



# Spiritual Due Diligence

Exploring questions of eternal significance

**Study 3** The Nature of God

presented by Links Players International

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# Spiritual Due Diligence

## Introduction to this study

**W**HEN A MAN OR WOMAN CONSIDERS making a significant financial investment, they normally do not rush into the decision. Rather, they begin a process commonly known as due diligence—a gathering of facts and considerations that will allow them to judge rightly whether this investment is appropriate for them.

Of course, due diligence does not guarantee success. However, if an investment fails and we ask the investors whether or not they did their due diligence, the most embarrassing answer they can give is, “No, we did not.”

While thousands of wise investors each year avoid that embarrassment by conducting due diligence in their financial endeavors, millions of people never take the same careful steps in their spiritual lives. While they have heard stories of God and the afterlife, and while they may have even toyed with such questions loosely in their minds, they have never set about the task of spiritual due diligence—considering the information that would support these eternally significant claims.

### Intent of this series

The intent of this series, *Spiritual Due Diligence*, is to assist potential spiritual investors with regard to investigating the claims of the Bible, particularly as they point to a relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ. One study in this series will focus on the claims of other faith systems, but that is not our primary intent here. Instead, by a thorough examination of the Bible, you will have opportunity to study Christianity in depth, and thereafter you will have the tools necessary by which to measure other faiths and religions.

### The audience for this series

At least three categories of readers should find great value in this series: those who are beginning their first serious investigation of the Bible, those who are desiring to increase their knowledge and understanding of the Bible, and those who may be speaking with others about their own established Christian faith.

### Focus of this particular study

This study is the third in the series. Its particular thrust is to explore what the Bible says about the nature of God. Obviously, such an expansive topic carries the possibility for far more than eight weeks of study, but in these lessons we do intend to address at least three major areas: the eternal, imperial nature of God the Father; the incarnated (“in the flesh”) nature of God as Jesus of Nazareth; and the indwelling person of God as the Holy Spirit. Through these studies, you will find out why Christians place great hope in the deity of the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

— Jeffrey Cranford and Jeff Hopper, for Links Players International



# The Nature of God

## Lesson One: The 'otherness' of God

**N**O ONE WANTS A MANAGEABLE GOD. At least not in theory. Of course, if we dare to tell the truth, our own flesh could be quite satisfied with a neutered God, one who is not much of a challenge to the things *we* want to do. But when we get down to business, we want a God who gets down to business. We want the Almighty God of the grand theological traditions to stand up and be counted on. We want a God who is capable of doing anything we ask.

In this regard, then, we should find great satisfaction in the Scriptures of the Bible, for all aspects of the biblical literature—the historical accounts, the poetic renderings, the prophetic deliveries, and the doctrinal statements—all point to such a God. The point to a God who is *holy*, a word that means, in the original languages, “other than” or “separated.”

The God of the Bible is different than we are. And these differences allow us to begin our investigation into God’s character.

### God as Creator

Many readers think that God’s creative legacy is attached solely to the Genesis accounts which, as we acknowledged in an earlier study, they dismiss as myth. But God’s creative existence was thrust forward by the New Testament writers as well. Consider Romans 1:20: “From the creation of the world His invisible attributes, that is, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen...” God as Creator is found throughout Scripture.

What does it mean that God is Creator, as opposed to the creative work of artists today and the industrial production of manufacturers? Simply this: The Bible reports that God created the elements from which all else was made. In pictorial terms, God made not only the cake, He made the ingredients from which the cake was made. In contrast, all that man has made through the centuries has derived from those elements of God’s creation. In this way, God is uniquely “other than.”

### God as Judge

While at first blush, “God as Judge” is one of those disconcerting expressions that places Him in a position of authority over our resistant self, a God who can enact justice is very much the kind of God most of us desire. For instance, when a latecomer is served prior to those who have been waiting many minutes in a deli line, we are angered inside. Why? Because we innately desire justice. We want matters big and small to be administered according to an ordered design.

But what makes God “other than” the judges that occupy the bench in the world’s courtrooms? God has all the facts. In an earthly courtroom, the information can be clouded by convincing yet false witnesses, the persuasive powers of a polished attor-

ney, or the individual perspective of the judge himself. God does not see things this way. The facts are bare before Him and His perspective is untainted by life's experience. He can be uniquely fair and—yes, this is the frightening part—deadly accurate.

### God as the Giver of Grace

Not all of God's holy characteristics create a subservience or dread in our emotions. God is also the unique dispenser of complete grace. In fact, it is this aspect of grace that causes a separation between the God of the Bible and God as He is presented in other religious texts. All other religious texts leave room for the hard work of a man or woman trying to get to God. The Bible explains that God is willing to do all the work of clearing the path to us. He does this via grace, His operative forgiveness that draws us to Him.

Men and women may forgive one another, no doubt. But that forgiveness is sometimes reluctant, sometimes given with conditions attached ("OK, I'll forgive you, but don't ever do that again!"). God, on the other hand, delivers His forgiving grace at our simple request. And in so doing, He has disarmed many seekers, for they wanted to have a hand in their own salvation. God's grace is so big—so "other than"—that it does not leave any room for our ego, no matter how small we think we have shrunk it in coming to Him.

Creator, Judge, and Giver of Grace are just three traits of God that show the vast difference between Him and us. Some of the questions below explore other ways that God is distant from us in His nature. As we shall see later in this study, however, He is in no way distant in His presence.

### BIBLE STUDY

*Read Ephesians 2:10, Isaiah 11:4, and Ephesians 2:8-9.* How do these passages amplify God's characteristics of creation, justice and grace that we have examined already?

*Read Psalm 103:6,8-10.* How do these nearby passages reveal God's justice and grace all at the same time?

*Read Isaiah 55:8-11.* What other grand traits of God are exposed in this passage? How are even the words of God "other than" when compared to the words we speak?

### EPHESIANS 2

<sup>10</sup>For we are His creation—created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.

### ISAIAH 11

<sup>4</sup>...but He will judge the poor righteously and execute justice for the oppressed of the land.

He will strike the land with discipline from His mouth, and He will kill the wicked with a command from His lips.

### EPHESIANS 2

<sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God's gift—<sup>9</sup>not from works, so that no one can boast.

### PSALM 103

<sup>6</sup>The Lord executes acts of righteousness and justice for all who are oppressed...

<sup>8</sup>The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and full of faithful love.

<sup>9</sup>He will not always accuse us or be angry forever.

<sup>10</sup>He has not dealt with us as our sins deserve or repaid us according to our offenses.

### ISAIAH 55

<sup>8</sup>"For My thoughts are not your thoughts and your ways are not My ways."

This is the Lord's declaration.

<sup>9</sup>"For heaven is higher than earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts are higher than your thoughts.

<sup>10</sup>For just as rain and snow fall from heaven, and do not return there without saturating the earth, and making it germinate and sprout, and providing seed to sow and food to eat,  
<sup>11</sup>so My word that comes from My mouth will not return to Me empty, but it will accomplish what I please, and will prosper in what I send it to do."



# The Nature of God

## Lesson Two: The transcendence of God

**W**HO ARE THE ATHLETES THAT TRANSCEND SPORTS? That's an increasingly popular question on the sports talk shows. It suggests that certain athletes stretch beyond their impact on the field and begin to have an impact on culture. Sports fans know these athletes, but so do many who are not regular fans.

Baseball's Jackie Robinson is the quintessential historical answer to the question. It was Robinson's persistent fortitude that broke baseball's "color line" and allowed African-American athletes to take their rightful, often dominant, place in the game.

Now the same swirl of excitement surrounds Tiger Woods. Woods crosses cultural lines (he is part Asian, part African American, part Dutch, part American Indian) and draws attention from those who wouldn't turn an eye toward golf for any other reason. His toddling appearance on television, his marriage to a Swedish beauty, his getaways on his yacht *Privacy*, the birth of his first child—all of these non-golf events find their way onto web site home pages and tabloid covers. The Tiger Woods Foundation makes a way for underprivileged children in both sports and education.

Of course, transcendence among humans is not limited to athletes. When Microsoft's Bill Gates stepped aside from the tech giant's day-to-day operations to run his philanthropic foundation, he was making a transcendent impact on culture. The same can be said for Gates' rival in wealth, Mexican telecom magnate Carlos Slim Helu, who takes as one of his greatest efforts the battle against poverty in Latin America.

It is easy to offer up a level of respect for this kind of transcendence. Particularly among those with an entrepreneurial mind-set, there is an appreciation for such cross-over. But when we begin to discuss transcendence theologically, we find that even the finest transcendence of men and women is lacking.

In the opening lesson of this study, we noted that no one wants a God they can get their hands around. That would not make Him Lord of all. Then we established that God has an "otherness" about Him that makes Him entirely different from us.

But while different may point to *better*, it does not necessarily imply *bigger*. In what ways, if any, does the Bible suggest that God is bigger than we are, that He can transcend common parameters?

### God transcends time

The Bible begins, as most readers are familiar, with the account of a series of creative acts by God. But as for God Himself, the Bible leaves Him "uncreated." That is, He has always existed. While this can be a difficult concept for some, it becomes more accessible when we consider the evidences for God's existence *since* that biblical beginning.

From the Bible's first pages to its last, a closely knit narrative wherein God interacts with His people (both generally and specifically) leads us to consider that this same God who formed the heavens and the earth will be its re-creator in a new age prophesied in the book of Revelation. In the interim, He was worshipped by people of multi-varied backgrounds and experiences, never as an idol but always as Almighty. He gained credit from Noah 3,000 years before Christ and from Paul and John in the waning days of their lives decades after Christ. If this same God consistently presented Himself and was consistently recognized through this 3,600-year span, we begin to understand how He could have existed before all else—and how He continues to draw men and women into our own time.

### God transcends space

Remarkably, the Bible also suggests that God transcends space. The theological term for this is “omnipresence,” or the ability for God to exist in more than one place at a time. Different from pantheism, where God is in all things, the omnipresence of God means that He can meet each of us individually when we call on Him (or even when we don't!). Because God is essentially spirit in form, He can attend to the prayers of one person in Bangor, Maine, at the same time as He can attend to the prayers of a second person in Bangkok, Thailand. There is a second matter of great importance here: the true God is culturally relevant in all places. He is not held captive by one tongue or one temple.

### BIBLE STUDY

*Read Genesis 1:1, 2 Peter 3:8-9, and Revelation 21:1-4.*

How do these passages lay out God's existence in and rule over time, past present and future?

*Read Revelation 21:3 and Psalm 139:7-12.*

Based on these passages, what understanding do we gain about God's omnipresence, His willingness and ability to meet us wherever we are?

### REFLECTION

*Read Ephesians 4:4-6.* After studying the components of God's transcendence, how much more meaning does a passage like this have? Does it move from the realm of platitude to proclamation?

### GENESIS 1

<sup>1</sup>In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

### 2 PETER 3

<sup>8</sup>Dear friends, don't let this one thing escape you: with the Lord one day is like 1,000 years, and 1,000 years like one day.

<sup>9</sup>The Lord does not delay His promise, as some understand delay, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance.

### REVELATION 21

<sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea no longer existed. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>Then I heard a loud voice from the throne: “Look, God's dwelling is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will exist no longer; grief, crying and pain will exist no longer, because the previous things have passed away.”

### PSALM 139

<sup>7</sup>Where can I go to escape Your Spirit?

Where can I flee from Your presence?

<sup>8</sup>If I go up to heaven, You are there;

If I make my bed in Sheol, You are there.

<sup>9</sup>If I live at the eastern horizon

or settle at the western limits,

<sup>10</sup>even there Your hand will lead me,

Your right hand will hold on to me.

<sup>11</sup>If I say, “Surely the darkness will hide me, and the light around me will become night”—

<sup>12</sup>even the darkness is not dark to You.

the night shines like the day;

darkness and light are alike to You.

### EPHESIANS 4

<sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope at your calling;

<sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one

<sup>6</sup>God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.



# The Nature of God

## Lesson Three: God Incarnate, Jesus Christ (Part 1)

**T**IGER WOODS IS ONLY NOW DETERMINING HOW TO PLAY OUT HIS ROLE AS A PARENT. Part of what makes the world's top golfer so compelling is the way that he has adeptly presented himself in the two arenas where we know him best: on the golf course and as an advertising icon. Intriguingly, Tiger presents two very different personas in these roles.

On the course, he is perhaps the fiercest competitor in the game's history. He wears a classic game face, calculates to precision with his caddie Steve Williams, and dons his "power red" on Sundays. Along with this, he brings a game that produces lower numbers in the clutch than anyone of his generation. It's now wonder that so many other players have publicly expressed that they are intimidated by Tiger's excellent game.

As an advertising multi-million dollar rep, however, Tiger relaxes into a smiling, hip, "come-on-in" spokesman, hawking products you suddenly feel very good about buying. This Tiger wears T-shirts and plays video games and—we hope—will supply the "Daddy" side to his fatherhood.

In a way, all of us are like Tiger. We play varying roles despite being the same person. Some, for instance, go by "Doctor" to their patients, "Honey" to their spouse, and "Gramps" to their beloved grandchildren. Each of these names (or roles), while not really changing us, will draw out different aspects of our personality.

But we are not like God, who manifests Himself in three distinct but ever-bound persons. Theologians call this aspect of God "the Trinity," a name that points simply to the three-part nature of God. The fullness of God dwells in each of these "persons," yet each of these three persons is truly distinct in nature.

We might call these three persons God Imperial, God Incarnate, and God Indwelling. God Imperial (or God the Father) is the eminent God whom we studied in lessons one and two. God Incarnate (meaning God "in the flesh," who is Jesus Christ) walked the earth as recorded in the four Gospels of Scripture; He will be the subject of this lesson and the following two. And God indwelling (the Holy Spirit) is He who may live in us; lesson six will focus on Him.

### The life of Jesus

Most people are familiar, at least to a basic extent, with the life of Jesus Christ. Hollywood has made a significant number of contributions to the "Jesus montage" through the years. Some of these movie efforts have aimed at strict biblical accuracy (*Jesus* and *The Gospel of John*, to name a couple), while others have exercised broad interpretation (*The Last Temptation of Christ*, Monty Python's *Life of Brian*).

It is important, then, to turn to Scripture itself to gain access to what the Bible says

about Jesus and the life He lived while “in the flesh.”

Because it is not the purpose of this study to explore every detail of Christ’s life, let us present these facts, which denote key elements in that life prior to the week of His death:

Jesus was born in Bethlehem to a virgin named Mary, who conceived when the Holy Spirit overwhelmed her. Her betrothed husband Joseph was Jesus’ earthly “father” for at least the childhood years of Jesus’ life. (Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-20)

Jesus began his public ministry at the age of 30, after training as a carpenter under Joseph and working in that capacity. (Luke 3:23, Mark 6:3)

Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan River. At this time, the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus in the form of a dove and a voice from heaven announced, “This is my Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:13-17)

Jesus performed a number of public miracles. These included healing of those who were deaf, blind, lame, leprosy and demon-possessed. While He discouraged recognition for these miracles, word got out and wherever He went people brought the sick to Him for healing. On at least three occasions, Jesus also rose people from the dead. (Matthew 9:18-26, Luke 4:31-44, Luke 5:12-26, Luke 7:11-17, John 11:1-44 — a partial listing)

Jesus regularly challenged Jewish religious leaders, condemning their self-serving interpretations of Scripture and the self-righteous attitudes that made them merciless critics of others. (Matthew 23:13-32)

Jesus claimed to be the promised Messiah, citing the prophetic Scriptures that pointed to His coming (Luke 4:16-21, Luke 24:25-27).

#### BIBLE STUDY

*Read Mark, chapters 1-10. (This reading may take you about an hour, but it will give you a sweeping look at Jesus’ earthly ministry.)*

What is the balance between events of Jesus’ life and teaching with which you were familiar and those with which you were not?

What are some other miracles Jesus performed besides healing?

What seems to be the dominant form of teaching Jesus did?

#### MATTHEW 1

<sup>18</sup>The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way: After His mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, it was discovered before they came together that she was pregnant by the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup>So her husband Joseph, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, decided to divorce her secretly.

#### MATTHEW 3

<sup>16</sup>After Jesus was baptized, He went up immediately from the water. The heavens suddenly opened for Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on Him. <sup>17</sup>And there came a voice from heaven: “This is My beloved Son. I take delight in Him!”

#### LUKE 4

<sup>40</sup>When the sun was setting, all those who had anyone sick with various diseases brought them to Him. As He laid His hands on each one of them, He would heal them.

<sup>41</sup>Also, demons were coming out of many, shouting and saying, “You are the Son of God!” But He rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew He was the Messiah.

#### MATTHEW 23

<sup>13</sup>“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You lock up the kingdom of heaven from people. For you don’t go in, and you don’t allow those entering to go in.

<sup>14</sup>“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You devour widows’ houses and make long prayers just for show. This is why you will receive a harsher punishment.

#### LUKE 24

*(Jesus is speaking here to two disciples after His resurrection)*

<sup>25</sup>He said to them, “How unwise and slow you are to believe in your hearts all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup>Didn’t the Messiah have to suffer these things and enter into His glory?” <sup>27</sup>Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He interpreted for them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.



# The Nature of God

## Lesson Four: God Incarnate, Jesus Christ (Part 2)

**W**HILE A PERSON'S LIFE UNCOVERS MUCH ABOUT THEIR CHARACTER, often the nature in which they die is even more revealing. This is, of course, especially true with those who can anticipate their deaths, preparing to face the ultimate struggle—the time when they must let go first of their remaining earthly hopes and dreams, then their comfortable routines, and finally their very bodies.

Jesus Christ died such a death. Indeed, one of the most significant aspects in reviewing the life of Christ is how closely it paralleled our own. He was tempted fiercely, as we are, and He suffered greatly, as many of us do. But the death of Jesus Christ was especially severe in two regards: (1) it was implemented by the most torturous means ever devised, and (2) it was entirely unjust.

As with the previous lesson, this look at Christ's death and resurrection may reflect some of the events that you have seen in Hollywood's depictions of Christ's life. But we believe it is important that you know the facts as the Bible lays them out, without Hollywood's "middle men." You are the one who is conducting spiritual due diligence, and in doing so you will want to encounter the facts for yourself.

### The death of Christ

Throughout the course of His earthly ministry, Jesus often told His disciples of His eventual death. This was a real event for Him, one that was bound to take place, according to the design of God. However, either because their adoration for Him was too great, or the method of death to which He kept pointing was too gruesome, His disciples could not make sense of His words:

*From then on Jesus began to point out to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders, chief priests, and scribes, be killed, and be raised the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, "Oh no, Lord! This will never happen to You!" (Matthew 16:21-22)*

Jesus persisted in following the Father's design for Him, however, knowing that the purpose of His death was to "purchase the redemption" of sinners who believed in Him (that is, pay the required price of turning something worthless into something invaluable).

Upon entering Jerusalem, Jesus was greeted by the admiring masses. But their affections were fleeting, and within a week, the jealous Jewish leaders had turned their minds against Jesus. (These leaders were jealous because they were losing followers to Jesus, particularly after He raised Lazarus from the dead.)

On the eve of His death, Jesus sat again with His closest disciples, called "the

Twelve.” From among these men, Judas Iscariot would arise as Jesus’ betrayer, identifying His location in the night at the Garden of Gethsemane. There Jesus was taken prisoner and led to the temple courts. Despite the efforts of some Jewish leaders to stop the course of the majority, Jesus was voted a blasphemer and taken to the Roman authority, Pontius Pilate, for sentencing. Pilate was reluctant to condemn Jesus, finding no fault in Him. But in a political play, he gave the Jews their choice of prisoners. They chose Barabbas, a revolutionary, and called for the crucifixion of Jesus. Pilate complied.

Jesus was scourged, an act of torture that reduced His body to shredded flesh. Then He was made to carry His cross outside of town to Golgotha, “the place of the skull.” There He was crucified alongside two thieves. The Roman centurion at His side watched Jesus die and heard His words on the cross, including, “Father, forgive them, because they don’t know what they are doing,” and “It is finished.” Witness to this, the centurion declared, “This man really was God’s Son!”

### The resurrection of Jesus Christ

After Jesus’ death, He was removed from the cross by friends, including two prominent Jewish leaders. They placed Him in a tomb, which was sealed and guarded against robbery at the request of His enemies. There He lay until the passing of the Sabbath.

On Sunday morning, several women who were followers of Jesus went to the tomb in hopes of anointing His body for burial, which they could not do as the sun set prior to the Sabbath. When they arrived, they discovered the stone covering the tomb’s opening had been rolled away. They were met by an angel who told them that Jesus was living, raised from the dead as He said He would be.

In the days that followed, Jesus appeared to His disciples and many others. Then, at the end of His earthly ministry, He ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives.

### STUDY AND REFLECTION

*For a complete account of Jesus’ death, resurrection, and subsequent appearances, read John 18:1-Acts 1:11.*

Because the death and resurrection of Jesus comprise the critical core of the Christian faith and hope, each person, if they are to believe, will have to come to grips with the accounts of these events. As you consider them now, what thoughts arise in your mind? Do you have questions, challenges, or confessions that you would like to explore further?

### LUKE 22

<sup>39</sup>He went out and made His way as usual to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples followed Him. <sup>40</sup>When He reached the place, He told them, “Pray that you may not enter into temptation.” <sup>41</sup>Then He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, knelt down, and began to pray, <sup>42</sup>“Father, if You are willing, take this cup away from Me—nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done.”

### LUKE 23

<sup>20</sup>Pilate, wanting to release Jesus, addressed them again, <sup>21</sup>but they kept shouting, “Crucify! Crucify Him!”

<sup>22</sup>A third time he said to them, “Why? What has this man done wrong? I have found in Him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have Him whipped and then release Him.”

<sup>23</sup>But they kept up the pressure, demanding with loud voices that He be crucified. And their voices won out. <sup>24</sup>So Pilate decided to grant their demand <sup>25</sup>and released the one they were asking for, who had been thrown into prison for rebellion and murder. But he handed Jesus over to their will....

<sup>44</sup>It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three, <sup>45</sup>because the sun’s light failed. The curtain of the sanctuary was split down the middle. <sup>46</sup>And Jesus called out with a loud voice, “Father, into Your hands I entrust My spirit.” Saying this, He breathed His last.

### LUKE 24

<sup>1</sup>On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came to the tomb, bringing the spices they had prepared. <sup>2</sup>They found the stone rolled away from the tomb. <sup>3</sup>They went in but did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup>While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men stood by them in dazzling clothes. <sup>5</sup>So the women were terrified and bowed down to the ground.

“Why are you looking for the living among the dead?” asked the men. <sup>6</sup>“He is not here, but He has been resurrected!”



# The Nature of God

## Lesson Five: God Incarnate, Jesus Christ (Part 3)

**I**T IS LIKELY THAT IN THE COURSE OF YOUR LIFE'S AFFAIRS, you have been involved in a business interview. This may have been to secure a job position, or to hire someone else for such a position. It may have been to hear the pitch of a company that might advertise your group's work. Or it may have been a proposal to purchase your company and "take it to the next level."

In all these cases, the right course of action (what we might even call the "truth") seems to come in two stages. The first stage is the actual interview, when facts are laid on the table. You may raise some questions and receive solid answers, but the material still comes your way at a speed that is hard to keep up with. Thus, there is need for the second stage wherein, after the interview is completed, you sit back and think on what you have just seen. Perhaps you do this reflecting with other leaders on your team. Whether alone or together, the goal is the same: to find out what holds fast after the interview. Was this person you just encountered on the level? Will their proposals make the difference for your business?

In the same way, the Gospel accounts of Christ's life are the record of events surrounding the man. In the years that followed, several of His disciples were called upon by the Holy Spirit to write reflectively about the impact of His life, death and resurrection. They did so in a series of letters in the New Testament. In this final lesson on God Incarnate, Jesus Christ, we turn to these letters to advance our insight into His nature. Though this is not a complete list of Jesus' roles and characteristics, it will help understand how much there is to Him.

### The eternal Creator

The first insight is that Jesus was the eternal Creator, resident with God the Father from the beginning of time. We discover this in John's introduction to his Gospel, as well as in Paul's letters:

*In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. All things were created through Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created... The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-3,14)*

*He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation; because by Him everything was created, in heaven and on earth... (Colossians 1:15-16)*

### The Saving Redeemer

Second, Jesus is our Saving Redeemer. That is, He is the One whose righteous death paid the price we could not pay, taking the worthlessness of our sin and exchanging it

for His covering righteousness. By accepting this truth, followers of Christ gain access not only to an abundant life on earth, but to eternal life with Christ:

*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. (Ephesians 1:7-8)*

### Our intercessor

Third, Jesus has taken up residence at the right hand of God, where He presently intercedes for us. That means that He acts as our go-between, buffering the schism between our unholiness and God's holiness with His own irrefutable righteousness.

*Christ Jesus is the One who died, but even more, has been raised; He also is at the right hand of God and intercedes for us. (Romans 8:34)*

*Therefore He is always able to save those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to intercede for them. (Hebrews 7:25)*

### The Lord

Fourth, Jesus has been established as the Lord of His follower's lives, the One whom they serve out of reverence and love:

*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light—for the fruit of the light results in all goodness, righteousness, and truth—discerning what is pleasing to the Lord. (Ephesians 5:7-10)*

### The Coming King

Fifth, Jesus waits for the Father's time to return to earth and lead His people as their eternal King:

*...I charge you to keep the commandment without spot or blemish until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in His own time. He is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords... (1 Timothy 6:13-15)*

### BIBLE STUDY

Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, 12-28. What ongoing importance does the resurrection of Jesus Christ have for those who follow Him?

### 1 CORINTHIANS 15

<sup>3</sup>...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup>that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup>and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup>Then He appeared to over 500 brothers at one time, most of whom remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup>Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles....

<sup>12</sup>Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say, "There is no resurrection of the dead"? <sup>13</sup>But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; <sup>14</sup>and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is without foundation, and so is your faith. <sup>15</sup>In addition, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we have testified about God that He raised up Christ—whom He did not raise up if in fact the dead are not raised. <sup>16</sup>For if the dead are not raised, Christ has not been raised. <sup>17</sup>And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. <sup>18</sup>Therefore those who have fallen asleep in Christ have also perished. <sup>19</sup>If we have placed our hope in Christ for this life only, we should be pitied more than anyone.

<sup>20</sup>But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. <sup>21</sup>For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also comes through a man. <sup>22</sup>For just as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. <sup>23</sup>But each in his own order: Christ, the firstfruits; afterward, at His coming, the people of Christ. <sup>24</sup>Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father, when He abolishes all rule and all authority and power. <sup>25</sup>For He must reign until He puts all His enemies under His feet. <sup>26</sup>The last enemy to be abolished is death. <sup>27</sup>For He has put everything under His feet. But when it says "everything" is put under Him, it is obvious that He who puts everything under Him is the exception. <sup>28</sup>And when everything is subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who subjected everything to Him, so that God may be all in all.



# The Nature of God

## Lesson Six: God Indwelling, the Holy Spirit

**A** POPULAR LITTLE COURSE ON CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST confounds most golfers for a reason they do not at first realize. It is this: of the first nine holes, there is only one where you can see the green from the tee. And this is true not only of the greens. On nearly every hole, the landing areas are also blind. In other words, trust is an absolute requirement, especially for the golfer playing the course for the first time.

And therein lies a common contention about God: *If He is there, how am I to know? I cannot see Him, I can only trust Him; and I am not so sure I can do that.*

That is a reasonable observation, but it normally comes from those who do not know what the Scriptures have to say about God's presence in our time. In other words, those who struggle with the lack of God's "concreteness" have not done their spiritual due diligence.

The Bible makes it quite clear that the departure of Jesus Christ into heaven did not leave earth unoccupied as far as God's presence. Jesus promised another person of God was about to arrive, and that arrival came in a most dramatic way.

### The promise of the Holy Spirit

In the weeks and days before His death, Jesus tried to give His disciples a clear picture of what to expect. He told them of His coming death, He hinted at His resurrection, He spoke of His going to heaven, and He talked about the One who would come after Him:

*"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. He is the Spirit of truth, whom the world is unable to receive because it doesn't see Him or know Him. But you do know Him, because He remains with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I am coming to you...."*

*"But the Counselor, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you."*  
(John 14:15-18, 26)

Soon after, Jesus was put to death and on the third day was resurrected. After 40 days of interacting further with His disciples, Jesus prepared to ascend to heaven, but before doing so He offered a more specific promise:

*"...you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now... you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you..."* (Acts 1:5, 8)

### The coming of the Holy Spirit

Although Jesus' promise was fulfilled, and the Holy Spirit came in power on the dis-

ciples, it would be wrong to assume that there was no Holy Spirit before this time. As with the Father (God Imperial) and the Son (God Incarnate), the Holy Spirit (God Indwelling) is eternal in nature. Multiple times throughout the Old Testament, the Spirit “came upon” individual men and women, both in miraculous power and in prophetic revelation. In Acts, however, when the Holy Spirit came upon God’s people during the Jewish feast of Pentecost, His indwelling presence was far more universal. Peter addressed the gathered crowds, each hearing him in their own language, and pointed to the prophecies of Joel to explain this event:

*“And it will be in the last days, says God, that I will pour out My Spirit on all humanity.” (Acts 2:17)*

God’s indwelling Spirit was available to all who believed, as their Counselor. The Holy Spirit would supply not only visible power but less visible aides as well, including insight, conviction, and comfort.

### The work of the Holy Spirit

Any reading of the book of Acts inspires interest in the miracles that were worked through the apostles of Christ, those who led the followers of Jesus. Yet Paul, in his writings to the churches, never assumed the Spirit’s influence was for apostles alone. He wrote to the Romans that it is the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead that now gives life to all believers, and that the Spirit intercedes for us when we cannot find the words to pray. He told the Corinthians that all Christ’s people were given gifts for ministry by the Holy Spirit. He explained to the Galatians that the Holy Spirit instills the fruit of righteousness in us—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control—and that against such things there is no law. And to the Ephesians, he established that it is the Holy Spirit who seals our salvation.

In all of this, God becomes visible to us. By the work of His Holy Spirit within us, our trust is fortified, because we see things happening in our lives that we could not produce in our own strength or intellect.

### BIBLE STUDY

*Read Acts 2:1-13.* How does this initial visitation of the Holy Spirit remind you of some of God’s epic miracles? How are the responses of the crowd mixed?

*Read Acts 10:44-48.* This scene at the house of the Roman centurion, Cornelius, is often called “the Gentile Pentecost.” In what way is this event important for us today?

### ACTS 2

<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost had arrived, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>Suddenly a sound like that of a violent rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were staying. <sup>3</sup>And tongues, like flames of fire that were divided, appeared to them and rested on each one of them. <sup>4</sup>Then they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different languages, as the Spirit gave them ability for speech.

<sup>5</sup>There were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup>When this sound occurred, the multitude came together and was confused because each one heard them speaking in his own language. <sup>7</sup>And they were astounded and amazed, saying, “Look, aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans? <sup>8</sup>How is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes, Elamites; those who live in Mesopotamia, in Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, <sup>11</sup>Cretans and Arabs—we hear them speaking in our own languages the magnificent acts of God.” <sup>12</sup>And they were all astounded and perplexed, saying to one another, “What could this be?” <sup>13</sup>But some sneered and said, “They’re full of new wine!”

### ACTS 10

<sup>44</sup>While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who heard the message. <sup>45</sup>The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. <sup>46</sup>For they heard them speaking in other languages and declaring the greatness of God.

Then Peter responded, <sup>47</sup>“Can anyone withhold water and prevent these from being baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” <sup>48</sup>And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.



# The Nature of God

## Lesson Seven: Knowing God

**C**ONSIDER THIS ANALOGY. Making yourself an art aficionado for the moment, walk into a gallery where important works are collected. But let us say this. None of the paintings are rightly labeled. In a sort of puzzle for art buffs, the curators have switched the labels on the paintings. To make the puzzle more difficult, none of the works are significant; they are not readily known by art lovers. How would you match the painters' names to their actual paintings? The answer to that question is really quite easy: according to the painters' known styles. In other words, the nature of each work points to the person who painted them.

God is recognizable in our time in the same way. Though He is Spirit, if through Scripture we know His work, we can recognize Him in the work.

### **The importance of knowability**

The importance of God's knowability as it is presented in Scripture cannot be understated. This is because those whose religious faith is drawn from other religious texts find God presented as distant and unknowable. But as we have already seen in this series of lessons, God has acted historically and continues to act with the direct purpose of restoring relationship between Himself and us.

See, to understand God's central purpose, you really do have to go back to the beginning, in those years after the creation of Adam and Eve. When the first couple broke fellowship with God by eating from the one tree He had directed them to leave be, a series of judgments was laid out for them. But worse than those consequences (toiling work, painful childbirth, contention between man and wife) was the fact that people were now unholy while God remained holy. The water had been poisoned and was now fit only for death.

But God was used to walking with Adam, talking with Him, acting as the loving Creator and Father. This is why He had made humanity: to commune with Him. Now that humanity had gone another direction, God set out to rebuild that relationship.

He was still God, however, and still beholden to the laws of justice He had created. He could not simply say to humanity, "Ah, forget about it. Let's go back to our evening strolls in the garden." Justice required restitution. And God's plan for that restitution required two definite actions: repentance by man and redemption by Christ.

### **God's cry throughout history**

Through the centuries after Adam's sin, God called a people to Himself through the patriarch, Abraham. A progression of prophets continually expressed God's character— "a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and rich in faithful love and truth"—and His cry— "return to Me, for I have redeemed you." God left no doubt that He wanted to rebuild the relationship He had had with His beloved people.

But sin, particularly the giving of their affections to lifeless idols, gripped God's people, and their commitment to repentance would come and go with the generations.

In time, then, God sent His promised redeemer, the Messiah, who was Jesus Christ. This led to Christ's sacrificial death, as we studied in lesson four, but it was God's ultimate act of love. Likely, you have seen this act of God capsulized in these verses, spoken by Jesus to an inquirer named Nicodemus:

*“For God loved the world in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world that He might judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” (John 3:16-17)*

Those who believe in Christ are saved for eternity with God. But believers do not need to wait until heaven to begin their relationship with God. At the moment of belief in Christ, the Holy Spirit enters a man or woman's life and begins to reveal the meaning of God's Word and the wonder of His person.

*For to those who are perishing the message of the cross is foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is God's power. (1 Corinthians 1:18)*

### The stunning truth about God

The remarkable truth about the God of Scripture is not only that He is the Creator of all things, not only that He sacrificed His perfect Son that the adequate price might be paid to redeem us from our sins, not only that He is present in the world today by His powerful Holy Spirit. The most remarkable thing about the God of Scripture is that He invites sinful men and women to know Him—to know *about* Him in an intellectual sense, yes, but to *know* Him also in a relational sense, according to His great purpose.

### BIBLE STUDY

Read Acts 17:19-32, where Paul addresses a crowd in Athens.

How does this passage contribute to our understanding of how the Old Testament regulations have been replaced by God's ultimate design, the perfect Messiah?

### REFLECTION

Mixed reactions, like that in Acts 17:32, have always followed the message of Jesus Christ. Why do you think this is?

### ACTS 17

<sup>19</sup>They took him and brought him to the Areopagus, and said, “May we learn about this new teaching you're speaking of? <sup>20</sup>For what you say sounds strange to us, and we want to know what these ideas mean.”

<sup>21</sup>Now all the Athenians and the foreigners residing there spent their time on nothing else but telling or hearing something new.

<sup>22</sup>Then Paul stood in the middle of the Areopagus and said: “Men of Athens! I see that you are extremely religious in every respect. <sup>23</sup>For as I was passing through and observing the objects of your worship, I even found an altar on which was inscribed:

TO AN UNKNOWN GOD

Therefore, what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. <sup>24</sup>The God who made the world and everything in it—He is Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in shrines made by hands. <sup>25</sup>Neither is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives everyone life and breath and all things. <sup>26</sup>From one man He has made every nation of men to live all over the earth and has determined their appointed times and the boundaries of where they live, <sup>27</sup>so that they might seek God, and perhaps they might reach out and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. <sup>28</sup>For in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also His offspring.’ <sup>29</sup>Being God's offspring, then, we shouldn't think that the divine nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image fashioned by human art and imagination. <sup>30</sup>Therefore, having overlooked the times of ignorance, God now commands all people everywhere to repent, <sup>31</sup>because He has set a day on which He is going to judge the world in righteousness by the Man He has appointed. He has provided proof of this to everyone by raising Him from the dead.”

<sup>32</sup>When they heard about resurrection of the dead, some began to ridicule him. But others said, “We will hear you about this again.”



# The Nature of God

## Lesson Eight: In review—what do I know about God?

**W**E CERTAINLY DON'T HESITATE TO ADMIT that there is a huge volume of ideas in the world about who God is. And even in restricting ourselves to the God who is presented in the Bible during the course of this study, we have had to leave a lot of information on the table. Actually, we like that! It is good to know that if we are going to consider God that He does not disappoint us in terms of His size and His wonder and His activity and His influence.

Before you came to this study, it is likely that you had your own sets of ideas—your own theology—about who God is. And it is likely that this study has brought far more information your way. Before we move on to the next study, however, we can benefit from reviewing what we have learned, considering not only the statements of Scripture and their contribution to our spiritual due diligence, but also how we respond to those statements in our own minds and hearts.

### The 'otherness' and the transcendence of God

God is fundamentally different from us. He is the Creator, we are the created. He is the Judge, while we are the governed. He is the One who gives grace, and we are those who need grace. God's nature, then, permits Him to serve us in the ways we most need it.

God's nature allows Him to transcend time and space. He has eternally existed as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This gives Him the unique perspective of seeing the entire parade of time at once, explaining why He can understand events that we cannot. Additionally, He is able to occupy multiple places at one time, responding to the needs of people as they call on His name, wherever they are.

*Are these truths what you would expect from God? Does His 'otherness' and transcendence make you feel inferior or well-served?*

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### The life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ

When God came to earth in the flesh, He was the man Jesus Christ. His life was marked by a virgin birth, a carpenter's upbringing, and a ministry of miracles and inspired teaching in the language of the common people. As Jesus' life fulfilled a number of Old Testament prophecies, Jesus prophesied further events in His own life,

most significantly His death and resurrection. Jesus was put to death in response to public demand despite the proclamation of His innocence by the Roman territorial ruler, Pontius Pilate. A mountainside of people witnessed His physical death, as well as the earthquake and darkening of the skies that accompanied His death. Upon His death, His friends buried Him in a tomb that was then sealed and guarded at the urging of His enemies. Yet on the first day of the week, when the women who had followed Jesus went to anoint His body for burial, the tomb was open and waiting angels announced Christ's resurrection. Later, He appeared to several hundred people before ascending to heaven.

*What events strike you as the most intriguing of Jesus' life? How about the most important?*

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### The Holy Spirit

In the book of Acts, we read the accounts of the powerful coming of the Holy Spirit (also called the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Christ). The Holy Spirit worked miracles through the apostles and others, and the apostle Paul wrote of how the Spirit indwells, gifts, and empowers all followers of Christ.

*Can you say that you have recognized the Spirit of God at work in those who profess to follow Christ? What evidences would point to this truth?*

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### The ability to know God

We closed our study by discussing how God desires that we know Him personally. Through the revealing work of the Holy Spirit in us, we come to see the fullness of the person of Jesus Christ, who came to die in our place, though our sins deserve the consequences required of unholy people. This act of God was the greatest demonstration of His love for us.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

This is the third in a series of studies on spiritual due diligence. The complete set of studies allow for a thorough investigation of some of a number of spiritual matters, including:

- The need for due diligence
- The nature of man
- Death and the afterlife
- What other religions teach in comparison to the Bible
- The invisible realm
- End times

The fourth study in the series, which you may explore next, is "The Nature of Scripture." If you have made your way through all three studies so far, you know that we have relied on Scripture's ability to present itself. But if doubts remain for you about the veracity of Scripture, the next study will be to explore how the Scripture holds up to various forms of scrutiny, including tests of historicity and logic. The Bible also makes some strong claims about itself, and we will discuss whether these claims can stand our examination.

Our hope throughout these studies is that you will gain a greater and greater sense of who God is and how He promises to interact with you as taught in the Bible. If this occurs, you will have accomplished what many have not—you will have conducted your spiritual due diligence.

What you decide to do with the knowledge you gain is surely a matter between you and God. But we also believe that God has designed us to live in community with other people. Therefore, it is also important that you discuss what you are thinking with others who are also considering the claims of Scripture, be they "seasoned veterans" of Bible study or quite new at the task. If you are not in a study with others at this time and would like to be, call Links Players at 800-90-LINKS and we'll offer some suggestions for groups who might encourage you in your thought and discussion.



## Spiritual Due Diligence

# Leading a group study

**I**T CAN BE DAUNTING TO BE CALLED ON to teach the Word of God. Indeed, many potential leaders have told us that while they are capable of and eager to bring a group together, or to act as host, teaching is an entirely different level, one for which they do not consider themselves prepared.

Others don't feel so much weight when it comes to teaching. They know their Bibles well, or they're naturals when speaking to a crowd.

It is, then, the precise goal of the structure of these Links Players Bible studies to provide a fully operational Bible study for those teachers who need much assistance and yet a format that leaves room for experienced leaders to bring their own learning to the table.

The lessons include these features:

- An **introduction** providing connections for the reader between what they see and know in their lives and the topic of study at hand. While we are primarily a sports-minded ministry aimed at golfers, our materials are used by many non-golfers. Therefore, these introductions use examples from more common experiences, as well as those tied to athletics.
- A **narrative** progressing through the main ideas of the lesson. Some leaders may choose to read this with the participants verbatim (or nearly so). Others may use it as a general guide for presenting the material.
- A **Bible study**, drawing from particular specific Scripture passages. These passages are included in the light green bar on the right side of each lesson. You may find that you wish to provide the broader context for these passages from your own Bible. You may also wish to look up these passages in other translations to see how the alternate wording can assist in understanding.
- A **reflection**, which challenges participants to make some mental connections and decisions about what they have studied.
- Some of the lessons also include **further thoughts**, which are presented in the dark green bars on the right of the lesson. Again, these are intended only to offer the basic information; your own study and knowledge can help expand these ideas.

In addition to these studies, as your group grows together, you will want to include opportunity for prayer among the participants. Even with a study like this one, which may include a number of participants who are just beginning their investigations of God, Christ, and the Bible, prayer is often an open door for those who are truly seeking God. Offering to pray for personal and family needs is often the best way to begin this practice.

We also strongly encourage leaders to stay in touch with participants throughout the week, simply making themselves available for further questions and discussion.

In the same way, we are available to talk to group leaders about their experiences and to answer questions regarding the studies. You may call us Monday-Friday at 800-90-LINKS.

# What is a Links Player?



Spiritual  
Due Diligence

**T**HE LINKS PLAYERS BIBLE STUDIES, including “The Nature of God,” are produced by Links Players International, a Christian sports ministry aimed primarily at golfers. The good news is that sometimes in that aim, we miss! That is, there are plenty of non-golfers who have found benefit in the Daily Devotional, Bible studies, and magazines we have published through the years.

There is a reason for this, of course, and that is because truth transcends our human experiences. For instance, while we often hate to admit it, in many ways we cannot improve on how the previous generation lived. Technologically, we may have made some nifty advancements, but in terms of human interaction—and, we believe, humans interacting with God—we don’t make any real progress through time.

Therefore, whether or not you are a golfer, we think that the chief principles we teach and learn can apply to you. A Links Player tries, by the power of God’s Holy Spirit in them, to live according to the following principles:

**L**OVE GOD AND OTHERS. When asked the greatest commandment of Scripture, Jesus replied, *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”* He went on to say, *“This is the greatest and most important commandment. The second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”* (Matthew 22:37-39)

**I**NTegrate CHRIST’S REIGN AND INTEGRITY INTO ALL OF LIFE. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told the crowds, *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things (the necessities of life) will be provided for you.”* (Matthew 6:33)

**N**ETWORK FRIENDS TOGETHER IN CHRIST. When the followers of Jesus met together after His ascension into heaven, it was said of them: *They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.* (Acts 2:42)

**K**INDLE COMPASSION FOR THE POOR AND NEEDY. Jesus told a parable of the eventual judgment of each man and woman by God. In it, He provided insight into the standards of this judgment: *“The King will answer them, ‘I assure you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.’”* (Matthew 25:40)

**S**HARE CHRIST. One of the chief of Christ’s apostles, Paul, wrote to the church at Corinth this reminder: *Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ; certain that God is appealing through us, we plead on Christ’s behalf, “Be reconciled to God.”* (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Today, you may find that you have reason to be reconciled to God and to become a Links Player yourself. If so, you need to tell God in prayer: *Heavenly Father, Through Your Son Jesus Christ, I am prepared to offer my life to You. Please take it and all of my sin, and begin to renew me as Your ambassador. Amen.* If you have prayed that prayer, you will also want to share your decision with a trusted friend who knows Christ. This way they can encourage and lead you in your new walk of faith. It will be a challenge worth every step!

