



SESSION NINE

A JOURNEY OF FAITH

9 Anointed
by the
Holy Spirit

Larry Aikens, Jr.

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“Anointed by the Holy Spirit”
Session Nine of Ten Sessions from the book:
A Journey of Faith Discipleship Ministry:
Bible Answers to Life’s Toughest Questions

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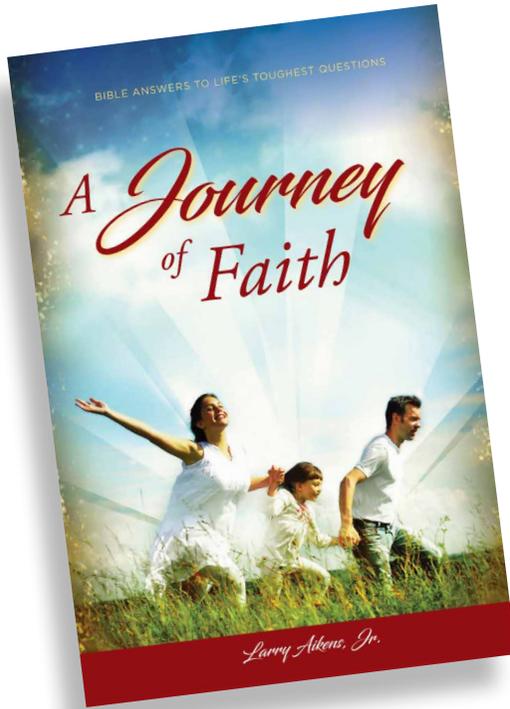
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SESSION **NINE** FROM

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

EPHESIANS 5:18

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.

JOHN 10:10

“The thief’s purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give them a rich and satisfying life.”

ROMANS 6:13

Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God.

Isaiah 44:3

*“I will pour out Water
to Quench your thirst...”*



Joel 2:28

*“I will pour out My Spirit
upon All people.”*

INTRODUCTION TO SESSION NINE

OBJECT LESSON: The Anointing Of the Holy Spirit

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Three clear drinking glasses
- A clear pitcher of water
- A large, clear mixing bowl with soap and water
- A hand towel and a bath-sized towel

SETUP

Before the session starts, make two of the glasses appear as dirty as possible by smearing them with mud and letting them dry. Take the third, clean glass and put a little water in it. On a table beside the podium, set the materials out where they can be easily seen as people assemble.

OBJECT LESSON

To introduce the session, take one of the dirty glasses and wash it in the soapy water, explaining that the dirty glass represents the life of an unsaved person. When he or she comes to Christ, Jesus' blood (represented by the soapy water) cleanses him or her from all sin.

Dry the glass and pour a little water in it to represent the presence of the Holy Spirit in a saved person's life. Although the Holy Spirit is present, as discussed in Session Eight, show the Journeyers that much of self (represented by the air in the glass) still remains.

Take the other clean glass and fill it up with water to overflowing. This represents a saved person who has allowed the Holy Spirit to take full control of his or her life and work through that life to bring honor to Christ.

This session will help us learn how to live a Spirit-filled life of dedication and usefulness to Christ Jesus our Lord.

TEXT: ACTS 2:1-6, 14-18

¹ On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place.

² Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty windstorm, and it filled the house where they were sitting.

³ Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them.

⁴ And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

⁵ At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem.

⁶ When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.



¹⁴ Then Peter stepped forward with the eleven other apostles and shouted to the crowd, “Listen carefully, all of you, fellow Jews and residents of Jerusalem! Make no mistake about this.

¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as some of you are assuming. Nine o’clock in the morning is much too early for that.

¹⁶ No, what you see was predicted long ago by the prophet Joel:

¹⁷ ‘In the last days,’ God says, ‘I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.

¹⁸ In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants—men and women alike—and they will prophesy.’”



SESSION 9: ANOINTED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

Session Eight focused on the Holy Spirit’s worldwide work of reconciliation in the hearts of humankind—both the lost who are separated from God by their sin, and also the saved who have wandered away from God. This session will focus on the Holy Spirit’s work *through* the saved who desire to accomplish God’s plan and purposes for their life.

To understand this work, one must first understand the function of the Holy Spirit’s work in his or her conversion. The Bible teaches that, at the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit does the following:

1. The Holy Spirit acts as the Agent of regeneration, or new birth.
Titus 3:5-6 – ⁵[God] saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. ⁶He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior.

John 3:5-6 – ⁵Jesus replied, “I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. ⁶Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives

birth to spiritual life.”

a. Regeneration is sometimes referred to as “the baptism of the Holy Spirit.”

1 Corinthians 12:13 – Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

b. Regeneration includes redemption.

1) Redemption is made possible through the blood of Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 9:12 – With his own blood—not the blood of goats and calves—he entered the Most Holy Place once for all time and secured our redemption forever.

2) Redemption becomes personal in one’s experience by the application of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:2 – And because you belong to him, the power of the life-giving Spirit has freed you from the power of sin that leads to death.

c. Regeneration includes “positional” sanctification.

1) When you were born-again, you were sanctified (set apart from sin to God), or relieved of the debt of sin that caused condemnation before God. That is your new position.

2) As you continue in the Christian life, however, you will continually need to be sanctified, or set apart, from the many sins and temptations of the world that would cause you to be ineffective as a Christian.

1 Corinthians 6:11 – Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

d. Regeneration includes justification.

Romans 3:24 – Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when

he freed us from the penalty for our sins.

ILLUSTRATION

Often you will hear the term *justification* defined simply that Christ forgives and brings us back to God “just as if we had never sinned.” While this is a good working definition, I think the term goes a little farther.

Perhaps it will help if you think of it this way... Let’s suppose that I got into major debt and fell way behind in my payments—so much in debt and so far behind that my creditors threatened repossession, foreclosure, etc. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if someone stepped in and completely paid off my debt in my place? You could think of that as forgiveness. In this scenario, I would be out of debt, and would be able to keep the items that had been put up for collateral. However, my credit would still be ruined.

What if someone not only paid off my debts, but also somehow transferred their perfect credit record to my account? Not only would my debt be paid in full, but also my creditworthiness would be restored. That is what justification means. Forgiven, yes...but also Christ’s good standing with God placed upon our account.



2. The Holy Spirit sets up residence in the heart of each believer.
Romans 8:9 – But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit if you have the Spirit of God living in you. (And remember that those who do not have the Spirit of Christ living in them do not belong to him at all.)
3. The presence of the Holy Spirit brings assurance of our salvation.
Romans 8:16 – For his Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children.

The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit *accompanies* salvation, but *does not guarantee* that a believer will be “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18). Being filled with the Holy Spirit, or anointed by the Holy Spirit for Christian service, involves an understanding of truths from God’s Word and a willingness on our part as believers to apply these truths to our lives on a daily basis.

*Equipped by the Holy Spirit
to fully Function for Christ.*

I. Defining the term.

- A. Being **filled with the Spirit**, or **anointed** for Christian service, means that a believer is fully controlled and energized by the Holy Spirit so that his or her life fully functions to bring honor and glory to Christ.
 - 1. A Spirit-filled person manifests the evidences of the Spirit.

Galatians 5:22-23 – ²²But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!
 - 2. The filling of the Spirit affects the whole person—body, mind and spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 – Now may the God of peace make you holy in every way, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes again.
- B. Being filled with the Spirit, or anointed for Christian service, is not a state of emotionalism.
 - 1. The Holy Spirit is working in the realm of truth, not in the realm of emotions. Sometimes, truth moves us in an emotional way, but being filled with the Spirit is not mere emotionalism.

John 16:13a – When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth.

2. The Holy Spirit works in a disciplined fashion to further the work of Christ (read Acts 2:14-40).

2 Timothy 1:7 – For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

C. Being filled with the Spirit, or anointed for Christian service, should not be *equated* with speaking in tongues, prophesying, or working of miracles.

1. The gift of tongues in Acts 2 was the gift of languages, used of God to birth the early church. Read carefully Acts 2:4-11, and you will see that the Apostles were speaking in known languages—not unknown tongues.

- a. Some believers bear testimony of a heavenly language, or tongue, they use before God in worship or prayer. Though that has not been my experience of the Holy Spirit, I certainly would not take away from their experience, nor try to explain away the manifestation of the Spirit in their lives. It seems that some believers are given a heavenly language known only to God. The Apostle Paul spoke of having such a gift.

- b. The Apostle Paul did not forbid speaking in tongues, or this heavenly language, in worship. Even so, he insisted that there be an orderly expression of this gift. **We find his clear instructions in 1 Corinthians 14:**

- 1) If someone feels led to exercise the gift of tongues in worship, there must be someone present with the gift of interpretation (vss. 5-14).
- 2) The message given must be edifying to all who are present, not just the one gifted with the heavenly language (vss. 15-19).
- 3) The gift must be exercised in an orderly way (vss. 26-28, 33, 39-40).

- c. I would caution you that being filled with the Spirit should not be *equated* with these types of experiences. One can be filled with the Spirit and not experience such utterances or extraordinary expressions in physical ways.
2. The gifts of prophecies in Acts were necessary in the early Church, because the New Testament had not yet been completed.
3. Other “sign gifts” (i.e. miracles, healings, and words of knowledge or wisdom) were manifestations of the Spirit to establish credibility for the early church.
4. These measures were no longer *necessary* once the Church was established and the New Testament completed.
1 Corinthians 13:8-10 – ⁸Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever! ⁹Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture! ¹⁰But when full understanding comes, these partial things will become useless.
5. God is still pouring out the Spirit upon us, and these gifts of miracles and tongues are still being experienced at times. Even so, it is most likely that the fullness of the Spirit in your life will be experienced in a less dramatic, yet still effective, way to enable you to promote the cause of Jesus Christ and carry on his work.

II. Who is eligible to be filled with the Holy Spirit and anointed for Christian service?

- A. All believers have the opportunity to be filled with the Spirit after their public declaration of Christ in baptism (read Acts 19:1-5).
- B. Every believer has been saved and baptized to serve Christ.
- C. In order to serve Christ effectively, it is necessary to be filled with the Spirit.

III. To obtain this anointing, or filling of the Spirit, we need to make (or renew) a four-fold decision.

- A. First, we must decide to *deeply commit* to Christ's service, prioritizing God's will above our own plans and commitments.
1. This infilling of power is for the purpose of fully functioning in order to bring honor and glory to Jesus Christ.
 2. The Holy Spirit will not empower a person for personal gain.
Acts 8:18-21 – ¹⁸When Simon saw that the Spirit was given when the apostles laid their hands on people, he offered them money to buy this power. ¹⁹“Let me have this power, too,” he exclaimed, “so that when I lay my hands on people, they will receive the Holy Spirit!” ²⁰But Peter replied, “May your money be destroyed with you for thinking God's gift can be bought! ²¹You can have no part in this, for your heart is not right with God.”
 3. This type of commitment is what Jesus was getting at when he said, “Seek the Kingdom of God above all else...” (Matt. 6:33).
- B. Second, we must come to a place of *true contrition* about our sins.
Isaiah 57:15 – The high and lofty one who lives in eternity, the Holy One, says this: “I live in the high and holy place with those whose spirits are contrite and humble. I restore the crushed spirit of the humble and revive the courage of those with repentant hearts.”
1. Contrition expresses itself in genuine repentance.
 2. Private sin, between a person and the Lord, should be confessed and repented of privately.
 3. Public sin, which is known by others, should be confessed and repented of both privately and publicly.
 4. When necessary, repentance leads a person to make things right, providing it is within his or her power to do so.
- C. Third, we must be willing to *yield completely* to the Holy Spirit.
1. This involves submitting completely to God.
 2. This involves a decision to seek God's glory above a person's own self-promotion or personal comfort.
 3. This involves a person relying totally on the power of the Spirit to

energize his or her service for Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION

May I share a personal story from my experience of God? Though raised in a missionary's home, I wasn't especially interested in following in my father's footsteps. My parents were missionaries to Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries. I grew up with Hispanic people and grew to love the people and culture dearly; but like most Americans, I had grown accustomed to our conveniences and didn't relish the thought of giving them up to be a missionary.

I really began feeling a calling to ministry when I was about 11 years of age. Coinciding with that moving of the Spirit in my life, there was a trip in which I accompanied my father to the Dominican Republic for a conference. We stayed for about two weeks in the home of the national people—dear, dear Christian people. The home was above average for the area, and the people were extremely hospitable to us. I was very grateful for their kindness and felt no prejudice against them at all. That was not my issue. Rather, my issue was the lack of conveniences that I had come to enjoy—even in an American home that would have been considered poverty-level by U.S. standards.

In Dominican, the homes were quite different. There was no A/C and no flooring to speak of; mosquitoes abounded, and we had to sleep in a zip-up netting; we couldn't drink the water, and the only shower was cold water out of a ½ inch pipe with no shower head. Not to mention, the food was very different from what we get at the local taco place in the U.S. Our hosts so kindly brought us a Coca-Cola and some type of dessert every night. Other homes that we visited were experiencing even more acute poverty. At least we had a shower, a net, and even a fan to stir the air!

I just couldn't see myself living in another country, and I was truly afraid that is what God would ask of me if I totally surrendered to God. I prayed, "I love you, God, and I will do anything you want me to do—as long as I can live in the United States of America."

For quite a while, I held out, but I remember clearly the place and time

when I truly turned my life over to God and said, “Ok, God, I am done holding out. I will go—even to Dominican Republic, to Africa, to Asia, or wherever you think is best. I will give up the modern conveniences and live within the means of the culture you call me to. I am willing to make a full surrender to your will and trust in your divine providence to lead me and provide the grace I will need to follow your will.”

Friend, I really meant it. And I still make this commitment to follow wherever and however God leads. At present, God hasn’t called me to leave the United States, but God does lead me daily—and on my best days, I follow.



D. Fourth, we make a conscious decision to *rest by faith* in God to send forth the Holy Spirit to empower our lives for Christ’s service.

IV. Being “filled with the Spirit,” or anointed for Christian service, is a daily process that must be renewed continually.

A. The presence of the Holy Spirit within a believer’s life is guaranteed by God’s grace.

John 14:16 – And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you.

B. The fullness of the Spirit, or this special anointing, is lost when we grieve the Spirit of God.

Ephesians 4:30 – And do not bring sorrow to God’s Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

C. When this happens, we must ask forgiveness and repeat the four-fold decision, or process, for a fresh anointing and filling of the Spirit.

D. Thankfully, God is patient with us and willing to forgive us and grant us continual anointing, if we continue to seek God’s guidance and

anointing in our lives.

In Conclusion

Let's go back to the object lesson at the beginning of this session. Think about the three glasses. These three glasses illustrate the three possible conditions of our hearts:

1. Think of the dirty glass, smeared with mud. That is the picture of a person in their natural state of sin that separates them from God. This person is being influenced by the Holy Spirit to turn to God, but the presence of the Holy Spirit has not come to indwell his or her life.
2. Now, focus a moment on the glass that has been washed in the soapy water and a little water has been put into the glass. This represents a person who has been washed by the blood, born-again, and redeemed from their debt of sin. The Holy Spirit has moved in to indwell that person—but there is still much of self, represented by the air still in the glass.
3. Now, think about the third glass. This glass has been washed and is *filled* with water to *overflowing*. This is the picture of a person who has been saved, and *filled*, or anointed by the Spirit of God.

The third glass represents what God desires of each of us. Instead of serving God in our own power and strength, we are to be vessels of God's anointing, so that our service is energized and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The world needs to be impacted by God, and just as the third glass is filled with water to overflowing, we need to be so full of the Holy Spirit that the world is experiencing God working through us!

*Thanks to God's Grace,
You can Improve.*

I would challenge you to spend a little time with this object lesson and ask of God exactly which glass represents your life at *this* moment. Once you have honestly identified where you are with God, the Good News is that you can improve your position—thanks to God’s grace extended through Jesus Christ. The lost can be saved; the saved can be filled with the Holy Spirit; and those who have been filled with the Spirit can seek continual infilling for even more effective service to Jesus Christ.

*Whatever you Yield, God accepts;
Whatever God accepts, God Cleanses;
Whatever God Cleanses, God fills;
Whatever God fills, God Uses.¹*

ENDNOTES

¹ Adrian Rogers said something similar in sermons (https://gracegems.org/30/short_pithy_gems_from_adrian_rogers.htm), and his thoughts may have been an adaptation of similar ideas from R. A. Torrey, who wrote, “Whatever we yield to God, God accepts.” [The Complete Works of R. A. Torrey, vol. 5, How to Work for Christ (Harrington, DE: Delmarva Publications, 2014), chap. 6, Kindle.]



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. In your own words, please explain what it means to be anointed or filled with the Holy Spirit.
2. Please explain the difference between positional sanctification and justification.
3. In this session, we have discussed speaking in tongues. After studying this session, please discuss what you believe about speaking in tongues.
4. Discuss what it means to be deeply committed to Christ's service. Do you feel that you are willing to make this commitment of your life to God? Explain.
5. If the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our hearts when we are born again, why do we need a daily renewal of this filling or anointing of the Holy Spirit? Explain.

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: “Body of Water Waves,” April 07, 2017, by Dimitris Vetskias on Pixabay.

Photo 2: “Waterfall,” Tennessee, United States, November 3, 2018, by Ronny Sison 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!