The Basics

Volume #2

Quinn Greer

“You’re the called out ones”

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CONTENTS

Intro	4
The Bible	5-23
The Church	24-36
Leadership	37-58
Faith	59-63
Money	64-74
Outro	75-77

PREFACE

INTRO

Welcome to Volume #2 of *The Basics*.

Now that you've made it through the first volume, you have a foundation that we can build upon. In this volume, we're covering five more essential doctrines. They are: the Bible, the Church, Leadership, Faith, and Money.

Please go through this with someone from the movement if you can, and before we continue, I want to remind you of my heart:

I want every person in the Holy Spirit Movement to be biblically literate. That's why these short books cover more than you'd usually get in Foundational teachings at most churches.

Biblical literacy helps us to discern and protect others from spiritual abuse and cult-like teachings. It also opens up the door for us to safely encounter the Lord with no deception sneaking in.

With all of that said, please take your time, don't rush, ask questions, and let's jump in!

CHAPTER 1

THE BIBLE

The Bible is foundational to the Christian faith. Without it, Christianity becomes subject to anyone's opinion, meaning that anybody can assert whatever they want about God, and there's nothing to call that into question or to see what's really true.

That's why, as Christians, we believe the Bible is more than a religious text: it's God's word.

The Bible is a collection of books (made up of letters and books of different literary genres) that was written by multiple human authors over the course of history, inspired by the Holy Spirit. It's divided into two sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Christians believe that the Bible is:

- ***God-Breathed:*** *This means it originates from God Himself. He used human authors, guiding them through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit so that what they wrote is what He intended (2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 1:20-21).*

- ***A Guide For Our Lives:*** *Scripture gives us God's light so that we know how to move forward in decisions, relationships, etc., according to His will (Psalm 119:105).*

- ***Living & Active:*** *The Bible is more than intellectual information. The Holy Spirit uses scripture as we read it, hear it, and think about it to speak directly to us and apply it to us personally (Hebrews 4:12).*

- ***Useful for Teaching & Growth:*** *The Bible helps us to live holy lives. It gives us wisdom, shows us how to have a relationship with God, and reveals His will to us.*

- ***Our Path to Genuine Encounter:*** *One of the dangers of pursuing God spiritually is that there's a chance to fall into prelest (a deceptive spiritual experience that is real but not from God).*

  God does want us to have real spiritual experiences where we encounter Him, but He typically doesn't entrust those to people who haven't built a solid foundation in His word. This isn't because He's withholding from us, but because He's protecting us from prelest. Biblical literacy is the road to encountering God safely.

At the Holy Spirit Movement, we believe that the Bible is internally consistent, historically validated, and that it transforms lives. For these reasons, reading it, studying it, and living from it aren't optional for those who want to know God.

BOOKS OF THE BIBLE:

Let's walk through the different books in the Bible.

The Old Testament:

Before these books were written down, the stories were passed down orally. These were traditions in God's people, the Israelites, before they became text. The books of the OT were written roughly between 1400 BC and 400 BC. They're separated into three sections:

- ***Torah (The Law):*** *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. These five books are said to have been written by Moses, covering creation, the fall, the calling of Israel, and the giving of the Law.*

- ***Nevi'im (The Prophets):*** *Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi). These cover Israel's history and God's word through the prophets.*

- ***Ketuvim (The Writings):*** *Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles. These are poetry, wisdom literature, and historical accounts.*

We'll dive deeper into this later on, but you'll also hear about the **Deuterocanonical books** (Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, 1 & 2 Maccabees). These were written during the roughly 400-year time period between the Old and New Testaments. They're included in Catholic and Orthodox Bibles but not Protestant ones.

The New Testament:

After Jesus' resurrection, His followers didn't immediately sit down to write scripture. They were traveling, teaching, planting churches, and suffering for the gospel. But in the course of their ministry, over time, the writings we have today were written.

The 27 books of the NT are organized like this:

- ***The Four Gospels:*** *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These are eyewitness accounts and testimonies of Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection.*

- ***Acts:*** *This book is written by Luke as a continuation of his Gospel, allowing us to see some of the history of the early church.*
- ***The Epistles:*** *These are 21 letters written by Paul, James, Peter, John, and Jude to churches and individuals. These letters contain doctrine, Christian living, conflict, encouragement, and correction.*
- ***Revelation:*** *This book is a prophetic vision given to the apostle John about the end of all things.*

Different Canons:

Each of the 3 major Christian denominations (Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant) agrees on the NT scriptures, but disagrees about what belongs in the OT.

Regardless of which canon a Christian holds to, major doctrines that make Christianity what it is don't change.

With that said, let's take a look at the different canons:

- ***Protestant Bible (66 Books):*** *The Reformers used a textual manuscript called the Masoretic Text as the basis for their OT. This didn't include the Deuterocanonical books. Alongside this, there were theological concerns about the Deuterocanon because certain Catholic doctrines were drawn from them. That's part of why we have this canon today. We'll dive deeper into this later on.*
- ***Catholic Bible (73 Books):*** *Catholics include the Deuterocanonical books in their OT because they were used in the early church, quoted by church fathers, and read publicly in Christian worship for centuries. At the Council of Trent in 1546, the Catholic canon was formally reaffirmed in response to the Protestant Reformation.*

- ***Eastern Orthodox Bible (approximately 76 books, but varies by tradition):*** *Because the Orthodox Church based its Bible on a textual manuscript called the Septuagint, its canon includes everything Catholics have, plus additional books (and chapters) like 3 & 4 Maccabees, Psalm 151, 1 Esdras, Odes, and the Prayer of Manasseh. Also, it's important to note that, unlike the Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church never formally approved a universal canon list.*

- ***Ethiopian Orthodox Bible (81 Books):*** *This is the most extensive canon in Christianity. It includes writings like Enoch and Jubilees that other traditions set aside because of questions about their authorship, their unconventional cosmology, and their absence from most manuscript traditions used by the wider church.*

HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE:

The Old Testament

In looking at how we got the list of books we have today, what you need to understand is that before there was an official list saying, "These are the books we recognize as inspired and authoritative for our faith," ancient Israel was already treating certain writings as authoritative.

That means that the authority for books being considered inspired didn't come from a canon list; the canon list came later on to recognize authority that was already there. A book's authority was recognized by its spiritual weight, use in the community, and its continuity with Israel's faith, history, and worship.

Now, if we fast-forward to the late Second Temple period (roughly 200 BC to 100 AD), most Jewish communities had recognized which writings were sacred. We covered these earlier.

Christianity inherited the OT scriptures from Second Temple Judaism. And with this, it's important to understand that even though there was a general agreement about what was considered inspired/canon, there wasn't a single, universally locked-down list. This means that different Jewish communities emphasized different writings.

Major Manuscript Traditions:

Before we get into the Deuterocanonical books, you need to know about the three main manuscript traditions that shaped the Old Testament, because which one a community used directly affects which books ended up in their Bible.

- ***Masoretic Text:*** *Jewish scribes called the Masoretes carefully copied and preserved the Hebrew scriptures (roughly from 600 to 900 AD) from an older Hebrew text that had been passed down for centuries. They added vowel markings and detailed notes to make sure nothing was lost in transmission. This text became the canon of Rabbinic Judaism, and it's the OT baseline that Protestant Bibles are translated from.*

- ***Samaritan Pentateuch:*** *The Samaritans were a neighboring people group with a complicated relationship with mainstream Judaism. They had their own version of the first 5 books of the Bible (the Torah), going back to around 200 BC. It's pretty much the same as the Hebrew Torah, with some differences. For example, Mount Gerizim is the sacred place of worship instead of Jerusalem.*

- ***Septuagint (LXX):*** *This is the Greek translation of the OT scriptures. It started circulating around the 3rd century BC and was made for the Jewish communities living in the Greek-speaking world. The Septuagint included extra books that the Masoretic Text didn't (the Deuterocanonical books). And the early church used it.*

Deuterocanonical Books:

You'll usually hear Protestants call these books the "Apocrypha." I don't personally use that term because I don't think it accurately describes what these books are. Catholic and Orthodox Christians call them Deuterocanonical, which means "second canon."

That's not saying that they're second-rate; it's just so that there's a distinction between them and the rest of the OT books because of when the Deuterocanon was written.

The debate about whether or not these books are inspired scripture and deserve to be in the canon is one of the biggest points of disagreement between the major 3 Christian denominations.

Because of this, I want to walk you through the history rather than only tell you what I think:

In the 16th century, when the Protestant Reformation happened, reformers like Luther went back to the Masoretic Text, which became the canon of Rabbinic Judaism. Keep in mind that Rabbinic Judaism didn't follow the manuscript traditions that the early church would've followed because it started after 70 AD.

The Deuterocanonical books weren't part of the canon of the Masoretic Text; therefore, they were set aside. Not completely removed for a while, but were included in Protestant Bibles at the end as a separate section for a long time, as "useful but not inspired books."

In 1826, the British and Foreign Bible Society removed them completely. The main reason for this was the cost of printing extra pages.

Because the groundwork had already been laid theologically, removing these books from the Bible altogether was a possibility for the sake of mass-producing them at a lower cost.

The theological concerns that the Reformers had were real. Certain Catholic doctrines that Protestants considered to be heresy were drawn from these books (for example, prayers for the dead). Because of this, it was natural for these books to be viewed with suspicion.

But I think we need to be honest about the full picture. These decisions were made in the heat of one of the most intense theological and political conflicts in church history. And during this time, they had less manuscript evidence, linguistic tools, and scholarship than we have today.

Given this context, I think that the decisions of the reformers concerning the Deuterocanon shouldn't hold authority for us today.

My Personal View on the Deuterocanon:

When you read the Deuterocanonical books in their proper context, they don't teach indulgences or purgatory the way these doctrines later developed in Catholic theology.

Instead, what they actually teach is morality, faithfulness to God, trust in His justice, and other great theological gems that are consistent with the rest of the Bible. I personally hold to the Orthodox position on the canon. Here's why:

- ***The apostles used the Septuagint, which included these books:*** *The theological framework that shaped the New Testament was one in which the Deuterocanon functioned as scripture. For example, we can see this when we look at Romans 1; the theology behind Paul's argument is deeply shaped by the Wisdom of Solomon 13-15.*
- ***They deepen our understanding of the NT:*** *I think that we miss out on some of what the NT authors are teaching when we detach the Deuterocanonical books from understanding them. For example, Sirach teaches principles about free will and God's sovereignty that help illuminate and run parallel to some NT scriptures.*
- ***The early church received them:*** *Church Fathers quoted and taught from these books. They were read publicly in worship. The councils of Hippo (393 AD) and Carthage (397 AD) affirmed their inclusion.*
- ***It makes more sense to go with what the apostles used:*** *Why would we base our canon on the Masoretic Text, which came after Rabbinic Judaism started (which was after 70 AD), and isn't the text that Christianity inherited its scriptures from? That doesn't make sense to me.*
- ***Dealing with a common objection that Jesus never quoted the Deuterocanon:*** *He also never explicitly quoted Esther, Ecclesiastes, or Song of Songs, but nobody questions those. This is an argument from silence and isn't strong enough to carry weight, especially since we can see echoes of the Deuterocanon in Jesus' teachings despite them not being directly quoted.*

Now, to be fair, I want to give a couple of good objections to my view that are worth considering:

- ***Athanasius:*** *All 3 major denominations today hold to his view of the NT. In 367 AD, Bishop Athanasius affirmed the canon of the OT and NT and didn't include the Deuterocanon. He said they're beneficial for reading but not on the same level of authority as the 66 books he considered scripture.*

- ***Luke 11:51:*** *In this passage, Jesus refers to the blood of the prophets from "Abel to Zechariah." Those who hold to the Protestant canon argue that since Abel opens Genesis (the first book of the OT) and Zechariah closes 2 Chronicles (the last book of the canonical OT), Jesus was revealing what the Hebrew canon was, therefore endorsing it as complete without the Deuterocanon.*

  I think this argument has a problem, though: when you read the verse in context, Jesus is specifically talking about the persecution and killing of God's messengers throughout history. He's making a statement about bloodguilt, not about which books are considered scripture.

  To read Jesus endorsing certain books as the canon is asserting a viewpoint into the text that just isn't there.

There are more arguments than these, but I find these two to be among the strongest. I don't have a strong response to the Athanasius one; there are other church fathers who disagree about the canon.

The reason I hold to the Orthodox canon is that continuity makes the most sense to me. If the church has been consistently using certain books throughout its history, why would we depart from that?

And to be clear, this is my view. Not everyone in the Holy Spirit Movement holds to it, and that's okay! You can make a decision about this for yourself.

Whether you accept the Catholic, Orthodox, or Protestant canon, it doesn't affect your salvation because the core doctrines of Christianity remain unchanged.

When you're ready, I encourage you to study the Deuterocanonical books, look at the history, and weigh the arguments.

The New Testament

Over time, the writings from the apostles and other NT authors were copied, shared between churches, and read aloud alongside the OT scripture in their gatherings. Some writings were debated, while others carried obvious weight.

This is how the Early Christian Communities recognized if something was inspired:

- ***Apostolic Origin or Endorsement:*** *Was the book/letter written by an apostle, or by someone in close relationship to them?*
- ***Widespread Use:*** *Was this book widespread across the different churches in different regions and used regularly by them?*
- ***Spiritual Authority:*** *Did the Holy Spirit use these in gatherings?*
- ***Doctrinal Consistency:*** *Did they line up with the gospel and other accepted texts and teachings?*

By the fourth century, there was a broad consensus in the Church. In 367 AD, Bishop Athanasius listed the 27 books we now have in our New Testament as canonical. He didn't create the canon but simply affirmed it, recognizing what was already common across the Church.

What About Textual Variants?

Because the NT has been copied over centuries in different regions, small differences have crept in (ex., a word changed here, a phrase added there).

These two passages are included in some of our modern Bibles, but most likely, they were never part of the original documents:

- ***Mark 16:9–20:*** *Some early manuscripts end Mark at verse 8. Others include the longer ending through verse 20. Most modern translations include it with a note explaining the situation.*

- ***John 7:53–8:11:*** *The story of the woman caught in adultery appears in later manuscripts but is absent from the earliest copies of John. It's also included in most Bibles with a note about its textual history.*

I know this may feel unsettling at first, but here's what's true about these scriptures: no central Christian doctrine rests on these or other disputed passages. That means the identity of Jesus, His death and resurrection, salvation by grace, discipleship, and things like this are all established doctrines on texts that are uncontested.

And it makes sense why these passages are the way they are when we consider that the early church was under the constant threat of persecution and death.

Most likely, the extra stories we have are footnotes that translators added, and they could've been well-known stories that were passed around in the early church communities. Regardless of how we got them, they're still useful and consistent with Christian teaching as long as they're understood properly.

Other Bible Facts to Know

To finish off this section, I want to share a couple more important things to know about the Bible.

1) Chapters & Verses Were Added Later

The books of the Bible were originally written as continuous text. They were letters, narratives, poems, and prophecies meant to be read aloud and heard as a whole, not only in snippets.

Chapter divisions were added in the early 13th century by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury. Verse numbers came in the 16th century from the printer and scholar Robert Estienne. These were added to make the Bible easier to navigate.

2) There Are Many Different Bible Translations

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. The OT is in Hebrew, and the NT is mostly in Greek, with some Aramaic.

And the many different translations of the Bible we have today exist for different reasons:

- *First, some translations work from different underlying manuscripts.*
- *Second, translation philosophy. Some translations are word-for-word, staying as close to the original language structure as possible. Other translations are thought-for-thought, which prioritize readability while keeping the meaning of the text intact. And some translations are paraphrases, which reword things in modern language.*
- *Third, language and culture. Different translations exist for different languages. Also, they get updated over time as language changes and as scholarship improves, so that people can hear God's word in the language they actually speak and understand.*

CAN WE TRUST THE BIBLE?

After everything we've covered, now knowing what we know, can we really trust the Bible as authoritative?

The short answer is yes. And here's why.

The Bible Holds Up Historically:

The Bible is one of the most (if not the most) reliable and credible documents of the ancient world. This is what historians and scholars have concluded based on the manuscript evidence and archaeological findings.

For example:

- *The consistency between NT manuscripts is roughly 95-99.5%. The differences are minor things like spelling variations, word order, or small slips that don't change any core doctrine.*
- *For the NT, we have over 5,800 Greek manuscript portions (some complete, many fragments), plus another 20,000+ in early translations like Latin, Syriac, and Coptic from the first few centuries.*
- *For the OT, we have the Dead Sea Scrolls, which were discovered in Qumran in 1947. These gave us manuscripts that were about 1000 years older than anything we had previously. The scrolls are dated from around 250-100 BC. Archaeologists found copies of Isaiah that were about a thousand years older than those we had previously. They match our later texts very closely, down to about 95%. The differences are mostly spelling and minor variants.*
- *The NT was quoted so much by the early church fathers that scholars say that we could reconstruct pretty much the whole thing from their writings alone if somehow every manuscript magically vanished (this isn't 100% perfect down to every verse).*

- *The NT documents were written just 20-70 years after Jesus, while many of the original writers were still alive. This is extraordinary in comparison to other ancient documents. The Bible blows them out of the water.*

  And think about it: if you were going to invent a whole religion and fabricate stories, the smartest move would be to wait until all the eyewitnesses were dead and gone so nobody could call you out. But that's not what we see at all.

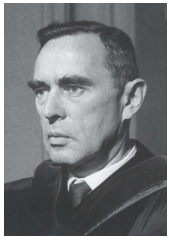
  Instead, Paul tells his listeners in 1 Corinthians 15 that Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at one time after the resurrection, and adds an important detail: most of these people are still alive. He's basically saying, "Don't just take my word for it; go ask them yourself if you want." That's a risky move if the story was made up.

- *A story in John 5, which some academics once used as a reason not to trust the Bible, was found to be true through archaeology. In the passage, John describes a pool near a sheep gate with five colonnaded porches in a place called Bethesda. Critics for a long time said no such thing ever existed because there was no archaeological proof for it.*

  But later on, archaeologists dug deeper, north of the Temple Mount, and they found the pools, the sheep gate, and the five colonnaded porches.

- *Luke, in his Gospel, identifies 32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 islands, and gets them all right.*

- *Archaeologists have confirmed dozens of people who were once thought to be myths from the OT (kings, officials, etc.) as being real through inscriptions, seals, and monuments.*



Nelson Glueck, Rivers in the Desert (1959, p. 31): *"It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible."*

The Gospel Differences Build A Case:

Skeptics sometimes point to differences between the four Gospels as a reason we can't trust the Bible. For example, Matthew and Mark mention one angel at the empty tomb, while Luke and John mention two.

Here's the thing: Matthew and Mark focus on the angel who actually spoke to the women, while Luke and John simply give the total number who were there. These are actually different eyewitness perspectives on the same event.

Think of it this way: when a detective is investigating a case and is interviewing multiple witnesses who saw the incident, they don't expect their stories to match in every detail. In fact, if they all agree on every single point, they get suspicious. It looks like they might have gotten together and rehearsed a lie.

The minor differences between the Gospel accounts are exactly what you'd expect from people who independently witnessed the same events and recorded them from different perspectives.

Real, independent eyewitnesses will naturally emphasize different things based on what stood out to them, their angle, and what they remember most clearly from the event they're describing.

The minor differences in the Gospels are exactly what you'd expect from people recording real events from different viewpoints. That's why the differences in the Gospels strengthen them rather than weaken them. It seems like they may have actually seen what they're describing.

Fulfilled Prophecy:

There's a lot of OT prophecy that Jesus fulfilled. Christian scholars usually say that He fulfilled over 300 messianic prophecies (the exact number varies, but is still in the 100s).

The odds of any one person accidentally fulfilling so many specific details across centuries of writings are astronomically low. Here are some examples:

- ***Birthplace:*** *Micah 5:2 (written ~700 BC) predicts the ruler of Israel would come from the small town of Bethlehem.*
- ***Ministry:*** *Isaiah 9:1-2 foretells light breaking forth in Galilee, and Isaiah 61:1-2 describes preaching good news, healing the brokenhearted, and proclaiming liberty. These are passages Jesus directly applied to Himself (Luke 4:18-21).*
- ***Suffering, Death, and Resurrection:*** *Multiple passages predict these, including the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 and the vivid crucifixion-like imagery in Psalm 22 (written ~1000 BC, long before crucifixion was invented as a form of execution).*

These are just some among many. Because of the number of fulfilled prophecies that were written by different authors across centuries, we have a strong case that points to Jesus being the promised Messiah.

Infallibility:

To wrap up this chapter, I want to present my view of the Bible: it's *infallible,* meaning that the Holy Spirit inspired it, and it's trustworthy to reveal what God intended to reveal. However, God worked through human authors who wrote within their own historical and cultural contexts. This means we sometimes see scientific errors, tensions, and contradictions in it.

The important thing to understand about this is that these problems do not change the Bible's inspiration or its authority in matters of faith and theology. We can still discover who God is and what He wants through it.

Just so you're aware, there are other views in Christianity about how to interpret the Bible that differ from mine. They are:

- ***Strict Inerrancy:*** *The view that scripture is inspired by God and is without error in everything it affirms. Any apparent contradictions, historical difficulties, or scientific problems are the result of misunderstanding the text, lacking information, or interpreting passages incorrectly. God guided the human authors so that the original writings contained no actual errors.*

- ***Limited Inerrancy:*** *Teaches that the Bible is free from error in the truths God intended to communicate for faith, salvation, and God's purposes, but allows for the possibility that some non-theological matters (ex, history or science) may contain errors.*

- ***Neo-Orthodox:*** *This view teaches that God reveals Himself primarily through encountering Jesus Christ instead of through a perfectly error-free text. The Bible is a very important human witness to God's revelation. The authority of scripture comes from how it brings people into contact with God's revelation, instead of complete factual accuracy.*

Being real, I don't see much difference between my view and limited inerrancy; they're very close. Christians don't always use these terms consistently anyway.

In conversations, "inerrancy" and "infallibility" are sometimes used interchangeably to mean something like what I'm describing, or even slightly different positions depending on the tradition and context.

Practically speaking, if you want to understand someone, ask them what they mean by their terms. That way, there's no room for confusion or misunderstanding.

I hope that you're able to see that the Bible is trustworthy. We can discover who God is, what He wants, and how to understand different areas of our lives through it, with the Holy Spirit's help.

CHAPTER 2

THE CHURCH

What exactly is the Church? Is it just an institution? Or a place you attend to hear someone preach at you? Is it a big building with stained glass windows?

Because of years of tradition and watered-down theology, that's what many of us think when we hear the word "Church."

But the Church was never meant to be reduced to buildings or institutions; it's supposed to be a family of people called out of the world by Jesus Christ to His Kingdom.

The early church met in homes, and unlike many modern churches, they were close. They shared communion as a meal, prayed together, walked with one another, and helped each other practically with their resources.

The original Greek word for "church" is ekklēsia, meaning assembly or called-out gathering.

This word was borrowed from the Greco-Roman culture that surrounded Jesus and His followers. It referred to citizens being summoned to a public assembly. In light of this, the Church is those who are summoned by the King to assemble for His Kingdom's purposes.

So, the Church is those called out by King Jesus from the world system to be His family and citizens of His Kingdom who assemble to seek Him, love one another, and walk in His purposes.

We are the Church. The building we gather in, whether a home, a public space, a traditional church building, or a stadium, isn't the church. Instead, it's the building the Church gathers in.

NICENE CREED:

In 325 AD, the Council of Nicaea produced an early form of the Nicene Creed, which was finalized in 381 AD at the Council of Constantinople. It says that there's "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church." These words don't all mean what we may think they do in the modern day. Let me explain them:

- ***One:*** *According to Ephesians 4:4-6, even though our local churches may not all look the same, we have unity that comes from sharing "one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father."*
- ***Holy:*** *The church is holy because God has set it apart and because Christ gave Himself for it "to make it holy" (Ephesians 5:26).*
- ***Catholic:*** *This isn't referring to the modern denomination. It means "universal" or "the whole." The church isn't one sect of Christianity; it's the full and universal community of those who belong to God through Christ. Every local church that God recognizes is part of this.*

- ***Apostolic:*** *The church stands in continuity with the apostolic witness, meaning that we follow the apostles' teachings (which are preserved in the NT).*

  In Catholic and Orthodox traditions, this is also connected to the idea of apostolic succession, the belief that ordained ministry is maintained through an unbroken line of bishops tracing back to the apostles.

  Protestant traditions emphasize that this part of the Nicene Creed is about aligning with and continuing in the doctrine of the original apostles rather than apostolic succession.

I say this concerning the major denominations of Christianity: the Nicene Creed is beautiful and reveals the truth that, in the middle of a very divided church, we are still one, despite our differences and all that's happened throughout church history.

So whether you attend our Holy Spirit Movement gatherings or one day attend an Orthodox, Catholic, or Protestant Church, know that we're still one family.

ASPECTS OF THE CHURCH:

I want to dive deeper into different aspects of the church as revealed through scripture:

- ***The Body of Christ:*** *In scripture, we're called the Body of Christ, meaning that we're Jesus' primary means of manifesting His presence and action in the world today.*

  And just like a human body, each one of us is a different part of the body. We all have different functions, yet are animated by the same Holy Spirit to do our functions. For example, some of us are like an eye, and others are like a foot. Even though we're unique individuals, we aren't islands unto ourselves; we need each other.

Jesus is the Head of the Body, meaning He governs, directs, and nourishes it (1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4).

- ***Bride of Christ:*** *Marriage is an institution God designed to reflect and point toward the relationship between Christ and the Church. The Bride of Christ is metaphorical language that is meant to describe the faithful and exclusive union between Jesus and His Church. It's not suggesting a sexual relationship like in earthly marriage.*

  Earthly marriage is a foreshadowing of a greater reality: Christ's love for His people and the Church belonging to Him (Ephesians 5:25–32, Revelation 19:7–9, Revelation 21:2)

- ***Witnesses of the Kingdom:*** *God's Kingdom is wherever His rule and reign are fully expressed, like in heaven.*

  The Church is a community called out of the world to live under God's reign. Because of this, it bears witness to the Kingdom by reflecting what it looks like to live under God's authority. When it does this correctly, the Church points forward to the time when Jesus' reign will be fully and perfectly established on earth.

  The Church isn't the Kingdom in its fullness or final form. It's a sign of the Kingdom of God on earth because it consists of people who have been brought under Jesus' reign and are being shaped by it (Matthew 6:10, Psalm 103:19, Philippians 2:15-16, Matthew 5:14-16, Colossians 1:13, 1 Peter 2:9, Luke 17:21).

- ***Priesthood of All Believers:*** *The early church didn't have an elite spiritual class that had the special privilege of granting "regular believers" access to God. Instead, all Christians have direct access to God through Jesus Christ and are called to offer spiritual service to Him and to one another. Practically speaking, this means all of us can know God personally and operate in the gifts of the Spirit that God gives us (1 Peter 2:5, Revelation 1:6).*

- ***The People of God:*** *The Bible teaches that the Church is a part of a long story God has been telling throughout history. It's not something completely new.*

  Instead, it's an expansion and continuation of the community that began with Abraham in the OT, where God chose a people to know Him and represent Him to the world (this was ancient Israel).

  In the NT, becoming God's chosen people was opened up to all nations. In the past, only those who were ethnically Jewish were considered God's people. But now, anyone who is born again through faith in Jesus Christ becomes part of God's family.

  The apostle Paul uses the language of us being "grafted in," like branches being joined to an already living olive tree. So, today, the Church is the people of God, made up of both Jewish and non-Jewish believers, under a new covenant established by Jesus' blood (Genesis 12:1-3, Romans 11:17-24, Ephesians 2:12-19, Galatians 3:28-29).

- ***Collective Temple of the Holy Spirit:*** *Not only does God live inside of each of us individually, but He also dwells in His people when we gather together. We're the living spiritual "temple."*

  That means that while God manifests Himself to us individually, certain aspects of His work, presence, and gifts are expressed when we're gathered together in a way that can't be experienced alone (1 Corinthians 3:16-17 & 6:19, Ephesians 2:19-22).

- ***Pillar of Truth:*** *This doesn't mean that the Church creates or decides what is true. Instead, the Church is supposed to hold up, protect, and clearly reveal God's truth in the world. The Church is called to preserve the message of Jesus, teach it correctly, and live it out so that others can see what God is like (1 Timothy 3:15).*

HOW TO VIEW TRADITIONS:

When it comes to how the church should function, it can get kind of confusing. Between different denominations and over the course of church history, the church has evolved and developed all kinds of traditions inspired by theological development and cultural influences.

Here's a list of things that aren't directly from the Bible but came along later in church history [I give credit to Frank Viola for compiling this list in *Pagan Christianity*]:

- ***Church Buildings:*** *First became common in the 4th century under Emperor Constantine (around 327 AD onward). At the time, these were modeled after Roman basilicas (public halls used for law and commerce) and, in some cases, drew inspiration from Greek temples.*

  The concept of "sacred space" developed gradually, partly because of Christians gathering at martyr burial sites.

- ***Stained-glass Windows, Steeples, and Gothic Cathedrals:*** *These emerged during the Medieval period (roughly the 12th century). They have roots in earlier architectural traditions, including some pagan philosophical influences (ex., steeples were thought to be landmarks and symbolic pointers toward heaven).*

- ***Clergy/Laity Divide, Titles, Ordination, and Priestly Robes:*** *When I say clergy/laity, I mean a divide between God's leadership and "regular believers" that isn't biblical. The clergy/laity distinction grew over the 2nd and 3rd centuries. Clergy robes were influenced by the dress of Roman officials starting around the 4th century. Going back to the 2nd century of the Church, Ignatius of Antioch emphasized that there needs to be a single leading bishop who is distinct from a group of elders.*

- ***"Sunday Best:"*** *The expectation to wear your "Sunday Best," which is a widespread idea in many Protestant churches came during the Industrial Revolution.*

- ***Music Practices:*** *Professional choirs and boys' choirs emerged in the 4th century. These were inspired by imperial ceremonies and earlier pagan temple practices.*

  Now, the modern evangelical worship team with a band came in the 1960s through Calvary Chapel and the Jesus Movement. This was inspired by secular rock concerts.

- ***Mandatory Tithing, Collection Plates, and Clergy Salaries:*** *The 10% tithing practice wasn't a core feature of early Christianity. It became a formalized feature in the Western church during the early Middle Ages. This was justified by OT patterns.*

  Clergy salaries, on the other hand, were instituted under Constantine in the 4th century. Collection plates (also called alms dishes) appeared later, with the passing of the collection plate becoming common in the 17th century.

- ***Order of Worship and Elements:*** *These practices vary across denominations, but candles, incense, standing for clergy entry, long pastoral prayers, altar calls, church bulletins, and even the centrality of the sermon all developed centuries after the early church.*

- ***Changes in Baptism:*** *Infant baptism began to appear in the late 2nd century and gradually became the norm in many parts of the church by the 5th century.*

  Sprinkling (or pouring) as the mode of baptism progressively replaced full immersion in Western Churches during the late Middle Ages, often for practical reasons.

- ***Youth Pastor Role:*** *This came in the late 1930s and 40s. It emerged in Urban Churches as the modern sociological category of "teenagers" was recognized as a distinct life stage between childhood and adulthood.*

- ***Education:*** *Seminaries, Sunday Schools, Bible Colleges, and similar institutions are post-apostolic developments.*

- ***Modern Evangelistic Tools:*** *Things like the altar call, decision cards, the sinner's prayer, and the phrase "personal Savior" were developed in the context of 18th-20th century revivalism.*

So what do we do with all of this? Do we throw it all out as evil and against God? Or is there a better middle-ground perspective?

I'll start by saying that ***not everything extra-biblical is anti-biblical.*** The Church has always adapted to culture, technology, architecture, and social norms.

But with this said, we need to ensure that our ***traditions don't compromise the principles the Bible lays out for when we gather.*** These are:

- ***Mutual Edification:*** *Every Christian has something to contribute, whether it's a thought, a story, a testimony, asking questions, prophesying, singing, praying, encouraging, etc. In the family of God, every voice matters (1 Corinthians 14:26).*

- ***Shared Discernment:*** *Although Jesus has leaders, they're not an elite class that cannot be questioned. All believers are expected to think, reason, and know the scriptures enough to be able to discern whether a teaching or leader is really from God (Acts 17:11).*

- ***Relational Discipleship:*** *Teaching and helping people grow isn't left up to a stage only. Leaders and those who disciple walk with those who are learning about Jesus (1 Thessalonians 2:8).*

- ***Confession:*** *In a healthy way, this happens between God's people and, when needed, safe leadership, so that God can bring deep healing (James 5:16).*

- ***Mission-Focused:*** *God's people gather together to seek King Jesus and help one another do His will for their lives (Matthew 28:19-20, 1 Corinthians 12).*

- ***Spirit-led:*** *The Holy Spirit is supposed to guide each gathering, regardless of whether it's liturgical, at a home, a worship concert, or whatever form it takes. This looks like believers operating in their spiritual gifts and the Holy Spirit setting the order and moving as He wants in each gathering (1 Corinthians 14:40; 14:26; 12:4-11)*

- ***Servant Leadership:*** *Jesus' leaders are supposed to equip God's people for the work of the ministry, which is their specific God-given assignment. Leaders are not here to dominate or control. They're here to help people humbly and sacrificially. Even in correction, leaders are meant to embody the heart of Christ (Mark 10:42-45, Ephesians 4:11-12, 1 Peter 5:2-3).*

- ***Family:*** *The church isn't meant to be impersonal; believers are supposed to know one another so they can love one another as Jesus loves them (John 13:34-35, Galatians 6:10, Hebrews 10:24-25).*

- ***Worship:*** *Even though the primary purpose of gathering isn't worship, it's an important part of what we do together (John 4:24, Romans 12:1, Hebrews 13:15).*

- ***Sacraments:*** *Jesus instituted sacraments for the church to take part in (Matthew 28:19, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Acts 2:42).*

What I want to suggest with this is that if what we primarily focus on as churches follows these principles, then we're golden! There's nothing wrong with a modern worship team, preaching, liturgy, etc. But these things can become wrong when the above principles are overlooked.

Traditions are valuable when they support scripture and the principles that are found in it. They can educate, communicate depth and beauty, and connect us to the church's historical memory.

But they become harmful when they keep us from obeying scripture, create barriers to these principles, elevate leaders to an elite status, turn the church into an impersonal institution, or keep believers from being able to function in their spiritual gifts.

So that's why, in the Holy Spirit Movement, I've worked hard to build a decentralized ministry that, yes, has institutional aspects, but the family feel undergirds everything.

No matter what we do, we're always about small groups because these groups focus on relationships and naturally lead into relational discipleship (where a leader or someone further along in faith walks with you, helping you learn the faith through our resources).

I want to do everything I possibly can to put the power back into the hands of God's people and see the church shine the way it's meant to.

I'm not abandoning tradition or institutions altogether; I'm simply stressing that at the core of our churches and ministries, we need to stay relational. When the family foundation is strong, and the Spirit is moving, everything else finds its proper place.

When we as the Church function properly, we'll see the Holy Spirit move in greater ways in society through us. Through His power, we'll see people healed in many ways, the poor fed, true justice, forgiveness and reconciliation, and much more.

Let’s allow the Holy Spirit to lead us so that we can shine as we were always meant to as Jesus’ Church!

HOW THE CHURCH GATHERS:

I want to bring together everything we've talked about and make it practical. Whenever we gather together, this is our guiding scripture:

1 Corinthians 14:26 (NKJV): *“Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification.”*

Simply put, the word edification here means to let everything be done so that you help one another and build one another up so that you can know God, hear His voice, and do His will for your life.

I get what I'm about to say from the scholar Tom Wadsworth [PhD]: The purpose of gathering together is not mainly worship.

The NT never actually uses worship language to describe what happens when believers come together. They simply gathered to build one another up.

Even though worship is obviously a part of what we do when we gather together (for example, we might sing worship songs), the main purpose is our relationships and building one another up.

Also, in the context of the above verse, the Apostle Paul gives practical instructions, saying that gatherings would be orderly.

Even though we meet in homes as a movement and this fosters a down-to-earth and casual environment, our gatherings should never be chaotic or disrespectful.

To help maintain order, those who have strong discernment and a leadership gifting are equipped by the Holy Spirit to help everyone be orderly as well as understand God's word in context in our gatherings.

Everything we do is meant to be done under the leading of the Holy Spirit. Everyone has a spiritual gift like prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues, or something else. Each one of these gifts is meant to be done for edification and in an orderly way.

The Church was never meant to be a building, a service you attend, or a performance you watch. It's a family. And when we gather, the goal is always the same: to build one another up, know God, hear His voice, and be empowered to do His will.

THE CHURCH AS EKKLĒSIA:

It's one thing to understand what the Church is, how we gather, and how to view different traditions. But understanding this isn't the same as living it out. So to finish this chapter, I want to give a clear, practical definition of the ekklēsia, giving clarity to an important aspect of why we gather in the first place.

Here's my practical definition of the ekklēsia: **it's a civil gathering of the people of the Kingdom of God, who are also engaged socially in the world around them, for the sake of Jesus' Kingdom.**

This means that even though our gatherings are down-to-earth, they're meant to awaken and produce something in and through each person who becomes a friend of God.

Let's break down what this looks like:

- *Our gatherings shouldn't exist just for us. We gather as citizens of God's Kingdom and are supposed to display our King's values here, right now, in all aspects of the earthly society we live in.*
- *Mutual edification in our gatherings needs to eventually flow out into the world. People have needs that we need to help with. This looks like sharing meals shared with people who have nothing to offer back; it's showing up for a neighbor in crisis; and it's using our resources to meet real needs.*
- *There are injustices and moral issues that we need to speak into and engage with.*

We, the ekklēsia, are called to be a people who actually know and love each other, who build one another up, and who carry what we've received in our gatherings back out into our homes, jobs, and cities.

So, the next time you gather, understand that yes, you're there to connect, participate, ask questions, be encouraged, learn, and spend time with your spiritual family, but the purpose of Jesus' gatherings is to eventually send us out on a mission to do our God-given purpose in the world, whatever that looks like.

CHAPTER 3

LEADERSHIP

Leadership in Jesus' Kingdom is radically different from what we often see in the world, and honestly, from what we tend to see in modern church culture, too. A lot of what passes for church leadership today looks very different than anything Jesus modeled.

There's too heavy an emphasis on titles, positional authority, and in some cases, outright control. None of these things is what Jesus had in mind when He founded His Church.

Jesus' vision for leadership looks like servanthood, humility, and guiding people closer to Him. That's what I'm going to talk about in this chapter: what leadership actually looks like in His Kingdom.

How Jesus Chooses Leaders:

In God's Kingdom, leaders aren't chosen because of their status, wealth, education, charisma, or what they personally desire. Jesus selects His leaders based on His will, their heart, their character, and their willingness to follow Him.

And once He chooses someone, the Holy Spirit trains and equips them to actually function in that role with godly character. Even though education is good, the calling and equipping come from Him, not a seminary degree or platform.

There are clear biblical qualifications that cover the expected character and conduct of Jesus' leaders. These qualifications are about the heart and integrity of each person, not their gifts, talent, or outcomes. Here's what the Bible lays out:

- ***Above Reproach:*** *Leaders must live in a way that is blameless and beyond serious accusation. This doesn't mean they have to be perfect; it means the way they live their life is consistent, oriented toward God's character.*

  A leader who lives above reproach will repent when they get it wrong. They don't make excuses; they own their mistakes, apologize, and take the proper course of action afterwards.

  They live life in such a way that people don't have legitimate grounds to accuse them of hypocrisy or dishonesty (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6).

- ***Faithful in Relationships:*** *A leader must be faithful to their spouse and manage their household well. This reflects their capacity to lead with love, responsibility, and care in the most personal context of their life.*

  If someone can't lead their own family with integrity and love, it raises real questions about their readiness to lead a broader community (1 Timothy 3:4-5).

  Note: Marriage is not a prerequisite for leadership. Paul (who wrote these qualifications) was unmarried. He served powerfully as a single man, and his singleness actually freed him to serve with great focus. What scripture requires is faithfulness and integrity in whatever relationships you do have.

- ***Self-Controlled & Gentle:*** *Leaders must walk in self-control, humility, patience, and gentleness. Jesus doesn't want leaders driven by uncontrolled anger, greed, or pride. Anyone who consistently behaves like that causes damage and shouldn't be in leadership (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7-8).*

- ***Able to Teach:*** *Even though not every leader is gifted to be a top-notch communicator, they should be capable of guiding others in God's truth and living as good examples of what it looks like to live it out. This means they need to know and understand the Bible and the doctrines of the faith (2 Timothy 2:24).*

- ***Spiritually Mature:*** *New believers shouldn't be placed into leadership too quickly. Placing someone in leadership before they're ready can lead to pride or potential spiritual damage that could be avoided. I'm not saying that you have to wait forever, but you need to at least know the essential doctrines of Christianity, be able to disciple, and have learned from other leaders before you begin to lead (1 Timothy 3:6).*

These qualifications were put in place by Jesus through the apostle Paul to protect God's people.

Leaders are supposed to be a gift to the church, not a burden. Too many Christians have been mistreated and burned by leaders who shouldn't have been leading in the first place.

THE FIVE OFFICES:

In Ephesians 4:11-13, Paul describes five distinct leadership roles given by God as gifts to His people to help them grow and fulfill their specific callings. These are usually called the fivefold ministry (Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers).

Now, before I go through them, I want to clarify something: you may have heard of the New Apostolic Reformation (usually just called the NAR). It's a movement that's popular in some Charismatic and Pentecostal circles.

Let me be upfront and say that I don't subscribe to NAR theology. And I'm not going to address all of their bad theology here, but I will address their views about the fivefold ministry and explain why I think it's false:

- *They teach that apostles and prophets are being restored as governing authorities over the church. This looks like a spiritual hierarchy where everyone else must submit to and "align" with apostolic networks.*
- *Apostles sit at the top as the highest spiritual authority, and their word carries governing power over other leaders.*
- *Prophets receive new revelation from God that carries authority equal to or even above the Bible.*

What the NAR teaches is a great departure from biblical Christianity, which causes harm and spiritual abuse. Honestly, it's usually outright manipulation of people under the banner of apostolic authority or a so-called "prophet."

Also, their theology is based on a fallacy: they think the offices of apostle and prophet ceased at some point. I don't believe that. They have continued to function all throughout church history.

Not every apostle or prophet throughout church history used the title; they just operated in the function of the office because the Holy Spirit empowered them to. I'm sure many of them didn't know they were considered apostles or prophets either.

Finally, the NAR Movement has a misunderstanding of what exactly an apostle or prophet is. Real prophets don't supersede scripture. And true apostles aren't some kind of super-Christians.

So what do I actually believe about these five roles?

I believe they're best understood as *functions:* descriptions of how Jesus gifts certain people to serve His Body in specific leadership roles. None of these offices makes someone more spiritually important than anyone else in the Body of Christ.

One more thing worth noting: there's an argument based on the grammar that "pastor" and "teacher" in Ephesians 4:11 actually describe a single definite article in the Greek, meaning that they might be one combined role rather than two separate ones.

Despite this, I've chosen to write about pastors and teachers as two separate offices below, because I think each aspect carries a distinct emphasis that's worth unpacking on its own. But as you read both sections, keep this in mind: they're one office, not two.

With all of that said, here's how each office functions:

1) Apostles

The word apostle means "sent one." They're God's commissioned missionaries.

Apostles are entrepreneurial, pioneering, and typically are not just serving one congregation but moving between communities, raising other leaders, planting churches, and establishing new works of the gospel in new places.

Apostles carry a mix of spiritual gifts that equip them for birthing new communities of faith. They don't just start something and move on; they nurture what they've planted until it can stand on its own, leaving communities autonomous rather than dependent on them. A mark of a genuine apostolic person is that they build you up to not need them.

Modern apostles don't write scripture as the original Twelve did; instead, like other apostles we see in scripture (besides the Twelve), they are sent from the church and/or from Jesus Himself as missionaries to do the work of an apostle (Acts 14:14, Romans 16:7).

2) Prophets

Normally, a prophet is someone with a unique authority and assignment to call and lead people back to God (usually the church) in repentance. They're gifted with a clear sense of what Jesus is saying and have the ability to communicate it with clarity.

Each prophet operates differently, depending on what the moment calls for. Sometimes they come with encouragement and comfort. Sometimes they cast vision or help restore God's will when a community has drifted. They can also confirm the gifts and callings of others, prepare the church for future challenges, help people grow in discernment and holiness, and call believers into deeper friendship with Jesus.

Prophets serve as guides, revealers, and lights, pointing the church toward the Father's heart and the revelation of Jesus Christ. While they don't give "fresh revelation" in the sense of creating new doctrine, they may give insight into established ones.

For instance, if the church has watered down certain theological truths, God may raise up prophets to speak those truths with the Spirit's empowerment.

And in church history, we see believers who've encountered God and have communicated deep truths about Him, the spiritual realm, morality, and other subjects. Of course, with all revelations like this, it must be tested by the scriptures (according to their proper context) and not contradict them.

A real prophet welcomes being questioned because they know the genuine thing will always hold up under scrutiny (1 Corinthians 14:3, Acts 11, Acts 13, 1 Timothy 1:18, Revelation 19:10).

3) Evangelists

Evangelists are passionate heralds of the gospel. They carry a boldness and courage to reach people who don't yet know Jesus.

Every believer is called to share their faith, but evangelists are uniquely anointed to model what it looks like to lead others to faith and ignite a genuine love for the lost in the people around them.

Evangelists don't always, but tend to have powerful personal testimonies that make the message of Jesus tangible, relatable, and believable.

They're the bridge between the church and the world, demonstrating the reality of God's Kingdom through their words, their actions, and a contagious passion for people who are still far from God.

4) Pastors

Pastors are caretakers of Jesus' flock. Their primary role is nurturing and guiding believers in their spiritual growth. They provide protection, encouragement, and oversight to help the church mature in love and truth.

Where apostles pioneer and prophets declare, pastors patiently tend. They're the ones who show up in everyday life, sit with people in their pain, and cultivate the kind of community where relational discipleship can happen.

Pastors help foster love, stability, and deep relationships within a community. They're not just administrators or weekend speakers; they're shepherds who genuinely know their sheep and care about where they're headed.

5) Teachers

Teachers help believers understand scripture in ways that are both accurate and practically applicable to their lives. While all of the offices involve teaching in some capacity, those with a teaching gift have a unique ability to break down complex truths and reveal the depth of scripture in a way that actually sticks.

They strengthen the church by equipping believers to deeply understand the truths of God's word so that they can live them out in everyday life.

Good teachers make the Bible accessible without making it shallow. They take the Word seriously, handle it carefully, and help others do the same.

Other Notes

Using Titles:

Leaders in the Holy Spirit Movement don't insist on being addressed by their function, meaning that they don't require the people they serve to use titles to address them (Matthew 23:8-10).

This principle flows directly from how the early church operated. Paul identified himself as an apostle (in the sense that he was clear about his calling and function), but he didn't go around demanding to be called "Apostle Paul" requiring that title as a mark of respect.

True authority in the church is recognized through humility, sound teaching, faithful service, fruit, and love for God's people, not through a title.

1 Peter 5:2-4 says: *"Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers... being examples to the flock."*

Uniqueness:

Each function has multiple dimensions and expressions. There's a wide range of ways these roles can operate depending on the person, the community, and what God has called them to.

Sometimes a person in a prophetic role will operate at the level of going to churches the Lord sends them to, to speak prophetic words privately to the leadership; in other instances, a prophet might be called to a global public ministry where they carry authority.

Another example is that one teacher might specialize in a certain doctrine while another specializes in a different one.

Regardless of the specific situation and assignment, it's important to discern whether this person is really sent by God. Let's just not do that by outward appearances.

The Difference Between a Function and a Gift:

A *gift* is a capacity or ability given by the Holy Spirit to operate in a certain area (whether prophecy, evangelism, healing, teaching, and so on). Any follower of Jesus can be gifted in one or more of these areas without carrying the ongoing responsibility of a fivefold function.

A *function/office* carries ongoing leadership responsibility. They're first equipped by Jesus and then recognized and affirmed by the community as the Spirit leads. Their gifts are meant to serve their role.

Both are valuable and Spirit-given. The person who shows up every week with a gift of encouragement and doesn't hold any recognized role is just as essential to the body as someone operating in a fivefold function.

CHARACTER OF A LEADER:

I want to talk about some of the characteristics and mindsets that mature Christian leaders have. These characteristics reflect Jesus and how He embodied leadership:

- ***Servanthood:*** *Jesus showed that a leader's first priority is to serve. On the night before His crucifixion, He washed His disciples' feet (this was a task in that culture that the lowest servant in the household did).*

  Jesus doing this was absurd in their culture, especially because He was their leader and teacher. He did it intentionally to drive home what He was teaching them: the greatest in the Kingdom is the least.

  Leadership in Jesus' Kingdom looks like getting low, putting others' needs ahead of your own, and not grasping for status or recognition. This doesn't mean having no boundaries or burning yourself out. Servanthood and self-care go together. Jesus modeled both.

- ***Humility:*** *Jesus was God in the flesh, and as a man, He humbled Himself, walked among us, and lived in total dependence on the Father. His example teaches leaders to reject pride and embrace true humility.*

- ***Compassion:*** *Jesus demonstrated deep compassion for people. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and spent time with those society had written off. He saw people's real needs and responded with genuine care and love.*

  Leaders in Jesus' Kingdom are called to have that same heart: caring for and nurturing others, not for personal gain or to build their own platform, but out of real love for the people God has placed in their lives (Matthew 9:36)

- ***Courage:*** *Jesus spoke the truth boldly, even when it was unpopular. He confronted injustice and challenged religious hypocrisy directly and without apology.*

  He never compromised His mission or morality to keep people comfortable. Kingdom leaders are called to the same kind of courage: standing firm in God's truth while remaining loving and gracious. These are not opposites. You can be both truthful and kind (John 18:37, 2 Corinthians 4:7).

- ***Submission to the Father:*** *Jesus was completely submitted to the Father. Every decision He made and every word He spoke came out of His relationship with God. He didn't act independently or on His own agenda. He sought to do only what pleased the Father.*

  All followers of Jesus are called to live this way, but leaders carry a particular responsibility to model it. People are watching how we relate to God. Our submission, or lack of it, will shape the culture of whatever community we're a part of (John 6:38).

- ***Empowering Others:*** *Jesus didn't lead alone. He equipped and empowered His disciples to continue His mission after He resurrected and ascended. Kingdom leaders are supposed to follow that same pattern: raising up others to serve and lead. As a leader, if you're leading in a way where things fall apart when you leave, that's not healthy leadership.*

- ***Relatable & Imperfect:*** *One of the most comforting things about leadership in Jesus' Kingdom is that you don't have to be perfect. Jesus intentionally chose broken, flawed, relatable people.*

  I mean, look at Peter: he was impulsive, loud, spoke before thinking, and even denied Jesus. And yet, Jesus restored him and built His Church through him.

  If you feel inadequate, unqualified, or too broken to lead — hear this: Jesus isn't looking for perfection. He's looking for a willing heart. Your imperfections don't necessarily disqualify you. They make you relatable, and they make you a vessel for God's transforming power in a way that polished, put-together people often aren't.

And to tie all of these character traits together, I want to talk about how **leaders submit themselves to accountability.** They do this because leadership carries real responsibility, and responsibility can produce toxicity if things aren't handled properly.

Leaders are a part of Jesus' community; they answer to both God and His people. This protects everyone, including the leader.

We don't want our leaders, because of stress, life, or other factors, to end up unnecessarily harming people.

That's why, in the Holy Spirit Movement, we provide support for our leaders and allow any member of our community to question them or appropriately hold them accountable, whether personally or by contacting us if needed.

CAN WOMEN BE LEADERS?

In this section, I want to address a controversial subject in the church: whether or not women can be church leaders.

And there are two main camps on this. There's the ***complementarian*** view that says men and women are equal in value but have different God-given roles.

They teach that leadership in the church (pastors, elders, etc.) is reserved for men only. Women can serve, teach other women, and lead in certain capacities, but not over men.

Then there's the ***egalitarian*** view that says men and women are equal in value and in roles. God's gifts and callings don't have a gender requirement. Women can pastor, lead, preach, and serve in any capacity the Spirit leads them into.

I'm egalitarian. To start showing you why I am, let's look at some of the women who led in the Bible:

- ***Deborah (Judges 4–5)*** *was a prophet and judge over all of Israel. Not just women. Israel. The military commander Barak refused to go into battle without her. God used her to deliver an entire nation.*
- ***Huldah (2 Kings 22)*** *was a prophet whose word was so trusted that King Josiah sent his officials to her and not to any male prophet, and what she said triggered national reform.*
- ***Junia (Romans 16:7)*** *is called "outstanding among the apostles" by Paul. Most scholars agree that Junia was a woman. Paul called a woman an apostle.*
- ***Phoebe (Romans 16)*** *is called a diakonos by Paul. This is the same Greek word used for deacons, a recognized leadership role. Paul trusted her to deliver his letter to the Romans, which wasn't just a delivery job. It involved explaining and teaching the letter to the church. That's a position of authority.*

This isn't an exhaustive list. But it's enough to establish a pattern before I walk through some "troublesome passages" that those who hold to complementarianism point to in support of their view.

Troublesome Passages

1) 1 Timothy 2:11-12

"A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet." (NIV)

If we read this one at face value without looking at the context, it seems like it's cut-and-dry.

But the thing is that the word translated as “authority” comes from the Greek word *authentein.* Paul uses this word only once in the entire NT. Nowhere else. And this is unusual because if it just meant normal, legitimate authority, he would’ve used the word he always used for that: *exousia*.

So what I’m saying is that *authentein* is different from the normal word used for authority in the NT. It carries the connotation of domineering, controlling, abusive authority. Biblical scholars widely agree on this.

With this in mind, let’s look at the cultural context: Ephesus, where Timothy was, was home to the cult of Artemis (a religion where women held domineering leadership roles). According to many scholars, women who were once a part of this cult converted to Christianity and, unfortunately, brought these controlling patterns into the church with them.

It makes sense, based on all of this, that Paul wasn’t shutting down women in leadership universally. He was shutting down a specific, abusive way of leading that happened in this church through women who were once part of the cult of Artemis.

2) 1 Corinthians 14:34-35

"Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home." (NIV)

To start, let me point out that three chapters earlier, Paul addresses women praying and prophesying in the church gathering and doesn’t tell them to stop. Instead, he tells them how to do it appropriately.

So with this in mind, 1 Corinthians 14 can't be a blanket prohibition on women speaking; otherwise, Paul is contradicting himself within the same letter.

So what's going on? Here are a couple of possibilities:

First, Paul might be quoting a position held by the conservative members in the Corinthian church and then sarcastically refuting it. I say this because in the next verse, in the Greek, Paul starts with something like: "What?!" This suggests that Paul is pushing back on what he just quoted.

Second, Paul might be specifically addressing married women who, in that culture, had very little theological education and were disrupting the gathering too much by constantly asking questions. So, Paul suggested that their husbands teach them at home simply so that the service could go smoothly.

And in saying this, Paul would have been countercultural and progressive, because many men at the time didn't even believe their wives were capable of learning theology.

3) 1 Corinthians 11:3-5:

> *"But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head." (NIV)*

This verse gets brought up in this discussion because it covers gender roles and seems to put a nail in the coffin on egalitarian views altogether.

Now, the word in this passage for "head" is the Greek word *kephale*, which has a few possible meanings: your literal physical head, "source," or "authority." Paul is using it metaphorically here, so which meaning is he actually going for?

If kephale means "authority," then the passage is saying Christ has authority over man, man has authority over woman, and God has authority over Christ.

But that last part is a theological problem, because it would mean the Father has authority over the Son, which is a heretical view called eternal subordination. This view is rejected because the Trinity is coequal.

Reading *kephale* as “authority” doesn’t make sense, unless we suggest that Paul is teaching heresy here.

With this in mind, the more likely reading of *kephale* is "source." And that makes complete sense. Christ is the source of humanity. In the Garden of Eden, man is the source of woman because Eve came from Adam's rib. And the Father is the source of the Son's mission into the world.

Now, let’s look at the actual head coverings instruction. What Paul is addressing is a cultural issue. In Corinth, an uncovered head on a woman signaled low social status, specifically associated with prostitution.

So a Christian woman showing up to worship with her head uncovered wasn't making a statement about freedom. To everyone in that room, it was a distraction because of what it visually communicated in that culture. Paul's concern was keeping the focus on God during worship.

And part of what Paul is doing here is honoring the distinction between men and women. Honoring your God-given gender, whatever that looks like in your culture, is something that matters to God because He made your body.

In saying this, I want to be careful. I'm not trying to make blanket rules for modern life. Style is style. What someone wears or how they present themselves isn't the issue. The issue is motive. Purposely trying to erase or deny the distinction between men and women is the problem.

With this, there's verse 14, where Paul says it's a disgrace for a man to have long hair. This is just another example of Paul upholding the cultural markers of what it meant to be a man or a woman in their culture. It's not a universal rule for all men.

And Paul confirms this at the end of this section, saying: "If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God." In other words, these are customs. They're a pastoral response to a specific cultural context, not universal commandments for every church in every generation.

Lastly, later in the same passage (v11), Paul says: *"In the Lord, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God." (NIV)*

Paul is saying that men and women are interdependent with one another and have equality before God. If Paul were trying to teach that women couldn't have authority over men, it seems strange for him to emphasize independence in the same passage.

Final Thoughts:

With all of this covered, I believe the passages used to restrict women from church leadership are taken out of context and misapplied.

This creates injustice in some churches today. Women who are genuinely called by God and gifted for leadership get barred from it and end up having to go elsewhere to walk in what God has called them to.

I'm calling the Church to repent of false views concerning women in leadership. Regardless of whether you're a man or a woman, what matters is that God has actually called and chosen you to lead.

If you feel called to lead, I want to encourage you to pursue the character needed, study the Bible in context, and do everything you can to prepare for the role. And if there's any way the Holy Spirit Movement can help you pursue it, we will.

Let's stop silencing women in the Church. Let's see both men and women lead together in Jesus' Church.

PLURALITY OF ELDERS:

In the early church, churches were never run by one person. They were led by a group of elders.

While they were usually older, age didn't determine if you were an elder: your character and faith did. Being an elder meant you were rightfully well-respected in the community because of your life.

The idea of having a plurality of elders leading a gathering wasn't unique to the early church. It came from what was already common in the ancient world.

An elder is someone who oversees and shepherds a local gathering of God's people. I believe this office is normally filled by whoever carries the pastor-teacher function I talked about earlier.

Normally, apostles and prophets do not function as elders in a particular local gathering. Instead, they exercise leadership in broader ways, usually travelling from church to church doing foundational work. With that said, this doesn't mean they never do. From time to time, someone holding one of these offices may also function as an elder within a specific church.

Throughout the NT, we see a plurality of elders. For example, when the Apostle Paul planted churches, he appointed elders in each church (Acts 14:23). Also, when he wanted to speak with the leaders of Ephesus in Acts 20:17, he didn't call for the "senior pastor," but instead he called for "the elders of the church."

Unfortunately, very early in church history, this model began to shift. The church gradually moved toward a more hierarchical structure, and the term "bishop" (which in the New Testament is simply another word for elder or pastor) became elevated into a distinct, superior office.

According to Tom Wadsworth [PhD, Biblical Studies], we can see the roots of this development in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch. Ignatius emphasized that nothing in the church should be done without the bishop's approval and urged believers to regard the bishop as the Lord Himself.

These ideas were absent from, and I'd say, in contrast to, the writings of Polycarp, who was a contemporary of Ignatius, writing around the same time.

Polycarp's letter to the Philippians assumes a plurality of elders. He addresses "the presbyters" (meaning elders) as a group and never appeals to a single ruling bishop over the church like Ignatius does in his letters.

Also, Ignatius' ideas around church leadership contradict Jesus' teachings. For example:

> ***Matthew 20:25-28 (NKJV):*** *But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.*
>
> *Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

Leadership is supposed to serve and empower God's people to do the work of the ministry, not domineer over them and exercise their authority in a way Jesus never intended.

So with this in mind, I think we can see how certain ideas and ways of leadership that are now common in the church today came to be. I'm not saying every gathering has to look like a first-century house church to be legitimate. But I do think maintaining plurality and humility for leadership is essential.

Church elders are meant to be a group of humble, tested people walking with the people they serve, not a special elite class of leaders who are above the "lay people."

I believe that it’s a lot harder for pride or toxic control to take root when leadership is shared, known, and accountable, not only to other leaders but to all of God's people.

That's part of why, in the Holy Spirit Movement, we've resisted building anything around a single personality (mine included), no matter how gifted a person is.

Healthy leadership was never meant to be one person carrying the weight of everyone else's spiritual life or dictating extra-biblical doctrines as if God is requiring that of His people.

And on another related note: some leaders in the Holy Spirit Movement function in an apostolic or prophetic office. But even though these leaders usually won’t function as elders in local gatherings, they’re still subject to the accountability principles and other leadership principles we’ve talked about.

Whether a leader is travelling and establishing gatherings, doing evangelism, or is an elder in a local gathering, each one answers to the same standards Jesus set for His leaders.

CHAPTER 4

FAITH

Before we get into what faith actually is, I want to cover two common misunderstandings about faith:

The first comes from within certain parts of the church, specifically the Word of Faith movement. They teach that faith is essentially a *spiritual force* that believers can release *through their words*.

In their view, if you believe strongly enough and speak the right declarations, you can bring about healing, finances, or whatever you want. They'll say things like, "I speak this into existence" or "I declare healing over my body." Their theology is built on an underlying belief that God is bound by a spiritual law, where if you activate "faith" correctly, He has to respond.

The core issue with this is that it portrays God as weak, relying on you to move. But when you read the Bible in context, you see that God does whatever He pleases, and faith is more about trusting God to act according to His will. God is the One with the power, not us.

Also, this twists scriptures about our words. Words do have the power to harm others, but not in the sense of being able to magically cause things to happen.

What the Word of Faith teaches is more in alignment with New Age Spirituality rather than Christianity. The Bible never teaches us that we can speak things into existence or change reality with our words.

The second misunderstanding about faith is that it's *blind: faith is believing something without evidence.* It's a blind trust and about shutting off your brain.

But when you look at the Bible, true faith is nothing like this. We're supposed to reason, ask questions, and test things to make sure they're true. Rationality has always been a core part of real faith.

The Greek word for faith in the New Testament is *pistis,* which means trust, confidence, and reliance based on demonstrated trustworthiness.

It's the same kind of trust you place in a doctor, a bridge, or a close friend. You trust them because you have reasonable, well-founded confidence based on what you know about them.

What Is Faith?

At its most basic level, **faith is trusting God (usually for something).** This level of faith isn't exclusive to those who are already saved. Even someone who hasn't come to know Jesus yet can cry out to Him in a moment of desperation, trust Him for something, and find that He responds.

God heals people who aren't believers, provides for them, and, at times, answers the prayers of those just beginning to seek Him. He doesn't withhold Himself from the unsaved because He loves them.

But I want to go deeper than this. What is the kind of faith does someone who knows God have?

Here's my definition of this: **Faith is relational trust in God that produces God-ordained results.**

If you're born again, this is the kind of faith that you and I have. Let's unpack this:

Hebrews 11:1 (ESV): *"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."*

That verse is describing a trust and confidence in God where we believe Him for things that we can't yet see in our lives (normally this is something that He's promised to do in the future).

We can trust God like this because we know who He is and that He's faithful, meaning He'll keep His word.

If we look at the rest of Hebrews 11, we'll see many examples of God's people from the OT. And even though each of their stories is unique, there's a pattern that repeats across every example:

1) God speaks or makes a promise *2) A person trusts Him*

3) God brings about the promise according to His will

Remember how I taught in the last volume that when God saves us, it's for a purpose?

Well, part of faith means trusting Him to prepare us into the kind of person, with the right character, connections, and whatever is needed for His purpose for our life to come to pass.

God always keeps His promises. And the transformation and results won't come because we've been good enough or have enough faith; it's because He's faithful. So whatever God is trying to do in you and through you, trust Him that He knows what He's doing and will cause things to take place at the right time.

True faith is more than intellectual agreement with theological statements. It's more than positive thinking. It's not just willpower or working yourself up into a state of obedience. It's knowing and trusting the living God to do what He's promised.

Galatians 5:6 (NIV): *"The only thing that counts is faith working through love."*

Because faith is relational trust in God, love for God, others, and even holy self-love are produced.

Any form of faith void of a living relationship with God is a dead faith that can't produce God's love. But a living faith will transform us into people who love like Jesus and walk in His purposes for our lives.

Living Faith:

Part of having a relationship with God includes asking Him for things and making requests. You can ask Him to provide, to heal you, to move in your life, and because He's our Father, He wants that. But if that's all our faith ever is, we're missing out.

You see, our faith is meant to be a living faith, which looks like what the Bible calls *pure religion.*

James 1:27 (ESV): *"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."*

Pure religion is the opposite of dead religion. Dead religion is about performance without actually knowing God. But pure religion flows from genuine friendship with God. You can't manufacture it or maintain it yourself. It's the natural overflow of knowing Him.

And the way pure religion expresses itself is through helping others and living a godly life. It's where you let God's light shine through you.

This can look unique depending on what field God calls you to serve Him in, whether that's the business world, entertainment, politics, or something else. The context may look different, but pure religion still looks like helping people and shining God's light.

Pure religion looks like being led by the Holy Spirit in real time. As you grow in your relationship with God, you'll start to develop a sensitivity to what the Lord is saying to you in everyday moments.

This might look like giving a person a prophetic word, or noticing someone most people ignore and meeting their need, or it can also look like sitting and listening in a way that reveals God's compassion.

When you have a living faith, you're emptied of your own agenda and are available to walk in God's purposes wherever He places you. Because of this, when people meet you, they encounter God in a real way. Faith was never meant to be something that only affects you; living faith affects the people around you.

CHAPTER 5

MONEY

This topic can get dicey, so let me be upfront:

In the Holy Spirit Movement, we don't take regular tithes or offerings. Not at our gatherings, not at our large events, not anywhere.

And the reason for this is that we don't want to do what some other churches do, where they use guilt, pressure, fear of curses, or promises that God's going to provide finances because you gave. That's all manipulative spiritual abuse, and we want nothing to do with those kinds of practices.

What we talk about at the Holy Spirit Movement is generosity (voluntary giving). For example, if there's somebody in need, we may help them and ask members if they're willing and able to give.

Also, being generous isn't only about what we do when we gather together. In your own personal life, help people out. If you want to, do some charity work.

Now, I want to cover some theological points about money before getting into some misunderstandings about it in the modern church:

- ***Money Isn't Evil, But Loving It Is:*** *Wealth is often a blessing from God. Something that we can enjoy and use to serve Him. However, Jesus is clear that we cannot serve both God and money. It's either that God is our God or money is our God (1 Timothy 6:10, Proverbs 10:22, Matthew 6:24).*

- ***We're Called to Properly Manage It:*** *The Bible is chock-full of principles surrounding proper management of finances. Jesus even calls us to be faithful in how we manage our wealth and use it for His Kingdom. Also, our wealth is actually His wealth. That means we're trustees or stewards of what belongs to Him (Matthew 6:19-21, Proverbs 21:5, Luke 16:10-11).*

- ***God Provides It:*** *Even though we work hard for it, God is the One who gives us the ability to generate wealth. In His sovereignty, He distributes resources according to His own will and purposes.*

  That means some people are called to be rich for God, and at other times, others might be called to be poor for Him. In some situations, God may walk somebody through a time of being poor before they're rich so that they're humble, see themselves and God properly, and can handle the resources correctly (Deuteronomy 8:18, Sirach 11:14).

- ***He Wants Us To Healthily Enjoy It:*** *Even though we serve God and are stewards of His resources, He wants us to enjoy His blessings, too. He's not against fun; He's against sin. So with wisdom, in a healthy way, enjoy whatever He gives you (Ecclesiastes 5:19, Sirach 11:3-6; 11:11).*

- ***Spirit-led Cheerful Generosity:*** *God wants us to be led by His Spirit in our giving and to do so with a love-and-joy-filled heart. When you give, do it because you love God and you love whom you're giving to.*

  Generosity isn't about giving out of external pressure, guilt, or duty. Giving as if God's ripping it from your hands or complaining reveals that you haven't yet grasped the truth that it's better to give than to receive (2 Corinthians 9:6-7, Acts 20:35).

With all of that covered, let's talk about some of the misunderstandings and false teachings about money in the modern church, so that you know what to look out for.

TITHING:

A lot of churches teach that giving 10% of your income is a requirement for every Christian. And some even go as far as to say that if you don't tithe, you'll be under a curse and miss God's provision and blessings. I've got to say… that's pretty horrible!

One of the main bible passages that those who teach this point to is Malachi 3:8-10 (NIV), which says:

> *"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?' "In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."*

This looks pretty cut and dry until you look into the proper context of this verse.

Here's the thing: Malachi was written around 450 BC to the nation of Israel, and remember, this is under the Old Covenant. When you read it carefully, this section is actually addressing the priests and Levites who were mishandling and withholding tithes.

And these tithes weren't money. They were crops, livestock, and fruit from the land. The blessings God promises here are about Him pouring out rain and protecting their fields from locusts.

So, it's a misuse of the text to say that we're commanded to give 10% of our paycheck to God through the church every time we're paid.

Something else important for me to mention is that the Israelites didn't just have one tithe; they had three:

- *The first went to the Levites and priests because they didn't have land of their own and needed the community to provide for them (Numbers 18:21-26).*
- *The second funded their annual sacred feasts and celebrations (Deuteronomy 14:22-27).*
- *And the third was collected every three years and went specifically to the poor, widows, orphans, and foreigners in the land (Deuteronomy 14:28-29).*

When you add all three up, Israel was giving around 23% of their produce, not 10%. So, if somebody wanted to be consistent in applying the OT tithing system to Christians today, then they'd need to require these three tithes, not just one of only 10%.

And finally, the early church didn't practice mandatory tithing. We can see that in the historical record. They gave voluntarily and freely to meet the needs of the community. Also, they did give sacrificially at times, as led by the Holy Spirit.

How the modern church has gotten to where it's at today in tithing and giving practices is messy, but it can be traced to its roots in the 6th century, when tithing was enforced as church law in parts of Europe.

After this, if you go through the different stages of church history and see what happened with tithing, you'll see that it kept evolving until it turned into what we see in some churches today.

PROSPERITY GOSPEL:

This is a false teaching that says it's God's will for every believer to have constant health and wealth.

In these circles, you'll hear things like this: if you have enough faith and give in the right way, God will prosper you. You'll also hear "sow a seed to reap a harvest" or "release your faith and claim your breakthrough."

So what's the problem with this?

First, the Prosperity Gospel twists a real spiritual principle found in Galatians 6:7, which says, "Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."

Here's the thing: in context, this isn't even talking about money. The author is talking about sowing to the flesh versus sowing to the Spirit. The harvest is primarily spiritual: corruption or life.

And yes, the sowing principle does involve generosity with your finances. But giving money doesn't mean that God will give you money back. He might give you opportunities, wisdom, relationships, or bless you in other ways. He's God and gets to decide what the harvest looks like.

Beyond money, you can sow all kinds of things. You can sow time, encouragement, prayer, kindness, your gifts and talents, etc.

Also, the Prosperity Gospel turns God into a vending machine. It's just not how God operates, and frankly, it's a manipulative way to approach Him. Instead of asking Him for things because He's our King and Father, we try using the right words to force Him to move.

Second, the Prosperity Gospel relies on some Word of Faith theology surrounding our words.

Proverbs 18:21 (NKJV): *"Life and death are in the power of the tongue"*

Along with this verse, James 3 talks about how the tongue is like a "rudder that steers a ship."

In their theology, these passages are taught to be able to manifest external things in reality. For example, you speak healing, and healing shows up. You declare a financial breakthrough, and money comes in.

This is essentially the same idea as New Age manifestation, where your words are a creative force that shapes the world around you.

But this is not what these passages are saying. In context, Proverbs 18:21 is about the impact your words have on others and the consequences that come back on you as the speaker. Words can either build someone up or tear them down.

And James 3 is talking about the direction of your heart and about how your words can damage the lives of other people when they're out of control.

The Bible teaches that our words matter. In fact, Jesus says that "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks," meaning that what we say reveals how we truly think and feel subconsciously. Our words reveal what we treasure and love.

I think we need to be careful how we speak because our words reveal and can solidify bad attitudes that lead us down the wrong path.

But we can't magically affect our external circumstances with our words or force God's hand to drop money into our bank account.

Third, the Prosperity Gospel turns God into a means to an end and turns faith into a formula.

When it comes to money, God wants us to come to Him as our Heavenly Father. That means we know He cares for us; we can ask Him for things, but we're not going to treat Him like we're entitled to His blessings. There's a huge difference between a request and a demand.

God certainly does bless people at times when they ask. He can put it on someone's heart to give to one of His children.

But we shouldn't feel entitled to always receiving financial blessings like this and instead earn money through whatever means God wants us to, knowing that it's Him who's providing through those means.

Fourth, and lastly, the Prosperity Gospel is built upon disappointment and injustice.

Just look at the leaders in this movement: many of them live in mansions, fly on private jets, and wear expensive suits; all the while, they're ripping off their people, telling them to give sacrificially, even though their people are literally on food stamps, barely able to afford food or rent.

And on top of this, many of the people who give money don't get the financial breakthrough they're promised and end up blaming themselves. This creates a cycle of guilt, shame, and confusion that's really hard to get out of.

Many of these people end up broken, questioning whether God even loves them, and walking away from the faith entirely. Plus, those outside of the church look at this and at how other Christians don't do anything about it and think Christianity is absurd and evil.

All of this is spiritual abuse and greatly evil.

Jesus isn't pleased with these con artists, who should be afraid of claiming to speak for God.

The example of Jesus and His Apostles looks nothing like those who preach the garbage of the Prosperity Gospel. Paul was willing to go without at times for the sake of the people He was trying to reach.

I'm not saying we shouldn't help our leaders out if they need it, but there's no place for them to have millions of dollars *for themselves.* If God makes one of His leaders wealthy, it's not only for them. It's for His people so that the church can shine His light in the world by helping people.

POVERTY GOSPEL:

This usually shows up as an overcorrection to the Prosperity Gospel. The Poverty Gospel says that wealth and material possessions are inherently evil; the truly spiritual person abandons these things.

Now, this mindset has a long history in Christianity. It goes back to the 3rd century, when hermits like Antony of Egypt sold everything he owned and moved out to the desert. Money was seen as a demonic snare, something to escape so you could get close to God.

And also throughout church history, there have been many who've renounced wealth and lived in radical poverty as an act of devotion toward God.

I'm not going to go as far as to say that God never leads anyone to live in poverty, because we see in scripture that both Jesus and John the Baptist did, according to the Father's will. God certainly can lead people to be poor.

What I'm trying to correct is the mindset that being poor is always God's will because somehow money itself is evil. Here are some problems with it:

First, it's built upon a philosophical idea called dualism. This is the belief that the material world is bad and the spiritual world is good.

The problem with this is that when you look at Genesis, God created our physical world and called it good. And when you take the Bible and its worldview as a whole, the physical world isn't in opposition to spirituality. God created physical things as gifts.

Second, Jesus challenging people about money is confused with saying it's always evil.

To support their view, sometimes those who believe the Poverty Gospel will point to how Jesus said in Matthew 19:24 that it's "hard for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven," as well as Him telling the rich young ruler to sell everything he had to give to the poor in Mark 10:21.

Let's address the rich young ruler first: when we read this in context, Jesus is addressing a heart issue the young man had.

Jesus told him to do what he did not because his being wealthy was evil in and of itself, but because Jesus knew money was the rich young ruler's god. Jesus was confronting what he treasured more than God.

This is a command specifically for the rich young ruler, not a universal command for every Christian to get rid of their material possessions.

When it comes to Matthew 19:24, Jesus wasn't saying that God is inherently against those who are wealthy. He was stating a truth about the spiritual danger that comes with having a lot of money.

Think about it: when you're wealthy, it's easy to start feeling like you've got things handled. Your needs are covered, and you don't feel desperate. This can lead you to naturally stop looking to God the way someone does when they have nothing else to turn to.

Wealth can cause you to walk in a self-sufficiency that pushes God to the edges of your life. But this doesn't always happen; it's just a real danger.

And when we look at Jesus Himself, yes, He was homeless during His ministry. But He went to parties, dined with wealthy people, attended weddings, and fully participated in society. If wealth and material things were inherently evil, Jesus would have kept His distance from all of it.

Thirdly, the Poverty Gospel ignores a lot of scripture. For example, Abraham was super wealthy and still called a friend of God; Solomon was the richest king of all time and built the Temple; Job was a man of great wealth whom God called blameless, and in the NT, Lydia was a successful businesswoman.

Wealth doesn’t disqualify someone from walking closely with God. Whether you’re rich or poor, let it be according to His will and for His glory.

CONCLUSION

OUTRO

Awesome! I'm glad you've made it to the end of Volume #2 of *The Basics.*

Below are some discussion questions you can go through with the person you're reading this with. After them, there will be further resources that you can look into if you want to study some of these doctrines more deeply:

- *What was the most surprising thing you learned about how we got the Bible?*
- *How do you currently engage with the Bible?*
- *What do you personally think about the Deuterocanonical books after reading the chapter on the Bible?*
- *What aspect of the early church stood out to you most?*
- *Were there any traditions that you were surprised to see weren't part of the early church?*
- *What does being part of the body of Christ mean to you personally? How does that change how you show up for other Christians?*

- *How does Jesus' model of leadership differ from what we see in many churches today?*
- *Do you think you're called to lead in any capacity in Jesus' Kingdom one day? What would that look like for you?*
- *In your own words, how would you explain what faith is to someone who's never heard a biblical definition of it?*
- *Where are you currently at in your relationship with God?*
- *Practically speaking, what does pure religion look like in your life right now?*
- *Have you ever been in an environment where there were manipulative practices and teachings surrounding money? How did that affect your relationship with God or with the church?*
- *Was there anything in the chapter on money that confirmed things for you or even challenged you?*

Further Resources

We don't necessarily endorse every viewpoint of the authors and speakers we list below:

1) Collection of Videos (Playlist)

2) The Reliability of the New Testament (Playlist)

3) On The Reliability of the Old Testament by Kenneth A. Kitchen (Book)

4) God, Greed, and the (Prosperity) Gospel by Costi Hinn (Book)

5) Health, Wealth, and Happiness by David W. Jones and Russell S. Woodbridge (Book)

6) Egalitarian View (Playlist)

7) Complementarian View (Playlist)

8) Pagan Christianity by Frank Viola & George Barna (Book)

9) The Assembly: How We Got Worship All Wrong by Tom Wadsworth [PhD] (Playlist)

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