

PERSONAL NOTES

God is not merely gathering a people, He is forming something within them.

"till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."
Eph. 4:13, NKJV.

Lecture 1: Swimming Upstream into the Life of Christ

Why this Study Lecture – A Call to Swim Upstream

This study lecture has been given for one purpose, to help you swim upstream. For there is, in the spiritual life, a current that carries the many, and a calling that summons the few. Popular religion, in many instances, has learned to drift with the world rather than confront it. It borrows the methods of the age in a sincere attempt to advance the Kingdom of God. And though we are grateful for every effort made to reach the lost, we must acknowledge with honesty that something more is needed, something not born of human strategy, but of divine intervention.

There exists also a subtle danger within theological thought itself. Over time, doctrine and tradition can become so firmly established that they no longer serve as windows through which we see truth, but as walls that prevent us from seeing further. Like the church of Laodicea, many feel rich and satisfied, unaware of their deeper need (Rev. 3:14-21). Yet spiritual maturity is not measured by knowledge, nor by systems, nor by activity, but by one thing alone: **Christlikeness**.

God-Seekers – The Bride becoming a Son

We love the family of God in all its stages, from the smallest infant in Christ to the restless and questioning believer still finding their way. Yet the ministry of Jesus Christ in this hour is particularly directed toward a people who are growing, those who are becoming the **Bride in her beauty**, preparing to step into maturity.

She is no longer satisfied with knowing Christ only as Savior. She has encountered Him as the Anointed One. And now, something deeper begins to unfold, His **Lordship** is being established within her.

For there is a divine order in God's purpose:

- First, **relationship**, then **expression**.
- First, **love**, then **authority**.

The love between the Bridegroom and the Bride is not an end in itself, it is a beginning. From that union, something is born. In the Old Testament, God was joined to Israel, and from that union came forth Christ. In the New Testament, Christ is joined to His Church, and from that union emerges a **corporate son**, a people in whom His nature is revealed. Brideship precedes sonship. Love gives birth to maturity.

The Free Ride and the Upstream Call

Imagine a great river, rushing toward the sea. The waters move with force and certainty, carrying along everything that yields to them, branches, leaves, and fragments of wood, all taken effortlessly downstream.

Such is the flow of this world. To drift with it requires no strength, no decision, no conviction. It is the path of least resistance, and billions, both within and outside the Church, are carried along by it.

But there is another company. Like salmon pressing against the current, they move in the opposite direction. Not because they delight in struggle, but because they are driven by something deeper, **an inward call**. They are not rebels. They are not critics. They are **God-seekers**. They refuse the free ride.

A witness of Christ – not by Word only, but by Life

The current of society, and, sadly, much of what is called religion, moves with an unchecked force, drawing everything downward that does not resist it. To drift with this current requires no effort; it is the easiest path, and countless multitudes follow it without question, both those who know God and those who do not. Yet, even now, there is a different call being sounded. God is awakening a people within whom a deeper hunger has been stirred, a company no longer satisfied with complacent religion but compelled to pursue Him. These are not merely believers; they are seekers, men and women, who have been inwardly delivered from the quiet grip of spiritual indifference.

Such a path is not without cost. To move against the current is to feel its resistance, and often to feel alone within it. There will be moments of misunderstanding, of rejection, even of being set aside by those who find comfort in the familiar. For to stand outside the structures that define popular religion is, at times, to appear as an outsider. And yet, something irreversible has taken place we have seen the King. We have heard His voice. His love has overtaken us, and His glory has begun to reshape us from within. We are no longer content with childish things, for as the Scripture declares,

“When I was a child, my speech, feelings, and thinking were all those of a child; now that I am a man (mature in Christ), I HAVE NO MORE USE FOR CHILDISH WAYS.” 1 Cor. 13:11, GNB.

This journey upstream is not sustained by human resolve, but by divine **POWER**. The Greek word “*Dunamis*” speaks of more than strength, it is an ability **born of an indwelling life**, the very power of God at work within His people. It is this life that enables us not only to endure, but to become. For we have not been called to build systems, nor to perfect methods, but to reveal a Person. The Church must recover her true calling, not as an institution, but as a living expression of Christ in the earth. And so we go, not merely to speak of Him, but to embody Him, until it may truly be said, “*Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,*” and the world once again encounters the living Christ through His people.

And having seen Him, we cannot return unchanged. This calling is not merely to speak of Christ, but to **become a witness of Him**.

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And then, quite unexpectedly, the surface of the river is broken, not by the drifting debris carried along by the current, but by a sudden, living resistance. A salmon emerges, cutting through the waters with deliberate purpose. It does not wander, nor does it hesitate, for it is drawn by something deeper than sight, **an inward knowing that calls it upstream**. While the river hastens downward with restless force, the **mature fish** press against it, undistracted by the turbulence that surrounds them. They do not consult the current; **they obey the call within**.

The journey is not without danger. Along the banks, predators wait, bears poised with patience, eagles circling above, and unseen threats lurking beneath the surface. Many will not complete the journey. And yet, this does not alter the course of those who continue. For they are not driven by safety, but by **destiny**. And though the way is narrow and the cost is real, there are those who will arrive, because they could not do otherwise.

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The Greek word for **FLESH** ("Sarx") refers to the body, the natural life of man. And yet, even in this body, another life now dwells.

As it is written: *"But you shall receive power (inherent ability stemming from an indwelling nature) when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses..." Acts 1:8, NASB.*

Notice: it does not say you shall *do* witnessing, but you shall *be* witnesses. Across the earth, there is a people who are hearing what the Spirit is saying. They are committed to Christ, and they are determined to swim upstream. And despite all that appears contrary, we know this truth: God is filling the earth with His glory (Num. 14:21; Hab. 2:14; Isa. 6:3).

Being a Witness – The Life within

There is a common misunderstanding that witnessing is merely speaking the right words at the right time. But true witness is far deeper than this. It is not first something we do, it is something we **are**. It is the life of Christ expressed through a yielded vessel.

People are not transformed by arguments, but by encounter. And the most powerful testimony is not spoken, **it is lived**. When others see the reality of Christ in us, His love, His peace, His authority, they begin to desire what cannot be manufactured. This kind of witness must be earned, not demanded. If we have not loved people, we have no authority to instruct them. If we have not walked with God, our words will carry no weight.

The Indwelling Life – Christ in you

Christianity is not an activity; it is a life.

← *"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the **flesh** I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Gal. 2:20, NKJV.*

There is within us a Presence far greater than any force that moves through the world. We do not stand in our own strength, nor do we advance by human resolve, for the victory we seek is already secured in the **One who dwells within us**.

As the apostle declares, *"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" 1 John 4:4, NKJV.*

The Christian life, then, is not the striving of a distant follower, but the expression of an **indwelt life**. To be a Christian is to be **inhabited** by Christ Himself. And it is this indwelling Presence that enables the journey upstream, for such a path belongs only to those who are willing to follow the Lamb, not selectively, but wherever He leads (John 10:1-18; Rev. 14:1-5).

If this indwelling Christ is truly our life, then He must be seen not only in our worship, but in **our conduct**. Faith that remains confined to moments of devotion, yet fails to shape our daily

relationships, has not yet taken root in its fullness. It is of little consequence to appear radiant in the assembly, while at home our words and attitudes betray a life untouched by grace.

For the witness of Christ is not established by outward acts alone, nor by the distribution of words without substance, but by a life transformed from within.

Love, patience, humility, these are the true evidence of His presence. We do not merely speak of Him; **we reveal Him** in the **quiet, unseen places** where **character** is **formed** and **tested**.

Summary

This lecture is a call to move beyond passive Christianity into intentional pursuit. While many drift with the current of religion and culture, God is calling a people to swim upstream, to resist complacency and pursue Christ with sincerity and depth. Spiritual maturity is not defined by knowledge or tradition, but by the measure in which Christ is formed within us.

The Bride of Christ is being prepared, not merely for relationship, but for transformation. From this relationship of love emerges a mature sonship, a people in whom Christ is not only known, but revealed. This journey requires courage, for it often leads away from acceptance and into deeper dependence on God alone. Yet those who have seen the King cannot return to ordinary living.

True witness is not found in words alone, but in the life of Christ expressed through us. Christianity is not something we perform, it is Christ living within us, manifesting His nature through our lives. As we yield to His indwelling presence, we become living testimonies of His reality in the earth.

The ministry of Christ now finds its truest expression among those whose hearts burn with a singular longing, God-hungry believers whose gaze is fixed upon Jesus alone. Among them, a quiet yet decisive transition is taking place: from spiritual adolescence into maturity.

No longer content to drift with the current, they turn and press upstream, drawn not by rebellion, but by revelation. These are not dissenters, but seekers compelled by a deeper call.

Like salmon moving against the force of a rushing river, they advance with purpose, though the waters resist them. Around them the current surges, sparkling, restless, carrying along leaves and driftwood with effortless ease. Everything that yields is swept downward by the pull of gravity. Yet these press on, not because the way is easy, but because the call within them is stronger than the current around them.

They are not sustained by their own strength, but by the life of Christ within them, quietly urging them onward. And because they have heard His call, they move with a certainty that no current can overcome.

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"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." Heb. 12:1-2, ESV.

Study Questions

1. What is the purpose of this study lecture?

2. What is the danger of tradition and doctrine?

3. How is spiritual maturity measured?

4. What is the relationship between Brideship and Sonship?

5. What does “*swimming upstream*” represent?

6. What does it mean to be a witness?

7. Why is lifestyle important in witnessing?

8. What does Galatians 2:20 teach us?

9. What does the Greek word “*Sarx*” mean?

10. Who are those that follow the Lamb?

Study Answers

1. To help believers grow spiritually and “*swim upstream*” against worldly and religious complacency.
2. They can become barriers that prevent further revelation if held without openness to the Spirit.
3. By Christlikeness, not knowledge or activity.
4. Brideship (love relationship) precedes Sonship (mature expression).
5. Living against the flow of worldly and religious compromise.
6. To embody Christ, not just speak about Him.
7. Because people are impacted more by what we are than what we say.
8. That Christ lives His life through us.
9. It refers to the flesh or physical body.
10. Those who fully surrender and follow Christ wherever He leads.