provide encouragement for believers.

#### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THAT WE NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT TO HELP US BECAUSE WE ARE ALL WEAK AND LIMITED.**

In our prayer life, our weaknesses sometimes overwhelm us. Our weaknesses can be emotional (Sometimes we become so discouraged, we lose heart, and we just give up without praying.) or even physical (We're just too tired, sleepy, ill or exhausted to even pray.). Yet, we should never lose heart in praying. Our weaknesses, shortcomings, and sense of inadequacy must never undermine our commitment to prayer. The Holy Spirit is not affected by what so easily cripples us. He is never short of understanding. His knowledge is infinite and unexhaustive. And since the Spirit of God knows the mind of God, the Spirit's prayer is always in keeping with the will of the Father. Therefore, our prayers are always laid at the throne of grace.

The first two declarations made in Romans 8:26 are: (1) “the Spirit helps us with our weaknesses,” and (2) “We do not know **what** we ought to pray for,...”. We should take note that even though some kingdom citizens may know **how** to pray, not knowing **what** to pray for is our major weakness, and that is why we need the Holy Spirit’s help. General principles and commands are given to us in the Scriptures on **how** to pray, such as **in secret (Matt. 6:6)**; continuously (**1 Thess. 5:17**); with persistence (**Luke 18:1**); with faith (**James 1:5; Mark 11:22-24**); with thanksgiving (**Philippians 4:6**); a spirit of forgiveness (**Mark 11:25**); in Jesus’ name (**John 14:13-14**); with a heart that is right with God (**James 5:16**); without unconfessed sins (**Isaiah 59:2; Psalm 66:18**); and with confidence in accordance with God’s will (**1 John 5:14-15**). The problem is that many times we don’t know **what** the will of God is, and therefore, we don’t know what to ask for when we pray.

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS RECOGNIZE THAT THEY LACK THE KNOWLEDGE OF KNOWING WHAT TO ASK FOR.**

Great men of faith even, at times, find themselves lacking knowledge; they didn’t know what to pray for according to God’s will. Apostle Paul, a faithful believer, prayed and the earth shook. (**Acts 16:25-26**) Yet, there are two instances when his prayers were not aligned with the will of God. He knew **how** to pray, but when his flesh was weak, he did not always know **what** to pray for. Three times, he prayed to God to have a thorn removed from his flesh, but that was not God’s will. (**2 Cor. 12:7-10**) At another time, the apostle was not sure whether to ask God to let him continue living or to let him die. (**Philippians 1:22-23**) At times we (believers) may not know **what** is the will of God and **what** to pray for in every situation. Should we pray for a way out or to be sustained within it? Does God want us to extend grace or pursue justice? Should we pray for healing for a loved one or to be able to let them go? There are many situations that believers may be faced with in which they have no idea where to start praying according to the will of God, as wisdom eludes them. How often have you found yourself at a crossroad, halting between two opinions, not sure of **what** to pray for? Though we may be spiritually weak and not know **what** to pray for as we ought to, the same God who made the sun stand still upon the prayer of Joshua (**Joshua 10:12-13**) invites us to come boldly before the throne of grace and pray with confidence that He will extend His mercy and grace to help us in our time of need. (**Hebrews 4:16**)

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT ALL COMMUNICATION IS NOT EXPRESSED THROUGH WORDS.**

No one has ever prayed for you like the Holy Spirit. No one has ever pleaded with the Father more on target and with deeper groaning and passion than the Holy Spirit. He prays with intensity, urgency, and deep emotions, pleading and urging the Father as He prays. The Holy Spirit groans from the magnitude and weight of our heavy burdens which can’t be expressed in words because the groans are too deep for words. The Spirit intimately and perfectly knows the will of God. The Father knows comprehensively what the Spirit is thinking and asking for on our behalf as He silently intercedes with deep groans that only the Father can understand. The Spirit melts our wills into the will of God: “*Not my will, but thou will be done*”. (**Matt. 6:10**)

## KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

### **JULY EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

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**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens must know that the power of the Holy Spirit dwells within them. We must seek to understand who the Holy Spirit is and how He can help us prepare mind, body and spirit for post-pandemic living.

**WORDS/PHRASES:** Spiritual Truth, Liberator, Manifest, Born Again

### **LESSON THIRTY: ⌘THE MANIFESTATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT⌘**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Why do you think the disciples interrupted Jesus while He was speaking? How do you feel or what is your response when you are in the midst of speaking or doing something “most” important and you are interrupted?
2. In what ways do you participate in sharing your resources, skills, money and time so that the expansion of God's kingdom is not hampered?
3. What are two reasons why it is imperative to wait on the Holy Spirit in order to effectively witness in our “Jerusalem”, “Judea, “Samaria”, or “ends of the earth”? Which of the three have you been more effective in witnessing? Why?

#### **TEXT: ACTS 1:6-9**

### **HEART OF THE LESSON: OUR ROLE AND ASSIGNMENT IN ADVANCING THE KINGDOM OF GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:** Acts 1:6-9, tells of Jesus’ last earthly conversation with His disciples. He informed them of why He was leaving them on earth. Then He reiterated that they were going to receive the promise of the Father, but they needed to wait for Him to come. Then Jesus ascended back to the Father. This lesson will reveal aspects and effects of the Holy Spirit working in the lives of the disciples, empowering them with boldness to expand the Kingdom of God. This all came about after the disciples realized that Jesus’ plan for them was greater and far exceeded their hopes of Him restoring the Kingdom of Israel on earth. They were given roles and assignments so that they could be instrumental in helping to restore the Kingdom of God.

#### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT IT IS PERMISSIBLE TO SEEK KNOWLEDGE. (James 1:5)**

“Then they gathered around him and asked him, ‘Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?’ He said to them: ‘It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.’” (VV 6-7)⌘The disciples knew of the prophetic promise of Israel’s restoration.



They had also learned that a messiah would come and set up his kingdom. **(Eze. 11:17)** Therefore, they had come together and were anxiously waiting for Jesus to inform them when He was going to set up the Kingdom. **(V 6)** The disciples understandably were expecting the kingdom to be set up immediately; they were so excited. Though they were excited that the Kingdom of Israel was going to be restored, they were also looking forward to their own ambitious placement in the Kingdom. **(Mark 10:35-37)** To answer the question that the disciples asked concerning the restoration of the Kingdom, Jesus said to them, **“It is not for you to know times which the Father has fixed by His own authority.” (V 7)** Jesus, our compassionate Savior, didn’t rebuke them; instead, He told them that He had something else in mind which needed to be said so that they would be able to complete their task. As it was with the disciples, we (believers) seek to know when Jesus is going to return. Some people have tried to guess when the end of time will come. Some religions have set specific dates when the world will come to an end. However, they have found themselves to have been wrong. The fact is no one knows except the Father. It is not our business to know when the end will come; instead, our focus should be on what Jesus has left for us to do and to be ready when He comes. %

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS ARE EMPOWERED TO DO GREAT WORKS AND TO BE WITNESSES FOR JESUS WHILE WE ARE IN THIS WORLD.**

Jesus’ final words (**“.... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...”**) to His disciples highlights His divine purpose for leaving us on this earth to be His witnesses and advance the Kingdom of God. **(V 8)** Not only are believers empowered and emboldened to do great work because one day we must give an account of the work that we have done and the work that was left undone. Jesus didn’t want the disciples to immediately run out and attempt—in the power of their own abilities—to declare Him to the world, nor does He want us to do so. In order to be witnesses for Jesus, we, as did the disciples, first need the indwelling and power of the Holy Spirit.

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW OBEDIENCE IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE.**

**During the three years that Jesus was with His disciples, they were always obedient to Him. And now that obedience was again required. They needed to lay aside their ambitions and hopes for Kingdom restoration of Israel and follow the directives that Jesus had given to them: stay in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father (the Holy Spirit); and afterwards, “.... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (V 8) “.... but tarry.... until you are endued with power from on high.” (V 49)** Because the disciples were obedient and followed the directives of Jesus, the Holy Spirit came and indwelled them on the day of Pentecost. As a result, **they became very powerful and effective witnesses for Jesus. Evidence of the power of the Holy Spirit working through them were:** (1) The disciples became fearless and bold in speech **(Acts 4:13)**; (2) **Peter preached and thousands were saved and indwelled with the Holy Spirit;** (3) As he passed by, Peter’s shadow healed sick people who were brought and laid in the streets. Also, those tormented by impure spirits were healed **(Acts 5:12-16)**; (4) Paul’s handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him healed the sick and diseased **(Acts 19:12)**; and (5) Peter and John healed a man crippled from birth at the Temple gate. **(Acts 3:1-10)**

## KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

### **JULY EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

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### **LESSON THIRTY- ONE: BORN AGAIN IN THE SPIRIT**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. What evidential changes have occurred in your life since you have received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit?
2. What are some of the reasons why Nicodemus came to visit Jesus at night?
3. Is there a specific time in your life when you can look back and say, “This is the day that I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior?”

**TEXT: JOHN 3:1-8**

### **HEART OF THE LESSON: ENTRY REQUIREMENTS TO THE KINGDOM**

**INTRODUCTION:** John 3:1-8 records a conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus who comes in the secrecy of night to learn from Jesus whom he professes as a teacher sent by God. This lesson will focus on the persona of Nicodemus and what we can learn from his encounter with Jesus.

#### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS NEED ANSWERS TO SETTLE MANY OF THE “WHO” AND “WHY” QUESTIONS ABOUT NICODEMUS.**

To better understand John 3:1-2, we need to know the answers to three questions: (1) who was Nicodemus; (2) why he came to Jesus; and (3) why did he come at night. Nicodemus was a prominent man; he was a teacher; a part of the Sanhedrin, a group of leaders who served on the Jewish ruling council; a Pharisee, which means he loved the Scriptures and studied them carefully; and a teacher. **(John 3:1; 7:45-52; 19:39)** Nicodemus was also a well-educated, wealthy and powerful man with very impressive credentials. **There is a large difference between knowing facts, and understanding truth.** Biblical scholars for centuries have pondered the question, why did Nicodemus come to Jesus at night? Several opinions have been offered as explanations such as: (1) Nicodemus wanted to have a quiet, uninterrupted conversation with Jesus, who attracted crowds; (2) he would not be seen; (3) he wanted to see, know and hear more about the miracles; (4) he was ashamed and felt that it was beneath him to be seen going to someone of less prominence and status than himself; and (5) because he feared other Jews. Even though, Nicodemus came in the darkness of night, what is most important is the fact that **“he came”** and came to the right person – the “Light of the world”, the Son of God, thus making the **“why”** he came less relevant and less important.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus, he initiated the conversation and respectfully addressed Jesus as “Rabbi”, saying, “We know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one could perform these signs except God be with him.” (2:1-11;13-22) Jesus didn’t respond to Nicodemus’ reference to signs. Jesus knows that sign-induced belief tends to be shallow. (John 20:26-30) Therefore, Jesus begins to teach Nicodemus about the entrance requirements to the kingdom of God. **“You must be born again..., no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again”.** (V 3) Nicodemus began to question Jesus because he could not understand how a person could be **“born again”**. Nicodemus could not understand what Jesus was saying. Jesus was talking about being born again spiritually; Nicodemus was thinking of physical rebirth. (V 4) Nicodemus’ coming to Jesus was not in vain. While Nicodemus didn’t “get it” immediately, his encounter with Jesus must have had a great influence on him because he later tried to obtain a fair hearing for Jesus and defended Him before the council. (7:50; 1:47) After Jesus’ crucifixion, Nicodemus brought a large quantity of expensive ointments to anoint Jesus’ body. (John 19:39)

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS RECOGNIZE THAT GOD, WHO SEARCHES THE HEART AND MIND OF MAN, KNOWS WHAT WE HAVE NEED OF.**

After respectfully acknowledging Jesus as a great teacher, Nicodemus’ next statement indicated that he may have been more interested in seeing and hearing more about the miracles and signs that Jesus performed than about anything else. Jesus knew the reason that Nicodemus waited until night time to come to Him may not have been honorable; yet, Jesus did not refuse to receive him on that account. Jesus received him, taught him, and changed him. Through his nighttime visit with Jesus, Nicodemus came to know better who Jesus is, rather than just knowing what Jesus does. This is the point that all believers need to come to know – who Jesus is, Emanuel. Do you know more about who Jesus is or more about what He has done?

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS NEED TO KNOW THE MEANING OF BEING “BORN AGAIN” AND WHY IT IS NECESSARY.**

Nicodemus did not understand what Jesus was saying when Jesus told him **“... no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”** (V 3) As it was with Nicodemus, there are many people who are believers, yet they have not been born again, nor do they understand the concept of “born again”. It is crucial that we all have a clear and concrete understanding and know the significance and necessity of **“being born again”**. **“Born Again”** means our old self dies and we are spiritually born again as a completely new person. (2 Corin. 5:17) We cease to be a citizen of this world and become a citizen of the Kingdom of God. **“Born again”** people do not become perfect, but they do become different. They will increasingly and continuously pursue holiness because they will not want to grieve God. They will have a deep desire and compulsion to share Jesus with others by living in such a way as to always please and honor him. All believers need to understand two reasons why we **must** be **“born again”**. First, we must be **“born again”** because Jesus, who is King of the Kingdom, knows exactly what the entry requirements for the Kingdom are. Second, we must be **“born again”** because our first birth is flawed, corrupt, and sinful. **“We were born in sin and shapen in iniquity.”** (Psalm 51:5)

## KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

**AUGUST EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT – SPIRITUAL ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE BOOK OF PSALMS**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens must seek to understand how God provides encouragement in every life situation. We are never alone as He is a very present help in good times and bad times. Our God is a God of assurance.

**KEY WORDS/PHRASES:** Vigilance, Patience, Shepherd, Strength

**LESSON THIRTY-TWO: OUR GOD IS EVER VIGILANT**

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Why do we sometimes feel that the Lord is not with us?
2. Throughout the Psalms, we observe a variety of emotions. What are some emotions you have experienced during difficult times in your life?
3. In what ways has the presence of the Lord impacted your faith journey?

**TEXT: PSALM 121:1-8**

**THE HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST BELIEVE THAT GOD IS CONSTANTLY WITH THEM.**

**INTRODUCTION:** The brief descriptions that introduce the psalms have David listed as author in 73 instances. David's personality and identity are clearly stamped on many of these psalms. While it is clear that David wrote many of the individual psalms, he is definitely not the author of the entire collection. Two of the psalms (72 and 127) are attributed to Solomon, David's son and successor. Psalm 90 is a prayer assigned to Moses. Another group of 12 psalms (50) and (73—83) is ascribed to the family of Asaph. The sons of Korah wrote 11 psalms (42, 44—49, 84—85, 87—88). Psalm 88 is attributed to Heman, while Psalm 89 is assigned to Ethan the Ezrahite. With the exception of Solomon and Moses, all these additional authors were priests or Levites who were responsible for providing music for sanctuary worship during David's reign. Fifty of the psalms designate no specific person as author, although two of those are designated elsewhere in the Bible as psalms of David. The Book of Psalms has far more "chapters" than any other book in the Bible, with 150 individual psalms. It is also one of the most diverse, since the psalms deal with such subjects as God and His creation, war, worship, wisdom, sin and evil, judgment, justice, and the coming of the Messiah. The Book of Psalms is a collection of prayers, poems, and hymns that focus the worshiper's thoughts on God in praise and adoration. Parts of this book were used as a hymnal in the worship services of ancient Israel. The musical heritage of the psalms is demonstrated by its title. It comes from a Greek word which means "a song sung to the accompaniment of a musical instrument." One of the results of being filled with the Spirit or the word of Christ is singing. The psalms are the "songbook" of the early church that reflected the new truth in Christ.

## 1. KINGDOM CITIZENS MUST DEPEND ON GOD FOR HELP. (VV 1-2)

Each of us need help at one time or another. We go to a physician for health needs; we go to schools and universities for academic needs; we go to the mechanic when we have automotive needs, and we go to the bank when we have financial needs. But where do you go when you have spiritual needs? The Psalmist says, **I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.** His declaration was, **My help comes from the Lord.** For healing, comfort and deliverance, we must LIFT our eyes to the mountain. It is interesting that when we are sad, we often look down; however, if we would learn anything from this psalm, it would be to LIFT our eyes toward the heavens. Then with the psalmist we must declare that **“My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”** Why do you think the psalmist added this statement? What are some things about this statement that should encourage us? **What are some other sources of help we pursue in time of need? What might the psalmist have learned about some of these other sources?**

## 2. KINGDOM CITIZENS FIND COMFORT IN THE CONSTANT CARE OF OUR LOVING GOD. (VV 3-4)

The word ‘comfort’ is a very soothing word. At some point, each of us seeks comfort. The man who works away from home, longs to return to his family and his bed; both afford comfort. For the soldier who has served a TDY stint, comfort is one of the things he cherishes upon his return. Let’s consider some other avenues of comfort. The writer says, **“He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”**

*a. God will not let you fall; with Him, your feet are secure.* If you have ever been dizzy or had to use a walking apparatus for support, then you know the importance of firm footing. If you have ever encountered a fall, then you know what it feels like to be unsure. The Psalmist encourages us to find comfort in the truth that **He will not let your foot slip.**

*b. God will not let you out of His sight:* **He who watches over you will not slumber nor sleep.** I heard someone say recently that when Moses ran to the backside of the desert after killing the Egyptian, he thought he was hidden from the world, and maybe even, from God, but God knew exactly where he was and God knew the plans he had for him. **Have you ever felt like God was asleep during a difficult period in your life?**

## 3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT GOD PROTECTS AND PRESERVES US. (VV 5-8)

God’s commitment is to care for us, every day and in every way. Verses 5-8 are all about what God will do. If you doubt the vigilance of God in your life, read . . .

**The Lord watches over you — the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord will keep you from all harm— he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.** When you consider the promises of God here, what thoughts come to mind? Psalm 121 should be a psalm of meditation. We need to allow the Spirit of God to speak to us through this text. **How might you use this passage to help a struggling brother or sister? Where is the comfort? The Lord watches over you — the Lord is your shade at your right hand.**

## KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

### **AUGUST EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT – SPIRITUAL ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE BOOK OF PSALMS**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom Citizens must seek to understand how God provides encouragement in every life situation. We are never alone as He is a very present help in good times and bad times. Our God is a God of assurance.

**KEY WORDS/PHRASES:** Vigilance, Patience, Shepherd, Strength

### **LESSON THIRTY-THREE: WAIT PATIENTLY ON GOD**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. What kinds of situations in life force us to wait?
2. Why is it difficult to wait for many of us?
3. What are some benefits of waiting in general, and what are some of the benefits of waiting on God?

#### **TEXT: PSALM 40:1-3**

### **THE HEART OF THE LESSON: LEARNING TO WAIT IS A PART OF MATURING AS A CHRIST FOLLOWER.**

**INTRODUCTION:** Waiting forces us to stop; sometimes this may be for a short period of time; other times, it's much longer. A child waits to be picked up from school, an employee waits for his/her paycheck, and a patient waits to see the doctor. Waiting is built into our physical and our spiritual lives. **What does it mean to wait on the Lord?** To some, that means spending time in prayer, seeking God. To others, it means standing firm on what God has already spoken. To wait on God's answer, voice, or promise in prayer is an essential part of our walk with Him. Here are three encouraging verses about waiting: **Lamentations 3:25** "The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him." **Isaiah 30:18** "Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you. For the Lord is a God of justice; blessed are all those who wait for him." **Psalms 130:5-6** "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word, I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning." In an article entitled "God Works While We Wait," author Jade Mazarin said, "Something actually happens while nothing is happening. God uses waiting to change us. The story of Adam and Eve is a story of rebellion against God. Once they believed that God didn't have their best interests in mind, they decided to go ahead without God and do what they wanted. They became, in effect, their own god. Too often, this is exactly what we do today. When God tells us to wait, we don't trust Him, but go ahead and find ways to accomplish what we want to happen." **Why do you think God has built waiting into our faith journey?**

**1. KINGDOM CITIZENS AFFIRM THE TRUTH THAT WHEN WE WAIT PATIENTLY ON THE LORD, HE HEARS US. (V 1)**

Feeling impatient is a perfectly normal response to a situation, but we shouldn't allow that impatience to escalate into anxiety and stress. Learning to wait patiently will help you deal with everyday life and be more comfortable taking long and unexpected waits in stride. The Psalmist said, **I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry.** Ann Lin suggests “3 Ways to Wait Patiently”:

1. **Occupy your time.** One of the best ways to avoid becoming anxious during a long wait, is to do something else at the same time to occupy your mind.
2. **Don't try too hard.** Finding ways to distract yourself is a tried and tested way of keeping impatience at bay and helping time pass.
3. **Wait with other people.** There is evidence which suggests that waiting for something with other people can help the time pass quicker.

**How might we apply these three principles in our lives?** As we walk through each waiting period, and there will be more than one, what are some of the tools we should use to help us grow, and what should we do when The Lord turns and responds to our cry?

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS REJOICE WHEN GOD ANSWERS THEIR PRAYER. (V 2)**

The Psalmist continues, **“He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.”** The verbs in this verse are so rich - **lifted, set, gave.** Gotquestions.com says “David wants to convey the idea of being desperately trapped in abysmally dark circumstances. David’s metaphor reminds us of Jeremiah’s actual imprisonment in a muddy cistern (Jeremiah 38:7–13) and Joseph’s entrapment by his brothers in a pit (Genesis 37:18–22). On his own, David is powerless to escape. The only thing he can do is wait patiently for the Lord to rescue him. David may have been speaking of the same excruciating episode in Psalm 69:2: “Deeper and deeper I sink into the mire; I can’t find a foothold. I am in deep water, and the floods overwhelm me” (NLT). David testifies, “He brought me out of the miry clay.” The Lord delivers him by pulling him up and out of his horrible ordeal. “You brought me up from the grave, O LORD,” utters David in Psalm 30:3, “You kept me from falling into the pit of death” (NLT). “He brought me out into a spacious place; he rescued me because he delighted in me,” declares David in Psalm 18:19. What David cannot do for himself, the Lord accomplishes. God sets David’s feet on a solid, secure rock and establishes his steps (Psalm 27:5; 37:23; 62:2).”**In what ways has the Lord LIFTED you, SET your feet on a rock, and GAVE you a firm place to stand?%**

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS CELEBRATE GOD’S GOODNESS AND GRACE. (V 3)**

It is sad but true, that we pray, God answers, and we fail to stop and celebrate His goodness and grace to us. Full assurance and real deliverance should lead us to celebrate the hand of God in our lives. The Psalmist continues, **“He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him.”** The Lord God moved the writer from an old song to a new song. I have learned to enjoy homegoing services over funerals. In my mind, funerals are about the death of a person while homegoing services are more about the life of the person. In both, there may be tears; however, the focus is very different. Before the Lord delivered me from my pit, my song might have been “Nobody knows the trouble I see,” while after the pit, the new song is, “I Will Sing of the Goodness of God because all my life You have been faithful.” One focuses on human strength, the other on God’s greatness. **Because of your testimony, how has God used your story to help others?** Telling our story is important.

## KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

### **AUGUST EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT – SPIRITUAL ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE BOOK OF PSALMS**

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**KEY WORDS/PHRASES:** Vigilance, Patience, Shepherd, Strength

### **LESSON THIRTY-FOUR: GOD IS OUR REFUGE AND OUR STRENGTH**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Who are the people who have given you a feeling of security?
2. What are some of the negative effects when a person does not feel secure?
3. How would you describe your sense of security because of your faith in Christ to an unbeliever or non-Christian?

#### **TEXT: PSALM 46: 1-3**

### **THE HEART OF THE LESSON: A SENSE OF SECURITY IS PRICELESS.**

**INTRODUCTION:** Life is filled with many challenges and changes. We are impacted by a host of circumstances and situations that can threaten our sense of security. Here are just a few: *1. A child who has to walk through a dangerous neighborhood to get to school 2. A woman who is recently divorced after 25 years of marriage with little or no work experience 3. A man who is constantly threatened by a supervisor concerning losing his job. These are a few examples of how we can lose our sense of security. Then there is instability in the economy, international conflicts, inflation and identity theft. Our narratives may be different, but each of us land at the same doorstep: "I want to feel secure." There are politicians who would lead us to believe that they can and will make us secure; there are financial institutions that go a long way to give us that sense of security, and even our families work hard to provide security for us; however, at times, each of these will fail us. **Where can we find ultimate security?***

### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT OUR SECURITY IS FOUND IN GOD. (V 1)**

As we reflect on a difficult day, one might say, "The Lord kept me today." Another might say, "God protected me today." Some might even say, "The Lord made a way for me today." No matter how we phrase it, it all boils down to what the Psalmist said in verse one, **"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble"**. The idea conveyed here is of one who protects and secures. Gotquestion.com says, Psalm 46:1 contains a description of God and a wonderful promise based on His character: **"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."** *He is our refuge. God provides safety. We take shelter in our relationship with Him (cf. Proverbs 18:10). He is our strength.*



*God gives us the power we need to endure hardship as we serve Him, fight spiritual battles, resist temptation, and bear up under persecution. We are weak, but He is strong (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:10). He is an ever-present help in trouble. God is at hand. He is not far away from us but nearby to assist us in the tasks He has assigned (cf. Psalm 145:18).*

Children run to their parents when they are afraid or need comfort. Students traveling on a field trip will often run to a chaperone if there is a feeling of uncertainty. Each of us needs a place of safety, as well as safe people in our lives. Again, the Psalmist finds solace in God, **“From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe.”**

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT GOD PROVIDES COMFORT IN DIFFICULT TIMES. (V 2)**

Fear, bitterness, hate, and love are very powerful emotions. In the best of situations and in the worst of situations, we make the decision as to which emotions control us. Here the psalmist encourages us not to fear because of current surroundings. **“Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea . . .” (V 2).** In the past few months, we have experienced an upheaval in nature - snow and flooding in California, flooding in Florida, multiple tornadoes in the southwest, midwest and even in the northeast, whole towns have been destroyed by unusual and destructive weather. It has been said that nature is angry. Our comfort lies in the truth that God controls nature. So, what is the believer called to do, **“though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea?”** What we are called to do and what we actually do are not always the same.

Kingdom Citizens should turn their eyes toward God and find Him in His word. We are not people of sight; we are people of faith. It is not during the easy, sunny days of life that our faith is proven, or put on display. It is however, during the difficult days, when it is raining cats and dogs in our lives that we are called to cast all our cares on Him. Matthew 8:23-26a illustrates this for us. **“Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!” He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?”** Describe a time you were afraid and you chose faith over fear?

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT THE UNSETTLED ELEMENTS OF EARTH DO NOT LIMIT THE POWER OF GOD. (V 3)**

**“Though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging . . .” (V 3).** As we read verse three, the intensity of the problem increases. In Psalm 46, the poet describes various kinds of disasters and the chaos that mark our existence in this broken and sinful world. He alludes to natural disasters such as earthquakes, volcanoes, landslides, and floods (verses 2 and 3). He mentions the elements of war and violence in verses 8 and 9. But, through it all, “we will not fear” (verse 2). One of the keys to successfully navigating the troubles and tragedies of life is perspective. If we only see the **“waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging,”** we will become overwhelmed, defeated and mentally, physically, spiritually and emotionally destroyed. But if we lean into the truth that our God is Lord of nature, then we will respond differently; we will respond correctly. The writer says in vv. 7 and 10, **The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. . . “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”** What happens in us when we are confident that God is with us during troubling times?

## KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

### **AUGUST EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT – SPIRITUAL ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE BOOK OF PSALMS**

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**KEY WORDS/PHRASES:** Vigilance, Patience, Shepherd, Strength

### **LESSON THIRTY-FIVE: THE LORD IS OUR SHEPHERD**

#### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. What is your view of God? Is He faithful or unfaithful? Is He partial or impartial, etc.?
2. If a friend asked you, “What kind of relationship do you have with the Lord?” What are some things you might tell him/her?
3. Please explain the relationship between a sheep and a shepherd.

#### **TEXT: PSALM 23**

**THE HEART OF THE LESSON: THE GOOD SHEPHERD PROVIDES, PROTECTS AND DIRECTS.**

**INTRODUCTION:** God first compared the Israelites to sheep and later applied that label to all who are called by His name (Ezekiel 34; Matthew 10:6; 15:24). God’s people are compared to sheep for several reasons (Psalm 79:13; 100:3). **First** of all, sheep are one of the few animals that do not have a defense system. Sheep are helpless without a shepherd (Matthew 9:36; Numbers 27:17). The first line of Psalm 23 reflects the wonderful truth that God Himself is our Defender.

**Second**, sheep are notorious for following the leader, regardless of how dangerous or foolish that may be. Like sheep, human beings are extremely gullible when an attractive or charismatic leader promises a shiny new idea. History is replete with tragic illustrations of the “herd mentality” in action (Acts 13:50; 19:34; Numbers 16:2). That sheep-like mentality was in evidence when Pilate brought Jesus before the people to ask what should be done with Him. A **third** reason human beings are compared to sheep in the Bible is that sheep are prone to wander away from the flock (Isaiah 53:6). A sheep’s only chance of survival is with the flock under the care of a competent shepherd. Yet sheep become overconfident, rebellious, or distracted, and they wander away. They spy greener grass in the other direction or fail to notice when the flock moves away. **Give reasons why, as sheep, we should stay close to the Good Shepherd.**

## 1. KINGDOM CITIZENS HAVE THE ASSURANCE THAT GOD PROVIDES FOR HIS OWN. (VV 1-2)

Basic provision is important to a healthy life. For a child depending on parents, for a spouse who does not work outside the home, and for a young man with physical and emotional disabilities having needs provided for in a sufficient manner is important. For each of us, man, woman, boy or girl, we need the assurance that we will have the basic necessities of life. The Psalmist here speaks with great confidence when he says, **“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.”** (VV 1-2). To have a shepherd means to have someone who cares for you intimately and personally. It means you are not alone, and you are not an orphan. The Amplified Version puts verse 1 this way, **“The LORD is my Shepherd [to feed, to guide and to shield me], I shall not want.”** Gotquestions.com reminds us that, the clause “the Lord is my shepherd” comes from one of the most beloved of all passages of Scripture, the 23rd Psalm. In this passage and throughout the New Testament we learn that the Lord is our Shepherd in two ways. *First, as the Good Shepherd, He laid down His life for His sheep and, second, His sheep know His voice and follow Him (John 10:11, 14). Furthermore, sheep are easily frightened and become easily confused. In fact, they have been known to plunge blindly off a cliff following one after another. Shepherds in Bible times faced incredible dangers in caring for their sheep, putting their own lives at risk by battling wild animals such as wolves and lions who threatened the flock. In what ways has God demonstrated to you that He is your GOOD shepherd?*

## 2. KINGDOM CITIZENS HAVE THE ASSURANCE THAT GOD PROTECTS THEM. (VV 3-4)

**He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.** (VV 3-4) **He restores my soul;** He keeps me from becoming completely and utterly destroyed; He brings me back to a place of health. **He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name’s sake:** He goes before me so that I would know the way to follow. He does not send me in the path of righteousness; He leads me, so I am safe. He not only protects my body but He also protects my spirit - He leads me in a righteous path. **Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me:** In my darkest and most difficult moments, You are there; In my low and challenging moments, You are there. Therefore, I feel safe and secure because of your presence. **Where have you seen God’s hand of protection in your life?**

## 3. KINGDOM CITIZENS HAVE THE ASSURANCE THAT GOD PRECEDES THEM. (VV 5-6)

The Lord goes before us; He knows the path we must tread. He is aware of the dangers and the difficulties we will face. Like a good father and a faithful shepherd, He precedes us. The Scripture continues, **“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.** (VV 5-6) Years ago when the men of Jehovah did Men’s Retreats at Ridgecrest in North Carolina, some of the leaders would not ride the bus with everyone else, but instead, they went ahead of the group to make sure things were in order when the men arrived. The Lord not only goes ahead of us, but he is with us. **When has the Lord gone before you?**

## KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

**SEPTEMBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT- SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT FROM THE ULTIMATE POWER SOURCE**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom citizens know that their spiritual batteries will become weak from time to time. We must know that we can be spiritually empowered by a right connection to the ultimate power source, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**KEY WORDS/PHRASES:** Recharge, Empower, Spiritual Boost, Struggle

**LESSON THIRTY-SIX: STRENGTH THROUGH STRUGGLE**

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Do you see God's Plans in the midst of struggles?
2. What is an example of a spiritual boost God gave you through prayer?
3. Has God ever recharged, refocused, or re-established your plans?

**TEXT: JEREMIAH 29: 11-14**

**HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS SHOULD KNOW THE PLANS OF GOD FROM THE PLOTS OF PEOPLE. (VV 11-14)**

**INTRODUCTION:** This book gains its title from the human author, Jeremiah. The book begins with "**The words of Jeremiah...**" His name means "Jehovah throws," in the sense of laying down a foundation, or "Jehovah establishes, appoints, or sends." This name implies that God gives us spiritual instruction and insight from this Prophet of God. Jeremiah served as both a priest and a Prophet of God. Jeremiah has also been known as "The weeping prophet" (13:17; 14:17), living a life of conflict because of his predictions about judgment by the invading Babylonians. He was threatened, tried for his life, put in stocks, forced to flee from King Jehoiakim, publicly humiliated by a false prophet and thrown into a pit. This prophet's name and his struggles help us understand the historical and theological themes of this powerful book. The main theme of Jeremiah is judgment upon Judah (Chs. 1-29) with future restoration in the messianic kingdom. Therefore, as we consider the name, history, life, and struggles of this prophet of God, we can receive empowerment and a spiritual boost as we study this lesson for the week.

### **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS ALWAYS SEE GOD AT WORK IN EVERY SITUATION AND CIRCUMSTANCE IN LIFE!**

In our text today, God did not forget his people, even though they were captives in Babylon. He planned to give them a new beginning with a new purpose-to turn them into new people. In times of dire circumstances, it may appear as though God has forgotten you. However, God may be preparing you, as he did the people of Judah for a new beginning with Him at the center.

We must always listen and search for the heart of God for instruction and direction in every situation and circumstance in life. The text says: **“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (V 11)** There are times in life when we face situations and circumstances that appear as if God is not working on our behalf, but we must remember the word of God says in Romans 8:28: **“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”** Therefore, kingdom citizens must know that even the struggles of life are somehow working out for our good. In our text from Jeremiah 29: 11, God speaks a powerful promise and declaration of what He knows! It is the plans He has for us! Then God says His plans are not to harm us, but to give us hope and a future. **Are you willing to wait and hold on to God’s plan or your plan?**

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW HOW TO PRAY AND SEEK GOD WHOLEHEARTEDLY.**

According to God’s wise plan, His people were to have confidence. Although the exiles were in a difficult place and time, they needed not to despair because they had God’s presence, the privilege of prayer, and God’s grace. If we seek Him wholeheartedly, He will be found. Neither a strange land, sorrow, persecution, nor physical problems can break our fellowship with God. Plus, the Power of Prayer gives us access to the Ultimate Power Source! The word of God validates the Power and Grace of God working in our lives in Romans 8:38-39: **“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”** Kingdom citizens have this promise and power of God through the Grace of God! The access to the power, promise, and grace of God is a relationship and prayer life. When the kingdom citizen has a personal relationship and a fervent prayer life, they are seeking God wholeheartedly. The text says: **“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” (V 13)** Kingdom citizens must seek God wholeheartedly not half-heartedly!

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THAT SOMETIMES GOD WILL RE-DIRECT THEIR PLANS.**

The text says: **“I will be found by you, declares the Lord, and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you, declares the Lord, and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.” (V 14)** This verse implies a lot and proclaims a lot, however the key message for kingdom citizens is that God knows how to bring us back! Not only does He know how to bring us back, but He knows when and where to bring us back or take us. In other words, God knows we need to be re-charged, re-focused, or re-established to His Plans.

## KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

**SEPTEMBER EMPHASIS: KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT- SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT FROM THE ULTIMATE POWER SOURCE**

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom citizens know that their spiritual batteries will become weak from time to time. We must know that we can be spiritually empowered by a right connection to the ultimate power source, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**KEY WORDS/ PHRASES:** Recharge, Empower, Spiritual Boost, Struggle

**LESSON THIRTY-SEVEN: THE LORD WILL STRENGTHEN YOU**

### **Questions To Consider:**

1. Was there a time when you felt fear that God was not with you?
2. Was there a time when God removed your enemies without you knowing?
3. Was there a time when you felt confident that God was holding you?

### **TEXT: ISAIAH 41: 10-13**

**HEART OF THE LESSON: KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT THE COVERING OF GOD WILL SEE THEM THROUGH. (VV 10-13)**

**INTRODUCTION:** The human author of this another Prophet book of the Old Testament is Isaiah. Isaiah, son of Amoz is often thought of as the greatest of the writing prophets. His name means “The Lord saves.” This powerful name and its meaning point us to the name that is above every name- The name of Jesus who is salvation. As we consider the book of Isaiah, it is a book that unveils the full dimensions of God’s judgment and salvation. God is “the Holy One of Israel” who will punish his rebellious people, but will also redeem them by His Amazing Grace. Isaiah is the prophet we need to hear today as he cries out God’s message of hope and deliverance. He makes a profound declaration in Isaiah 40:1 when it says, **“Comfort, comfort my people, says God.” (NIV)** In this verse, the English word “comfort” comes from two Latin words that together mean “with strength.” Kingdom citizens understand the sovereign power of God and His comfort, grace, and mercy on undeserving saints and sinners. Yet, this is not the key verse in this awesome prophetic book for this week’s lesson. The key verse is Isaiah 1:18 which says: **“Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.”** “Scarlet” & “crimson” refer to the blood that is on the hands of murderers & sinners, but can be cleansed by the blood of Christ. “White as snow” is a powerful figurative description of the result of forgiveness offered by Jesus Christ. The lesson this week not only points us to all these things, but to God being our helper also.

## **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT GOD IS WITH THEM AND HAVE NO NEED TO FEAR!**

Fear is an emotion that many times people don't like to talk about or admit. The website dictionary defines fear as: "dread, alarm; unpleasant emotion caused by evil or danger." Kingdom citizens realize that fear is a natural emotion, but also realize that there are different uses of the word. For example, Psalm 31: 13 says: **"For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life."** (KJ) and Proverbs 9:10 says: **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."** (KJ) Our text for this week's lesson says: **"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God."** (V 10a) This verse is a faithful and powerful promise from God that He will help us through everything. The prophet shares this promise from God to remind the believer and let others know that we don't have to fear or to be dismayed. Isaiah takes the verse even further by saying, **"Don't be discouraged for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand."** (V 10 b, c) God gives us several promises in this verse, but the most powerful thing for the kingdom citizen is that **"I am your God."** This declaration assures us that because He is our God, and we are His children, we don't have to fear. Therefore, kingdom citizens, hold your heads up! Don't fear or be dismayed! God's got It!

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF THEIR ENEMIES.**

The text says: **"All who rage against you will surely be ashamed and disgraced; those who oppose you will be as nothing and perish."** (V 11) In this verse, the prophet makes a statement against anyone who comes against His servant. Kingdom citizens as servants of God have this same assurance as any other person with a title such as: Pastor, Prophet, Preacher, etc. as it is written in Psalm 105:15: **"Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm."** We must be very careful how we treat any of God's creation! The text says in verse 12: **"Though you search for your enemies, you will not find them. Those who wage war against you will be as nothing at all."** (NIV) This verse implies that God has a way of getting rid of those who plot and plan against you as enemies. God is able to turn your enemies into your footstools!

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT ALL OF THEIR HELP COMES FROM THE LORD.**

This text says: **"Do not be afraid, O worm Jacob, O little Israel, for I myself will help you, declares the Lord."** (V 14) Isaiah makes it a point to again give the assurance that we don't need to be afraid. God also again assures the believer that He will step in Himself and help in every situation. Kingdom citizens have the God of all as their personal help through every circumstance. We must have confidence that God is able and will do all He promises to do!

## KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

**SEPTEMBER EMPHASIS:** KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING BODY, MIND AND SPIRIT- SPIRITUAL EMPOWERMENT FROM THE ULTIMATE POWER SOURCE

**THOUGHT:** Kingdom citizens know that their spiritual batteries will become weak from time to time. We must know that we can be spiritually empowered by a right connection to the ultimate power source, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

**KEY WORDS/ PHRASES:** Recharge, Empower, Spiritual Boost, Struggle

**LESSON THIRTY-EIGHT:** PERFECTION POWER

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Have you ever felt like you had an outer body experience?
2. Is there a thorn in your flesh that God uses to keep you humble?
3. What is your weakness that reveals God's strength in your life?

**TEXT: 2 CORINTHIANS 12:1-10**

**HEART OF THE LESSON:** KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT GOD'S POWER IS PERFECTED IN OUR WEAKNESS. (VV 1-10)

**INTRODUCTION:** The Apostle Paul is the human author of this second letter to the Corinthians. Paul writes this second letter to the Corinthians because of the infiltration of false teachers and troublemakers in the midst. The false teachers were challenging both Paul's personal integrity and his authority as an apostle. They were saying that Paul was not a genuine apostle and that he was putting into his own pocket the money they had collected for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem. Paul asked the Corinthians to consider that his personal life in their midst was always honorable and that his life-transforming message of salvation was true. These are some of the same situations we face today in churches. Many times, the church is infiltrated by people with wrong motives and personal agendas that can divide a congregation. Sometimes, just as they challenged Paul's personal integrity and authority, people will do the same with leaders of the church today. The fact that kingdom citizens, leaders, pastors, and everyone have character flaws is no excuse for not receiving the true Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul was sure of his calling from God and in spite of the challenges from people and his own inward challenges, he pressed forward with the ministry and message God gave him to share. Therefore, as we move into this lesson for this week, let's consider Paul's vision and his thorn as one of God's kingdom citizens. Perhaps, we have had some similar encounters as Paul and can be inspired and encouraged by Paul's outcome.



## **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW THAT GOD DOES ALLOW INTIMATE EXPERIENCES AND DREAMS THAT ARE MYSTERIOUS AND PRIVATE.**

In the New International Version of the Bible, the heading title for our text this week is “Paul’s Vision and His Thorn.” This is an interesting statement made by Paul and is somewhat of a mystery. Paul opens this chapter talking about visions and revelations. The Holman Bible Dictionary says: “Vision is an experience in the life of a person, whereby a special revelation from God was received.” Holman also gives two purposes the vision was given. “First, a vision was given for immediate direction, and second, a vision was given to develop the kingdom of God by revealing the moral and spiritual deficiencies of the people of God in light of God’s requirements for maintaining a proper relationship with Him.” Therefore, in our text, Paul states that his vision and revelation was from God, and he didn’t want to boast about it but it was a “caught up into the third heaven experience.” Paul says: **“That experience is worth boasting about, but I’m not going to do it. I will boast only about my weaknesses. (2 Cor. 12:5 NLT)** When we consider these first 6 verses of the text and what Holman says about visions and their purposes, we must ask ourselves some difficult questions.

1. Is God directing my life now through visions and revelations?
2. Do I have experiences that reveal the person God is developing in me?
3. Do I know when to reveal or not reveal the vision God gives me?
4. How do I deal with the thorn in my flesh?

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW HOW TO STAY HUMBLE EVEN WHEN THEY HAVE LIFE EXPERIENCES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO BE PROUD OF.**

The text says: **“Even though I have received such wonderful revelations from God. So to keep me from becoming proud, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger from Satan to torment me and keep me from becoming proud.” (2 Cor. 12: 7 NLT)** Paul suggests to us in this verse that the Lord knows how to balance our lives. We must be careful not to become puffed up and overly proud of our blessings, revelations, and visions God gives us that we think more highly of ourselves than we ought. Therefore, God permits us to have burdens, challenges, and thorns to help us balance. Paul’s great experience in heaven could have ruined his ministry on earth; so, God, in His goodness and sovereignty, permitted Satan to buffet Paul in order to keep him from becoming proud. Perhaps, as kingdom citizens, God allows a thorn in our flesh to keep us from becoming proud and to the point that we rely on ourselves more than we rely on God.

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS KNOW HOW TO BALANCE THEIR WEAKNESSES WITH GOD’S STRENGTH.**

This content of scripture closes out with Paul asking God to take away the thorn, but God’s response in our text should help us trust and understand what God does. The text says: **“But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (VV 9-10)** It’s All God!

## KINGDOM CITIZENS PREPARING MIND, BODY AND SPIRIT FOR POST PANDEMIC LIVING

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**KEY WORDS/ PHRASES:** Recharge, Empower, Spiritual Boost, Struggle

**LESSON THIRTY-NINE:** POWER TO SEE RIGHT

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. How do you deal with struggles and blindsided situations?
2. How do you deal with people when they discourage your faith?
3. How do you feel when you realize that Jesus empowers us with faith?

**TEXT: MARK 10: 46-52**

**HEART OF THE LESSON:** A SPIRITUAL BOOST OF FAITH (VV 46-52)

**INTRODUCTION:** Most scholars believe that John Mark is the human author of this gospel that bears the name Mark. The key theme of this gospel is “Jesus Christ, the Servant.” In fact, some writers call Jesus “the suffering servant” and record that Jesus traveled from place to place and dealt with the physical and spiritual needs of all kinds of people. One of Mark’s favorite words is “immediately.” He uses it forty-one times. Mark does not record many of Jesus’s sermons because his emphasis is on what Jesus did rather than what Jesus said. He reveals Jesus as God’s Servant sent to minister to suffering people and to die for the sins of the world. Mark gives us no account of our Lord’s birth, nor does he record a genealogy which was unnecessary in regard to a servant. Our lesson this week is placed strategically between “The Request of James and John” and “The Triumphal Entry.” This is where we find our heading and lesson entitled “Blind Bartimaeus Receives His Sight.” In our lesson, Mark gives the name of one of the two blind beggars sitting by the road as “Bartimaeus.” Both gospel writers Mark and Luke focus attention on him since he was the more vocal of the two. Kingdom Citizens must realize that Jesus, the merciful healer, is always a prayer away, and that we can be recharged, empowered, and restored by the amazing call and act of faith in Jesus Christ.

## **1. KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THAT JESUS IS ONLY A CRY OR A CALL AWAY AT ANYTIME.**

This scripture opens with Jesus and His disciples moving with a crowd of people leaving the city and passing by a blind man named “Bartimaeus” sitting on the side of the road begging. The text says: **“When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ (V 47)** In this verse, Mark uses the phrase, “Jesus, Son of David!” This term is the “Messianic title” that points to Jesus as the Messiah. Messiah is a transliteration of the Hebrew word meaning “anointed one” that was translated in Greek as “Christos.” Therefore, in short, Bartimaeus makes his plea to Jesus who is the anointed one of God, our God given Redeemer and Savior Jesus Christ. We must then conclude that Blind Bartimaeus knew who to cry out to in his blind situation. He cries out to “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me! We must also realize the power of that name and call on Him as we go through the struggles, trials, temptations, blind situations, and challenges of life. We must know without a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is the Son of God when we call on his name! When we call on Him, we must have faith that He can and will help us.

## **2. KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THAT HATERS NOR DOUBTERS CAN DISCOURAGE THE BELIEVER WITH DETERMINED FAITH.**

The text says: **“Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me!” (V 48)** Bartimaeus had a persistent faith and didn’t let negative comments discourage or diminish his faith. He knew the power of Jesus and of the miracles He did for others. By faith, he had confidence that Jesus would do the same for his blind situation. We as kingdom citizens must have that same kind of faith. Therefore, when we encounter anyone or anything that tries to discourage us or challenge our faith in the power, presence, and provision of God, we must press even more with our faith. Even when people rebuke you, request you to be quiet, or require you to do things their way, keep the faith and rely on God. The text says: **“Jesus stopped and said, ‘Call him.’ So they called to the blind man, ‘Cheer up! On your feet. He’s calling you.’ (V 49)** It is always a blessing when Jesus pauses to give us His attention. Not only does Jesus give him attention; He calls this blind man to Himself and uses the opposers to do so as He prepares to perform a miracle on him.

## **3. KINGDOM CITIZENS REALIZE THAT PRAYER IS THE KEY TO THE KINGDOM, AND FAITH UNLOCKS THE DOOR.**

These next three verses point out the process of having Faith in God. The text says: **“Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.” (V 50)** Three spiritual insights on this verse are: (1) He took off something. (2) He moved immediately. (3) He came to Jesus. Then the text says: **“What do you want me to do for you? Jesus asked him. The blind man said, ‘Rabbi, I want to see.’ (V 51)** Jesus’s response to him was, “What do you want me to do,” and Jesus is asking a similar question to us today! This man’s response implies two things: (1) He knows Jesus as a teacher and anointed one because of the name, “Rabbi.” (2) He knows Jesus is able to address his blindness. Then the text says: **“Go, said Jesus, your faith has healed you. Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.” (V 52)** Three last observations are: (1) His faith healed him! (2) He immediately received sight! (3) He followed Jesus!

# The Seven Gifts of The Holy Spirit

