

LOOKING BACK ON 2015

**MAXIMIZING OUR FAITH
THROUGH
JESUS CHRIST**



Looking Back on 2015: Maximizing Our Faith through Jesus Christ

Taught by Min. Paris Cox, Hosted by Dorinda Cox

Coming through the outer doors, the excitement grew stronger. The bright room, the round tables, the smell of the food; these were just a small part of the excitement. The root of the excitement was the smiles on the faces of the people there. There was a sense of love, mutual support and a sincere desire to learn. Here was a group of people who desired to be together and were likeminded in their reason for the gathering. We were all here to learn more about God and His word.

This is the atmosphere of the Labour of Love Monthly Bible Study. Even though some of us only see each other on that one day a month, there is still a togetherness that can't be denied. So, what you have is food, fellowship and fun, all centered around the Word of God or as it's put in the book of Acts, "And they, continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Act 2:42)

And, that's how it was throughout the year of 2015. With the theme for the year being "Maximizing Our Faith through Jesus Christ", the studies started with a focus on ***How to Overcome the Nature of Sin***. As with all Labour of Love Ministries bible studies, we began with the Intent and Purpose of the topic. In this case, the Intent and Purpose of the study was, "To understand the danger, power, and effect of sin, and to learn how to overcome the nature of sin."

After going over several definitions – Overcome, Nature, Sin, Inherited Sin, Imputed Sin, Personal Sin, we talked about the difference between our Old Nature and our New Nature. In the lesson, we saw that the old nature was that part of man that was pure and perfect at the beginning but became corrupt and in opposition to God after Man's fall. The new nature is that same part of man but is subjected to the rule of Christ by being born again. Or as the bible puts it, "...the old man has been done away with..."

We ended the series with a teaching on how to know if your New Nature has taken over and is in charge, thus nullifying your Old Nature. We saw that it included three things;

1. You have been made free from guilt and shame (especially your bad decisions)
2. You are quickly aware of when you sin and more sensitive to seek forgiveness from God and others
3. Your desire is to truly please Jesus first and not your flesh (old nature) or people

The next set of Bible Study Series emphasized "***Jesus, the Son of Man***" in keeping with the theme for the year. The Intent and Purpose of this series was, "To understand that the bedrock of Christianity is personal, passionate, devotion to Jesus the Son of Man. We delved into the meaning of

the title “**Jesus, the Son of Man.**” From there we looked at **Jesus, the Son of God** – His divine origins and nature. And finally, **Jesus, the Son of David** – His lineage and messianic authority.

Once the **Jesus, the Son of Man** series ended, we moved onto a new set of studies called, **Why Do I Struggle with a Lack of Faith?**

These studies started with the *issues or the reasons that cause us to struggle with our faith.* The reasons that we struggle with our faith were boiled down to three primary reasons that we struggle with faith:

1. We can't see and trust the object of our faith,
2. We don't understand God's word and
3. We struggle against the WFS Group – The World, The Flesh and The Devil.

Since Labour of Love Ministries always seek balance and application of God's Word, it would do us no good to be just left with the reasons that we struggle with faith. We had to be given hope and a way to “overcome our lack of faith.” And, the is where we turned our attention – **How to Overcome Our Lack of Faith.** Again, we were given three primary ways to overcome what is lacking. We were taught that we are to:

1. Fully believe in the life, death, resurrection and return of Jesus,
2. Correctly read, study, interpret and hear the Word of God and
3. Accept trials as they come.

As we continued with the main theme of **Maximizing Our Faith through Jesus**, our next study was **The Purpose of the Holy Spirit in Our Lives.** An overview and an understanding of the Holy Spirit; the Comforter laid the groundwork for the study. Using the foundation of the Holy Spirit being the third Person of the Trinity and the Greek word Comforter meaning, “... one called alongside to help,” we looked into what it meant for the Holy Spirit to “proceed” from God versus being begotten or generated.

Changing and transforming lives is the focus of the work of the Holy Spirit. And, this was the beginning of the first part of our discussion on what the Holy Spirit does. He, the Holy Spirit, baptizes and He fills. The study clarified the fact that baptism is a permanent experience that comes before water baptism. And the filling is a continual and repeated experience. The filling of the Holy Spirit occurs as we submit each area of our soul – our thoughts, attitudes and actions to the Holy Spirit.

The second part of our discussion focused on the teaching, convincing, convicting and guiding aspects of what the Holy Spirit does. In order to conform us to imagine of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit has to point out the things that are wrong, teach us what we need to do and then to guide us.

Within the studies on The Purpose of the Holy Spirit in Our Lives, we couldn't leave without talking about the different “fruit” or works of the flesh which is in opposition to the Fruit of the Spirit. When we give in to or submit the flesh and fulfill the “works of the flesh,” we feel the guilt and pressure of the law. But when we submit and are led by the Spirit, we experience the freedom from bondage, freedom from the law and freedom to fulfill God's purposes in our lives.





We ended a great year of learning to **Maximize Our Faith through Jesus** with a final series of studies on **The Importance of Forgiveness**. As the Intent and Purpose stated, the reason for the topic was “For Christians to understand not only the importance of seeking and asking God for forgiveness of our own sins, but the importance of forgiving others that sin against us.”

We saw that forgiveness is an action based on obedience to God and His Nature and understanding what Jesus did when He forgave us. We came to

understand that forgiving someone doesn't need a “forgiving feeling” to proceed it and lead us to forgive someone. As a definition, it was stated that forgiveness is, “*To grant pardon, to cancel a debt, to wipe the slate clean. To cease to feel resentment against. Forgiveness is an act of love, mercy, and grace. Forgiveness is a decision to not hold something against another person despite what they have done to you.*”

To get a foundation, we started with the reasons why don't forgive others. Three reasons are because:

1. We haven't fully and sincerely asked for God's “forgiveness and cleansing” for our own sins.
2. We've forgotten and/or don't understand the love that God has shown us
3. We don't believe that God has truly forgiven us of our sins

It was taught that true forgiveness is from the heart and is a sign of genuine salvation or conversion. While being an act of obedience, the heart of a person who has experienced God's forgiveness motivates them to forgive and gives them the ability to forgive from the heart without the initial feelings. We'll led by God's Spirit, not our emotions, which was discussed in the study on **The Purpose of the Holy Spirit**.

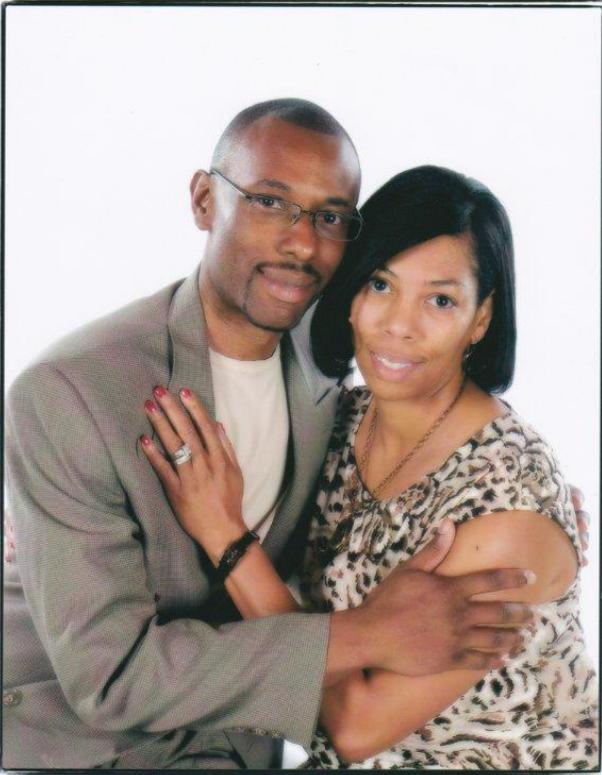
We went through a detailed look at the verses of the study, 1 John 1:9 [*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*] and Prov 28:13 [*He that covers his sins will not prosper: but whoso confesses and forsakes them shall have mercy*]. For forgiveness and cleansing to occur, it was emphasized that there has to be:

1. Confession and open admission to sins
2. Forsaken and a turning away of sins

The series on The Importance of Forgiveness included a quote from Dr. Martin Luther King. “*We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies*” Martin Luther King Jr.

We ended the year with the story of Joseph as a prime example of a person who had every reason not to forgive, but chose to forgive anyway. As the beginning of the study mentioned, forgiveness is an act; an act of obedience, the study ended with forgiveness being an act.

Joseph's dreams were fulfilled and not sidetracked and hindered through unforgiveness, which leads to bitterness and a hardened heart. In Joseph, we see a demonstration of **Maximizing Our Faith Through Jesus**.



Ending another year of Labour of Love Ministries Monthly Bible Studies bittersweet. As we gathered up our belongings and the leftover food, we shook hands, hugged and said our goodbyes. There was just something about the end of the year that gave the end of this study a different feel. Yes, we'd be back next month, but this was also the end of the year.

*Thanks be to God for you, your faithfulness
and your dedication to God the Father,
Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit!
..... Paris and Dorinda*

2015 Bible Study Notes

How to Overcome the Nature of Sin

Intent & Purpose

To understand the danger, power, and effect of sin, and to learn how to overcome the nature of sin.

Goal

- Define and explain what sin is.
- Explain when, how, and why the first sin was committed.
- Define and explain the difference between our old nature and our new nature.
- How to overcome the nature of sin and live joyfully, peacefully, and successfully in our new nature.

Definitions

Overcome: To defeat or gain an advantage over someone or something in a struggle or conflict. To succeed in controlling: to overpower or overwhelm in body or mind.

Nature: The native (built-in) character that is part of someone or something; temperament (a person's makeup or DNA)

Sin: is described in the Bible as transgression (wrongdoing) of the law of God and rebellion against God. There are three types of **Sin** described in the Bible:

Inherited Sin: To receive from a past situation or from someone who has gone before (Adam). Genesis chapter 3 describes Adam and Eve's rebellion against God and against His command. Since that time, sin has been passed down through all the generations of mankind and we, Adam's descendants, have **inherited sin** from him. Romans 5:12 tells us that through Adam sin entered the world, and so death was passed on to all men

Imputed Sin: To take something that belongs to someone and credit it to another's account (Romans 5: 12-21) before the Law of Moses was given, sin was not imputed to man, although men were still sinners because of inherited sin. After the Law was given, sins committed in violation of the Law were **imputed** (accounted) to them. After Moses, humans were subject to death both because of inherited sin from Adam and imputed sin from violating the laws of God.

Personal Sin: Anything from seemingly innocent untruths to murder (knowingly and unknowingly) because we have inherited a sin nature from Adam, we commit individual, personal sins. We are all three times condemned due to **inherited sin, imputed sin, and personal sin**. The only just penalty for this sin is death (Romans 6:23), not just physical death but eternal death. Those who have not placed their faith in Jesus Christ must pay the penalty for these personal sins, as well as inherited and imputed sin. However, believers have been freed from the eternal penalty of sin—hell and spiritual death—but now we also have the power to resist sinning. Now we can choose whether or not

to commit personal sins because we have the power to resist sin through the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, sanctifying and convicting us of our sins when we do commit them.

Define and explain the difference between our old nature and our new nature

(John 3: 1-7 & Ephesians 4: 22-24)

Old Nature: is that part of man (the soul or mind) that was once perfect & complete until he choose to disobey God's commandant and sinned.

New Nature: is that same part of man (soul or mind) that sinned but becomes born again (overcome his old nature) through faith in Jesus Christ.

How Do You Know When Your New Nature Has Taken Over Your Old Nature?

(Romans 8: 1-8)

1. You have been made free from guilt and shame (especially your bad decisions) (verse 1-2) (John 8:31-32)
2. You are quickly aware of when you sin and more sensitive to seek forgiveness from God and others (verse 4-6)
3. When your desire is to truly please Jesus first and not your flesh (old nature) or people (verse 8) (John 8:28-30)

Maximizing Our Faith thru Jesus Christ

Intent & Purpose

To understand that the bedrock of Christianity is personal, passionate, devotion to Jesus the Son of man

Jesus the Son of Man

Jesus is referred to as the “Son of Man” 88 times in the New Testament. A first meaning of the phrase “Son of Man” is as a reference to the prophecy of Daniel 7:13-14. The description “Son of Man” was a Messianic title. Jesus is the One who was given dominion and glory and a kingdom. When Jesus used this phrase, He was assigning the Son of Man prophecy to Himself. The Jews of that era would have been intimately familiar with the phrase and to whom it referred. Jesus was proclaiming Himself as the Messiah.

A second meaning of the phrase “Son of Man” is that Jesus was truly a human being. God called the prophet Ezekiel “son of man” 93 times. God was simply calling Ezekiel a human being. A son of a man is a man. Jesus was fully God (John 1:1), but He was also a human being (John 1:14) Yes, Jesus was the Son of God—He was in His essence God. Yes, Jesus was also the Son of Man—He was in His essence a human being.

In other places in the Old Testament, "Son of Man" is also used in reference to a person rather than to the Jewish Messiah. For example, Ezekiel frequently used the reference "son of man" to identify himself, emphasizing this aspect of the term by utilizing the phrase 93 times in his writing

Also, Greek scholars note that the use of the definite article ("the") with "son of man" is used exclusively of Jesus; it does not appear outside of the New Testament or Christian writings in reference to Jesus. Christians clearly identified Jesus as *the* Son of Man who fulfilled the prophecy of Daniel. In this sense, Jesus was more than another human being but unique from all others as the divine Son of God and Son of Man.

In summary, the title "Son of Man" includes both a human and divine aspect in the Bible. Jesus fulfills both meanings of this title. As a human, He became a "son of man" and walked the earth. As Messiah, He is "the Son of Man" who holds all authority and power, including victory over death. His coming offered salvation to all who would believe, an invitation that continues still today

Jesus the Son of God

Jesus is not God's Son in the sense of a human father and a son. God did not get married and have a son. God did not mate with Mary and, together with her, produce a son. Jesus is God's Son in the sense that He is God made manifest in human form (John 1:1, 14). Jesus is God's Son in that He was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit.

During His trial before the Jewish leaders, the High Priest demanded of Jesus, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God" (Matthew 26:63). "'Yes, it is as you say,' Jesus replied. 'But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven'" (Matthew 26:64). The Jewish leaders responded by accusing Jesus of blasphemy (Matthew 26:65-66). Later, before Pontius Pilate, "The Jews insisted, 'We have a law, and according to that law He must die, because He claimed to be the Son of God'" (John 19:7).

Why would His claiming to be the Son of God be considered blasphemy and be worthy of a death sentence? The Jewish leaders understood exactly what Jesus meant by the phrase "Son of God." To be the Son of God is to be of the same nature as God. The Son of God is "of God." The claim to be of the same nature as God—to in fact be God—was blasphemy to the Jewish leaders; therefore, they demanded Jesus' death, in keeping with Leviticus 24:15. Hebrews 1:3 expresses this very clearly, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being."

Jesus the son of David

Seventeen verses in the New Testament describe Jesus as the "son of David." But the question arises, how could Jesus be the son of David if David lived approximately 1000 years before Jesus? The answer is that Christ (the Messiah) was the fulfillment of the prophecy of the seed of David (2 Samuel 7:14-16). Jesus was the promised Messiah, which meant He was of the seed of David. Matthew 1 gives the genealogical proof that Jesus, in His humanity, was a direct descendant of Abraham and David through Joseph, Jesus' legal father.

The genealogy in Luke chapter 3 gives Jesus' lineage through His mother, Mary. Jesus is a descendant of David, by adoption through Joseph, and by blood through Mary. Primarily though, when Christ was referred to as the Son of David, it was meant to refer to His Messianic title as the Old Testament prophesied concerning Him. Jesus Christ, the only son of God and the only means of salvation for the world (Acts 4:12) is also the son of David, both in a physical sense and a spiritual sense.

Why Do I Struggle With A Lack of Faith?

(Matthew 14: 22-33)

What Cause Us to Struggle with Our Faith?

1. It's hard to trust and believe in someone or something that you cannot see, hear, smell, taste, or touch (John 14:5-11) & (John 20:2a-29)
2. We fully do not understand (correct interpretation) what the word of God is saying and how it relates to our lives. Or once we do understand and if it does not line up to the way we think we tend to only follow or obey it partially (John 6:51-61 & 66-68)
3. The World, the Flesh, and Satan. The World: is the accepted "wisdom" of the unbelieving world and the culture we live in. Naturalism & Materialism. The Flesh: refers to our sinful nature (old man) that still clings to our new nature. Satan: and all of the fallen angels that were kicked out of Heaven'

How Do We Overcome Our Lack of Faith?

1. We must fully believe that by Jesus death on the cross and being raised from the dead, that our old life prior to accepting Jesus as our savior is totally wiped clean. Also that the Holy Spirit now lives on the inside of us along with our spirit. (Mark 9:21-24) & John 15:3'4)
- 2, We must correctly read/study and interpret the word of God daily, and continually have the gospel preached to us in order to build our faith. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17) & (2 Timothy 2:15) Accept Trials (James 1: 24) (Romans 5: 1'5)

The Purpose of the Holy Spirit in Our Lives

Scripture Text:

John 14: 15-21, 26

John 15: 26 & 27

John 16: 13-15

Definition

The word Comforter is a Greek word Parakletos (Par-ak'-lay-tos) meaning "one called alongside to help"

The comforter or (Holy Spirit) is the third person of the Trinity-equal with Father and Son in essence, separate in person, submissive (obedient) in duties. The Holy Spirit like the Son is God *from* God. The Son is "generated" or "begotten" but the Holy Spirit "proceeds" from God.

How It Works

This mean the Father and the Son continually sends the Holy Spirit. The Spirit does not come out of the Father or the Son but the Holy Spirit is continually sent. This does not suggests the Spirit is less important than the Father or Son, each person has a different role. Just as Jesus came to do the will of His Father, so the Holy Spirit is sent to speak not of Himself but of Christ, and Jesus (the Son of Man) only spoke of the Father. If the Holy Spirit came out of God, He would be less than God, but all three person of the God-Head or Trinity are equal.

What It Does

The Holy Spirit does two things to the believer once he or she accept Jesus Christ as their Saviour. **Baptism** of the Spirit and the **Filling** of the Spirit. The filling and baptism are two different works performed by the Holy Spirit:

Baptism: The baptism is a permanent experience that happens only once (for all) Baptism of the Spirit precedes water baptism (Acts 10: 34-48) (Acts 8: 26-39)

Filling: It mean to "be continually filled" emphasizing that the fullness of the Spirit is a repeated experience for believers. God desires that the minds of Christians be controlled by the Holy Spirit so that they will walk in the Spirit, speak on behalf of God, and understand the things of God. Because people are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at salvation,(baptism not with water) they do not need to get more of the Holy Spirit, but they are allow Him (Holy Spirit) to fill them with God's own life, character, and virtues. A Christian is filled with the Spirit when he or she controls their thoughts, attitudes, and actions (Acts 2: 1-4)

The Purpose of the Holy Spirit in Our Lives Part 2

Scripture Text:
John 14: 15-21, 26
John 15: 26 & 27
John 16: 13-15

One of the primary purposes of the Holy Spirit coming into a Christian's life is to change that life. It is the Holy Spirit's job to **conform** us to the **image** (Genesis 1:26) of Christ, making us more like Him. Our sinful flesh produces certain types of fruit that reflect our nature (Ephesians 2:1-10) and the Holy Spirit produces types of fruit that reflect His nature.

Another purpose of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to convict us. The word conviction embraces a number of biblical expressions in its meaning. Originally it derived from two Latin terms meaning "cause to see" (Psalm 119:18) (Deuteronomy 29:29) The New Testament uses the terms **reproof**, conviction, and **illumination** to communicate the ministry of the Holy Spirit whereby He causes the individual to "see" or understand truth.

Basically in order for the Holy Spirit to change one's life He must point out fault or error in our lives. That is to expose something as it really is. (John 16:8-11)

The final purpose of the Holy Spirit in our lives is to:

- A) Provide Teaching (John 14:26)
- B) Provide Guidance (John 16:13)
- C) Provide Peace of mind (John 14:27) (No Stress & Worry Free)

In Summary the Holy Spirit does three things:

1. Convict
2. Convince
3. Comfort

*Conform: To act in accordance with the standards or agreement

*Image: An image is a representation or replica of one person or thing by another. An image may be similar but not necessarily identical to its original. Likeness is used as a gauge of comparison or analogy

*Reproof: The act of correcting

*Illumination: Is the ministry of the Holy Spirit by which He causes Christians to understand the truths of God revealed in scripture.

The Importance of Forgiveness

Intent or Purpose

For Christians to understand not only the importance of seeking and asking God for forgiveness of our own sins, but the importance of forgiving others that sin against us.

Scripture Text:

Matthew 18:15-22

Mark 11:25-26

Luke 6:37-38

Definitions

Forgive: To grant pardon, to cancel a debt, to wipe the slate clean. To cease to feel resentment against. Forgiveness is an act of love, mercy, and grace. Forgiveness is a decision to not hold something against another person despite what they have done to you.

Confront: To present or put facts or evidence to someone. To occur or arise as something to be dealt with.

We tend not to forgive others for their sins because:

- A) We have not sincerely sought after or asked God for forgiveness and cleansing of our own sins. (1 John 1:9) (Proverbs 28:13)
- B) We have either forgotten or fully do not understand the love God has shown us, or do not believe He has forgiven us for our own sins. (Isaiah 1:18-20) (Isaiah 43:25-26)

True Forgiveness “from the heart” of a regenerated person is one of the signs of genuine salvation and conversion. Saved people are both forgiven and forgiving. Unforgiving people prove that they have never been born of God.

“We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies” Martin Luther King Jr.

The Importance of Forgiveness Part 3

(The Story of Joseph)

Scripture Text: Genesis Chapter 37 & 39-50

Joseph which mean “to take away or add” was the eleventh son of Jacob, the first son of Rachel and was his father’s favorite. However at the age of 17 he was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers to a passing caravan of Ishmaelites. Joseph arrived in Egypt during the second Midway Period in ancient Egypt’s history, and rose to the position of prime minister to the Pharaohs. Joseph eventually reconciled to his brothers and then invited his father along with his entire family to move to Egypt to escape a great famine and thus preserve the line of the Messiah.

