WORD AT WORK

April 2007

Dear Friends:

Hebrews 5:12-14 exhorts us to pursue growth to maturity so we can teach others, *"For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil."* **Tel-i-os** is the Greek word translated for age and is used for the process of growth in consummation of eternal purpose.

The first appearance in the Greek New Testament is in Matthew 5:48 where we are exhorted to, *"Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."* Jesus would be our example of how to pursue a growth pattern. Two elements immediately come to mind both of which are uncomfortable.

Luke 2:48-50 states, *"So when they saw Him, they were amazed; and His mother said to Him, 'Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.' And He said to them, 'Why is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?' But they did not understand the statement which He spoke to them."* The growth pattern set Jesus at odds with both the customs and expectations of His family generating disappointment and criticism. It is possible to be in God's will when none of our family or friends understand it! When God called Abram, He called him alone!

Jesus' growth pattern had another **tel-i-os** described in Hebrews 5:7,8, *"…who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered."* God's developmental path has a price.

We choose to grow because it is the only way we can achieve **tel-i-os**. Three growth paths are outlined in the New Testament and it is time to "hit the road."

Yours in Him,

Al Houghton

WORD AT WORK

VOLUME XXVII NUMBER IV

Three Dimensions Of Growth I

SUNDAY, April 1
Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-3

Ephesians 4:1-3 tells us "*…to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called*…." How do we do that? "Walk" is the Greek word **per-ee-pat-eh-o**. It means to be able to look behind you and see the path that you have left moving through life and to have no regrets. "Worthy" is **ax-i-os** and it means to balance the scales between the preparation and the price of your call. So a "*walk worthy*" as a Christian means it is one guided by these principles with the goal of – verse 3 *"…endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* The church in America needs to lead the charge on this issue. God places individuals in nations to save their nation. Each person has a contribution toward fulfilling the call upon that nation. Carnal Christians often hinder the national by their attitude and actions. I often hear people violate this passage in how they identify themselves saying, "I'm an Italian American. I'm an Asian American. I'm a Hispanic American. I'm an African American." Please don't walk around as a Christian speaking that division. If you have citizenship in America you are an American - end of story. If we are going to *"endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"* we have to realize that God gave America for the propagation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, by covenant, beginning with Columbus and all the way up through the Pilgrims who established it. The American nation has a call. The **devil** is successfully **dividing** the nation into secular camps based on heritage.

MONDAY, April 2
Scripture: Genesis 12:1 Matthew 12:25

The first command to Abraham was three-fold: *"Get out of your country, …kindred, …father's house,"* or country, kindred and culture. The call was to separate from your country, your kindred and your culture. Separating from country, kindred and culture have a **purpose** and the purpose is so God's Kingdom culture can replace them. In God's Kingdom culture we are first and foremost a Christian. The culture of Christianity demands we drop secular heritage. As a Christian we have a responsibility to win the nation in which we dwell. You are first a Christian. God does place Christians in nations for a purpose. We either agree with God where we walk daily and how we see ourselves ***or*** we agree with the devil. Jesus uttered Matthew 12:25 in the midst of being accused of being demonic. He said, *"Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand."* It is obvious that there is an assault on the church in America because of America's covenantal call to bring the gospel to other nations and to prove that men can love their neighbor as they love themselves. One of the deceptive ploys of the enemy is to get us to see ourselves not as

Christians but as **African** Americans, as **Hispanic** Americans, or to identify with **whatever is our culture of origin**. If we are going *"…to have a walk worthy of the calling with which we were called"* – we better wake up and smell the roses! The devil is trying to diminish and destroy a nation that God wants to bless, and a church that is fractured by division because they continually trumpet with their own mouth division. It is time to stop. It is an abomination to God. We will have to answer for it in eternity and it is time to STOP NOW. The church has to choose, and every member in it, whether we're red, black, yellow or white – we have to choose, are we going to come out of our culture, are we going to be a Christian and restore the covenantal call on our nation. It is time to make that choice NOW. Are we willing to put on Christ?

TUESDAY, April 3
Scripture: First Thessalonians 5:14-24

"Having a walk worthy…" is reflected by a **willingness to change** behavior aligning thought and deed with God's Word. Though there are two classes of men, saved and unsaved, there are three kinds of Christians. They are described by degrees of growth, yieldedness to the Holy Spirit and knowledge of the ways of God. In First Thessalonians 5 we see the Holy Spirit crying out in prayer for sanctification, (the setting apart of each believer in three different areas) of spirit, soul and body. Sin can invade each dimension to differing and various degrees, but even so, deliverance can come completely and totally to each part of man. God's will, of course, is our sanctification be total and complete, but where do we now stand? If the world is a classroom and God gives tests, then the race pimps have demonized significant numbers. I hear the language of **demonic division**: "I'm African American. I'm a Hispanic American." When I fought in Viet Nam, I didn't fight for Africa or Mexico. I fought for America because God placed me in America. What kind of Christians are we? We all want to grow developing in commitment, dedication, spiritually, soulishly, and physically until sanctification is complete. **God demands unity** while ***demons demand disharmony***. Abram had to come out of his culture. It is time we come out of ours.

WEDNESDAY, April 4
Scripture: First Corinthians 2:12-3:3

This passage of Scripture reveals three types of Christians. Verse 14 says, *"But the **natural** man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God."* Verse 15 shows the second, *"But he who is **spiritual** judges all things…."* And in chapter 3 verse 1 we see the third, a **carnal** man. Whichever area we are most dominated by becomes descriptive of our walk before the Lord. The Greek word for "body" is **sarx** and **sarkikos** is the word for "carnal," which means having the nature of the flesh, or being under control of the animal appetites. What is a carnal Christian? One moved or controlled certainly not by the Holy Spirit, but rather by the lower nature. Our goal is to take inventory and if there is any carnality in our life, we want to recognize it for what it is and send it on it's way. Just as God demanded Abraham separate from his culture, so God demands we separate from ours. Because nations have calls and God places us in nations, we have an obligation to express the Kingdom in our assigned nation. If the Lord placed us in Canada then we take our stand as Christians and as Canadians believing for the welfare of our nation. Acts 17:20 declares God sovereignly placed us in nations for a salvation purpose. If God placed you in Canada be Canadian. If God placed you in Australia, be Australian. If God placed you in America, be American – not a hyphenated division thereof! Jesus promised nations. We have a choice to sow unity or strife. When we face Jesus we will pay the price for that choice or reap the reward of that choice. Martin Luther would have said, "Hell was created for those who knowingly sow division." Let the fire fall!

THURSDAY, April 5
Scripture: First Corinthians 3:1-9

Notice the first signs of the carnal man are given in verse 3: *"For whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"* When these three things increase, spirituality takes a

nose-dive. What has brought more division in America than the attempt by many to keep their culture, elevating it above being American? Even believers are in disharmony. Verses 4 and 5 describe the denominational spirit. If you are a Baptist *before* you're a Christian, you've got problems. You're carnal because you probably refuse to fellowship with Pentecostals. If you're a Pentecostal *before* you're a Christian, you've got problems because you'll probably refuse to fellowship with the Baptists. If we are white *before* we are a Christian we won't fellowship with Asians. If we are black *before* we are a Christian, we won't fellowship with whites. If we wear our denominational or racial differences on our shoulders, then we're going to be those who cause division and strife in the Body. There's plenty of it floating around without us lending a helping mouth. **The spiritual Christian learns to fellowship on the basis of the blood of Jesus which cleanses us from all sin and magnifies the points of agreement rather than the points of historical difference.** The Apostle Paul shows a right spiritual attitude even about our very favorite ministers when he says, *"So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase."* You may have your favorite teacher, your favorite pastor, or your favorite prophet, but God says neither one of them is anything, but everything is in the Lord who is the giver of the message, the anointing, and the increase. Let's make sure our attitudes toward our favorite ministries are spiritual and not carnal.

FRIDAY, April 6
Scripture: Galatians 5:13-19

Here we see the fruit of carnality listed explicitly. Every Christian experiences warfare. To win, you must crucify the flesh with its affections, passions, desires, lusts, cravings, and longings. The access that satan has to us is through the flesh, but the Scripture tells us if we walk in the spirit, or in the spiritual realm we will fulfill God's purpose every time. Can a person be a Christian and commit the sins of carnality that are listed here? The answer is "yes," with a qualifier. The qualifier is if we ***continue*** to do them on an on-going basis severe judgment is inevitable. But there are people who are born again, who fall into some of the individual things listed here and it's a clear measure of carnality. Two major roots of carnality are murder and adultery. They are alike in the biblical standard of application. Adultery is sexual relations outside of the marriage vows and in Matthew 5:27-28, the Holy Spirit says even entertaining the desire in the thought life is counted as if a person has already committed the sin. The same standard exists for murder. How do we rate by this standard? Are we spiritual, natural or carnal? How do our friends rate with whom we fellowship? What do we entertain in our homes? How do we use our computers? Are we spiritual? Are we natural? Are we carnal? Without holiness, we will not see God!

SATURDAY, April 7
Scripture: Galatians 5:19 Revelation 19:11-13

Jesus is the Judge of all the earth who sends adversity to both nations and individuals who violate His Word! In Revelation 19:11-13 the Jesus we represent looks like this, *"Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And he who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God."* He is judging and making war **based on His Word**. Sexual sin fills a land with iniquity demanding judgment. Fornication is any sexual relationship committed by those not married. There's an especially good amplification in First Corinthians 6:15-19 where it says, *"Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"* Sexual sin is especially destructive because it's a sin against our own body. The third root of carnality is uncleanness which Romans 1:24-27 speaks to along with First Thessalonians 2:3. It specifically deals with homosexuality and lesbianism. I think we can see why AIDS is exactly what we would expect to happen to people who give themselves over to these perversions. God's Word says in First Corinthians 6:15-18 that they sin against their own body, and AIDS destroys the God-given gift of their immunization system. The reason our forefathers made homosexuality illegal is they understood allowing what God prohibits has severe consequences for the entire population. What started rampantly running through the

homosexual community quickly spread to the rest of the nation killing innocent people. Cain's chief complaint to God when questioned about the whereabouts of Able was, *"Am I my brother's keeper?"* All the law is fulfilled when we love our neighbor as our self. God's judgments are here. The Supreme Court has opened the door to much much more!

SUNDAY, April 8
Scripture: Galatians 5:19,20

Number four is lasciviousness which doesn't sound too bad until we discover what it means. It means unbridled lust, excess, gluttony, any kind of promotion of lustful desires (which certainly encompasses most of our television ads today), filthy words, or indecent bodily movements. It's anything promoting unhealthy desire. Ninety-nine percent of the church would never consider adultery or homosexuality because they know its sin, and yet, will pig out two or three times a month at their favorite restaurant. That's carnality in action and hurting our spiritual growth. If we recognize these things, we simply need to repent and ask God for a total deliverance. Do we control our appetite, or does our appetite control us? Which spirit rules – God or the enemy?

MONDAY, April 9
Scripture: Galatians 5:20

Idolatry is worship of anything other than God. That would include money OR things like houses, positions, possessions and all the world seeks after to place ahead of God. Witchcraft is the use or administering of drugs, sorcery, or magical arts. Sometimes Christians use witchcraft when they try to project their own will on another individual through prayer, rather than asking God for His will and His desire for the life of the person they are praying for. This usually happens when one single person selects a mate and attempts to pray them into marriage. Christian witchcraft is not uncommon and usually comes about as a result of a lack of knowledge of God's ways. Do we pray what we think should happen to other people, or do we let God direct us and show what He wants us to pray?

TUESDAY, April 10
Scripture: Galatians 5:20

Hatred is holding hostility. Matthew 18:21-35 says Jesus turns people over to tormentors because of bitterness, resentment, and unforgiveness. The judgments of God are rising rapidly and we must prepare to represent Jesus the Judge to Senators, Congressmen, and Judges. Seeker-sensitive Christianity is not preparing us for this. Proverbs 24:24 says, *"He, who says to the wicked, 'You are righteous,' Him the people will curse; Nations will abhor him."* How is our heart? Variance means contention, debate, quarrelings, strife, and disputing. It's a trap of the enemy and there are multitudes of believers always ready to debate doctrine which is a worthless proposition because it usually leads straight to carnality. Emulations is being envious or jealous. It is rivalry or competition in spiritual things. We are so adept at competing in various sports many times we let the competition we learned in school carry over to church life. God never called us to excel over each other in the Kingdom, and many times, when that surfaces in the congregation, it leads to a church split. Let's make sure we allow God to promote us and don't try to do it ourselves!

WEDNESDAY, April 11
Scripture: Galatians 5:20

Wrath means outburst of anger, usually of a lasting or disturbing nature that unsettles our spirit so we can't really think properly or receive from the Lord. Strife has a little different meaning than most of us think. The root word means "the desire to put yourself forward." It's a partisan, factious spirit. Philippians 1:15-16, in the Living Bible, speaks explicitly of this kind of strife. Seditions means "disunion, dissension, and division." First

Corinthians 3:1-13 shows us the fruit of dissension. Romans 16:17-18 also speaks of this demonic activity that many of us can recognize at various times in our churches: *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."* These individuals use a cloak of flattery, friendship, and fair phrases, to win confidence on the surface while all along they are preparing to win confidence in order to poison. These people usually transfer spirits into churches causing splits. We need to watch out for such activity.

THURSDAY, April 12
Scripture: Galatians 5:20,21

Heresy is dissension arising from a diversity of opinion. It's men separating themselves and following their own tenets. I remember writing papers in High School lighting the Civil Rights Movement and supporting the cause. Wrongs were righted and equality realigned in my lifetime. In the past two decades "race pimps" have built political organizations and routinely trumpeted inequality that didn't exist. They are political heretics sowing division for personal profit. There should be a special place in hell for those wanting to destroy a nation for their own profit! Envying simply means jealousy or ill-will because of a blessing that someone else receives. When we can praise God for another who receives a blessing we have been praying for, but don't have yet, then we know we're growing rapidly out of carnality.

FRIDAY, April 13
Scripture: Galatians 5:21 Matthew 15:15-20 First John 3:10-16

Jesus said murder is in the heart before it is ever acted out, making it possible to be guilty spiritually before ever committing the act. We're stopped in our tracks to realize, in both Matthew 15 and First John 3, that murder goes well beyond the actual act of ending someone's life. It deals with the quality of our maturity in Christ-likeness. If we're not walking in love, we can actually be labeled in Scripture as a murderer even when we've never sliced anyone's throat. Drunkenness means over indulging in any intoxicant or losing control. Many get intoxicated with television and can't turn it off, men with sports, ladies with soap operas or kids with action movies. The last major part of carnality is revelings, which means the love of social gatherings. Can a person be a Christian and get caught up in any one of these things? The answer is unequivocally, "yes." We need to be aware and walk in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is faithful to witness against over indulgence. When we see things in our friends, intercede and apply Mark 11:23-24 in intercession stopping the work of the enemy so maturity can come. Paul said over and over again, *"I labor in prayer until Christ be formed in you,"* meaning that through prayer he was used by the Holy Spirit to bring people out of carnality into spirituality. If we let God use us in that way, we too are bringing forth eternal fruit.

SATURDAY, April 14
Scripture: First Corinthians 1:27-3 1

Are we moving toward spiritual maturity? Jesus ate with a Pharisee who could not understand why He was allowing a sinner and a prostitute to minister to Him. Jesus told a parable. He said a master had two debtors. One owed him a quarter, the other owed him a quarter of a million. He forgave both, but which one would love him more? The Pharisee said, *"The one who he forgave more,"* and Jesus said, "So it is with you and this woman. You love me little, she loves me a lot." Verse 28 says the things which are despised of the world, God has chosen to bring to nought things that are. God desires to redeem our inabilities, failures, weaknesses and all shortcomings. What is judged weak by the world becomes by the Spirit our qualification. God's transformation enables us to move mountains and make a difference. This process brings dramatic growth! God delights in using those who the world would never promote, admire, or find anything of which to make a success. God delights in taking

failures like David and making them great spiritually. If we'll but walk the pathway of spirituality, we'll be used to bring forth mighty eternal fruit. God's transformation of failures is spiritual cement.

SUNDAY, April 15
Scripture: First Corinthians 2:1,2

Paul says two basic principles determined his whole ministry. Number one - he refused to rely on his own ability, his own training, or his own background of higher education, which, of course, was always a great temptation as it is to us in America, because we live in a society where higher education is the pathway to financial security and a better life. He chose rather to totally rely on God through a walk in the spirit, which is principle two in verse 2. He said, *"I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified,"* meaning "I'm going to walk into the pulpit totally dependent upon God. If He doesn't come through, I look like an idiot. If He comes through, I look like I'm one of the greatest ministers that ever walked the face of the earth. If God has something to say and has spoken, I will speak it. If God has nothing to say, I will risk the ire of the congregation and sit down rather than please the people and disobey God." If we make that determination in our life in what we face daily, then we certainly are trainable in God's hands and are well on our way to a spiritual walk where God will be able to entrust us with His power.

MONDAY, April 16
Scripture: First Corinthians 2:3

What a bold statement to be made by the Apostle Paul: *"I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling."* This certainly doesn't sound like the man who raised the dead, who was stoned and then got up healed, who preached to kings, Roman emperors, and rulers from one end of the then known world to the other. Does that sound like Mr. Boldness and Mr. Power? And yet, he says in verse 3, *"I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling."* We say, "Wait a minute. I thought he was a great man of faith. How could this be?" Verse 3 is a necessary part of the decision in verse 2. Once we have determined not to use worldly ways, manipulation, motivational techniques, and all the little intricacies of getting people to do what we want, which are so readily available in every aspect of our society, the only alternative is trusting and relying totally on the Lord. But what if the Lord doesn't come through? We see Paul relinquished control to God and there was an ever-present uncertainty in his life as to what would happen next. He had to live on the precipice of a very high hill knowing only God could keep him from falling squarely on his face. Very few people are willing to live a life like that. Most of us opt for the safer walk where we have more control. But the problem is, when we take control, the Holy Spirit has none, and He is the One with the power!

TUESDAY, April 17
Scripture: First Corinthians 2:1-5

The exciting second half of yesterday's lesson is in verse 4. Once we've determined that we're willing to live on that kind of a cliff and to fall on our face if God should will it so, then, we are prepared for the demonstration of the Spirit and power. And so Paul says, *"...my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: (for one reason) that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."* Sadly enough, we have all too many congregations today whose faith is not in the power of God, but in the wisdom of men. There is a price to be paid to walk in the spirit. The question is, are we willing to pay it? In the two preceding days, we have just seen the difference between stages of spiritual development. A spiritual Christian develops a total dependence on God and refuses to rely on his own resources, abilities or techniques, to get him through. The soulish Christian is one who tries to walk in God's ways with his own mind figuring out the best way to do and accomplish. He's grown past the carnal stage, but doesn't hear God's specific directions for his life. Which stage are we in? Let's determine that we're going to grow into the spiritual realm.

WEDNESDAY, April 18
Scripture: James 3: 1 -1 7 Galatians 6: 1

As we begin to plumb the depths of the soulish man, what better place to start than in James where we look at the primary delivery vehicle for all soulishness - the tongue. Verse 9 says concerning the tongue, *"With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so."* A sure sign of soulishness is a sporadic cursing, although many times not intended, from the mouth of undisciplined people. Whatever we discover and judge in a fellow believer, if we're not careful, can become an open door for the same kind of sin (Galatians 6: 1). If we forgive and try to restore people who fall into various levels of sin and iniquity rather than judging them, God says we can expect rapid growth and development in the character of Jesus. But if we refuse, then we clearly acknowledge we're walking on in foolishness opening a door for the same kind of temptation to overtake us as we've criticized. Does a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? No. It can't yield salt water and fresh. Verse 13 says the wise will walk in wisdom. They refuse to let a judgmental and critical spirit, bringing envy and strife, enter their hearts for they know that wisdom is not from above, but is earthly, sensual (soulish), and devilish. It hinders our growth and must be overcome!

THURSDAY, April 19
Scripture: Matthew 23:1-15

The soulish man is presented quite realistically here as Jesus begins to talk about the scribes and Pharisees sitting in leadership positions. Many works of the soulish man are done for one purpose, to be seen of men rather than the actual pleasing of God. They dress up in spiritual garb so that everyone can recognize their position. They love all the positions at the head of the table where they are seen by the whole congregation and love their titles "Rabbi, Rabbi." And Jesus said, all of it has to stop, for it's sensual, soulish, and non-productive.

FRIDAY, April 20
Scripture: Jude 14-19

There is a pattern emerging in the New Testament concerning the soulish man. He is usually a person of law loving position and seeking a title. They are exalters of themselves, always pushing for greater heights of recognition. Many of the things they do are for a pretense to look good and make people think they are mature. Finally, they are much more interested in growth in numbers than they are in the actual spiritual progress of people. Even in Jude, it says there will be those who separate themselves in the last days and are sense-ruled. In other words, they move people soulishly because that's where they live. How many of our churches rely on entertainment, good music, slick presentations, special ministries or programs based primarily in appealing to the soulish realm to bless people. It has a great sound, gives you nice goose bumps, but produces very little of eternal value. The soulish man cannot fulfill the works of the spirit nor produce the fruit.

SATURDAY, April 21
Scripture: Luke 13:23-30 Matthew 22:31,32 Exodus 3:6,15,16 John 5:19,30 Genesis 16:1-16

God identifies Himself with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He began with Abraham but He didn't have a nation until He finished with Jacob who had to be transformed into Israel. Abraham is called the father of faith, and yet, as we study his life, we can certainly discover because of natural and carnal tendencies there's definitely hope for all of us. Abraham blew it many times. God promised him a son and after waiting a number of years and growing almost to the end of the time when it was still physically possible, he, in agreement with Sarah decided to help God out with Hagar. Their own plan didn't work out very well as it produced a lot of strife between Sarah and Hagar. And not only that, Ishmael was a wild man, according to Genesis 16:12, and his hand was **against** every man and every man's hand would be against him. Ishmael produced a lot of strife and Abraham would have been blessed

had Ishmael never been born. Consequently, Abraham learns the value of the principle that every worthwhile thing must have its eternal source in God in order to count. When its origination is in the soulish part of man, then all it produces is soulish fruit which is wildly against God's plan and of no eternal value. Through mercy God redeems our failures and brings value out of it!

SUNDAY, April 22
Scripture: Genesis 17:1-22

God comes to visit Abraham and says, "Look, My promise will be established with you and Sarah. You're going to call his name Isaac, and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant and with his seed after him." Abraham pleads that Ishmael may stand before Him, but God will hear none of it, although He does promise the child of flesh a very fleshy position. But that which is spiritual and eternal has to be established through Isaac, for anything to have eternal value it must originate in God alone. Ishmael gets a very fleshy blessing because he is a child of the flesh while the eternal value of God's covenant and what He wants to do has to come through Isaac. Isaac has an origin of promise ratified by faith which overcomes the impossibility of flesh. So Isaac will be a child of the spirit, and let's make sure everything we get involved in spiritually is not just an expenditure of flesh for expediency sake, but is really obedience to God and has its roots in Him, for then and then only, will it count eternally.

MONDAY, April 23
Scripture: First Corinthians 3:9-15

Ishmael's life was wood, hay, and stubble. It originated in a good plan to help God out, but God had to come back and tell Abraham and Sarah He never accepts addendums to His plans. And when we try to help Him out, then all we're going to produce is something that's worthless, usually detracting from the original purpose as was the case with Ishmael, for his hand was against Isaac - the chosen seed. How many things have we done or ideas have we set in motion that are in the flesh? They're good ideas, but we try to help out, and what we start only hinders rather than helps. Such is the condition of the soulish Christian. He is ever-trying to figure out a better way to do what God wants done and only wakes up to realize he's gotten in the way and hindered the process. The spiritual man waits, trusts, and understands that many times God takes us to the very end of our own ability where we have to recognize it cannot be done without a touch of the supernatural, and *then* God, and God alone, gets the glory. That is our life and testimony.

TUESDAY, April 24
Scripture: Hebrews 4:9-16 First Peter 1: 13-25

How do we get delivered from the soulish realm? The first step is to ***surrender to the will of God***. Then, by His Spirit, He can divide asunder, or show us which is soulish, spiritual, and carnal. Only then can we discern the very thoughts and motivations of the heart. As we really begin to ask, God will surely show us. We first come to God through the blood of Jesus, recognizing it was the blood that released us from all sin, and it's the blood that has bought and paid for every blessing we shall inherit. Therefore, through continual, persistent, watchful prayer, we can stand before the Lord, speak to Him face to face and know He will surely reveal those areas of our life that need to melt away as we grow out of the carnal and soulish into the spiritual.

WEDNESDAY, April 25
Scripture: Acts 7:1-3 Genesis 11:27-31

Acts chapter 7 tells us something about Abraham we won't find in Genesis 11 and that is God spoke to him or appeared to him before he dwelt in Haran. This fact is very important as we read Genesis chapter 11 discovering exactly what God said and what He had in mind for Abraham. Genesis 11:31 says, *"Terah took his son Abram and*

... they went out from Ur of the Chaldeans ... and came to Haran." Now God had spoken to Abraham to leave his kindred and to begin to move revealing the destination – once he arrived. But the actual account of Scripture reveals it was Terah who took Abraham. The great leader Abraham, the pioneer father of faith, has suddenly become the follower. The great thing about being in covenant with God is that He gets our strengths and weaknesses. He is the **only** One that can redeem those weaknesses.

THURSDAY, April 26
Scripture: Genesis 11:27-32

Abraham took the revelation from God and submitted it to his earthly father; which was *not* what God told him to do. Patriarchs ruled entire families in those days. That was the custom of the land, but Abraham was told by God to leave his father and his kindred. And so he went to his dad and said, "God appeared to me and told all of these great things He is going to do," and so his father decided it sounded good and he would go with him. So Abraham becomes the follower as Terah takes him on a journey. He didn't leave when he was told to, and rather than leaving his family, he took them with him. That's the reason they stopped short of Haran. Few can participate in our call. God's appointed leader becomes the follower through tradition. Thank God through the power of the Holy Spirit we can break tradition today. Abraham was locked up and couldn't go into the Promised Land until his father died, according to verse 32. Only then could he advance. Is it possible there are some traditions in us that need to die before we advance? If so, it's only the Holy Spirit that can reveal it, but as we pray and ask Him, He surely will for He's the One who has called us to the freedom of the sons of God.

FRIDAY, April 27
Scripture: Genesis 12:1-4

Isn't it interesting that the name Terah, Abraham's father, actually means delay and wasted time. So even as Abram yielded to culture honoring his Dad, it simply meant a delay in his calling, a delay in his blessing, and some naturally wasted time. But he still, after Terah's death, takes Lot; which was diametrically opposed to what God told him to do. I suppose if there's anything we can see in the life of Abraham, it is he doesn't readily, at this point, obey God when direction comes. How much like him are we? Do we come to God initially in the soulish realm, judge what He tells us to do based on how we feel rather than allowing the Holy Spirit to work it out in His time?

SATURDAY, April 28
Scripture: Luke 14:15-26

The degree of excuses which arise when God's call comes, reveal a very deep soulish domination. Isn't it interesting that verses 25 and 26 talk about a man's commitment to God above everything else? And it says in comparison, if he *"...hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."* The word "life" there is the Greek word **psuche.** It is soulish life and it includes all soulish appeals, whether they be new houses, lands, friends, finances, or any thing which has great worldly domination and appeal. God says put it all below our commitment to Him. Only then are we going to find the blessing of full discipleship.

SUNDAY, April 29
Scripture: Luke 14:27-35

It's obvious soulish domination causes disobedience to the Holy Spirit and becomes a doorway for the devil. Jesus' teaching here guarantees everyone when they start building their life, if they don't commit to God above all other soulish appeals, they will not have enough to finish that which they have begun. He also guarantees if we do not commit to loving and obeying Jesus above every other activity, (father, mother, wife, children, brethren,

sisters), then we forfeit everything He has promised. Without obedience, we can never have the fullness of His power or the fullness of His authority. Verse 33 guarantees it. But on the other hand, if we do make that commitment and allow God to do His perfect cleansing work, then Jesus guarantees we'll not only have enough to finish the building, but we'll also win the war. Are you winning your war?

MONDAY, April 30
Scripture: Mark 3:20-35 First Corinthians 14:45-48

He who said, *"Honor your father and mother"* also redefined our family when He said, *"Who are they?"* They are those who are doers of the Word and not hearers only. First Corinthians 15 tells us what Adam overlooked to satisfy his wife, Jesus refused flesh in order to obey God. In other words, many times Satan will attack us in our families. He will come against us and try to use a family tie of some kind in order to get us to disobey a higher calling. It was true with Abraham and it's still true today. The enemy still works the same way. He hasn't changed. So when the conflict in our family comes, are we going to be spiritual and serve God above everything else, or are we going to be soulish and give in to the desires of family? Thank God we have a new family. We're born into it by the precious blood of Jesus. Let's give everything we've got to see this family grow, prosper, and develop, for in this family, we draw our very life, power, peace, and the blessings of God. May they overflow upon us in the coming year in abundance as we learn to **walk in the spirit** and ***not in the flesh***.

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ITINERARY
Al Houghton

April 13-16	Daystar Ministries 75 Old Trolly Road Summerville, SC 29483 Phone: (843)821-0089 Meetings: **13th** 7PM **14th** 7PM **15th** 10AM **16th** 7PM
April 19-22	Word Of Love Ministries Phone: (770)772-6364 Call for location or e-mail pagastineau@earthlink.net Meetings: **19th 20th 21st 9:30AM – 3PM**