

Kingdom Life Spiritual Growth Track

5786 Month 12 Adar “Bye Bye Babylon”

I. Invitation and Aims of this session of *Kingdom Life Spiritual Growth Track*

🔥🕯️❤️🔥 **10 Days of “Kingdom Life** - immersed in the Word and worship, asking Holy Spirit to anoint and use us together, putting “synaxis” into practice for advancing his Kingdom purposes. It is the title of our course, but more - followers of Jesus are called to live fruitful lives as ambassadors in His Kingdom of Love and Light! We endeavor to “live a life worthy of the calling we have received” (Eph 4). No one can do that alone - He designed it that we need each other (Rom 12).

Theme this month: *Bye Bye Babylon!* Loving the Ways of God, submitting to the purifying work of Holy Spirit, leaving behind the ways of the world, and following Jesus onward in the PURE Kingdom Move of God. Note: this is not a Bible class on Babylon, but may it be a supernatural happening with Holy Spirit and us...

1. We begin on Monday, March 2 for 10 days: Mon-Fri week 1 and Mon-Fri week 2, with individual Bible, prayer, and worship assignments. This document is also be posted at BeginGrowFlourish.org .

2. The 30-minute team zoom sessions are convened on Tuesdays and Thursdays (March 3,5,10,12) from 7:00 - 7:30 pm. Even if you cannot make these sessions, we welcome you to enroll in Kingdom Life for the growth work, to stay in step, and to press in for advancing in the Kingdom this month, in spiritual agreement!

♥️ We welcome you to invite others who want to know Him deeper, move together for His purposes, and thrive in *Kingdom* life. BeginGrowFlourish.org

“Kingdom LIFE” Spiritual Growth Track Concepts:

We together are His people; He alone is our God!

(begin) **What is “Kingdom”?**

(grow) **How can I flourish in Kingdom Life - in community, and on a multi-gifted team?**

(flourish) **How can we help others flourish in Kingdom Life?**

The Lord calls us to WHOLENESS individually, and to FULLNESS together.

Be open to the Holy Spirit maturing us, and forming us into the image of Jesus, more and more, as we listen and obey Him through spiritual disciplines. Our trajectory as His Kingdom people in this EOZ Troop, engaging in online/ home, city, and regional gatherings: we show up in submission for Him to use us together as love warriors for the unstoppable forward movement of the ever-expanding Kingdom of God. Think synaxis: multi-gifted, apostolic teams sent on assignment in spiritual agreement, maintaining an atmosphere thick with love.

We want to give God what He wants: a family who knows Him and makes Him known. We do *Kingdom Life* together so we may be spiritually fruitful together. We cultivate a lifestyle of deepening relationship with Him, **hearing His Voice** - and using ours to pray, testify, and praise Him. Find your place in the (Kingdom life-together) Troop God has for you at this time in your life. We welcome you, as Holy Spirit leads, for exploits together with fruit that lasts eternally. Onward Together! (🎵 click =>)



focused on what God is doing today to lead us and all His Kingdom Authority people out of any of Babylon's ways that have crept in, and into the PURE Kingdom Move of God.

What is the significance of Babylon in these passages? Contrast with God's Kingdom/ City when mentioned. Record your answers and reflections, and share with the group as Holy Spirit leads.

Rev 14:7-8; Rev 16:18-19; Rev 17:1-6,18; Rev 18; Rev 19:1-9; Rev 21.

Matt 1:17 Thus there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah.

(By the way, Matthew compresses genealogy into blocks, or epochs of 14 generations, perhaps emphasizing Jesus is the prophesied Davidic King, as David's name in Hebrew adds to 14.)

◆ Day 4 Thursday March 5

What is the significance of Babylon in these passages? Contrast with God's Kingdom/ City when mentioned. Record your answers and reflections, and share with the group as Holy Spirit leads.

Gen 10:6-20. Nimrod, who first established Babylon (and Ninevah - remember that for later) was noted as a "mighty hunter" and descendent from Ham. Compare *1 Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

For Nimrod, Babylon is called "the beginning of his kingdom." Compare that with *Eph 2:2 "in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient."* and contrast *Col 1:13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,"*

Gen 11:1-9 Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. 2 As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. 3 They said to each other, "Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly." They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. 4 Then they said, "Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth." 5 But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. 6 The Lord said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. 7 Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." 8 So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. 9 That is why it was called Babel—because there the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

They did not want to be scattered, right? But they were! Plus, God addressed their self-aggrandizing, communication-alliance reliance by confusing their language and scattering them.

By the way, moving eastward is a thing in Scripture, and it usually does not work out well, starting with banishment from Eden. The exiles were taken east to Babylon; Susa (Esther) was even further east.

Now we know the whole earth is the Lord's, and may the knowledge of His glory cover the earth, including the Far East! He alone deserves worship! False eastern religions shall not lure and capture us or our generations, shall not replace our prayer with transcendental meditation. We say no to Hindu "christian" yoga, and to zen buddhism. What else? If the Lord gives you a prayer, decree, repentance - please do it, and record it.

Tower of Babel significance of brick vs. stone? Build for ourselves? Make a name for ourselves?

This shall be exposed and not go with us now into our new, beautiful land. What God-honoring attitudes and actions (and communications) shall go with us? If the Lord gives you a prayer, decree, repentance, do it, and record it.

Contrast Babel on day of scattering with Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost after Jesus' resurrection.
Acts 2:1-12 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. 6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. 7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? 9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome 11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" 12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"



One of the signs of Holy Spirit's grand new work in the believers was using them to communicate in heavenly languages and in the languages of these gathered people - hearing His praises. **Profound superiority of the wonders and ways of God!** Bye Bye Babylon! What does God show you in this?

Please pray for the work of Bible Translation into the remaining languages of people who do not have the Bible in their language, as Holy Spirit leads. Let's thank Him for access to the Bible in our language!

Paul warns Ephesian elders, be on guard of communicators...!

Acts 20:28 Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. 29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. 32 "Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. 33 I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing.

Compare that last verse (not coveting) to Joshua 7 - someone had (coveted and) taken some of the "devoted things" and Joshua drilled down to Achan. "21 When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia (Babylon is city in Shinar region), two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them." Historians say that robe was from the fashion center of the world (Babylon), and represented elite, imperial culture... Remember Rev 17-18 Babylon's purple, scarlet, fine linen (seductive splendor) contrasted with the saints' pure white linen (righteousness). Beware of seducing spirits... that try to hang out in the camp of the Lord, looking good on the surface only. No! Bye Bye Babylon.

How did God use Babylon?

- 1 Chron 9:1 All Israel was listed in the genealogies recorded in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. They were taken captive to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness.

- Isa 48:20 Leave Babylon, flee from the Babylonians! Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it. Send it out to the ends of the earth; say, "The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob."

Did they all leave, or just a remnant? Why? Would you rather stay or go? Are you recognizing change right now? We know some will stay (with what God is shaking) but may we all go with Him into reformation, into our new landscape, free from darkness that God is sweeping away. Awake! Record your answers and reflections, and share with the group as Holy Spirit leads.

3/5 Thursday Team Session 7:00-7:30 pm (eastern)

Share with your group what you wrote in Reflections, as Holy Spirit leads.

◆ Day 5 Friday March 6 Embrace Kingdom Lifestyle; resist abuse of authority

Today we examine how the Lord directed Kingdom Life for the believers in Ephesus and the believers in Asia minor (passage from Ephesus and passage from 1 Peter). Reminder: there is an age for believers who lived before Jesus came, and an age we are now living in, between His two comings/ Kingdom comings. Jesus has triumphed by laying down His life, and being raised from the dead, and being exalted to the highest place in all the cosmos (1 Cor 15). He brought His Kingdom here and yet there is a Great Day ahead when He and His Kingdom are coming in fullness... So the Kingdom has come and the Kingdom is coming. We who are in Christ have been made new (2 Cor 5). The earth has not yet been made new (Rom 8). We live in the blessing of Kingdom Life (Zion) and in this beautiful earth, which has yet to be made new. And there is an earthly kingdom ... - we resist Babylon's ways.

What does the Lord speak to our Troop (faith community), living kingdom life together, from Eph

5:1-21? Let's give this to Him, and intercede for all who are His to give this to Him - PURE. Let's follow Him - walking... finding out... having nothing to do with... being careful... understanding...

Also, think about the sweeping change God is making, which we are agreeing: Reformation! The fear of the Lord is a blessing to be embraced and lived in - staying within His boundaries - keeping Babylon's ways out! Record your answers and reflections, and share with the group as Holy Spirit leads.

Eph 5:1 Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children 2 and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

3 But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, 5 or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. 4 Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. 5 For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. 7 Therefore do not be partners with them.

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.

14 This is why it is said: "Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Soon (likely < 2 years) after Paul wrote Ephesians from Rome, Peter wrote believers who were living in Northern Asia Minor/ modern day Turkey (1 Peter 1:1) from Rome. "Babylon" was Peter's nickname for

Rome - (end of 1 Peter 5). It really was the Babylon system operating in that day through Rome. **What does the Lord speak to our Troop (faith community), living kingdom life together, from 1 Peter 5?**

1 Peter 5:1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ's sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: 2 Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; 3 not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 4 And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

5 In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."

6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

7 Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.

8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. 9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 11 To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen.

12 With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it.

13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark. 14 Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

Sobering truth that God loves us enough to reveal. Let's take *these standards* with us, onward! Bye Bye Babylon! Record your answers and reflections, and share with the group as Holy Spirit leads.



Let's pray for the Church as He leads. This song is that humble attitude... The Lord is gracious! (Remember Ninevah was a city Nimrod established.) We are agreeing with God's time of change for our modern Ninevah situation - including for us. God has mercy!

Let's use Saturday and Sunday to catch up on days 1-5, and WORSHIP



WEEK TWO: *Matt 28:18-20 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."*

Jesus gave us this Great Commission for us to fulfill together, in the power of Holy Spirit. We need to know and walk in God's true teachings if we are to make disciples of Jesus, yes?

So let's study the true doctrines (teachings) of God given in the Bible, and not be deceived by manmade doctrines (teachings made up by people).

Among many good reasons to do this are these top two for us in this KL series.

#2. Be able to articulate the message of the Kingdom of God, and answer related questions, empowered by our Teacher of Truth, Holy Spirit.

#1. Walk in the way the Lord according to His word - free and fruitful, enlightened and empowered by Holy Spirit (and not ever become sidelined or captured by false teaching, false prophecy, false shepherds.)

◆ **Day 6 and 7 Monday-Tuesday 3/9-3/10 Embrace Kingdom lifestyle; resist abuse of authority**

Let's take two days for this topic. The format is "what is in" vs. "what is out" - meaning things that **shall go forward with the BOC** in the PURE move of God, and practices (which God is exposing) that **shall not go forward with the BOC** into reformation.

Below we examine

- 1) all new covenant believers are anointed **vs.** defending exposing of errant behavior/ teaching/ prophecy with "touch not the Lord's anointed"
- 2) servant leadership of elders, of deacons, and of inter-working fivefold ascension gifts **vs.** hierarchies with an inherent vulnerability of attracting a dominating or narcissistic person into top leadership position
- 3) both forgiveness and accountability are biblical **vs.** blame the offended person and make them apologize for *becoming offended* (serious scriptural confusion about forgiving and offending).

These 3 are a representative sample of that which **God in His mercy is addressing, to bring change**. In Embassy of Zion we want to clarify so we all can be on the same page on these issues, intercede for the Body, answer/ minister to people we encounter, and keep Babylon-creep away.

1. WHAT IS IN: The anointed priesthood of all believers. In this age we are all anointed because Holy Spirit indwells us. We are all accountable before the Lord, and He gives us the blessing of walking in the light with each other, to help us along the way, and to finish well.

Heb 3:12-14 See to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called "Today," so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original conviction firmly to the very end.

James 5:19-20 My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Gal 6:1-2 Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.



This beautiful video from BibleProject describes the anointing we believers share IN Christ. (In the prior age of the OT only certain ones were anointed. Now Jesus has made us a kingdom of priests to serve God, Rev 1:5-6.)

BTW, recall the word “*Christ-ians*” means anointed ones. Christ, the Anointed One, gave us Holy Spirit. The anointing in every believer is Holy Spirit dwelling within us, teaching, guiding, and empowering us.

Read these two passages and add to your list of Zion vs Babylon.

1. 1 John 2:15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

18 Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. 21 I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. 22 Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son. 23 No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also. 24 As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is what he promised us—eternal life. 26 I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray. 27 **As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you**, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him.

2. 2 Cor 1:22-23 Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. **He anointed us**, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.



Press in on that anointing IN Christ as we rise above and leave (toleration of) Babylonian ways, embracing Zion’s ways - to the uttermost!

(=< click) This song from back in the day is calling on Holy Spirit, yes?

Some of us sang as a child, “Give me oil in my lamp, keep it burning.” That was a call for Holy Spirit to fill us, yes?

Thanking God for pouring out Holy Spirit in us to overflowing! His fire is burning! More, Lord! We welcome you, Holy Spirit! Bye Bye to any and all of Babylon’s ways that have crept into us!

(click =>)



Look at your notes from Friday, making sure to add things from the 1 Peter 5 and Ephesians 5 scriptures onto your list of Zion vs. Babylon, (especially about leaders, as in Eph 5:6-7 and 1 Peter 5:2-3).

1. WHAT IS OUT: An elite priesthood class of “the Lord’s anointed”. Setting oneself above being questioned in teaching, prophecy, and/ or lifestyle. Insisting that only some people (“the man of God”) are anointed *and* thus they are free from accountability, claiming that “touch not the Lord’s anointed” means no one can question this pastor/preacher/ teacher/ prophet.

Shockingly, a well-known television preacher says this and similar statements, “Touch not the Lord’s anointed... Often people don’t realize, when you attack the man of God you will get sick. Even if that man is wicked, sickness will come on you.” This strategy may effectively keep some people in fear, so they do not question or challenge his views. May he and those who parrot this misuse of Scripture repent!

They say that no one should dare to question or confront them because they are the Lord’s anointed (ignoring that all Christians are anointed because we are in Christ.) But in 1 Sam 24 David DID question and confront Saul - he gave that phrase as the reason he did not KILL Saul. They seem to insist they are above being questioned because they are an elite, “anointed” leader. This does not serve the Body of Christ.

In the OT kings and priests were the anointed ones. “Touch not” meant not to harm physically/ destroy/ kill. *It did not mean speak against, criticize, question, call to account.* Samuel rebuked Saul. Nathan confronted David. David confronted Saul.

Read these 2 following passages and ask the Lord: does this mean not to question a teaching, prophecy, or misconduct of a pastor/ leader?

1 Chron 16:19-22 (Same words repeated in Psalm 105:12-15) When they were but few in number, few indeed, and strangers in it, they wandered from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another. He allowed no one to oppress them; for their sake he rebuked kings: “Do not touch my anointed ones; do prophets no harm.”

In 1 Sam 24 David had opportunity to kill Saul in the cave, and even David’s men encouraged him to do so. Instead he cut off a piece of Saul’s robe and then confronted Saul about his relentless pursuit, trying to kill David. He obviously questioned Saul! And, David gave the reason he **did not destroy** Saul - because Saul was anointed. *1 Sam 24:10 This day you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, ‘I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the Lord’s anointed.’* Similarly in 1 Sam 26 David again did not harm Saul physically. But he confronted him verbally.

What the Bible says about questioning a leader:

1 Tim 5:19-20 Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning.

Gal 2:11-14 Paul confronted Peter.

James 3:1-2 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their whole body in check.

1 Thes 5:19-21 Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil.

2 Tim 3:16-17 All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2. WHAT IS IN: Servant leadership of elders, of deacons, and of inter-working fivefold ascension gifts. (ref Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5-16, Eph 4, 1 Cor 12:28-30, Rom 12:6-8)

In EOZ we know this well. Briefly - Jesus set up for team leadership when He gave us the equipping gifts in Ephesians 4 - servant leadership as a foundation (not a lid on top) so the BOC can grow in love, truth, unity - launching into Kingdom works of service, fruitful in their fields. Everyone has a ministry, working as a “body” or at least in connection with the others. That word “ministry” is broad - unlike the narrow definition in churches, mainly serving what goes on during Sunday mornings.

The complete scriptural basis is too long for this session. From Anne: I wrote a 15 page paper on pastoral ministry for my class last Fall. Wonderful, exercise with the Lord, and more learning! (For example, it’s a meaningful exercise to look at the many dozens of people Paul named as coworkers - maybe his most important title from his heart was brother or sister.) I have included one section from that paper about pastors, with quotes from members of the beautiful BOC. [Thanking God for the character of the HUGE MAJORITY of pastors and other leaders serving Him selflessly, as described here!](#) More, Lord!

Leading and Feeding for Jesus

God puts gifts in a variety of people and establishes teamwork; thus, not all the gifts are found in one person. John Stott describes how God’s people thrive in community. For example, Peter said there were some things in Paul’s letters that even he couldn’t understand (2 Peter 3:16). “The truth is that we need one another in interpreting the Scriptures. The church is rightly called to hermeneutical community, a fellowship of believers in which the Word of God is expounded and interpreted. We need pastors and teachers to expound it, to open it up to us so we can understand it.”[1] In addition to expounding on the Word of God, Jack Hayford points out that the acts of teaching and leading need to accompany one another. “The nature of the life of the global church and the nature of the spiritual battle mandate that we recognize our task as not simply to gather people together and teach them the Bible. A pastor, by definition, is a person who is not only feeding but is also taking the people somewhere. Shepherds do that. They lead and feed. That’s the essence of pastoral work.”[2]

Jesus asked Peter, “Do you love me? Feed my Sheep” (John 21:17). Peter later wrote, Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away. (1 Peter 5:2-4).

Charles Spurgeon speaks to the holy calling of pastors and other leaders, from the One who gives it. “It is evident that certain individuals are, as the result of our Lord’s ascension, bestowed upon the churches as pastors; they are given of God, and consequently not self-elevated to their position... ‘I will give them pastors according to mine heart’ (Jeremiah 3:15). ‘I will set up shepherds over them, which shall feed them’ (Jeremiah 23:4).[3] Paul urged the Ephesian elders, “Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). Tim Laniak writes powerfully to the aspect of pastors serving the Chief Shepherd selflessly, “In Acts the ‘overseers’ (episkopoi) are expected to guard or pay close attention to the needs of the flock... It is the vigilant attention to threats that can disperse or destroy the flock. The sacrifice of the Shepherd-Lamb is the source of motivation for this vigilance.” [4] The elders are caring for the flock belonging to God. “There is no room for pretense in the service of the divine Shepherd...

Ever mindful of their contingent role in caring for his flock, shepherds will model the kind of humility and service that the ‘sheep’ will embrace” (5:5–6).[5]

[1] John Stott, “A Definition of Biblical Preaching,” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, ed. Haddon W. Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2005), 25.

[2] Jack Hayford, “Leading and Feeding: How Preaching and Leadership Intersect,” in *The Art and Craft of Biblical Preaching*, ed. Haddon W. Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Reflective, 2005), 37.

[3] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students*, Lecture 2, “The Call to the Ministry” (London: Passmore and Alabaster, 1875), Kindle edition.

[4] Timothy S. Laniak, *Shepherds After My Own Heart: Pastoral Traditions and Leadership in the Bible*, vol. 20, “Serving the Chief Shepherd,” (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), accessed via EBSCOhost.

[5] *Ibid.*

2. WHAT IS OUT: Dominating leadership in manmade hierarchies. Certain hierarchical church structures enable strongholds to stand against true leadership gifts from God. In other words, there is a manmade setup with an inherent vulnerability of attracting dominating or narcissistic people into leadership positions.

This is unfitting for the Body of Christ. Rather, the Lord Jesus exemplified servant leadership, as did the early apostles, prophets, teachers, pastors, evangelists, elders, deacons.

Are these warning signs of puffed up, false leaders?

- Predicting fearful things will happen if the person leaves their covering of protection provided by *this leader*. (Truth: we are safe in the covering of the Lord - under his wing - He is our strong tower.)
- Excusing drunkenness (for the leader and/or for others in congregation). In extreme cases, pushing alcohol on someone for sexual misconduct...
- Rhetorical devices in self-defense: responding with *ad hominem* attacks (attacking the person instead of addressing the argument); gaslighting (making someone doubt their perception of reality); framing the disagreement as spiritual rebellion, and sometimes urging other congregants to avoid the person “in rebellion”; guilt manipulation - “your criticism could divide the church.”

3. WHAT IS IN: Shall we agree that **both forgiveness and accountability are biblical?! Forgiveness** does not erase the need for CHANGE of behaviors that harm others. *The bait is not to become one trapped (offended), but the bait is to become one who sets a trap!*

If you have time and want a chuckle, here is a clip from the movie *European Vacation* that parodies what happens when someone is not corrected, but continues offending...



3. WHAT IS OUT: Blame the offended person and make them apologize for *becoming offended*, instead of addressing the offender so they do not repeat their offending behaviors.

Examples: if someone is stealing, the thief should apologize, stop, pay restitution; the person who was stolen from does not need to stay quiet and does not need to apologize for becoming offended, right?! It is not taking satan’s bait to “be offended.” If a wife is being physically abused by her husband, the husband should apologize and stop, not the wife be told to forgive him endlessly and stay in the situation - rather than insist *he* leave!

There is a teaching in a popular book that takes a particular scripture out of context. While many people have been helped by breaking the stronghold of unforgiveness in their lives, the author unfortunately makes a manmade doctrine that can result in abusive church leaders having a free ride, unaccountable. That is NOT the heart of our Father! Note: if you are interested in a personal conversation on that passage or on the greek word meaning trap/ stumbling block, let us know.

Following are relevant Scriptures for the 3 topics addressed above.

Matt 23:11-12 The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Matt 20:25-26 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant,

Matt 18:15-17 "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Consider: Jesus said "ekklesia" (translated church) but there were not even house churches yet, and certainly not church buildings with installed leaders. He said this meaning the community of people following Him. The point is not about a church congregation, but bringing the matter to light, increasingly before more peers, until the offender repents.

Prov 20:1 Wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise.

Eph 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit

Rom 16:17-19 I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people. Everyone has heard about your obedience, so I rejoice because of you; but I want you to be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil.

2 Peter 2:1-3 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them - bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their depraved conduct and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. In their greed these teachers will exploit you with fabricated stories. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.

Acts 20:17-38

3 John 1

Pray: Ask Holy Spirit for supernatural understanding and increased discernment for all God's people. Bye Bye Babylon! As the Lord leads, pray for true shepherds/ leaders to keep walking in the ways of God. Pray also for God's people to be protected from false shepherds/ wolves.

Record your reflections and aha's gained, with the help of Holy Spirit.

3/10 Tuesday Team Session 7:00-7:30 pm (eastern) Share with your group what you wrote in Reflections, as Holy Spirit leads.

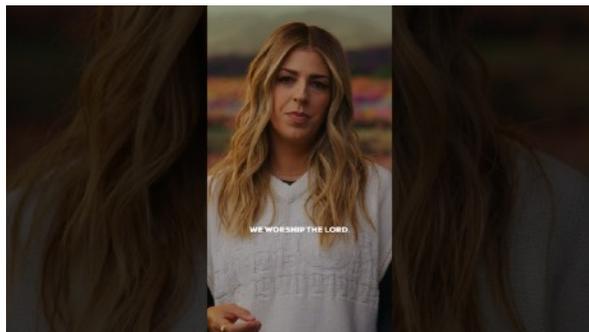
◆ **Day 8 Wednesday March 11 honoring God as God, the *only* God:** valuing life as God's image-bearers; and being made a new creation and a renewed image-bearer through Jesus.

Made the image of God, being IN CHRIST, with the anointing of Holy Spirit, let's go forward together in the PURE Move of God to accomplish His Kingdom purposes.

We are leaving Babylon's ways (behind the impasse) and now beyond it we are intentional to help others get out of exile and captivity, so they can enter *through Jesus* to live in the new and coming Garden-City of God, in His present and coming Kingdom! On earth as it is in Heaven! We are a family who knows Him and makes Him known!

Now let's explore some details in those concepts and life applications of:

- 1) all humans being created in God's image - to commune with Him and ...
- 2) believers being made new and renewed in His image through Jesus Christ- to produce...
- 3) living worthy of our high calling - to participate in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4), having been brought from death into life eternal, now becoming sanctified to live according to the Spirit rather than according to the flesh. Hallelujah!



Gen 1:27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

(<= click) **“We are uniquely made for relationship with God.”**

Reflect on the capacity for the holy, pure, beautiful worship of God; our knocking with Jesus; and our call, “AWAKEN!” *Bye Bye Babylon!*

Render to God what is God's!

Matt 22:15-22 Jesus asked whose image was on the coin. When they answered “Caesar's,” he said to give it back to Caesar. But the deeper implication is this: humans bear God's image - so our lives belong to God. Give Him ourselves, our lives in worship, our all. The image on the many coins in that day - *the coins were not truly little Caesars*, but they bore his image to reflect his earthly kingdom rule. (click =>)
(Recall Peter referred to Rome as Babylon.)



Consider and reflect on this: each of us who bear God's image are not *little gods*, or “little g's” (anymore than those coins are little Caesars. (And as crazy as this sounds, there have been some Christians to teach it, as do some eastern religions and Mormons.) Tim Mackie (of BibleProject) says, “Human beings are not gods. To be made in God's image means we are his representatives, not miniature deities.”

Jesus' lesson using the coin - it served as a tangible example of Roman authority and pagan worship of the emperor - think Babylon. However, bearing the image of God we all get to be **tangible examples of God's authority and the fellowship/ worship of Him, for whom we were created**. Our God's city is Zion! Rev 21:24-26 shows the final fulfillment of what Jesus said to render to God - when the nations and kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into the New Jerusalem, acknowledging that all glory ultimately belongs to God!

Gen 9:6 Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.

2 Cor 3:17-18 Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

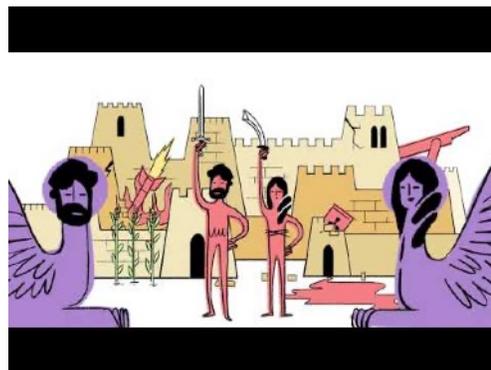
Col 3:9-10 "Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."

Eph 2:2-24 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

*Heb 1:2-3 ... but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. **The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.** After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*

Col 1:15-23

See this video from BibleProject, to **explore the meaning of the image of God**. God has His divine rule, and gave us our human rule in the Garden to steward things God created. We have the capacity to make art and music, innovate, protect, nurture and make things better in this world that God created and is renewing. New Jerusalem is coming!



Ancient pagans conflated humans with gods, which the Bible consistently rejects. NT Wright: "Idolatry happens when humans act as though they are divine." He states that "image-bearer" means that **humans reflect God's rule into the world and reflect worship back to God.**

After being made in His image, humans fell for the temptation to become like God. (This shows they knew they were NOT gods.) They seized the knowledge of good and evil, redefining what God had forbidden, by calling "good" and "pleasing". *Genesis 3:3-6 "but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"*

"You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

Valuing Life as Image Bearers Reflect on the importance humans feeling their worth and the worth of others (in or out of the womb), because we are made in God's image!

We saw this progression last week:

1. Genesis 11 Babel - humans "make a name for ourselves" and build a city reaching heaven.
2. The exile into/ release from Babylon was a major milestone in Jesus' lineage (Matt 1).
3. Revelation 17-18 Babylon the Great becomes the symbol of the corrupt human system opposed to God. It falls!



Reflect on this in your notes: Babylon has been described as the place where humans go to try to build a world without God and make a name for themselves. And, “Babylon is humanity organizing itself to be its own god.” Has this crept in to the church? Let’s repent for any part in it, and let’s pray: AWAKEN!

“We together are Your people; You alone are our God!”

Isa 21:8-9 And the lookout shouted, “Day after day, my lord, I stand on the watchtower; every night I stay at my post. Look, here comes a man in a chariot with a team of horses. And he gives back the answer: ‘Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground!’”

He is the One and Only! *1 Tim 1:17 Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, **the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.***

*Rev 1:4 ... Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father - **to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.***

Now, what about the beautiful, “partakers in the divine nature” passage?

*2 Peter 1:3-8 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. **Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.** For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Reflect: What does the phrase “participate in the divine nature” mean (or partakers in divine nature) - within the full sentence and paragraph?



R.C. Sproul interpreted 2 Peter 1:4—“partakers of the divine nature”—not as becoming ontologically divine (deification), but as receiving a new nature through regeneration, enabling believers to reflect God’s character and holiness. This transformation involves escaping worldly corruption through God’s promises and growing in godly attributes, with the Holy Spirit empowering this sanctification.

NT Wright discusses: We do not stop being human and become divine instead. ... Spirit coming to dwell in us and transform us and infuse us with his life and love - we would become more like Jesus - Spirit enables us to be carriers of the gospel so we are embodying the love of God. We are bringing God to people, being Christ to them. But we are not Christ. Holy Spirit makes Jesus real within us. Communion - the life of Jesus becomes our life - becomes part of us. Rather than start there and build on that phrase, see the larger biblical picture.

Though we are not divine in essence, what a privilege to share in God’s holiness and His character (He is forming in us through our submitting to the power of Holy Spirit)! Jesus has brought us into Father’s household forever! The Lord is preparing the Bride and we are cooperating. Hallelujah!

*1 John 3:1-3 See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. **All who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.***

◆ Day 9 Thursday March 12 Bye Bye Babylon and Onward Together!

Today - **grateful that the Lord has gifted the Troop with higher revelation of how to go forward with greater impact, as we go forward in the PURE Move of God** - going in Christ, in the image of God, like angled mirrors* reflecting His glory and His Kingdom rule into earth, and reflecting praise back to Him! We have accepted His invitation and unmerited grace to become His Kingdom of Priests, His HOLY Nation, the Family who knows Him and **makes Him known!**

*NT Wright explains the image of God using the concept of angled mirrors. "The angled mirror reflects God out into the world and reflects the world back to God. That is what humans are made for. So when we are talking about humans made in the divine image, the point is not so that we can look inside ourselves and say, 'Oh, there is something about me which is like God.' No, this is a vocation. This is what we are called to do and to be. Humans are designed to sum up and enhance the praise of the whole of creation and to turn that praise into articulate speech.

"In the book of Revelation, all creation is praising God. But when the humans praise God, they add the word 'because'. You are worthy to receive all praise because you created all things. It's part of the human vocation to understand what's going on so that the inarticulate constant praise of creation can be presented before God.

"So this vocation to be image-bearers is what is then described in Exodus 19 and elsewhere through into the New Testament as the vocation to be the royal priesthood. The image-bearers are to be the royal ones. That is the ones who are channeling God's rule over the world into his world bringing wisdom and fruitfulness and creativeness and joy and prosperity to the world.

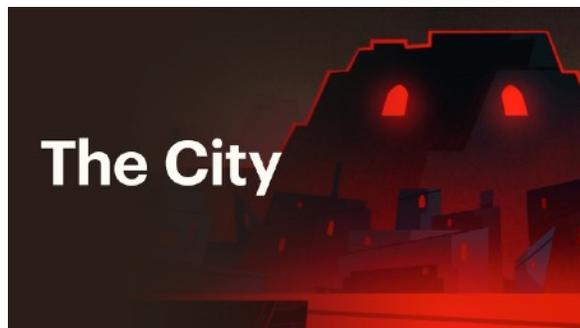
"And the priestly bit is the summing up of the praises of creation, standing in the presence of God and worshiping him, conscious that as we do so we are summing up all that the trees and the rocks and the seas and the animals are doing all the time. It is up to us to turn that into concrete reality and into speech.

"So the idea of the image is the vocation that humans have to stand at what I've called the dangerous intersection of heaven and earth. The place where heaven and earth are overlapping and interlocking. Humans are made to stand at that place, to live at that place, to pray at that place, to love at that place, and granted the state of the world, to lament at that place for all that has gone wrong and still goes wrong in God's world. But all that is part of what it means to be made in or according to the image of God."

What a privilege to BE HIS ambassadors of ZION, welcoming people out of exile and/or captivity and into freedom, as we were welcomed!

Exodus 19:3-8; 1 Peter 2:1-9; 2 Cor 5:17-6:2

Hello Zion! Bye Bye Babylon!

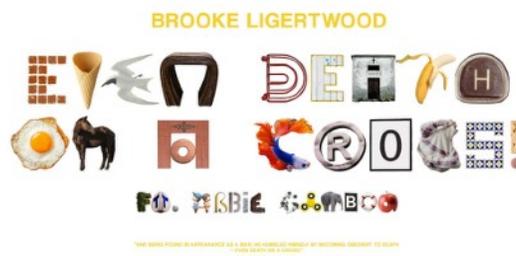


Did you know that reference to being made in the image of God has been on the “About The Embassy” page at BeginGrowFlourish.org website since we published (October)? Below is the text there. Check it out (laptop view is better) <https://www.begingrowflourish.org/>

Life is a beautiful gift. Through Jesus we are made new (2 Cor 5:17). May our highest love and devotion be set on Jesus (Matt 22:37-38), who gives us peace (Rom 5:1).

Purpose is a beautiful discovery. Amazingly, He is inviting all of us to live in the dynamic, forward movement of what He is unfolding (Eph 2:1-10). Bearing the image of God, we realize that people are meant for more than serving only our self-interests (Gen 1:26-28). We have strength through the Holy Spirit to be a blessing and leave a legacy of love (Eph 3:16-19).

We gather in His beautiful Presence to grow more vibrant in worship; to grow more rooted in the Word of God; and to be more impactful on mission. We gather where we live and we go where He sends us. Together we are seeking His Kingdom FIRST, above all other pursuits.



3/12 Thursday Team Session 7:00-7:30 pm (eastern)

Share with your group what you wrote in Reflections, as Holy Spirit leads.

Bring your questions (we welcome you to text or email them in advance, but on the fly is good too!)

◆ **Day 10 Friday March 13**

Review everything! Let's get this revelation in us, part of us, moving forward in the energy of God He is giving us!