



SESSION EIGHT

A JOURNEY OF FAITH

8 The Worldwide
Ministry of the
Holy Spirit

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“The Worldwide Ministry of the Holy Spirit”
Session Eight of Ten Sessions from the book:
*A Journey of Faith Discipleship Ministry:
Bible Answers to Life’s Toughest Questions*

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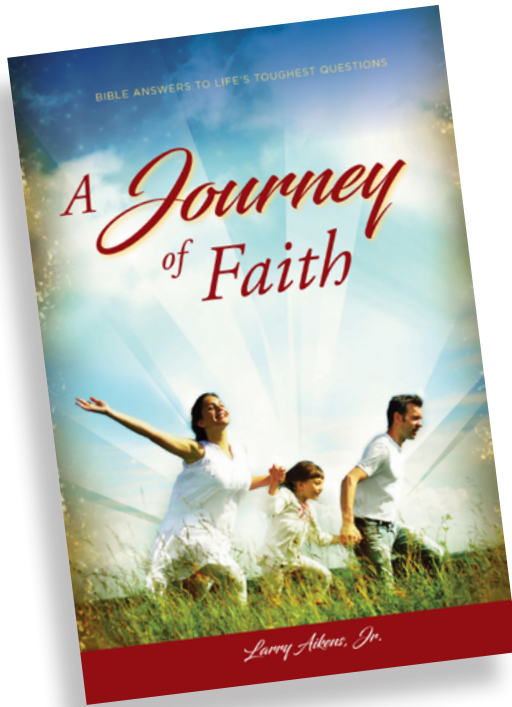
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SESSION **EIGHT** FROM

A Journey of Faith

BIBLE ANSWERS TO
LIFE'S TOUGHEST QUESTIONS



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Virginia USA

A SPECIAL INVITATION

As a pastor since 1992, I have realized that many people have questions on their mind about God and the Bible. Sometimes they tell me that they aren't sure they should ask, but they wonder, "Why *do* bad things happen in this world—especially to good people? Doesn't God love us, can't God protect us? Why doesn't God answer *my* prayers?"

So many people have said to me, "Pastor, I have been trying to read the Bible, but I just don't understand it. And besides, where did all these different versions of the Bible come from. Which one should I use? It's just so confusing!"

And the questions keep on coming: "How can I know for sure that I will be in Heaven when I die? Has my life really mattered? Is there any help in the Bible for my personal finances? How can I make better decisions? Do you believe in speaking in tongues? Can a person recover from addictions?" And on they go...

All of these are good and fair questions—completely necessary—and they have caused me to really pray for guidance of the Holy Spirit as I have studied God's Word to try to find answers for what I consider to be *the toughest questions about life*. This book is the product of that research and experience—trying to get at answers that will help you understand God better.

I am quick to admit that I can't answer all of the toughest questions completely—some of life's mysteries God just hasn't fully explained—but I have tried to provide sessions in *A Journey of Faith Discipleship Ministry* to at least engage with these questions fairly.

These sessions provide a framework to process these mysteries through a biblical understanding of what God has explained to us and really wants us to know. You might be surprised at just how much can be uncovered if you are willing to do a little bit of discovery in a guided setting. So many people with the toughest questions have told me that this study has helped them immensely.

I want to thank these folks who have *journeyed* with us up to this point. Each sincere person has deepened my faith, and has in some way been an encourager to produce the resource that you hold in your hand. I feel indebted to all who have spoken into my *Journey of Faith*, and especially to the Holy

Spirit who has guided each of us, and has revealed the truth of God's Word to our hearts as we have diligently pursued a relationship with God through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

It is my sincere hope that you will also travel with us and take the time to study these provided materials carefully. This *Journey* very well could be a wise investment in your relationship with Almighty God. My prayer is that through the power of the Holy Spirit, you may emerge from this series of studies a more informed and dedicated follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Your fellow Journeyer,

Larry

Psalm 40:1-3

WELCOME TO THE JOURNEY!

We are delighted that you have joined us for *A Journey of Faith*. We know that this is a wise investment you are making in your life, and it is our sincere desire that you will understand more of God's love for you and how you fit into God's plan of grace. We would like to introduce you to a few practical ideas:

- ✓ When you watch or attend the sessions, be sure to have a Bible, this resource, and a way to take notes. We will be studying the Bible, using the *New Living Translation*. While it is not required, it might be helpful for you to purchase this translation. We suggest the *NLT Illustrated Study Bible*.
- ✓ Before each session, please read carefully the material you have received. We believe that *Truth Discovered Is Truth Retained!* Please come to the sessions prepared.
- ✓ We offer this *Journey* with appreciation to those whose questions, together with our own, have challenged us to dig deep into God's Word for answers. It is because of their curiosity that this discipleship ministry has been developed. As you study, we realize that you also may have questions of your own. Please feel free to ask your questions during our discussion time, or contact your facilitator throughout the week. We are always happy to talk with you about your *Journey*.
- ✓ After the session, please complete the Discussion Questions and Abiding Principles on our website. Submit these for extra credit!
- ✓ If you are enjoying *A Journey of Faith*, please refer a friend to Journey with us. Visit www.onlyJesus4me.com to discover how to become a Licensed Facilitator and offer this life-changing resource to others. It is easy and rewarding!
- ✓ Before our study each week, we will say this prayer together:
“Dear heavenly Father, I ask that you open my heart to receive the Scripture for today's lesson. I also ask for the Holy Spirit to give me courage to take the steps of a true disciple in following Jesus, as truth is revealed to me through this *Journey of Faith*. Thank you for your grace at work in my life to draw me closer to your awesome love. I pray in Jesus' holy name, Amen.”

THEME VERSES

2 Peter 1:3a, 5a

³By his *Divine Power*,
God has given us
Everything we need
for living a *Godly Life*.

⁵In view of all this, make
every effort to *Respond*
to God's *Promises*.
Supplement [or add to]
Your Faith.



ABIDING PRINCIPLES

JOHN 14:16

“And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you.”

JOHN 14:17

“He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn’t looking for him and doesn’t recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you.”

REVELATION 22:17

The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” Let anyone who hears this say, “Come.” Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life.

INTRODUCTION TO SESSION EIGHT

In Jesus' final instructions to believers before ascending into heaven, he gave this promise: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20b). He keeps this promise, abiding in born-again believers in the form of the Holy Spirit. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit brings many blessings:

- Assurance of Salvation.
- Confidence to live for Christ.
- Protection against false teaching.
- Teaching and understanding of the truth.
- Power for Christian service.
- Guidance and direction.
- Growth in Christ.
- Victory over sin.

Those who have not experienced new birth in Christ do not have the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit living within them; however, the Holy Spirit is also at work in their lives. In this session, we will be focusing on verse eight of our text: "And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God's righteousness, and of the coming judgment" (John 16:8).

The Greek word for *convict* is also translated *reprove*, *convince*, or *rebuke* in the New Testament.¹ The Holy Spirit is working in the hearts of the lost to bring them to an awareness of their sin; to prove that they are in error; and to encourage them to turn to Jesus Christ, placing their faith in him as their only hope of forgiveness and birth into the family of God. He is doing a similar work in the hearts and lives of the saved who wander away from God.

If you think about parenting, you may get a grasp of this work of the Holy Spirit, at least in theory. When my two children were young, we had an incident at our house that illustrates what we will discuss in this session.

ILLUSTRATION

Here's the story: We decided to repaint the bonus room over the garage. It was mostly a place for the children to play, but also served as a small office for the house. Just days after the walls had received a fresh coat of paint, two small and distinct holes mysteriously appeared just over the light switch. It looked like someone had taken an ink pen and punched two holes close together in the wall. Turns out, something like that had happened...

I called my wife upstairs to look at the holes with me. "Do you remember these holes being here?"

"Of course not," she replied. So we called the children in and asked them about the holes in the wall.

"Do you know anything about how these holes got here?"

"Not me," the first one said.

"Not me," the next one said. And they gave us a blank look as if to say, "How dare you accuse us..."

No matter how we asked the question, they remained resolute that they had no idea at all about how those holes appeared in the freshly painted wall. Well, no one else had been in our home, and it was just the four of us—plus the house cat. So, I said, "You know, if none of us know anything about this, and we are the only ones in this house, then it must have been the cat who did this damage."

"Oh, no, daddy, it was not the cat. The cat would never do anything like that," they quickly said. I knew it was pretty far-fetched, and I was pretty sure that one of them had deliberately done it; but I wanted to lead them to admit it and make it right, so they could learn and grow in character.

I was concerned—not so much about the holes, for I had done far worse as a child—but about someone damaging property and then lying to cover it up. I knew this was a teaching moment, the kind that only comes along every once in a while. An idea popped into my head. With a wink at my wife (the real owner of the cat), I said, "Well, if the cat is going to tear up the place, I

guess we will just have to find the cat another place to live.” I went down the steps to the garage and brought the cat’s transport cage up to the bonus room to find one of them in tears.

“Daddy, please don’t punish the cat...he didn’t do it. I did.” They had both known about it all along... Well, we dealt with that situation the best we could as human parents, and I hope our children learned a bit of character that day from their experience.

God is a much better parent! God cares for us and has sent the Holy Spirit to shepherd us on life’s journey. The Holy Spirit has been given to us as a guide, to “lead us into all truth” (John 14:17).



As is our standard practice before every lesson, will you open your heart to the all-important work of the Holy Spirit? **Remember the prayer in the “Welcome Page” of the book?** This would be an especially important time to pray that prayer from your heart to God’s heart—and mean it.

The work of the Holy Spirit may seem painful at first, but if you cooperate, you will find the peace of finally dealing with what may have been keeping you from a deeper relationship with God. My prayers are with you and every *Journeyer* in a sincere way. Believe me, I need your prayers as well. The Holy Spirit is still working on me, too, and I have come to rejoice in the fact that God cares so much for me. God cares that much for you as well.

*The Holy Spirit was **Given** to us
to **Shepherd** us on life’s journey.*

TEXT: JOHN 16:7-15

⁷ “But in fact, it is best for you that I go away, because if I don’t, the Advocate won’t come. If I do go away, then I will send him to you.

⁸ And when he comes, he will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment.

⁹ The world’s sin is that it refuses to believe in me.

¹⁰ Righteousness is available because I go to the Father, and you will see me no more.

¹¹ Judgment will come because the ruler of this world has already been judged.

¹² There is so much more I want to tell you, but you can’t bear it now.

¹³ When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.

¹⁴ He will bring me glory by telling you whatever he receives from me.

¹⁵ All that belongs to the Father is mine; this is why I said, ‘The Spirit will tell you whatever he receives from me.’”



SESSION 8: THE WORLDWIDE MINISTRY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

A working definition of the **Trinity** is that God is one and yet three: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Although the concept of the Trinity is difficult to grasp, it must be embraced by faith. The Holy Spirit is God, yet the Holy Spirit's unique personality has a special worldwide ministry in the accomplishment of God's plan.

In simple terms, the Holy Spirit is working in humankind and through believers to bring honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Spirit of God does this work in three ways—through indictment, illumination, and influence. Let's examine each part of this work a little more closely:

I. The Holy Spirit indicts the human heart, bringing conviction of sin (vs. 9).

A. The Holy Spirit is at work to convince sinners of their complicity in sin

before a holy God.

Psalms 14:2-3 – ²The LORD looks down from heaven on the entire human race; he looks to see if anyone is truly wise, if anyone seeks God. ³But no, all have turned away; all have become corrupt. No one does good, not a single one!

1. The Holy Spirit declares each person guilty before God.
Romans 3:23 – For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.

ILLUSTRATION

Have you ever been doing something that you really shouldn’t have been doing, and felt the presence of someone behind you—maybe even felt their hand on your shoulder? That is the feeling many people have described when they have felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

When I was a youngster, about 13 years old, my family and I were visiting my Father’s relatives who lived close to Washington, D.C., in a large, high-rise apartment building. Feeling rather bored after the adults had visited a while, I asked permission to go downstairs and play on the playground outside. My parents, assured by our relatives that it was safe enough, allowed me to go. I had a wonderful time. No problems on the playground. The problem was trying to get back into the building.

Dad’s folks had always met us at the bottom of the staircase closest to their apartment, and we had walked up the steps to their home on the 11th floor. No one had thought about the fact that this door would be locked and I wouldn’t be able to come back up the way I had gone out.

Upon discovering the locked door, I panicked. This was long before cell phones, and I wasn’t sure how to go through the lobby. No one was around to ask for help. I remembered that I had my trusty pocket knife with me. So, I thought to myself, “This is a simple-looking lock; I will just slide the mechanism back and let myself in.” I wasn’t going to leave any marks on the

door, and it seemed innocent enough to me. Carefully, I started working to pick the lock so I could get back inside the staircase. About the time I had picked the lock, I felt a heavy hand on my shoulder. **A voice said, “Son, hand your knife over and come with me.”**

I looked up, and there stood a great big security officer with a very stern look on his face. I was scared out of my mind! As it turned out, someone had been vandalizing the property, and the security officer thought he had found the vandal...me! So, I went with him and between my explanation and profuse apologies, and my relatives' vouching for me, the security team realized they had the wrong guy. But I learned a lesson that day!

Though my reason for picking the lock was innocent enough, I will never forget the feeling of fear and guilt that gripped me—and that is the kind of feeling you get when the Holy Spirit is dealing with you about something that is wrong in your life. You can run away, or run to Jesus.



2. A person's guilt can only be removed by faith in Christ Jesus' sacrifice on Calvary (vs. 10).

John 3:18 – “There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son.”

- B. The Holy Spirit helps sinners to understand their accountability to Almighty God.

1. Satan is working against this effort, by trying to keep the lost blinded to the truth.

2 Corinthians 4:4 – Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

2. The Holy Spirit uses the Word of God to awaken the lost, shedding light on their sinful condition.

John 3:20 – “All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed.”

II. The Holy Spirit illuminates the truth, convincing of the love of God provided in Christ (vs. 10).

A. When a person is awakened to the reality of their sin and its accountability to God, the human response is to try to clean up and live a better life.

B. The Holy Spirit is working to bring each person to an awareness that righteousness cannot be established by living a better life of good works.

Isaiah 64:6 – We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind.

*Righteousness before God cannot be established
By living a life of Good Works.*

C. The Holy Spirit teaches that Christ’s righteousness must be applied to a person’s account, through the miracle of salvation, or the new birth in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:21 – For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

D. Look at verse 10 of our text carefully. The resurrection and ascension of Christ prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

1. Only by turning to Christ as Messiah, can we be forgiven and brought into a right relationship with God.

2. The Holy Spirit is working in hearts, pleading with humankind to realize that Christ alone can save.

Romans 10:4 – For Christ has already accomplished the purpose for which the law was given. As a result, all who believe in him are made right with God.

III. The Holy Spirit influences people to turn to Jesus Christ, so that they may be converted and healed of their sinful condition (vs. 11).

- A. The Holy Spirit warns of a coming judgment.

John 3:36 – And anyone who believes in God’s Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn’t obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God’s angry judgment.

ILLUSTRATION

Suppose you lived at the edge of town next to a river. After a huge storm came through the area, you were the first to realize that the bridge had been completely washed out, and you were the only one around to warn motorists of impending danger.

Wouldn’t you try to flag down motorists and warn them to turn around before it was too late? Isn’t that what the Holy Spirit is doing in our lives?

This reminds me of a humorous but pungent story:

A priest and pastor from the local parishes were standing by the side of the road holding up a sign that read, “The End is Near! Turn yourself around now before it’s too late!”

They planned to hold up the sign to each passing car. As the first driver sped past, he yelled, “Leave us alone you religious nuts!” From around the curve they heard screeching tires and a big splash.

One clergy said to the other, “Do you think we should just put up a sign that says, ‘Bridge Out’ instead?”²

One day we will stand before God. Either we will have made things right through Jesus Christ our Savior before-hand, or we will face the wrath of God

in judgment for our sins. The Holy Spirit is warning us of impending danger.



- B. The “ruler of this world” (vs. 11) is Satan. He has already been judged, and one day he will be contained and ultimately cast into Hell.

Revelation 20:1-2, 10 – ¹Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key to the bottomless pit and a heavy chain in his hand. ²He seized the dragon—that old serpent, who is the devil, Satan—and bound him in chains for a thousand years. ¹⁰Then the devil, who had deceived them, was thrown into the fiery lake of burning sulfur, joining the beast and the false prophet. There they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

- C. Those who are lost without Christ remain in their sins and will share in Satan’s torment forever.

Revelation 20:15 – And anyone whose name was not found recorded in the Book of Life was thrown into the lake of fire.

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 – ⁸In flaming fire, bringing judgment on those who don’t know God and on those who refuse to obey the Good News of our Lord Jesus. ⁹They will be punished with eternal destruction, forever separated from the Lord and from his glorious power.

1. The Holy Spirit calls sinners to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Revelation 22:17 – The Spirit and the bride say, “Come.” Let anyone who hears this say, “Come.” Let anyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who desires drink freely from the water of life.

- a. Notice the partnership of the bride of Christ with the Holy Spirit.
 - b. Believers join the Holy Spirit in calling the lost to repentance.
2. We join the Holy Spirit in urging the lost to come to Christ while they have opportunity.

2 Corinthians 6:2 – For God says, “At just the right time, I heard

you. On the day of salvation, I helped you.” Indeed, the “right time” is now. Today is the day of salvation.

IV. The Holy Spirit is involved in a similar work in the lives of believers who are not living for God (vss. 13-14).

A. This work begins with conviction.

1. The Holy Spirit deals with every believer about sins in his or her life.

Hebrews 12:5-6 – ⁵And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, “My child, don’t make light of the LORD’s discipline, and don’t give up when he corrects you. ⁶For the LORD disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.”

2. The conviction of the Holy Spirit is exemplified in the life of David, recorded in Psalm 51. You can read about David’s sin in 2 Samuel 11-12.

- a. Notice how David was brought face to face with the reality of his sins.

Psalm 51:3 – For I recognize my rebellion; it haunts me day and night.

- b. David was shown how his sins had impacted his relationship with God.

Psalm 51:4a – Against you, and you alone, have I sinned;

- c. David was reminded of how God viewed his sinful behavior.

Psalm 51:4b – I have done what is evil in your sight.

- d. The Holy Spirit guided David to acknowledge the responsibility of his sinful choices.

Psalm 51:4c – You will be proved right in what you say, and your judgment against me is just.

- e. David was brought to the end of his human resources and humbled before God.

Psalm 51:5 – For I was born a sinner—yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.

- B. This work of conviction is designed to bring a believer to confession of his or her sins.
1. An alternate to confession is covering over sins.
Proverbs 28:13 – People who conceal their sins will not prosper, but if they confess and turn from them, they will receive mercy.
 - a. Arguing that sin is not really sin is an attempt to cover our sins.

*True Confession comes from
Genuine repentance.*

- b. Making excuses or blaming others for our sins is another attempt to cover our sins.
2. True confession comes from genuine repentance.
1 John 1:9 – But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.
 - a. Repentance is an outgrowth of Holy Spirit conviction.
 - b. This repentance is literally a change of mind.
 - c. This change of mind creates a renewed desire in a person's life to do what is right in the sight of God.
3. Notice David's confession to God that came about as a result of the Holy Spirit's work of conviction:
Psalm 51:1-2, 7 – ¹Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins. ²Wash me clean from my guilt. Purify me from my sin. ⁷Purify me from my sins, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

C. If a believer does not get right with God after this process of conviction, he or she will experience God's chastening.

1. Chastening is evidence that a believer is truly a member of the family of God.

Hebrews 12:7-8 – ⁷As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? ⁸If God doesn't discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all.

2. This chastening is designed to bring a believer to a place of greater maturity in his or her faith.

Hebrews 12:10b-11 – ^{10b}...God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. ¹¹No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

D. If a believer refuses to heed God's chastening, God may decide to call this person home.

1 Corinthians 11:30 – That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.

IN CONCLUSION

The Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts of unbelievers and in believers who have wandered away from God. Have you truly been born again? Are you right with God? How is it with your heart and soul?

- If you are not saved, please respond to the Holy Spirit's urging and turn to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith as your only hope of salvation.
- If you are not right with God, will you respond to the Holy Spirit's urging to turn to Christ?

It is the graciousness of God that brings the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts. We should be humbled and thankful that God cares that much. "For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him" (Philippians 2:13).

- **Celebrate** – God is within you.
- **Confess** – Allow the Holy Spirit to bring you closer to God as you enjoy God's wonderful forgiveness.
- **Cooperate** – Conform to the changes the Holy Spirit brings in your life to make you more like Christ.

*Holy Spirit, all divine,
Dwell within this heart of Mine;
Cast down Every idol throne,
Reign Supreme, and reign alone.³*

ENDNOTES

¹ Strongs, “Elegcho,” NT: 1651.

² “Bridge Out,” Joke Briefcase, accessed December 4, 2019,
<http://www.jokebriefcase.blogspot.com/2008/11/bridge-out.html>.

³ From the hymn “Holy Ghost with Light Divine,” written by Andrew Reed in 1817. He was a godly pastor who lived out his faith by serving orphans, mentally ill patients, and people with serious disease.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have you read and studied this entire session? Yes No

Please answer the Discussion Questions below in complete sentences, using our website. When you submit your answers to OJM, you will get a copy of Larry's and Diane's answers in return via email! (You may wish to keep a copy of your answers to compare yours with theirs as you continue discovering truth.) If you are not sure how to answer each question, go ahead and "take a stab at it." Once you start writing, you may surprise yourself! There are no "right" or "wrong" answers. We want to hear your thoughts!

1. **What does it mean to experience conviction of sin? Please share an example of conviction in your own life.**
2. **Explain how the feeling of guilt is removed from our lives.**
3. **Discuss what the love of God means to you and give an example of how you have noticed the love of God in your life.**
4. **Discuss how David's sin was dealt with by the Holy Spirit. What was it that made David feel better?**
5. **Chastening is designed by God to bring us to a place of greater maturity. How do you think God might bring chastening into a person's life?**

IN ADDITION...

Remember to write out the Abiding Principles on the website. If you complete these simple assignments, you will earn an upgraded certificate!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All the glory and praise goes to God for all of the many blessings we have in Christ Jesus our Lord. I truly am grateful to God for the wonderful people God has put in my life since I was but a small child. I chose the theme verses for Only Jesus 4 Me (OJM) from [Psalm 71:17-18](#), for truly as the Psalmist said: “[God has] taught me from my earliest childhood.” I am indebted to many voices and guides who have spoken into my faith *Journey* to bring me to this new opportunity to teach others *A Journey of Faith*.

My *Journey of Faith* started many years ago, when in God’s grace and providence, God allowed me to be born into a Christian home. When I was but three years of age, God led my parents, Larry and Linda, into full-time missions work. My early life was enriched by their experiences of faith and service to Christ. I owe them my lasting gratitude for the many ways they gave me a wonderful start in life.

Further, I am very grateful for the church families that have allowed me to serve Jesus in their midst since 1992. So much of what I have learned has been in the pursuit of their needs. Also, searching questions that have come to the surface in both my life and theirs, have called forth a diligent study on my part. I love each and every person with whom I have had the opportunity to minister throughout the years, and I appreciate all that they have taught me. Space would not allow me to thank each person by name, but to those who were part of these church families, know that I am eternally grateful that our journeys have intersected. I feel that we have blessed each other forward in our mutual faith, and I am thankful for what you have brought into my life.

I am grateful for a host of professors, pastors, teachers, and counselors who have spoken into my faith journey. I studied officially in many classrooms, but unofficially, I have sat at the feet of so many wonderful Christians—some whom I have pastored and others whom I have led as part of my church staff. Those very ones whom I was called to lead have led me in many ways. I can’t thank these mentors enough. I only wish that space would allow me to mention each one by name.

I also want to offer my appreciation to my first wife, Holly, and my children, Nathaniel and Jessica, for allowing me the time to pursue ministry, writing,

education, and the lofty dreams that I felt God placed within my heart. While I felt my motives were pure and my intentions were the best, I haven't always known how to balance my time and priorities well. I am sure that in my early zeal for God, I often got caught up in lofty goals that were more than what God had called me to pursue. In those times, my family suffered a great deal for my lack of attentiveness to them, and I regret that. I also made my share of mistakes and needed forgiveness. For those sacrifices they made to invest in who I have become, I offer my sincere thanks and humble gratitude. If I could go back, I would do things very differently. My children are grown now, and I love them very much.

God in his mercy and grace has allowed me to remarry a wonderful partner, Diane. I am very grateful for her support and the expertise that she has brought into my life. She is a dedicated follower of Jesus Christ, a grammarian, and an excellent musician. Her humble ways of living out her faith in Jesus Christ are constant lessons to me. She has a gentle spirit and has modeled to me the Christ-life, to which I aspire. I can't say "thank you" enough to her. She has a courage about her that is remarkable, and even though God has entrusted to her a battle with Stage IV cancer, she fights on with great courage. My thanks for her careful review of all of our written materials and the excellent edits. She might just make a grammarian out of me yet. I doubt it, but it is worth her continued try! Also, a special thank you is in order for Diane's parents, Don and Doris Johns. They are special folks, and they sure reared a fine daughter!

I must give a special thanks to my church family at Bethel. They are simply the BEST. I would never be able to express to them how much I love them and the church that we all call "home." It is such a privilege to be their pastor and to help carry on the work of Jesus. I appreciate Bethel's support and belief in the project of OJM. Their partnership is such a blessing to us. I want to give my appreciation to the chairperson of our Church Board, Robert Phillips, and his wife Lena, and also the chairperson of our Deacons, Ron Wampler, and his wife Carolyn. All of the leaders at Bethel are dear friends and encouragers in the work of Christ—I wish I had the space to list all of their names. I also want to thank our District Executive Minister, Bro. John Jantzi, for his review of some of our lessons and his excellent input and ideas. Also, my thanks go to him for believing in me and being the conduit that God used to bring Bethel and us together. He is a blessing and such an encouragement as we endeavor

to serve Christ together. I also want to give a shout out to the Discipleship Ministries Team with whom I have the privilege of serving: David Chappell, Jan Orndorff, and Debby Rimel are wonderful friends and encouragers. My “thank you” to the team! They have made me a better disciple of Jesus, and I appreciate their steady encouragement to look to Jesus and keep the attention on HIM!

Only Jesus 4 Me (OJM) was born out of a calling that I felt through fervent prayer on my knees. I shared the vision first with Diane, and she was right there to support me. We both prayed for God’s direction in putting the right people into our path to help launch this ministry. In the early days, God led us to a local businessman, C.L. Russell of C.L. Russell Photography in Broadway, Virginia. He is the creative genius behind the videography and photography! He and his wife, LaShonda, have become good friends, and we are very grateful for the ways they have supported OJM. In those early days, God also led us to Josh Hallahan of Christian Internet Design in Missoula, Montana. He and his team have brilliantly developed the website and have constantly been a source of encouragement in the Lord. They have found the tools to make the vision a reality! We are very grateful to them.

As we began to delve into the work of creating OJM, we realized very quickly that we needed some expertise in graphics design, technical issues, and developing the ministry materials, such as the book that you are reading. After much prayer, the Lord reminded me of a good friend who had assisted us on many previous projects, Tillman Ross of Graphic Imaging in Concord, North Carolina. We asked Tillman to consult with us as our Impressions Manager, and he graciously accepted. He is gifted at bringing colors, web pages, pictures and concepts into a unified whole. His creations speak of excellence, and we feel they are a wonderful reflection on OJM’s passion for Jesus. A “thank you” to Tillman for his steady and creative guidance, as well as being a friend in the Gospel ministry since 2003.

On the business side, we have been working with our CPA and friend, Ed Neese, from Greensboro, North Carolina. I pastored there in the late 1990’s and asked Ed to do my personal taxes. Since that time, Ed has done my yearly return and has counseled me on many financial matters. He loves the Lord Jesus, and he has been a true business friend. I am deeply grateful for his

guidance in financial matters concerning OJM, and ministry in general, but even more so for his consistent friendship and encouragement to both me and Diane. God has also brought into our lives a good friend and attorney, Dan Neher from Harrisonburg, Virginia. He is a solid brother in Christ and has been a source of encouragement and assistance in advising us on legal matters concerning OJM. We are grateful to Dan for his expertise.

Musically, God has put in our path a new friend from Nashville, Tennessee, Peter Young. Peter is an accomplished drummer, arranger, and producer. He has given “wings” to the theme song God allowed me to compose, “Only Jesus 4 Me,” and brought together incredible talent in Nashville to produce the song at the legendary Studio 19. He has been awesome to work with. Our thanks to Peter, and a thank you to the recording studio and all of the musicians who played on the project: Kyle Hershman, Studio Engineer; Chris Nole, Keyboards; Ron de la Vega, Bass; Peter Young, drums; Tony Paoletta, pedal steel; Joe Spivey, Acoustic Guitar, Fiddle and Mandolin, and Chas Williams, Lead Guitar. Mike Lusk is the awesome singing talent on the theme song, and he sounded just great. We appreciate Mike and all the musicians for their contributions!

There are so many others God has used in my life—many friends, family members, neighbors, and colleagues who have prayed for me—and I am truly grateful for each and every one. If I have failed to mention you by name, please understand that it was not on purpose. Yet above and beyond all others, I am humbled by the friendship of Jesus. I am so grateful that Jesus would entrust to me his vision for *Only Jesus 4 Me* and *A Journey of Faith*. I realized long ago that inspiration and creativity do not come from a human being; rather, all that is good comes from the Holy Spirit working through a yielded person to accomplish the purpose of glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ. When I am at my best, I feel the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and I give all the glory to Jesus. “In him, I live and move and have my being” (Acts 17:28). I know all the glory goes to God and I am eternally grateful for any small part that I have in Jesus’ kingdom. If this ministry touches your heart and is a help to you, please join with us in giving God the glory. God alone is worthy! Praise be to Jesus! Thank you, Jesus. Only Jesus 4 Me! Amen!



PHOTO ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Photo 1: “Laatefossen waterfall in Odda in summer, Norway,” September 17, 2017 by contributor: kukando, on istockphoto.com, stock photo ID: 848712492.

Photo 2: “Woman Wearing Grey Long-sleeved Shirt Facing the Sea,” Magadan, Russia, April 23, 2016, by Artem Kovalev on Unsplash.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Larry was born in Atlanta, Georgia, and reared on the missionary field. He is the second of six children. His folks served the Spanish-speaking world until Larry was a teenager, and then they traveled as a family in full-time evangelistic work in the United States. He recalls being in forty-three states and three other countries before going to college. During these formative years, Larry gave his heart and life to Christ and felt a calling to serve the Lord in local church work.

Larry was ordained to the full-time Gospel ministry in 1992, serving as a music and youth minister until 1995. Since that time, he has had the privilege of lifting up Christ as a pastor in the Baptist Church, the United Methodist Church, and the Church of the Brethren (COB). He is currently serving as the pastor of Bethel-Mayland COB in Broadway, Virginia, and the interim pastor of Pine Grove COB in Harrisonburg, Virginia. He also serves with the Shenandoah District COB as a member of the Discipleship Ministry Team.

Larry has earned three seminary degrees: a Master of Theology (Th.M.) and a Doctorate of Theology (Th.D.) from Covington Theological Seminary, Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia; and a Master of Divinity (M.Div.) from Eastern Mennonite Seminary, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

Larry is the father to two grown children, Nathaniel and Jessica, and a grandfather to Kirsten. Larry and his wife Diane reside in New Market, Virginia. When not busy in the ministry, Larry enjoys music, the outdoors, golf, tennis, riding motorcycles, and reading—especially biographies. Diane shares many of the same interests and is also a wonderful pianist. They both enjoy ministering, spending time together, traveling, and meeting other believers.



ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTING EDITOR



Diane was born near Tacoma, Washington, and grew up as the baby sister of two brothers. At seven years of age, her family moved across the country back to her mother's home in the mountains of Pennsylvania. They took up residence in an old farmhouse on the edge of the family farm and got very involved in their local church and Christian school. Diane's dad served as an assistant to the pastor, and her mother taught high school maths and sciences in the Christian school.

After graduation from high school, Diane went to Pensacola Christian College (PCC) and earned her bachelor's degree in Music Ministry in 1999, traveling with the PCC Ensemble for two years and helping to promote the college. She was offered an opportunity to continue her studies as a Graduate Assistant and earned a seminary degree in Church Music (M.C.M.) through Pensacola Theological Seminary in 2001.

Diane has had a diverse opportunity to experience Christ and how various traditions practice their faith. She grew up in a Community church, belonged to a non-denominational church, served on staff at a Baptist church, attended a Full Gospel church, and has belonged to the United Methodist Church. She is now a member of the Church of the Brethren, where she serves with her husband, Larry. Diane has also served the local church as a choir member and director, pianist, Sunday school teacher, secretary, and financial secretary. She is very involved in supporting Larry's ministry as a pastor's wife.

She offers her input in the discussion questions throughout this book as a person who has experienced the *Journey* many times. She hopes that her input will help to broaden the discussions and further the conversations around these important topics.



A JOURNEY OF FAITH INCLUDES

- Session 1 | God's Wonderful Assurance of Salvation
- Session 2 | What Does Baptism Mean?
- Session 3 | The Meeting House of God
- Session 4 | Is the Bible Relevant for Today?
- Session 5 | A Guide to Prayer and Fasting
- Session 6 | God's Will: Revealed & Concealed
- Session 7 | Financial Wisdom
- Session 8 | The Worldwide Ministry of the Holy Spirit
- Session 9 | Anointed by the Holy Spirit
- Session 10 | Why Do Bad Things Happen to God's Children?



Don't Miss A Session!