

How to live the fullness of God

Timothy Project

Student Manual

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Project Coordinator

Dr. John Barry Dyer

Pedagogical Team

Marivete Zanoni Kunz

Tereza Jesus Medeiros

Claudeci Costa Nobre

Leonardo Araújo

Manual prepared by:

Dr. John Barry Dyer

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Source: John Stacey, Groundwork of Theology (except Lesson 7).

Lesson

1

LIVING THE FULNESS OF GOD

PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

The purpose of this manual is to facilitate a living relationship with biblical doctrine. Our life and practice is determined by the values and principles that guide our conduct which, in turn, can enrich our daily experience of God's presence.

The Bible is the rule of faith and conduct. Christians live by the teaching of the Bible; the law and the prophets in the Old Testament, and by virtue of the infinite grace of God revealed to us in the New Testament, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. The apostle Paul speaks of three principles by which we live as Christians: faith, hope and love (1 Cor 13.13).

FAITH

The word "faith" may be used in two different ways: firstly, faith means to believe in something, for example, with regard to alternative medicine based on herbal remedies. This is to say, a person may believe that alternative medicine is able to correct certain types of imbalance in the human body. This type of faith may be generated through advertising on the part of the producers of these remedies and/or as a result of personal use of such remedies.

Faith of this kind is largely subjective, as there is not sufficient scientific evidence to prove that herbal remedies are reliable. However, one may believe that God has provided natural remedies (derived from plants) and synthetic medicine (produced in pharmaceutical laboratories) that are useful for the well-being of the human body.

Secondly, the word “faith” can be used to mean a body of doctrine or teaching by which we live out our lives. This doctrine generates the necessary conditions for faith to become a reality within human experience. As such, faith has its origin or source in doctrine. For the Christian believer, doctrine comes from God in the sense that it is revealed by him through the apostles and the prophets. The apostle Paul considered this to be the foundation of Christian faith, when he wrote to the church in Ephesus (Eph 2.20).

In fact, the people of God are the people of the faith. The faith of the believer is centered in God who reveals himself to us in a special way in the Bible and supremely in the person of Jesus Christ.

Our faith is centered in God and in the conviction that He exists and has revealed himself in history; that he rewards those who seek him (Heb 11.6). So faith, in this sense, is objective and is based on facts above human sentiment.

Faith translates as confidence and obedience. These are the principal characteristics of the people of faith, characteristics which lead towards a dynamic relationship with the living God. There is a hymn with the following lines: “Trust and obey, for

there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey".

HOPE

When we speak of Christian hope, we are entering the area of eschatology or things that are to come. The conviction that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the God who reveals himself in history, leads us to the conclusion that he is also the Lord of history, and as such has our destiny and that of the Universe in his hands.

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews defines faith as follows: "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (11.1). The theologian Jürgen Moltmann has made the statement that hope, whilst having a future orientation, serves the purpose of transforming the present.

This hope invades the present and becomes part of it. Hope is determinative for the way we live in the present, our thinking, speaking and doing. Our hope is based on the living God "who is and who was and who is to come" (Rev 1.8). We hope in God because of the things he has done in the lives of our forefathers in the faith, and because of the things he has done in our own lives.

In particular, the Exodus was the greatest event in Israel's history. It was because of this event that the people of God placed their hope in God for a secure and glorious future, despite the difficulties, struggles and defeats along the way.

For the Church, hope in God revolves around the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his victory over sin and death.

In both cases, Christian hope is based on the victorious action of the living God in the midst of history and in the lives of human beings. And in accordance with the testimony of Scripture: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Cor 2.9). Hope is nourished in the present by the action of God in the past and by the promise of his action, equally glorious, in the future. The beatitudes are the words of Jesus, full of hope for the poor and oppressed of the present time, that the Lord of history will bring rich blessings to those who trust in him.

LOVE

It would be difficult to find more beautiful or profound words about love than those of the apostle Paul on writing to the church in Corinth (1 Cor 13.4-7). There are many lessons that could be taken from these verses, though here we will limit ourselves to a few:

1. Love does not seek its own interests. Love always focuses the other person and their needs. The word “love” may be translated from the original Greek as fraternal love, sensual love, or divine love (agape). It is the strongest and most complete understanding of the word and signifies love dedicated to the interests of the one to whom it is destined - the beloved.
2. Love rejoices in the truth. That is to say, in the context of 1 Corinthians 13, love is just and strives for justice. It isn't biased or one sided. Love, faith and hope are a fundamental part of Christian living. This kind of love comes from God. It is supernatural love. To love one's enemies

and all others as oneself is an expression of God's love in our lives. In order to love like this, it is necessary to love God (Mat 22.37-39).

3. Love is patient and kind. God's love and love of God are founded in the law. (Deut 10.12, 15). However, God's love is not restricted to the people of Israel (10.18). The stranger or foreigner is also the object of God's love. This love is available to everyone and will never end (1 Cor 13.8). This love is revealed to us in a special way in the person, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 3.16; 15.9). We can live in the love of God, because he poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, which has been given to us (Rom 5.5).

DOCTRINE IN PRACTICE

This module has in view the living out of doctrine as the rule of faith and practice. To put doctrine into practice means to live in accordance with the teaching of Scripture and, in particular, of our Lord Jesus Christ (Mark 12.28-31). In this way, we may live the fulness of God, which is the will of God for every believer. As Jesus said: "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10.10b).

In the following lessons, we shall be learning about the living God and his purposes for our lives.

