An encounter with Jesus is the most glorious experience a person can ever have. He transforms our lives, renews our hearts, and lifts up our spirits. When we encounter Him, sadness disappears, pain dissolves and depression is broken because the strength of His Holy Spirit touches our whole being.

When I met Jesus, He changed the direction of my life, turning it around one-hundred-and-eighty degrees because He is such an extraordinary person. I started seeing things with new eyes and with a different perspective. He gave such meaning to my life that I was convinced that I had been wasting my time. Once I met Him, I wanted to redeem every minute of my existence.

The night I met Jesus was the most glorious moment in my life. Every day since that experience has been important because such a tremendous change had taken place in me and I finally found meaning in life. In addition, God put inside of me a great desire to do something for Him. The change in my life came about as a result of a simple and sincere prayer in which I asked Jesus: "If you truly exist and if you are the God of the Bible, please reveal yourself to me at this very moment." He responded quickly, and I came face-to-face with the Author of life. Emotions overtook me: I cried, I laughed, and I worshiped God with all my heart. I had met Jesus in a very personal way and He had transformed my life.

The material you have in your hands will be of great help in taking a step towards Jesus and having a personal, life-changing encounter with Him. After the prayer you said, He will also reveal Himself in your life.
FOUR WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITIES

Have you ever experienced the regret of allowing a great opportunity to pass you by? We know that life is full of opportunities, such as an interview, a business deal, or meeting the person who will become your mate. Many opportunities present themselves to all of us over the course of our lives, but the best opportunity you can ever have is an encounter with Jesus and growing in a relationship with Him. Meeting Him and growing in a relationship with Him includes four wonderful opportunities, which we will explore in this lesson.

The Encounter Opportunity

“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13

No matter how far you may have strayed from God, you can stop right now and turn back to Him. Just as the prodigal son made the decision to return to his father's house looking for a second chance (see Luke 15:11-20), you can do the same thing by deciding to have an encounter with your Father God.

God is always close to us, as close as the air we breathe. Anyone who desires to have an encounter with Him can do so. In his message to the Athenians, Paul declared, “God did this so men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us. For in him we live and move and have our being. As some of your own poets have said, “We are his offspring” (Acts 17:27-28, emphasis mine)

The Reconciliation Opportunity

“I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.” Luke 15:18-19

The young man in the parable decides not to stay in his fallen condition, but to take a risk in order to find a new opportunity. He recognizes his faults and sets out in search of his father to ask his forgiveness. Likewise, we can have a true reconciliation with God only when we acknowledge our sin, when we repent of and renounce all the evil we have committed, and ask God's forgiveness. When we do this, God stretches forth his merciful hand toward us, as 1 John 1:9 assures us: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

The Restoration Opportunity

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Romans 5:8

All of our sins deserve punishment, but God allowed His Son Jesus Christ to take our place and pay for our sin. The father of the prodigal son decided to restore his son’s lost dignity and threw a party for him. He ordered a fattened calf to be sacrificed in honor of his son’s return, because this son he thought was lost, was found (see Luke 15:23-24). The sacrifice on Calvary, and that great sacrifice is the only means God has established for us to be reconciled to Him. Sacrifice is the only way to redemption, according to Ephesians 1:7, which says, “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins.”

The Provision Opportunity

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” (John 1:12)

God treats us as His beloved children and entrusts us
once again with the privileges we had lost because of sin. He dresses us in the best garments, puts the best shoes on us and gives us the ring that represents the authority we now enjoy as His children and heirs. Because of our faith in Jesus, God considers us His dear children, making us participants of the same riches and glory as Jesus. The apostle Paul explained this when he wrote: “For it is by grace you have been save through faith, and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8, 9).

I strongly encourage you to make the effort to have a personal encounter with the Lord. For centuries, He has been transforming lives in radical ways. For example, when Jacob came face-to-face with the angel of the Lord, he said, “It is because I saw God face to face, and yet my life was spared.” (Genesis 32:30, emphasis mine).

The patriarch Job, who justified himself because he could not understand the “why” of his situation said, “My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes,” when he came face-to-face with God (Job 42:5, 6)

The prophet Isaiah was amazed when I saw the glory of the Lord, and cried, “Woe to me!...I am ruined! For I am a man with unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty” (Isaiah 6:5). After being confronted by Nathan the prophet, King David humbled himself and confessed his sin, begging to be purified. He experienced a genuine brokenness, saying, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O, God, you will not despise” (Psalm 51:17).

I believe a face-to-face encounter with the living God will change your life too.

QUESTIONS

1. What does it mean to have a true encounter with God? (see Revelation 3:20).

2. What are the paths mankind has chosen that have separated him from God?

3. What gift do we receive from God when we have a personal encounter with Him? (see Ephesians 2:8).

4. Analyze the following verses: Romans 5:8 and Luke 15:23-24

5. Describe each of the four wonderful opportunities along with their corresponding verses.

   a. 
   b. 
   c. 
   d. 
CONCLUSION

To have a true encounter with God is to know that:

- God prepared redemption for man, but man took the wrong road and separated himself from God.
- Only at the Cross will you be able to experience benefits of Jesus’ sacrifice and begin to walk in the freedom He purchased for you.
- True repentance is the door to salvation. You can experience inner healing from all the wounds of your past.

KEY PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

- The Encounter is an opportunity God gives you.
- The Reconciliation is your opportunity to return to the Father’s house.
- The Restoration is the feast of joy for your returning to God. Take hold of it!
- The Provision assures you that God wants to bless you and take care of both your provision and your family’s provision.

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES

Starting today, I will make a decision to:

- Have an encounter with Jesus Christ by accepting Him and experiencing God’s most beautiful gift for your life.
- Repent of all sin and be reconciled to God.
- Receive God’s gift of redemption.
- Repent of all sin.
- Receive God’s full provision for my life.

THE BENEFITS OF THE CROSS

THE INCOMPARABLE CHRIST

In all of human time and history, Jesus Christ is the one person who has impacted the world more than anyone else. Though there have been others who have been called great - because of their conquests, exploits, political talents, devout religious lives or even for having been able to impose their own philosophies on people – you cannot compare anyone of these to Jesus because Jesus Christ is God Himself who chose to come to earth and live in human body.

The apostle Paul writes: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). And the writer of the Hebrews observes: “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death, that is, the devil, and free those who all their lives were held slavery by their fear of death” (Hebrews 2:14-15).

JESUS is God

Jesus has always existed; His days had no beginning and will have no end. He is from eternity and to eternity. That is why, simply put, He had to become one of us – to show us the way of salvation. God had to become man in order to save us. In this regard, Jesus gave us a great example because he, “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped; but made himself nothing, taking the very
nature of a servant, being made in human likeness” (Philippians 2:6-7).

**JESUS is Humble**

Jesus’ attitude was the complete opposite of the attitude of the prince of this world, who said in his heart, “I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High,” (Isaiah 14:13-14). As Jesus chose to descend from heaven to earth, Satan expected to ascend from earth to heaven. But the Lord says, “For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 14:11).

Jesus humbled Himself to the point of dying on the cross among thieves. That’s why God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name (see Philippians 2:8-9). God rebuked Satan by saying, “But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit” (Isaiah 14:15), and “You have come to a horrible end and will be no more” (Ezekiel 28:19b).

**JESUS is the Word Made Flesh**

Paul said, “Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great. He appeared in a body,” (1 Timothy 3:16a). The apostle was not trying to present a topic of controversy, but an undeniable truth: “God appeared in a body.” The Lord Himself said, “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14). And if Jesus is God Himself, then it’s worth getting to know Him and making Him known because, as Scripture says, “For Whoever finds me finds life and receives favor from the Lord. But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death” (Proverbs 8:35-36)

Jesus is the very image of the invisible God, and existed even before God began to create the universe. Furthermore, Christ Himself is the Creator of everything that exists in the heavens and on the earth, of the visible and the invisible. The spiritual world, along with its kings and kingdoms, rulers, and authorities, was created by Him and for Him. Christ existed even before the things that exist came into existence and, in him, all things are held together (Colossians 1:15-17).

**The Power of Redemption**

The redemptive work was all done on Calvary’s Cross, and each aspect of the crucifixion teaches us great lessons. Let’s look at each one see what we can learn.

**The CROSS: the cancelled curse**

The Cross was where God took away our curse so that He could give us His blessing. All of our sin - everything bad that we were – came upon Jesus on the Cross. Everything good that Jesus was, was passed on to us through faith in Him.

Galatians 2:20 says, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”

**The Crown of Thorns: Freedom from ruin and oppression**

When Adam and Eve sinned and were expelled from
paradise, God told them, “...curse is the ground because of you... It will produce thorns and thistles for you” (Genesis 3:17-18). Thorns and thistles represent ruin. Jesus took upon His head the terrible oppression that had whipped and beaten and oppressed mankind for so long.

The Whipping of His back: Our Healing

All disease, all pain, no matter how great or how serious it may be, was all cancelled upon the back of Jesus when He was whipped and scourged. The prophet Isaiah, making reference to Jesus’ crucifixion, said, “And by his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

The Nails: Our Freedom

After taking off all Jesus’ clothes, those who crucified Him hung Him on a tree (the Cross). They opened His arms and nailed each of His hands to the Cross with sharp, cutting nails. Putting both of His feet together, they hammered in the third nail. Each one of these nails has a very important meaning:

Nail 1: Freedom from guilt

All the guilt that was upon your life, which would have taken you to eternal condemnation, was erased at the Cross of Calvary. There is no longer any need for you to feel guilty; with the first nail, Jesus took away the curse and guilt.

Nail 2: Canceled accusations and arguments

This means that every argument Satan had against your life has been canceled. Now, what is an argument? It is a legal right that you give to the adversary. How do arguments come about? They are formed by cursed inherited from one’s own family and through words spoken by the parents – words that leave a mark on their children’s lives. The good news is that Jesus took all of the curses upon the Cross; the blood of Jesus has annulled the decrees against us. From today on you can be made free of guilt. “Having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.” (Colossians 2:14).

Nail 3: Victory over oppression

This nail was hammered into the part of the heel under the ankle. Scientists discovered this was the area where they would pound a long nail into the person being crucified and it would go through both feet. In order to breathe, Jesus had to put His weight on this nail and get on His toes so that He could inhale, because his chest was extremely compressed. Because this effort always caused a sharper, more intense pain to the tendon of the leg, simple breathing was agonizing for Him. But, His suffering provided total victory for us and we no longer need to live under oppression.

The Spear: Inner Healing

After Jesus gave up the spirit, a soldier pierced His side with a spear and water and blood poured forth. Experts say this happens when a person’s heart has swollen and damaged itself. Jesus suffered such agony on the Cross that His sensitive heart exploded. You might have said at times, “My heart is broken” or “My soul is shattered into pieces.” But today Jesus tells you, “My son, my daughter, my heart exploded so that yours could be healed and your emotions restored.” All the punishment that we deserved as sinners fell upon that man called Jesus, who had not committed any sin. And all the good Jesus should have received then came
upon us, simply for believing in Him. When Cog looks at us, He look at us through Jesus; and when we desire to communicate with the Father, we should do that through Jesus.

**KEY PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER**

- Eternal life is received when Jesus is received as Savior.
- “By his wounds we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5b)
  He who believes that Jesus has redeemed him is freed from all oppression (see Colossians 2:14-15).
- The financial curse was canceled when Jesus wore the crown of thorns (see 2 Corinthians 8:9).
- Faith in Jesus restores families (see Malachi 4:6).
- Only Jesus can free us from the curse (see Galatians 3:13).
- Because of the love of the Father and through the blood of Christ we were made free (see 1 Peter 1:2).
- Jesus became man and, out of obedience, He accepted death upon the Cross, which was a great humiliation.

**APPLYING THESE PRINCIPLES**

Starting today, make a decision to:
- Give Jesus your weaknesses so he can take them upon himself. Receive His strength in your life.
- Give up your sins through repentance, which is the doorway to His blessing. Receive His salvation.
- Give up all sicknesses. Receive His health.
- Give up all your lack. Receive His provision.
- Give up all anguish. Receive His perfect peace.
- Surrender your whole will. Receive the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- Give up your human knowledge. Receive His divine wisdom.

By doing the things listed above, you are trusting completely in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then you can say with Paul the apostle, “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:13).
THE NEW BIRTH

Man’s Free Will
It pleased God, the Creator of the universe, in all His infinite wisdom, for everything to be governed by laws, both in the spiritual realm and in the natural realm. When He gave life and form to man, He made our freedom conditional upon obedience to His Word. Although God was very generous with the first man and woman, giving them all things in abundance, He established one limitation. He told them: “But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Genesis 2:17). The Lord did not want man to obey Him mechanically, like a robot, but desired for him to obey out of his own free will, using the complete freedom of choice that God had given him.

The New Birth Is for Everyone
Nicodemus was a very respected man in his time. He decided himself to teaching the law to both the religious leaders and to the common people. In addition, he was a man with high moral values. He fasted twice a week, he prayed two hours a day, and he had a great zeal for doctrine. Nevertheless, one night he met with Jesus and said, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him” (John 3:2). Jesus answered him, saying, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again,” (John 3:3). If the Lord had said this Zaccheus, who was a tax collector, or to Mary Magdalene, who had committed adultery, or perhaps to the thief on the cross next to Him, our human capacity could understand. But notice that Jesus gave this insight and instructions to a spiritual authority among the Jews.

You can see the Kingdom of God
In the same way that we experienced physical birth when we came into this world, we must also experience a spiritual birth in order to have a spiritual life. The new birth happens only when we accept Christ in our heart as Lord and Savior. This new birth is produced directly by the Holy Spirit, who, through faith, conceives the spirit of life in the new man. We are spiritual beings who live in a physical body and we become aware of the reality of this earth through our physical senses. But, the physical birth is simply a step that should lead us to the next one—the birth of our spiritual nature. Only when we experience this spiritual birth do we receive the right to become children of God. Through this, our spiritual eyes are opened and we can clearly discern the kingdom of heaven.

God desires our New Birth
James the apostle wrote, “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.” (James 1:18). God left the door open so that anyone who so desires can be born into the spiritual life. Jesus said, “Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24). The new birth implies a separation from our sin nature, so that the spirit can be fruitful in the spiritual kingdom.

You Can Have a New Heart
Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord said, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws,” (Ezekiel 36:26-27). No one on this earth can have two hearts at the same time. One can give part of himself to God and part of himself to sin. Whoever is on God’s side hates sin; and whoever likes sin does not follow God.

God’s promise is a “new heart, new spirit.” When this
happens, God takes away our hard heart and our rebellious spirit, and we receive God’s own Spirit. Paul understood this when he said, “don’t you know that you are the temple of the Holy Spirit, and that the Spirit of God lives in you?” (see 1 Corinthians 6:19). Then Spirit of God is the only one who helps us understand Scripture, the one who gives us the strength to obey it, and the one who prepares the environment in which His promises can be fulfilled.

A Life of Holiness

Some people struggle to understand completely how the new birth works. Even the blessed Virgin Mary had questions when an angel told her she was going to conceive the Savior of the world. She asked, “How is this possible since I am a virgin?” The angel responded, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God,” (Luke 1:35). The Holy Spirit becomes part of us when we receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, thereby becoming part of God. He is a gentleman and He will never try to force things upon us. He will not enter anyone’s life uninvited. He will only move through our faith in the Word of God. That is why by simply believing in Scripture and desiring its fulfillment in us, the Holy Spirit will cover us with His shadow and conceive a holy life that will be born in us.

A Personal Experience

The Lord told Nicodemus, “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). Sometimes the wind is strong, hurricane-like, devastating everything in its path. At other times, it is soft, gentle, and peaceful. The same is true with the Holy Spirit. Some people’s conversions are accompanied by strong emotions, while other people hardly even perceive when the new birth took place.

Either way, the new birth means we are given a new life the moment we receive Jesus in our heart as personal Lord and Savior. Jesus said. “I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.” (John 10:10b).

A New Person

The Holy Spirit sows within us the life of Jesus when we are born again. That sees germinates and develops, manifesting itself progressively in us. The new birth carries the certainty of the Holy Spirit, and that is why it cannot be invalidated nor revoked (see 2 Corinthians 1:22). God Himself seals each believer with His Spirit, guaranteeing him eternal life and a heavenly inheritance, which will be fulfilled when we go to the Father. Therefore, we should always try to obey Ephesians 4:30, which says, “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.”

KEY PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

God created man with the opportunity to choose (see Genesis 2:16-17).
The new birth is for everyone (see John 3:2-3)
The new birth allows us to see the kingdom of God (see John 3:5)
God desires us to experience the new birth (see James 1:18).

APPLYING THESE PRINCIPLES

Starting today, make a decision to:

- Surrender yourself to the Lord so He can give you a new heart (see Ezekiel 36:26-27).
- Let the new birth conceive something holy in your life (see Luke 1:35).
Let the new birth lead you the certainty and security given by the Holy Spirit (see 2 Corinthians 1:22).
BENEFITS OF THE NEW BIRTH

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.”
John 1:12

God has given us the privilege of being born into a new life, a life in the Spirit, where we discover that those things that did not get our attention in the past, such as praying, reading the Bible, going to Christian meetings, etc., have now become a part of our daily lives. Life becomes more interesting because we find a world ready to be conquered. We realize life has meaning and we ask ourselves how is it that we didn’t understand it before and how we could have been so blind. We feel ourselves recovering our trust in God, in His Word, in others, and in ourselves. But everything beautiful – especially these things – needs special care. Let’s explore several ways you can care for your spiritual life and ensure your spiritual growth.

Feed Yourself Spiritual Food

Just as a newborn needs the milk the mother provides, a spiritual infant needs to nourish himself with the Word of God because it’s the only thing that can help him grow. Paul the apostle wrote, “like newborn babies, crave spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation” (1 Peter 2:2). When I started taking my first steps in the Christian life, there was a desire within me to get to know the Bible, so I was compelled to study the Bible no less than two hours a day. I didn’t read it because someone told me to; I did it because I understood that it was food for my spirit and I knew that I should feed myself regularly.

The great man of God, Moses, wrote that, “man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of Lord” (Deuteronomy 8:3).

Live by the Word

We should love the Word and its teachings, obeying its directions just as the captain of a ship does with a compass. The Bible is the greatest of treasures, having answers to all of our needs. It is the greatest literary work ever written because it is the revelation of God to mankind. Within its sixty-six books, it contains the work of forty writers who lived in different times, and who, through divine inspiration, have made its message valid to this day.

- It contains God’s voice and the revelation of Christ (see John 1:1-2;14)
- It contain the divine laws (see Psalm 119:17-19)
- The Bible is the revelation of God to man (see John 14:6-10).
- It reveals the plan of salvation for man (see John 3:16; Romans 10:9).
- It reveals the truth (see John 17:17). Jesus is the main character (see Luke 24:27).

How to get closer to the Word

- Listen closely to the voice of God daily (see Deuteronomy 11:18-20).
- Read it with the right attitude and obey (see Deuteronomy 13:4).
- Meditate on it, searching it out (see Joshua 1:8).
- Put its commandments to practice (see Psalm 119:105).
- Share its message with others, confessing it (see mark 16:15; Psalm 71:15).
- Pick an appropriate place.
- Establish a study habit.
Start a devotional notebook (start preferably with the book of John).

Include:
- God’s message for me today.
- The promise for my life.
- The commandment to obey.
- The personal application.
- The verse to memorize.

**Benefits of getting close to the Word**

- It teaches (doctrine).
- It rebukes (reproof).
- It corrects (restores to a correct state).
- It instructs (guides).

**Communicate with God through Prayer**

The Lord has established prayer as the only means by which we can communicate with Him. Prayer is so important that Jesus spent time teaching His disciples how to pray (see Matthew 6:9-13). The writer of Proverbs says, “but the prayer of the upright pleases Him,” (Proverbs 15:8b). It doesn't matter if you are not eloquent when you direct yourself to Him. God will look at the attitude of your heart and will rejoice over every word you say to Him.

**How to Pray**

- Find a place with complete privacy.
- Start off with words of thanksgiving. We should give thanks to God in everything – the good that happens to us as well as the trials, which are often difficult to confront.
- Live the revelation of the Cross daily. Paul said, “I die daily.” We can take our life, our family and our difficulties to the Cross, visualizing the victory.
- Relate to God as a loving Father, who wants the best for His children.
- Pray for God’s blessings for your life and for your family.
- Promise the Lord you’ll lead a life of integrity and holiness.
- Tell God He can count on you to establish the vision.
- Commit to obeying the Word above everything.
- Pray that the Bible’s promises of financial provision will be fulfilled in you.
- Renounce any feelings of resentment you may have towards others.
- Pray for God’s spiritual armor in order to withstand any adversary.
- Ask the Lord to put a hedge of protection around you and your family.

**Share with Others**

Jesus said, “Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32). It is difficult for a person who has not known love to speak about it. But when a person falls in love, there is a change in their life. They continually talk to others about their new love. When we meet Jesus, something similar happens; we can’t stop talking about how good He has been to us. We are not ashamed to talk about Him to others because He’s the most important thing in our life.

You don’t have to be a theologian in order to share your faith, as long as you have had a real encounter with Jesus and your life has been changed. When you share with others, you’re lifting up the name of Jesus. Do as the psalmist said when he wrote, “My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long...” Jesus Himself commanded us to, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15). And Paul said, “For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved” (Romans 10:10).
We know that it’s nice to engage in conversation and exchange opinions with people. God created us to be social beings, so we could share with others. Something you will always notice in our meetings is how true friendships are formed. You will also notice that every teaching fills you and satisfies you spiritually; you find the answers to your worries and you receive the promises of God that you so desire. You will discover that there are other people with beautiful hearts who are willing to encourage you as much as they can.

One of the characteristics of the first church was that: “They devoted themselves to the apostle’s teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer,” (Acts 2:42). Fellowship is essential, as the writer to the Hebrews exhorted: “Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10:25).

**Take Care of Our Youth**

The strength to conquer, the energy and the desire to move ahead lies in our youth. It is so important that every young person make the right decision from an early age. Although it is important to study, to have a career and to make a living, there is something much more meaningful – having a strong spiritual life. The only way to do this is by making a decision for Jesus. King Solomon said, “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, ‘I find no pleasure in them’” (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

It is of utmost importance to take the road of righteousness as a young person. All servants of the Lord who learned to lean completely on Him were protected from disaster in a supernatural way. For instance, in the twilight of his life, King David said, “I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread” (Psalm 37:25).

Daniel the prophet, who came to King Nebuchadnezzar’s palace at a very young age, was given the right to partake of the royal table. He decided, in his heart, not to contaminate himself with it because it was food offered to idols. He preferred to eat something less tasteful instead of offending God. Besides that, Daniel had also learned how to select friends. Basically, these friends were spiritual men ready to help him in whatever he needed. He went to them during one of the most difficult moments of his life. These young men decided to back him up with prayer, and the next day, they received God’s answer!

**Learn to Deal with Life’s Worries**

Nowadays, people have to be productive. Because of the need to be productive and the busy-ness of life, people often neglect the most important aspect of their lives – the spiritual life. Some do this thinking that once they’ve overcome their financial pressures they will have their preoccupations are temporary, activities that will take a few days or weeks. But over time, people who do not prioritize their spiritual lives get more and more entangled by commitments that distance them completely from God.

Daniel the prophet was a very productive man and his relationship with God helped him faithfully fulfill each one of his responsibilities in the palace. This made his coworkers envious, and they began plotting to accuse him of something wrong. Nevertheless, Daniel continued being faithful in everything and no vice or fault was found in him (see Daniel 6:4). Although some people were increasingly hostile toward Daniel to the point that he was thrown into the pit of lions, he continued to commune with his God.

God rewarded him by shutting the mouths of the lions and supernaturally freeing him from them.

**Realize that Obedience Renews Strength**
God called Abraham when he was seventy-five years old, giving him these instructions: “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great and you will be a blessing” (Genesis 2:1-2).

Looking back after many years, the apostle James wrote, “Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness” (James 2:23b).

Abraham became the father of faith because he believed with hope against hope. In all his acts, this patriarch showed his unbreakable faith in the invisible God. He became the father of nations because he had the courage to leave his country. As a reward for having left his father’s home, he became the father of all families on earth. He was made prosperous in everything as a reward for having left all of his possessions behind. His descendants gained authority over their enemies as a reward from God for having made the decision of offering up his only son, Isaac, even though God did not actually require him to do it in the end.

KEY PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

- Enjoy the benefits of the new birth (see John 1:12; Romans 8:15-17).
- Feed yourself with spiritual food (see Deuteronomy 8:3; 1 Peter 2:2).
- Have daily contact with the Scriptures (see Deuteronomy 11:18-20; Joshua 1:8).
- Share what God has done in your life (see Psalm 71:15; Mark 16:15).
- Learn to handle life’s worries (see Daniel 6:4).

APPLYING THESE PRINCIPLES

Starting today, make a decision to:

- Get close to the Word of God.
- Study it daily.
  - Communicate with God continually through prayer.
  - Obey God, so that your strength can be continually renewed.
BENEFITS OF THE NEW BIRTH

When we are born in the flesh, everything within us is already established: our sex, our skin color, our height and weight, our temperament, our habits, and our desires. But when we are born again, there is the implication of getting a spiritual body and a spiritual mind – the body and mind of Christ.

Although many studies have attempted to define and identify the source of man’s problems, and everything has been blamed on the social crisis, the heart of the matter lies in a spiritual battle. It is important to understand that change must first come from within, before it is visible on the outside. Therefore, if we prioritize the spiritual solution, then the spiritual victory will impact all the different areas of society.

The prophet Ezekiel said, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

The new birth is a creative event in which God takes the believer’s faith and joins it to the power of the Holy Spirit, which produces the miracle of a new heart and spirit. “But the Spirit gives birth to spirit.” (John 3:6b).

THE PROVISIONS OF SALVATION

The plan of salvation, as designed by God, provides for the following: justification, regeneration, sanctification, and redemption.

Justification

Justification means to declare just. It is the act by which God declares that the sinner, who believes in Jesus and confesses his faith accepting His sacrifice for sin on the Cross, goes on to be made just and acceptable before Him (see Romans 3:24).

Sanctification

To be sanctified means to be separated unto God. A person is sanctified through grace. Sanctification means consecrating yourself completely to God, morally and spiritually. This holiness is an aspect of the divine essence and is produced within the believer through the work of the Holy Spirit (see 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Regeneration

Regeneration means to change the way you think about sin so that your mind can be open to the things of God, especially to the incarnation of His Son and His redemptive work. The Holy Spirit is the one who allows this regeneration to take place within a person, both morally and spiritually (see 1 Corinthians 2: 14).

Redemption

Redemption means paying a ransom for someone who is enslaved. Salvation, as it has been expressed, is associated directly with man’s redemption. Not having anyone on earth who could pay the price of rescuing (redeeming) man from his sins with their own life. God sent His only Son to do it thereby freeing humanity from eternal condemnation (see Galatians 3:13).
THE PRIVILEGES OF LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

The privilege of seeing

Only spiritual people have the ability to see the kingdom of God; their spiritual eyes are opened and they can perceive what is hidden from the natural man.

As the apostle Paul said, “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

The spiritual life is a world in which we find all kinds of riches and favors available only to us. They aren’t visible, but they do exist. In other words, they are not perceptible to the human eye; they can only be seen by those who have been born of God and have developed their spiritual sight. Through faith, we can perceive and enjoy God’s blessings.

The privilege of believing

“Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). God has given us the ability to believe, so as to change circumstances in a positive way. If we want to see this kind of change, we must listen to see what God says about it, because everything we want to conquer must be backed by His Word. The seed of life can be found within His Word and when the seed falls on a healthy heart full of faith, the seed germinates and produces the fruit of the miracle we long for. The entire power of God is contained in His Word, and our faith is the only thing that activates it and sets it into motion.

We need to understand that our ears are capable of hearing many sounds at the same time, but being able to hear and understand God’s voice depends on our commitment to understand and fulfill His divine purpose. We should saturate our minds with the Word of life, which never changes and maintains the same power throughout the ages. Then, we will be surprised by everything we will be able to do when we believe God’s words and exercise our faith.

The privilege of speaking the word of authority

The Lord said, “If you had responded to my rebuke, I would have poured out my heart to you and made my thoughts known to you” (Proverbs 1:23). The Lord longs to share His thoughts with us, but we can only understand the Word of God when the Holy Spirit reveals it to us. This is why the Bible should be read in an attitude of prayer. David said, “Do not snatch the word of truth from my mouth, for I have put my hope in your laws.” (Psalm 119:43).

The Word of God is as powerful now as it has always been; and since it was powerful in the mouths of the prophets of old, it is also mighty in our mouths today. We need to understand that the Word of God is not subject to time or space and He is not governed by human laws. Time was established by God, but time does not limit God.

When the Word of God leaves our mouths, it will not return until it has fulfilled the purpose for which it was sent out. This means that every word we speak will become a decree in the spiritual realm. Every word we speak will return only when it has fulfilled every purpose for which it was spoken.

KEY PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

The plan of salvation provides the following:

- Justification: to declare just or righteous (see Romans 3:24).
- Sanctification: separated unto God (see 1 Thessalonians 5:23).
- Regeneration: change the way you think about sin (see 1 Corinthians 2:14).
Redemption: payment for the rescue of someone who is enslaved (see Galatians 3:13).

**APPLYING THESE PRINCIPLES**

Starting today, make a decision to:

- Accept the privilege of seeing (see 1 Corinthians 2:9).
- Accept the privilege of believing (see Romans 10:17).
- Accept the privilege of giving the word of authority (see Proverbs 1:23).

**UNDERSTANDING OUR ENEMY**

Satan’s primary purpose is to cause a person to harden his heart toward God and block his mind so that the message of salvation will not be heard or accepted. Paul said, “And if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, emphasis mine).

**Satan’s Organization and Character**

Satan has the organizational skills of a military strategist, and he imposes a reign of fear in the hearts of people. Under his authority, there are rulers, authorities, powers of darkness and spiritual forces of evil in heavenly realms (see Ephesians 6:12).

He is characterized as being: sly or crafty (see Genesis 3:1); a liar (see Genesis 3:1-3); vengeful (see Psalm 8:2); destructive (see Isaiah 54:16); tempting (see Matthew 4:7); an accuser (see Revelation 12:10); prince of the demons (see Matthew 12:24); a murderer (see John 8:44); the father of all lies (see John 8:44); prince of the kingdom of the air (see Ephesians 2:2); the dragon (see Revelation 12:7-9); a roaring lion (see 1 Peter 5:8); and one who disguises himself as an angel of light (see 2 Corinthians 11:14).

**Satan is Judged**

When believers understand the redemptive work of Jesus on the Cross of Calvary, a veil is removed from their mind. Our Lord said, “For judgment I have come into this world” (John 9:39).
When Jesus was on the earth, His presence tormented the demons. For example, a demon-possessed man screamed at Him saying, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are – the Holy One of God! ‘Be Quiet!, said Jesus sternly. Come out of him!” (Mark 1:24-25).

In Matthew 12:28, the Lord said, “But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.”

God’s kingdom is not divided. In order for the kingdom of God to be established in any city or nation, it is of utmost importance that the church rise up in authority against demons and cast them out.

How do you exercise the judgment of God against the enemy? Look at the points below.

**Use your authority and bind the strong man**

The Word of God declares that no one can enter a strong man’s house unless they first bind him (see Matthew 12:29). Studying this verse, I came to understand that Satan was that strong man that had bound the lives of men, women, young people, and children, making them slaves to sin. When I received this revelation, we started binding Satan and the forces of evil. Psalm 149:5-6 says, “Let the saints rejoice in this honor and sing for joy on their beds. May the praise of God be in their mouths and a double-edged sword in their hands.” The doubled-edged sword is the Word and it is used to execute judgment among the nations and punishment among the people in order to bind kings with shackles. These “kings” are the demonic principalities of evil that operate in the spiritual realm. God has given you the anointing and the ability to bind kings with shackles. Believe it and walk in it!

**Live a life of integrity.**

In Matthew 12:33 the Lord said, “Make a tree good and its fruit will be good, or make a tree bad and its fruit will be bad, for a tree is recognized by its fruit.” This verse refers to our lives as trees. When Satan departs from someone, the life of evil that was inside the person leaves. And this is a miracle, because when evil leaves, God replaces it with a life of good – and that life of good is Jesus Christ. If you are one of Jesus’ trees – a person who has His life – then the fruit you produce should include integrity, justice and truth. There should be no such thing as, “I am a Christian, but I fornicate.” Are you a “tree” of Jesus or not? When you want to know what kind of tree a person is, look at the fruit in this life – and make sure your life bears the fruit of the Lord.

Some people get confused about this issue. They go to church, but they really aren’t Christians. Going to church does not guarantee salvation. We go to church because we are fruit, because we are new trees, different people; and it is there that we express our worship and gratitude to God. The life of the Father is shown in people through the fruit they bear.

**Watch Your Words**

Jesus said, “For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him.” (Matthew 12:34b-35). Your words express what is in your heart. When people complain, their fruit is bad. When they grumble, their fruit is bad. When people are full of God, their words are always lead to success. They encourage those who are fallen. These people don’t let themselves be influenced by circumstances, but always speak according to the Word of God.

**Cancel All Arguments Against You**

Don’t let the enemy attack you with them. Pray sincerely,
“Lord, free me from any demonic bondage. Grant me complete authority to rebuke demons in the Name of Jesus.” You must cancel all argument against you. Decide to sanctify your life starting right now. When Joshua said, “As for me and my house, we will serve he Lord.” (Joshua 24:15b), he made the decision that his whole house would consecrate their lives to the Lord. I hope you will do the same.

Paul said, “Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground.” (Ephesians 6:13). What is “the evil day”? It is the day of adversity, the day of trial.

**Preparation for Deliverance**

- Have a real desire to live in freedom, God is willing to give us freedom, and, through Jesus, he has given us the means by which to obtain it. But of his own free will, man needs to desire it with all his heart (see Matthew 11:28).
- Identify the causes of the bondage (see Psalm 139:23-24).
- Repent and confess sin. Deliverance does not replace repentance. Because of sin, Satan gained certain rights over our lives. These rights can only be cancelled through a genuine repentance and a complete renouncing of sin (see Luke 13:3).
- Have faith (see Hebrews 11:6).
- Take hold of the truth (see John 8:31-32, 36).
- Pray and fast (see Matthew 17:21).

**KEY PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER**

We should understand who our battle is against – Satan. The enemy’s main purpose is to harden people’s hearts against God and block their minds so they cannot receive the message of salvation. His greatest trick is to make people think lightly of sin, to see it as a game.

**APPLYING THESE PRINCIPLES**

Starting today, make a decision to:
- Use your authority to bind the strong man.
- Live with integrity.
- Watch your words, because your fruit depends on them.
- Cancel all arguments that may exist against you in the spiritual realm.
**The Importance of an Encounter**

The Encounter is a three-day retreat, during which time God will be imparting life to each person who participates. Those in attendance will receive direction and understand God’s true purpose for their lives.

All participants must attend the Encounter with a completely open heart and with the purity and simplicity of a child, in order to receive everything God wants to minister to them.

During the Encounter, it is crucial that they lay aside all types of arguments, wrong concepts, and prejudices about God because those things may hinder them from receiving everything God wants to offer them.

I have seen lives so completely transformed during these three days than they might otherwise be in a full year.

**The Children of Israel Had an Encounter**

You may recall when the people of Israel were oppressed in Egypt and God had to raise up a deliverer. His name was Moses and He went before the king of Egypt with a request from God. “Then they said, ‘The God of Hebrews has met with us. Now let us take a three-day journey into the desert to offer sacrifices to the Lord our God, or he may strike us with plagues or with the sword.’” (Exodus 5:3).

As we can see, Moses’ request reflected God’s desire to meet with His people for three days. Pharaoh did not accept the proposal, but hardened his heart and called them lazy. He burdened them with even more work so that in this way they would have no time to think about God. But then, God began to afflict the people of Egypt with different plagues so that they wanted the children of Israel to leave!

**Pharaoh’s Craftiness**

Pharaoh called for Moses and said, “I will let you go to offer sacrifices to the Lord your God in the desert, but you must not go very far. Now pray for me,” (Exodus 8:28). But later, Pharaoh asked them, “But just who will be going? Moses answered: “We will go with our young and old, with our sons and daughters, and with our flocks and herds, because we are to celebrate a festival to the Lord.” (Exodus 10:8b-9). But Pharaoh responded bluntly: “The Lord be with you – if I let you go, along with your women and children! Clearly you are bent on evil. No! Have only the men go; and worship the Lord, since that’s what you have been asking for.’ Then Moses and Aaron were driven out of Pharaoh’s presence.” (Exodus 10:10-11).

**Remember What Jesus Said**

Jesus said, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” John 2:19

The Encounter should last three days, allowing God to do a deep work of transformation in each life. There, you will experience death of the old nature and the resurrection to newness of life in Christ. What the Lord wants is for us have a quiet time, where we isolate ourselves from our activities for a short time and avoid any distraction in order to hear the voice of God clearly. Why does God ask for three days? Because that is the time necessary for the Holy Spirit to do a complete work of transforming hearts. The psalmist said, “Commit your way to the Lord; trust in him and he will do this.” (Psalm 37:5). Only at an Encounter can we entrust, give, and surrender our whole life to the direction of God.
Paul’s Encounter

Paul the apostle is one of the greatest men in Christianity. He was previously known as Saul of Tarsus. Before converting to the Lord he was a bitter persecutor of Christians. But then, he had an experience that transformed his life completely, changed his name, and caused him to defend the very doctrine he once condemned.

What brought about his change of heart? The answer is simple: he had a revelation of the Cross. Everyone who has a personal encounter with God will have the Cross of Christ revealed to them, and this revelation is the only thing that can transform hearts. Paul said, “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world”. (Galatians 6:14).

Paul also said, “I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.” (Philippians 3:10).

Paul’s desire was to feel what Jesus felt while He was on the Cross. He wanted to suffer the same agony that Jesus suffered during His crucifixion. He understood that if he had this experience, he would also be able to experience the power of resurrection. God answered the desire of the apostle’s heart and allowed him to experience the revelation of the Cross. This is why he said, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20).

Truths You Will Experience at an Encounter

In his defense as he stood before king Agrippa, Paul said, “About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw the light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,” the Lord replied. “Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and form the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn from darkness to light, and form the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.” (Acts 26:13-18).

Paul beheld the light, which was the manifestation of the glory of the Lord. When he had a personal encounter with God, he saw that all of his actions against Christianity were actually committed against the Lord himself.

On that day, God called Paul to serve Him, and gave him instructions concerning what to do and how to develop his ministry.

By attending the Encounter, you will:

Receive vision. "...to open your eyes..."

We know that without the vision, people perish. Those who convert to Christianity must first receive a vision of the crucified Christ. Whoever is able to see the Cross, in the true revelation, will be able to understand their calling.

Experience a genuine conversion. "...so they may turn from darkness to light..."

This conversion must be full and complete. God rejected the people of Israel because their conversion was just from their lips, and not form their heart. John the
Baptist would tell those who would come to him for baptism. “...produce fruit in keeping with repentance…” (Matthew 3:8) Our conversion is leads to and necessitates a change of lifestyle, so the believer should strive to do those only things that please God.

Understand that you have gone from Satan’s control to the lordship of Jesus. “...and from the power of Satan to God...”

In the past Satan took advantage of man’s weakness in order to make him a slave. But in Jesus every believer was rescued from enemy’s control over his life. The success of a victorious Christian life depends on our personal relationship with Christ. To convert to Jesus is to live completely in love with Him.

Understand that through faith in Jesus, you will receive forgiveness of sins. “...so that they may receive forgiveness of sins...”

One of the devil’s strategies is to enslave people with guilt, making them believe that their sins have not yet been forgiven. In this way, he retains control over their lives. The sins we have committed deserve punishment, but Jesus carried all of them upon His body and took them for us, receiving the punishment we deserved.

Understand your privilege in God. “... a place among those who are sanctified...”

Paul said, “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). If God gave up what He loved most, His own Son, so we could be saved by simply believing in Him, won’t He provide everything else we need? I can tell you that God has a lot more to give us than we can actually ask for.

We can enjoy His inheritance here on earth and also in the eternal life to come.

KEY PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER

God asked His people to go to an Encounter (see Exodus 5:3).
Pharaoh’s craftiness (see Exodus 8:28; 10:8b-9;10:11-12) Remember what Jesus said (see John 2:19).
Paul went to an Encounter (see Galatians 6:14; Philippians 3:10).
God transforms lives completely at the Encounter.

APPLYING THESE PRINCIPLES

If you decide to experience the joy and the blessing of attending an Encounter, you will be able experience the following truths:
- You will receive vision.
- You will experience a genuine conversion.
- You will go from Satan’s power into the lordship of Jesus.
- You will receive forgiveness of sins.
- You will understand the privileges of your inheritance.
What person has made an impact on your life to such a degree that he or she has left quite an impression on you?

I personally met someone who had such an extraordinary influence on me that He changed the direction of my life, turning it around one hundred eighty degrees. That person gave such meaning to my life that I was convinced that up to that moment, I had been wasting my time and now I wanted to redeem every minute of my existence. Perhaps you are wondering who that person is. Well, his name is Jesus Christ.

The impact of that encounter face to face with Jesus, which I describe in this Pre-encounter guidebook, was so glorious that form that moment on, Jesus was no longer a abstract and unsearchable person but as real as the air I breathed or the sun that sets. I am sure that He wants to reveal Himself t you in the same way that He revealed himself to me.

Through this material that I have prepared with much love and dedication, you will learn to prepare your heart to experience a true encounter with Jesus of Nazareth, who has prepared beforehand many great things for your life.

Cesar Castellanos Dominguez