

# The **Bible** Unpacked

## **Comprehensive Study Series**

A compilation of the Bible's teaching  
for believers established in the faith

paul mallison

This series of studies is based on the  
*Comprehensive Edition of The Bible Unpacked.*

There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked.*  
These aim to address the needs of  
NON-CHRISTIANS through to MATURE CHRISTIANS,  
from TEENAGERS to ADULTS.

For more information and free downloads go to:  
[www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net)



## An Appeal on Behalf of Persecuted Christians

Over 200 million Christians in at least 60 countries are denied basic human rights solely because of their faith. (Source: World Evangelical Alliance) Every year many Christians are killed because of their faith.

Through prayer, encouragement and practical assistance we can assist and fellowship with persecuted Christians in their suffering. You can play a vital part in this through contacting one of the organizations listed below. Most produce regular news/prayer letters.

### **Barnabas Fund** – [www.barnabasfund.org](http://www.barnabasfund.org)

It provides material and spiritual support in response to needs identified by local Christian leaders.

### **Christian Faith and Freedom** – [www.cffreedom.org](http://www.cffreedom.org)

It advocates on behalf of and aids persecuted Christians.

### **Christian Solidarity International** – [www.csi-int.org](http://www.csi-int.org)

CSI works to defend religious liberty and help persecuted Christians.

### **Christian Solidarity Worldwide** – [www.csw.org.uk](http://www.csw.org.uk)

It advocates for freedom of religion and justice for persecuted believers.

### **Compass Direct** – [www.compassdirect.org](http://www.compassdirect.org)

This is a Christian news service providing news, reports, interviews and analyses of situations facing persecuted Christians.

### **Open Doors** – [sb.od.org](http://sb.od.org); [www.opendoors.org.au](http://www.opendoors.org.au)

It provides Bibles and other Christian materials, to prepare believers for persecution and equip them to maintain a witness to the Gospel.

### **Religious Liberty Commission** – [www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/](http://www.worldevangelicals.org/commissions/rlc/); [www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx](http://www.ea.org.au/ea-family/Religious-Liberty.aspx)

RLC defends and aids persecuted Christians. See also [www.idop.org](http://www.idop.org)  
Receive weekly updates by sending a blank email to [join-rpb@hub.xc.org](mailto:join-rpb@hub.xc.org).

### **The Bible League** – [www.bibleleague.org/persecuted](http://www.bibleleague.org/persecuted); [www.bibleleague.com](http://www.bibleleague.com)

It supplies Bibles to persecuted Christians and also provides training.

### **Voice of the Martyrs** – [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com); [www.persecution.com.au](http://www.persecution.com.au)

VOM provides Bibles, literature, radio broadcasts and other assistance to help persecuted Christians spread the gospel. They also send material aid.

*Then the King will answer, 'I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of my people here, you also did for me.'* Matthew 25:40 NCV

# The Bible Unpacked™

## Comprehensive Study Series

A compilation of the Bible's teaching for believers established in the faith

## 18. God's Transformation of His People

Composed by Paul Mallison

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## Overview of *The Bible Unpacked*


There are seven editions of *The Bible Unpacked*, as shown below. Each edition is an abbreviated version of the next longest edition. As such they have similar structures. Four of the editions have studies based on them, with the same text along with questions. For more details and free downloads of all the material, go to [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net).

 **Two-Minute Edition:** Key Bible teachings for people “on the run”  
For giving to non-Christians.


 **Pocket Edition:** Key Bible teachings for seekers of truth  
Largely for giving to inquiring non-Christians or young new Christians.

 **Concise Edition:** A look at the Bible's teaching for new and young believers. For either new or young Christians. Suitable to give to non-Christian friends. Has study series based on it.




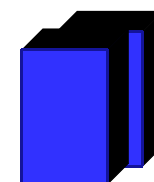
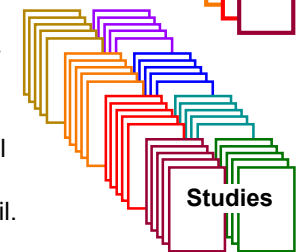
 **Foundations Edition:** A compilation of the Bible's teaching for believers consolidating their faith. For newer Christians. Study series is ideal for studies with newer believers.



 **Intermediate Edition:** A compilation of the Bible's teaching for believers growing in the faith. For developing a sound understanding of the faith. Studies are excellent for Bible study groups.



 **Comprehensive Edition:** A compilation of the Bible's teaching for believers established in the faith. For a comprehensive knowledge of the faith. Useful as a study or a devotional tool - and preparing talks. Studies are ideal for studying topics in detail.



**In-Depth Edition:** A compilation of the Bible's teaching for teachers and students of the Bible. For Christians keen to gain a deep understanding of their faith. Useful for speakers preparing talks, study groups leaders, Bible students and Bible colleges. It is also in an electronic version, which is a PDF file.



Electronic Version

## Section II. What to Do

### Part E. Relating to God

#### 21. Being Right with God

- I. Getting Right with God
- II. Staying Right with God

#### 22. Having Faith in God

- I. Faith and Hope
- II. What Not to Do

#### 23. Loving, Fearing and Obeying God

- I. Loving and Fearing God
- II. Obeying God

#### 24. Connecting with God

- I. Being Close to God
- II. Praying to God

#### 25. Exalting God

- I. Instructions
- II. Reasons to Exalt God

### Part F. Church Life

#### 26. Being One Body

- I. General
- II. Caring for the Body

#### 27. Worshiping God

- I. General
- II. Offerings

#### 28. Serving God

- I. Preliminary Instructions and Insights
- II. Doing God's Work

#### 29. Significant Practices

- I. Symbolic Rites
- II. Other Significant Practices

#### 30. Church Leadership

- I. General
- II. Teaching in the Church

### Part G. Relating to People

#### 31. Love

- I. Loving Qualities
- II. Antitheses of Love

#### 32. Justice

- I. Justice in Action
- II. Being True

#### 33. Wisdom

- I. Being Wise
- II. Antitheses of Wisdom and Knowledge

#### 34. Common Relationships

- I. Family Relationships
- II. Civil Relationships

#### 35. Spreading the Gospel

- I. Instructions
- II. Insights

### Part H. Persevering

#### 36. Standing Firm

- I. General
- II. Spiritual Warfare

#### 37. Rejecting Sin

- I. Encountering Sin
- II. Avoiding Sin and Being Holy

#### 38. Major Pitfalls

- I. Pride
- II. Riches and Sex

#### 39. Hard Times

- I. General
- II. Praying in Hard Times

#### 40. Persecution

- I. The Persecution of God's People
- II. What to Do in Persecution

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## A Quick Word

This series of studies aims to present a compilation of the Bible's teachings in a clear and readable order. There are 40 booklets in the series, based on the 40 chapters of the book *The Bible Unpacked - Comprehensive Edition*. Each booklet has two sections, which can be used for two or more studies.

See *Topics in This Series* towards the end of this booklet for a full listing of all the topics. Note that studying booklets alternatively from the two major sections (*What to Know* and *What to Do*) would add variety.

The material contains Bible verses. Before the verses are headings, which reflect what the verses say – in particular the parts of the verses in *italics*. The verses are sometimes followed by a comment.

The verses often have a brief introduction. Usually these state who is speaking and often who they are speaking to. Apart from God and Jesus Christ, the main speakers are:

- Moses – who lead the Israelites out of Egypt and taught them God's laws;
- David – Israel's greatest king who wrote many of the psalms, most of which are essentially prayers;
- Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and other prophets – who spoke to the people of Israel on God's behalf; and
- Paul, Peter, John and other leaders of the early church – who spoke to various groups and wrote letters to believers.

Much care has been taken in order to correctly interpret the verses. Nevertheless, if you encounter a verse that is used to teach something that is contrary to or goes beyond your understanding, assess its use by doing such things as: reading the passage it is from; and considering how its teaching fits in with Scripture as a whole (e.g. interpret OT teaching in the light of NT teaching).

For more information on *The Bible Unpacked* and free downloads, go to the website: [www.thebibleunpacked.net](http://www.thebibleunpacked.net)

Paul Mallison

## Topics in This Series

### Section I: What to Know

#### Part A. God and Spiritual Powers

##### 1. God's Being

- I. Basics
- II. God's Pre-Eminence

##### 2. God's Character

- I. Holy Characteristics
- II. Loving Characteristics

##### 3. Jesus Christ

- I. General
- II. Jesus Christ and God

##### 4. The Holy Spirit

- I. General
- II. God, Christ and the Holy Spirit as One

##### 5. Angels, Satan and Demons

- I. Angels
- II. Satan and Demons

#### Part B. God and the World: Basics

##### 6. God's Creation

- I. General
- II. God's Creation of People

##### 7. God's Sovereignty

- I. God's Supreme Authority
- II. God's Control over the World

##### 8. God's Word

- I. General
- II. Key Old Testament Covenants

##### 9. The Problem of Sin

- I. General
- II. The Law's Provision for Israel's Sin

##### 10. God's Judgment

- I. Basics
- II. The Manifestation of God's Judgment

#### Part C. God and the World: Jesus Christ

##### 11. God's Promised Messiah

- I. The Messiah's Identity
- II. The Messiah's Purpose and Person

##### 12. Jesus Christ's Mission

- I. God's Enablement of Jesus Christ
- II. Jesus Christ's Ministry, Death and Resurrection

##### 13. Salvation through Jesus Christ

- I. Salvation from Sin
- II. Salvation for the World

##### 14. The New Order

- I. Jesus Christ and the Law's Diminished Role
- II. Key Elements of the New Order

##### 15. 'The Last Things'

- I. Jesus Christ's Return and the Final Judgment
- II. The Afterlife

#### Part D. God and His Own People

##### 16. The Standing of God's People

- I. Belonging to God
- II. Being 'in' Jesus Christ

##### 17. Keys to God's Interaction with His People

- I. Basics
- II. God's Holy Spirit in His People

##### 18. God's Transformation of His People

- I. General
- II. Spiritual Attributes

##### 19. God's Care of His People

- I. God's Saving of His People
- II. God's Preservation of His People

##### 20. God's Plans for His People

- I. General
- II. God's Plans for Israel



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Choose one of the characteristics of wisdom listed in James 3:17 (in *God gives his people wisdom*) and give one reason why it is associated with wisdom.

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What wisdom and knowledge does a Christian have that others do not have?

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Do Christians themselves need to do anything for God to give them wisdom and knowledge?

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**Ps 119:18** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *Open my eyes so I can truly see the marvelous things in your law!*

As suggested by the psalmist's request, God opens his people's eyes to spiritual truth.

**... As such, they have spiritual light instead of spiritual darkness**

**1PET 2:9** [PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of his own, so that you may proclaim the virtues of *the one* [God] *who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

**JOHN 8:12** Then *Jesus spoke out again, "I am the light of the world. The one who follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

The light that Jesus gives enables one to recognize and avoid "darkness" or falsehood – including false ideologies and ways of life – and shows the way to spiritual life.

**Note: The exceptional wisdom that God gave to Solomon**

**1KI 4:29–31** *God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment; the breadth of his understanding was as infinite as the sand on the seashore.* <sup>30</sup>*Solomon was wiser than all the men of the east and all the sages of Egypt.* <sup>31</sup>*He was wiser than any man,* including Ethan the Ezrahite or Heman, Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol. He was famous in all the neighboring nations.

## I. General

God transforms his people by giving them the invaluable gift of spiritual life, in which they are "reborn" in a spiritual sense. Additionally, God makes them holy and accordingly begins to transform them to be like Jesus Christ and himself. God does this through such things as teaching and disciplining them.

## a) God Makes His People Spiritually Alive

### God's people have spiritual life

**JOHN 6:63** [JESUS, TO HIS FOLLOWERS:] *The Spirit is the one who gives life; human nature is of no help! The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.*

Jesus' words together with the Holy Spirit bring life. This spiritual life involves being "alive to God" (Romans 6:11) and comes through having God's Holy Spirit. Each believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling in them, renewing and nourishing them spiritually. Consequently believers have a spiritual consciousness that enables them to live in communion with and in dependence on God. As such they are "alive to God".

One could make a parallel with a person's own spirit enabling them to have physical life (for without one's spirit indwelling one's physical body, the body is dead). Somewhat similarly, having the Holy Spirit enables a person to have spiritual life.

### They have passed from their former state of spiritual death to spiritual life

**1JN 3:14** [JOHN, TO BELIEVERS:] We know that *we have passed out of death into life*, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. <sup>ESV</sup>

### In union with Jesus Christ, their sinful selves have "died" and they are now spiritually alive

**ROM 6:6–8, 11** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] We know that *our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.* <sup>7</sup>*For one who has died has been set free from sin.* <sup>8</sup>*Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him.* ... <sup>11</sup>So you also must *consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.* <sup>ESV</sup>

In our union with Jesus Christ we are identified with him in his death and resurrection. In a spiritual sense our old sinful selves have died with him in his death and we have been made alive spiritually with him in his post-resurrection life.

## d) Wisdom and Knowledge

(⇒ Accordingly, having the Holy Spirit is linked with having wisdom and knowledge, in 17. Keys to God's Interaction with His People; God Teaches His People, p. 8)

Note that in the Bible "knowledge" generally refers to spiritual knowledge, indicative of a clear comprehension of things of God. This is particularly so in the NT.

### God gives his people wisdom

**JAMES 1:5** *But if anyone is deficient in wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and without reprimand, and it will be given to him.*

**JAMES 3:17** *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, accommodating, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and not hypocritical.*

### God gives his people knowledge

**ECC 2:26** *God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to anyone who pleases him.* <sup>GW</sup>

**MATT 13:11** He [Jesus] answered them, "*You have been given knowledge about the secrets of the kingdom of heaven, but it hasn't been given to them.*" <sup>ISV</sup>

Jesus revealed God's hidden teachings of the kingdom of heaven to his disciples but not to others in the crowds. Presumably this was in part at least because the others were not open to believing and/or were not prepared to intently seek the truth.

### God's people are in fact given spiritual sight . . .

**EPH 1:17–19** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you spiritual wisdom and revelation in your growing knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup>– since *the eyes of your heart have been enlightened* – so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup>and what is the incomparable greatness of his power toward us who believe, as displayed in the exercise of his immense strength.

How can believers have joy even in the midst of trouble?

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Explain the connection between joy and strength.

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To what degree do you experience the joy which comes from God?  
What should one do to know more of this joy?

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### **As such, God's people are spiritually reborn of God . . .**

**JOHN 1:12–13** But to all who have received him [Jesus] – those who believe in his name – he has given the right to become God's children<sup>13</sup> – *children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband's decision, but by God.*

References to being born by God (v. 13) – or born again – refer to the spiritual rebirth people undergo when they come to faith, and by which they have spiritual life. It is accomplished by God through the work of the Holy Spirit within a person's heart or mind, along with exposure to God's word. This spiritual birth means that believers are in a real sense children of God. It also begins a process of growing more like God, as believers share in his Spirit which transforms them.

### **. . . They are born again of the Holy Spirit and through God's word**

**JOHN 3:6–7** [JESUS:] *A person is born physically of human parents, but is born spiritually of the Spirit.* <sup>7</sup>Do not be surprised because I tell you that *you must all be born again.* GNT

**JAMES 1:18** [JAMES, TO BELIEVERS:] By his sovereign plan *he gave us birth through the message of truth*, that we would be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

### **So, God's people are a new creation**

**2COR 5:17** So then, *if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away – look, what is new has come!*

Explain the spiritual "life" that the New Testament speaks of, as if you were talking to a new believer.

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How is this life given to Christians?

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In what ways are Christians a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17)? What old things have gone?

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*radiant with joy over the good things the LORD provides, the grain, the fresh wine, the olive oil, the young sheep and calves he has given to them. They will be like a well-watered garden and will not grow faint or weary any more.* <sup>13</sup>*The LORD says, "At that time young women will dance and be glad. Young men and old men will rejoice. I will turn their grief into gladness. I will give them comfort and joy in place of their sorrow.*

**Note: God's joy strengthens people**

**NEH 8:10** He [Nehemiah] said to them, "Go and eat delicacies and drink sweet drinks and send portions to those for whom nothing is prepared. For this day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for *the joy of the LORD is your strength.*"

The grief of the people would be offset through them drawing strength from the joy they had in the LORD, or the "joy that the LORD gives" (GNT, cf. CEV).

## c) Joy

(⇒ *The Holy Spirit gives God's people joy and peace, in 17. Keys to God's Interaction with His People*)

### God gives joy to his people

**Ps 97:11** Light is sown for the righteous, and *joy for the upright in heart.* ESV

### God and Jesus Christ give their people fullness of joy

**Rom 15:13** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Now *may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you believe in him, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

**JOHN 15:10–11** [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] If you obey my commandments, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commandments and remain in his love. <sup>11</sup>*I have told you these things so that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete.*

### The joy is present even in trouble . . .

**Ps 94:19** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *When my anxious inner thoughts become overwhelming, your comfort makes me glad.* ISV

**2COR 8:2** *They [churches in Macedonia] have been severely tested by the troubles they went through; but their joy was so great that they were extremely generous in their giving, even though they are very poor.* GNT

### . . . Promises of God replacing sorrow with joy

**ISA 35:10** And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; *everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.* ESV

**JER 31:11–13** For the LORD will rescue the descendants of Jacob. He will secure their release from those who had overpowered them. <sup>12</sup>*They will come and shout for joy on Mount Zion. They will be*

## b) God Makes His People Holy

(⇒ *The Holy Spirit makes God's people holy, in 17. Keys to God's Interaction with His People*)

The concept of being made holy concerns God's people being set apart for God - dedicated to him, for such purposes as doing his work and worshiping him. This involves them being made pure from sin.

Being made holy has a couple of phases or facets. Firstly, when a person comes to faith their sins are forgiven, and as such they are holy. Secondly, believers are made holy in that they are continually being transformed by God, becoming more like Jesus Christ and increasingly devoid of sin. This process is often referred to as "sanctification".

### God makes them holy . . .

**Ex 31:13** [GOD, TO MOSES:] Tell the Israelites, 'Surely you must keep my Sabbaths, for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that *I am the LORD who sanctifies you.*

**1THES 5:23–24** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Now *may the God of peace himself make you completely holy and may your spirit and soul and body be kept entirely blameless* at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup>He who calls you is trustworthy, and *he will in fact do this.*

### . . . As such, God's people are a holy people

**1COR 3:17B** For *God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.* ESV  
God's "temple" is the church.

### God's people are primarily made holy through Jesus Christ's sacrifice

**HEB 13:12** So *Jesus also suffered outside the city to make his people holy with his own blood.* NCV™

**God’s people are in fact being made like God . . .**

**COL 3:9–10** [PAUL, TO THE COLOSSIAN BELIEVERS:] Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices<sup>10</sup> and have put on *the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.* ESV

**. . . As such, they are being transformed to be like Jesus Christ**

**2COR 3:18B** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *We all show the Lord’s glory, and we are being changed to be like him.* NCV™

Paul has the development of the believer’s sanctification in view, with their characters growing more like Christ. As such believers increasingly reflect and even manifest Christ’s glory.

**Note: God’s people are his workmanship**

**EPH 2:10** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] For *we are his workmanship, having been created in Christ Jesus* for good works that God prepared beforehand so we may do them.

What does Jesus mean by saying: “I do not give it [peace] to you as the world does” (John 14:27)?

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In reference to Philippians 4:6–7 (in *It is a great peace*), how does what Paul says to do in v. 6 lead to the peace spoken of in v. 7?

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Choose one verse or passage in this section that encourages you, and say why.

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from me, because I am gentle and humble in heart, and *you will find rest for your souls.* <sup>30</sup>*For my yoke is easy to bear, and my load is not hard to carry.*

Here “rest” appears to encompass (or at least be applicable to) rest from: trying to obey the OT law in order to be righteous before God, particularly with how it was embellished by the Jews; the burden of sin; and any troubles in our lives that weary and burden us.

### It is a great peace

**ISA 26:3** *The LORD gives perfect peace to those whose faith is firm.* CEV

**PHIL 4:6–7** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Do not be anxious about anything. Instead, in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, tell your requests to God. <sup>7</sup>*And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

**2THESS 3:16** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Now may the Lord of peace himself *give you peace at all times and in every way.* The Lord be with you all.

Note that this is primarily speaking of peace amongst believers.

### God’s people have peace and rest even in death

**ISA 57:2** *Those who live good lives find peace and rest in death.* GNT

### Note: God is the God of peace

**ROM 15:33** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Now may *the God of peace* be with all of you. Amen.

To what extent or in what sense are believers made “completely holy and ... entirely blameless” (1Thes 5:23)?

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What changes are you seeing in yourself, compared to before you became a Christian? What are your “growing edges”?

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What is one aspect of Jesus Christ’s character that you need to imitate better? How can you make yourself more open to God transforming you to be like Jesus Christ in this way?

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## c) God Teaches His People

(⇒ *The Holy Spirit teaches God's people . . .*, in 17. *Keys to God's Interaction with His People*; . . . *In fact, the Holy Spirit teaches them about all things*, in 17. *Keys to God's Interaction with His People; Wisdom and Knowledge*, p. 27)

### God teaches them

**JOHN 6:45** [JESUS:] It is written in the prophets, *'They will all be taught by God.'* Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. NCV™

**PHIL 3:15** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] All of us who are spiritually mature should think this way, too. And *if there are things you do not agree with, God will make them clear to you.* NCV™

### God teaches his people how to live

**Ps 25:9** *He shows those who are humble how to do right, and he teaches them his ways.* NCV™

**Ps 32:8** [GOD:] *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.* ESV

### God enables his people to know the truth

**JOHN 8:31–32** Then Jesus said to those Judeans who had believed him, *"If you continue to follow my teaching, you are really my disciples<sup>32</sup> and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

### God makes known things about himself to his people . . .

**Ps 103:7** *He made known his ways to Moses, his acts to the people of Israel.* ESV

**ISA 43:10** The LORD says [to Israel], *"You are my witnesses and the servant I chose. I chose you so you would know and believe me, so you would understand that I am the true God. There was no God before me, and there will be no God after me.* NCV™

## b) Peace

(⇒ *The Holy Spirit gives God's people joy and peace*, in 17. *Keys to God's Interaction with His People*)

OT references to the peace that God gives to his people encompass both inner peace (including being at ease) and outer peace (the absence of war and adversity). In addition to peace with God, the NT speaks of God giving his people an inner, spiritual peace – even amidst adversity. The NT also speaks of God engendering peace or harmony amongst groups of believers.

### God gives his people peace . . .

**Ps 29:11** The LORD gives strength to his people; *the LORD blesses his people with peace.* NCV™

**COL 1:2** [PAUL:] To the holy and faithful brothers and sisters in Christ that live in Colosse: Grace and *peace to you from God our Father.* NCV™

### . . . and God provides his people with rest

**Ex 33:14** And *the LORD said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."*

### Likewise, Jesus Christ gives God's people peace . . .

**JOHN 14:27** [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] *Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you;* I do not give it to you as the world does. Do not let your hearts be distressed or lacking in courage.

**JOHN 16:33** [JESUS, TO HIS DISCIPLES:] I have told you these things so that *in me you may have peace.* In the world you have trouble and suffering, but take courage – I have conquered the world.

Because Jesus Christ has overcome the world, in him believers have peace amidst the trouble that the world causes them.

### . . . and Jesus Christ gives them rest

**MATT 11:28–30** [JESUS:] Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and *I will give you rest.*<sup>29</sup> Take my yoke on you and learn

Choose one of love, faith or hope - and say what is unique about the believer's experience of it.

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How or in what way/s does God teach believers to love one another (cf. 1Thes 4:9)?

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What reason/s do we have to believe God's promises?

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**. . . and God makes known other things of his to them**

**EPH 1:17–19** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you spiritual wisdom and revelation in your growing knowledge of him,*<sup>18</sup> – since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened – *so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints,*<sup>19</sup> *and what is the incomparable greatness of his power toward us who believe, as displayed in the exercise of his immense strength.*

The fact that Paul prays that the Ephesians would know these things is indicative that he saw God as ultimately the source of such knowledge.

**As such, God reveals unknown and concealed things to his people**

**ISA 48:6B** [GOD, TO HIS PEOPLE:] *From this point on I am announcing to you new events that are previously unrevealed and you do not know about.*

**1COR 2:9–10** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But just as it is written, “*Things that no eye has seen, or ear heard, or mind imagined, are the things God has prepared for those who love him.*”<sup>10</sup> *God has revealed these to us by the Spirit.* For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

How does God teach his people?

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What things would you like God to teach you more about?

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How can you make yourself more open to God teaching you?

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### . . . God's promises give his people hope

**HEB 6:17–18** *To those who were to receive what he promised, God wanted to make it very clear that he would never change his purpose; so he added his vow to the promise.* <sup>18</sup>*There are these two things, then, that cannot change and about which God cannot lie. So we who have found safety with him are greatly encouraged to hold firmly to the hope placed before us.* GNT

This indicates that “the hope placed before us” (v. 18) by God is based on, or comes from, his promise that is referred to and his confirmation of it with an oath – the “two things... that cannot change” (v. 18).

### Note: God's promises to his people include promises for the present life . . .

**ACTS 2:38–39** Peter said to them, “*Repent, and each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.*” <sup>39</sup>*For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far away, as many as the Lord our God will call to himself.”*

**Ps 119:76, 116A** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *May your loyal love console me, as you promised your servant. . . .* <sup>116</sup>*Sustain me as you promised, so that I will live.*

In these verses “as you promised” refers to promise of deliverance.

### . . . and promises for the afterlife – notably the promise of eternal life

**2PET 3:13** [PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] *But, according to his promise, we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness truly resides.*

**TITUS 1:2** [PAUL, SPEAKING OF BELIEVERS:] *Then they will have the hope of eternal life that God promised long ago. And God never tells a lie!* CEV

## a) Love, Faith and Hope

(⇒ *The Holy Spirit gives God's people love and faith, in 17. Keys to God's Interaction with His People*)

Love, faith and hope form a key triad of spiritual graces or attributes. They are linked a number of times in the NT, most famously in 1 Corinthians 13:13 – “And now these three remain: faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

### God gives his people love . . .

**EPH 6:23** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Peace to the brothers and sisters, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### . . . and so God enables his people to love

**1THES 4:9** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] Now on the topic of brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write you, for *you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.*

### God gives his people faith

**ROM 12:3B** [PAUL, TO THE BELIEVERS IN ROME:] *God has distributed to each of you a measure of faith.*

### God gives his people hope – especially by what he has done through Jesus Christ . . .

**2THES 2:16A** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] *God our Father loved us and by his kindness gave us everlasting encouragement and good hope.* GW

**1PET 1:3–4** [PETER, TO BELIEVERS:] Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, the Messiah! Because of his great mercy *he has given us a new birth to an ever-living hope through the resurrection of Jesus, the Messiah, from the dead* <sup>4</sup>and to an inheritance kept in heaven for you that can't be destroyed, corrupted, or changed. ISV

Through Jesus Christ's resurrection, God has brought believers into an “ever-living hope” (v. 3). This encompasses the hope of their own resurrection and an everlasting inheritance in heaven (v. 4).

## d) God Disciplines His People (I): Reasons

### When his people turn to sin, God punishes and disciplines them . . .

**JER 30:14B** [GOD, TO ISRAEL:] I have attacked you like an enemy; *your punishment has been harsh because your sins are many and your wickedness is great.* GNT

**PS 39:11** [DAVID, TO GOD:] *You correct and punish people for their sins ...* NCV™

### . . . By this God causes them to seek him again

**HOS 5:14–15** [GOD:] I will be like a lion to Ephraim, like a young lion to the house of Judah. *I myself will tear them to pieces, then I will carry them off, and no one will be able to rescue them!* <sup>15</sup>Then I will return again to my lair *until they have suffered their punishment. Then they will seek me; in their distress they will earnestly seek me.*

### So, God disciplines his people to rid them of sin . . .

**PS 119:67** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word.* ESV

### . . . and God disciplines them to save them from sin's consequences

**1COR 11:32** [PAUL, TO BELIEVERS:] But *when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned with the world.*

**ISA 38:17** [HEZEKIAH, TO GOD:] *Look, the grief I experienced was for my benefit. You delivered me from the pit of oblivion. For you removed all my sins from your sight.*

Here Hezekiah speaks of a time of intense suffering, which he attributes to God's punishment or discipline for sin. His words point to the fact that those who respond appropriately to God's discipline are forgiven for their sins and no longer face destruction.

### However, hard times from God are not always due to sin

**Ps 44:14, 17, 22** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *You have made us an object of contempt among the nations; they shake their heads at us in scorn. ...* <sup>17</sup>*All this has happened to us, even though we have not forgotten you or broken the covenant you made with us. ...* <sup>22</sup>*But it is on your account that we are being killed all the time, that we are treated like sheep to be slaughtered.* GNT

Not only was the people's suffering from God not due to sin, but it was because of their faithfulness to him that they were looked upon as objects suitable for abuse and even death (v. 22). This illustrates that discipline or suffering is not necessarily due to sin. Often the reason may in fact not be apparent.

### God also tests his people to show if they will obey him

**DEUT 8:2** [MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] Remember how *the LORD your God led you all the way these 40 years in the desert, to humble and test you in order to make known what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.* ISV

### Further reasons why God disciplines and tests his people

**HEB 12:9–11** [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] *On earth we have fathers who disciplined us, and we respect them. Shouldn't we place ourselves under the authority of God, the father of spirits, so that we will live?* <sup>10</sup>For a short time our fathers disciplined us as they thought best. Yet, *God disciplines us for our own good so that we can become holy like him.* <sup>11</sup>We don't enjoy being disciplined. It always seems to cause more pain than joy. But later on, *those who learn from that discipline have peace that comes from doing what is right.* GW

**JAMES 1:2–3** [JAMES, TO BELIEVERS:] My brothers and sisters, consider it nothing but joy when you fall into all sorts of trials, <sup>3</sup>because you know that *the testing of your faith produces endurance.*

## II. Spiritual Attributes

The spiritual attributes that God bestows on his people far exceed anything that this world can offer. Attributes or blessings such as love, hope, joy, peace and wisdom are longed for by most people, and sought after in many ways. But it is only from God that they can be gained in their highest form.

*trample over us; we went through fire and flood, but now you have brought us to a place of safety.* GNT

Explain how God's discipline is connected with one of the following characteristics of God: love, righteousness and faithfulness.

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Of what relevance is the teaching that God's discipline/testing is temporary and that he brings his people through it, to people with chronic suffering? How is it applicable to them?

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What is one point or verse in this or the previous section that you would find encouraging during times of discipline or testing?

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What are some reasons why God allows his people to experience difficult times? (Do not limit your answer to just what is mentioned in the verses.)

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Is all hardship in the lives of believers due to God's discipline and testing? If not, how can we discern if particular hardship is or not?

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Have you experienced any times of discipline or testing that you can look back on and say were "for my benefit" (Isa 38:17)?

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## e) God Disciplines His People (II): Insights

### God disciplines his people as his children, who he loves

**HEB 12:5–8** [THE WRITER, TO BELIEVERS:] And have you forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as sons? “My son, do not scorn the Lord’s discipline or give up when he corrects you.”<sup>6</sup> “For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son he accepts.”<sup>7</sup> Endure your suffering as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline?<sup>8</sup> But if you do not experience discipline, something all sons have shared in, then you are illegitimate and are not sons.

### God’s discipline is characterized by righteousness and faithfulness

**NEH 9:30–31, 33** [LEVITES, PRAYING TO GOD AND MAKING REFERENCE TO THEIR FOREFATHERS:] You prolonged your kindness with them for many years, and you solemnly admonished them by your Spirit through your prophets. *Still they paid no attention, so you delivered them into the hands of the neighboring peoples.*<sup>31</sup> However, due to your abundant mercy you did not do away with them altogether; you did not abandon them. For you are a merciful and compassionate God. . . .<sup>33</sup> *You are righteous with regard to all that has happened to us, for you have acted faithfully.* It is we who have been in the wrong!

As well as speaking of his patience and mercy, vv. 30–31 beautifully illustrate God’s righteousness and faithfulness in his discipline and dealings with his people, affirmed in v. 33.

### As such, God’s punishment of his people is warranted . . .

**EZEK 16:59** *Jerusalem, you deserve to be punished, because you broke your promises and ignored our agreement.* CEV

**EZEK 14:23** [GOD, TO EZEKIEL:] They will console you when you see their behavior and their deeds, because *you will know that it was not without reason that I have done everything which I have done in it,* declares the sovereign LORD.

God assured Ezekiel that when he saw the ungodliness of those who had remained in Jerusalem, he would realize that God had done nothing in his destruction of it without good reason.

### . . . In fact, God’s punishment is often less than what his people’s sins really deserve

**EZRA 9:13** [EZRA, TO GOD:] After all that has happened to us because of our evil behavior, and because of our great sin—considering that *you our God have punished us less than our iniquities deserve* and have given us this deliverance— . . . ISV

### God’s discipline is temporary . . .

**Ps 30:5** *His anger lasts only a moment, but his kindness lasts for a lifetime. Crying may last for a night, but joy comes in the morning.* NCV™

The reference to God’s anger speaks of his discipline and punishment.

### . . . Due to his compassion, God limits his people’s punishment

**NEH 9:28** [LEVITES, PRAYING TO GOD AND MAKING REFERENCE TO THEIR FOREFATHERS:] But after they had gained relief, they returned to doing evil before you. Therefore *you abandoned them to the control of their enemies, who continued to oppress them. But when they came back and cried out to you, you listened from heaven and delivered them in your compassion on many occasions.* ISV

**LAM 3:31–32** [JEREMIAH, REFLECTING ON THE PLIGHT OF HIS PEOPLE:] *For the Lord will not reject us forever.*<sup>32</sup> *Though he causes us grief, he then has compassion on us* according to the abundance of his loyal kindness.

### God’s discipline and testing can be intense, but God brings his people through

**Ps 66:10–12** [A PSALMIST, TO GOD:] *You have put us to the test, God; as silver is purified by fire so you have tested us.*<sup>11</sup> *You let us fall into a trap and placed heavy burdens on our backs.*<sup>12</sup> *You let our enemies*