

LOVE THE LORD



Lesson Four - What does it mean to live with Christ in us?

August 2023

Summary of key points

- Each person is either a slave to sin or a slave of God. We are called to be a captive to Jesus.
- Satan propagates lies about God and hardens our hearts so we turn away from God. We can't see the good news of Jesus living inside us.
- We need to remember how Jesus has demonstrated His love to us and who He is.
- Otherwise, unbelief will keep us from Jesus' Sabbath rest for God's people (includes some tests for unbelief.)
- We find perfect peace and rest when we believe in and trust Jesus fully.

Watch the lesson online

<https://youtu.be/fYP3wpOHtNo>

Transcript

Welcome to the fourth lesson of Love the Lord where we examine what it means to live with Christ in us.

Let us begin by inviting God to speak to us personally through this study. Please follow along as we pray together. Click "pause" at any point if you need more time.

First, let's thank God for His perfect character and His perfect will for our lives.

Next, please confess all the things that have been stressful lately and give them over to Jesus.

Let us confess the ways we have sinned against God and against other people, and ask for His forgiveness so that we can lay these burdens down at His feet.

Also, please confess the ways others have sinned against us, and forgive them in Jesus' name.

Next, let us ask God to purify and open our hearts to receive His teaching.

Finally, please repeat these words, "In Jesus' name, I silence all distractions and voices that are not from God. Amen."

Let's begin the lesson for today. What does it mean to live with Christ in us?

Most people can tell you that Jesus came to die for our sins in order to make us right with God again.

Romans 4:25 He was handed over to die because of our sins, and he was raised to life to make us right with God. (NLT)

The Son came to make us holy and clean, washed by His Word as we obey His will. Jesus does this so that we will be ready and purified, without blemish or fault, for His return when He comes back to earth again in full glory.

Ephesians 5:25-27 ... Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. (NLT)

Matthew 25:31-32 "But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. (NLT)

At that time, He will separate His true followers and judge everyone accordingly.

But all this is only part of the story. Jesus also came to destroy the works of the devil and the power of sin over our hearts, our minds, our souls, and our bodies.

1 John 3:8 But when people keep on sinning, it shows that they belong to the devil, who has been sinning since the beginning. But the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil. (NLT)

He also came so that whoever believes in Him will experience the outflow of the living waters of the Holy Spirit through our hearts every day.

John 7:38-39 Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, 'Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.'" (When he said "living water," he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him... (NLT)

These waters come down from the springs of the water of life around God's throne in heaven. Is this something you can picture? Let us pause here briefly to reflect on this. You and I are connected with Jesus in very real ways within the spiritual realm, more than what we may be conscious of.

Revelation 21:5-6 And the one sitting on the throne said, “Look, I am making everything new!” ... And he also said, “It is finished! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. (NLT)

In fact, you and I are currently seated with Jesus in the heavenly places. Jesus did not just come to earth and then ascend into heaven simply to wait for the time of His return. He is fully united with His people in one heart at all times. He continues to be engaged in our lives every minute of every day.

Ephesians 2:6 For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. (NLT)

And one day, He will return to earth to gather us to His eternal Kingdom. The question is, will we be among the remnant on earth that He will find still faithful to Him? We are certainly living in the last days.

Luke 18:8 I tell you, he will grant justice to them quickly! But when the Son of Man returns, how many will he find on the earth who have faith?” (NLT)

Jesus has warned that the love of many followers in this time will grow cold and many will be deceived. Many Christians will turn away from Jesus altogether. Only those who endure to the end will be saved.

Matthew 24:10-13 And many will turn away from me and betray and hate each other. And many false prophets will appear and will deceive many people. Sin will be rampant everywhere, and the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (NLT)

Thankfully Jesus is able to keep us from falling away and being rejected when He returns to judge the world, if we are willing to be made His captives.

Jude 1:24-25 Now all glory to God, who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into his glorious presence without a single fault. All glory to him who alone is God, our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord... (NLT)

Then we will be able to follow His victory parade as we spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume.

2 Corinthians 2:14 But thank God! He has made us his captives and continues to lead us along in Christ’s triumphal procession. Now he uses us to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume. (NLT)

The idea of being a captive or a slave may sound quite distasteful for some of us, but we need to realise that while we are on this earth, we are either a slave to sin or a slave of God. That is a choice we make on a daily basis.

Romans 6:20-22 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right... You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. (NLT)

We are either children of the devil or children of God. Who we choose to follow will determine if we are led to eternal death or eternal life. Those who are children of God will live righteously and love others, because it is no longer they who live but Jesus who lives in them and moves in them.

1 John 3:9-10 ... So they can't keep on sinning, because they are children of God. So now we can tell who are children of God and who are children of the devil. Anyone who does not live righteously and does not love other believers does not belong to God. (NLT)

This is what it means to be captive to Jesus, because He is the One who decides our every move. And we can trust Him because Jesus has already proven His perfect love for us by dying for us on the cross.

Galatians 2:20 My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (NLT)

Not only did Jesus die for us, He also took on our sufferings, rejection, abuse, and shame publicly. Let us look at the things He endured for our sake.

- Jesus has been despised and rejected, and has felt overwhelmed with grief | *Isaiah 53:3 He was despised and rejected — a man of sorrows, acquainted with deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised, and we did not care. (NLT)*
- He has been spat on, beaten, mocked, and slapped in public | *Mark 14:65 Then some of them began to spit at him, and they blindfolded him and beat him with their fists. "Prophecy to us," they jeered. And the guards slapped him as they took him away. (NLT)*
- He has been whipped in public | *John 19:1 Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. (NLT)*
- He has been stripped naked in public | *Matthew 27:27-28 Some of the governor's soldiers took Jesus into their headquarters and called out the entire regiment. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him. (NLT)*

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- He has been so brutalised and disfigured that He barely looked human | *Isaiah 52:14 ... His face was so disfigured he seemed hardly human, and from his appearance, one would scarcely know he was a man. (NLT)*

Because Jesus humbled Himself this low, we can be assured that He can fully sympathise with us when we feel rejected, abused, and ashamed too.

Let us read Hebrews chapter 2 verses 17 to 18 together, “Therefore, it was necessary for him to be made in every respect like us, his brothers and sisters, so that he could be our merciful and faithful High Priest before God... Since he himself has gone through suffering and testing, he is able to help us when we are being tested.” (Hebrews 2:17-18 NLT)

Jesus gave up immense divine privileges and humbled Himself to be born as a mere human being.

Philippians 2:7-8 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross. (NLT)

Where He used to rule above the angels, He took a position a little lower than His own angels, just so that He could save us and bring us into His Kingdom. Does that not lead us to deep humility and gratitude?

Hebrews 2:9 What we do see is Jesus, who for a little while was given a position “a little lower than the angels”; and because he suffered death for us, he is now “crowned with glory and honor.” Yes, by God’s grace, Jesus tasted death for everyone. (NLT)

Jesus is supreme and fills the universe.

- He existed before the world even began. | *John 17:24 Father, I want these whom you have given me to be with me where I am. Then they can see all the glory you gave me because you loved me even before the world began! (NLT)*
- Jesus is the Author of life. | *Acts 3:15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. And we are witnesses of this fact! (NLT)*
- He now sits in the place of honour next to God. | *1 Peter 3:22 Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority. (NLT)*
- All the angels and authorities and powers bow before His authority not only in this world but also in the world to come. | *1 Peter 3:22 Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority. (NLT)*

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- Jesus is the head over all things for the benefit of His people, the church. | *Ephesians 1:21-22*
Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. (NLT)
 - And He fills the entire universe with himself. | *Ephesians 4:10* *And the same one who descended is the one who ascended higher than all the heavens, so that he might fill the entire universe with himself. (NLT)*

This is the Jesus who lives inside us. Does this not lead us to worship Him?

Sometimes, we don't see Jesus very clearly because the god of this world has blinded our minds through unbelief. He propagates lies about God and hardens our hearts. We can't see the glorious good news that Jesus now lives inside of us.

2 Corinthians 4:4 Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God. (NLT)

Can you see why God calls an unbelieving heart evil, after all that Jesus has done and all that He is? When we hang on to the lies propagated by Satan, rather than in the truth stated in God's Word.

Hebrews 3:12 Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God. (NLT)

When we don't believe that Jesus lives in us, we will continue to strive using our own strength and we fail to enter a special rest that Jesus prepared for all those who believe in Him, called the Sabbath rest. Some of us have yet to stop striving and enter that Sabbath rest.

Hebrews 4:3,11 Now we who have believed enter that rest... it still remains for some to enter that rest, and since those who formerly had the good news proclaimed to them did not go in because of their disobedience, (NIV)

What does this Sabbath rest look like, and how can we make every effort to enter it? We will now run through some descriptions for you.

Hebrews 4:9-10 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from their works, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest... (NIV)

Take this opportunity to examine your own heart to see if you have experienced Jesus' Sabbath rest in its entirety.

One, we will rest from planning the direction and outcome of our lives. We have stopped analysing and strategising because our hearts trust in God's perfect plan. As long as we follow Jesus's instructions, we know we will be safe and secure.

Psalm 18:30 God's way is perfect. All the Lord's promises prove true. He is a shield for all who look to him for protection. (NLT)

Two, we will rest from trying to please other people because the only One that we want to please is God Himself. We know God's commendations lead to great joy, peace, and eternal rewards. Man's opinions, on the other hand, often lead to anxiety.

2 Corinthians 10:17-18 As the Scriptures say, "If you want to boast, boast only about the LORD." When people commend themselves, it doesn't count for much. The important thing is for the Lord to commend them. (NLT)

Three, we will rest from being easily offended. When we follow God's will for our lives, we know that when we are persecuted or attacked, it is really the Lord Jesus in us who is being attacked. We no longer take things so personally and are assured that God will bless us when we continue to obey Jesus.

Matthew 5:11-12 ... "God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. (NLT)

Four, we can rest from trying to defend ourselves because God is the ultimate Defender and Avenger of the innocent. Jesus promises to pay people back for all the evil they have caused by their words and actions. We can leave it to God to execute His righteous anger on our tormentors.

Romans 12:19 Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, "I will take revenge; I will pay them back," says the Lord. (NLT)

Five, we will rest from trying to be good. Jesus has said no one is good except God. We will accept our own flaws and weaknesses, because it is through our flaws and weaknesses that Jesus' transformative power is magnified the most through us.

Mark 10:18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked. "Only God is truly good. (NLT)

Six, we will rest from fearing death, because death only means that we are released from our physical bodies to join Jesus in heaven. Heaven is the purest, most peaceful, and most joyful place to be in. It is where we get to be with Jesus forever, without earthly sorrows or pain.

Hebrews 2:14-15 ... For only as a human being could he die, and only by dying could he break the power of the devil, who had the power of death. Only in this way could he set free all who have lived their lives as slaves to the fear of dying. (NLT)

Seven, we will rest from feeling hopeless. Where we used to feel defenceless and unequipped, we can now do all things through Christ who strengthens us to fulfil His will. Our hope rests in God alone. He promises to be generous with His wisdom if we ask.

Psalms 33:20-22 We put our hope in the Lord. He is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. Let your unfailing love surround us, Lord, for our hope is in you alone. (NLT)

Eight, we will rest from feeling condemned. We know that Jesus wants to save us and help us excel in His good and perfect will for our lives. This does not mean that we will no longer encounter painful challenges in life, because that would rob us of opportunities to mature in our faith otherwise.

John 3:17-18 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. (NIV)

It means that we will experience God's perfect peace, which exceeds anything we can understand, even in the midst of life's many difficulties. His peace will guard our hearts and minds as we live in Jesus Christ. This is God's Sabbath rest for us.

Philippians 4:7 Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus. (NLT)

What about you? How many of these statements can you say yes to? Are you living fully in Christ? Have you believed and entered Jesus' Sabbath rest? Or are there areas in which you are still striving in on your own strength? Are there any areas of unbelief in your heart? Is Jesus fully in control or are you still in charge? For instance, do you still compulsively worry about your future or your wealth or your health, more than you trust that Jesus can take care of all your needs? Do you still thirst for your parents' affirmation more than you desire to follow Jesus? Do you still feel a deep need to prove that someone was wrong about you, more than you desire Jesus' approval?

At the root of such anxieties, you will usually find some patterns of restless striving based on our own strength. For example, we may still have a deep instinct to:

1. Self-protect
2. Self-justify
3. Self-promote
4. Self-comfort
5. Self-indulge
6. Self-pity
7. Self-reject
8. Self-condemn

Notice that these all focus on the sinful human self, rather than in Jesus' perfect love and power. They are based on anxieties that we have not yet crucified to the cross. If you have recognised there are areas in your life where you are not fully living in Christ, here is a guided prayer to turn from self-idolatry. It is a prayer that you can come back to do in your own time at any point.

- First, pick one area that you struggle to rest in.
- Next, invite the Holy Spirit to search your heart and show you the reasons why.
- Thirdly, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the root fears that hold you back.
- Usually, there is someone we find that we need to forgive. Sometimes that person is ourselves. When we don't forgive, we stay stuck and enslaved to our past. Remember, we are either a slave to sin or a slave of God. All forms of bitterness will enslave us and hinder us from trusting God with childlike faith.
- We need to repent of our judgments and bitter thoughts of other people that have led to our inability to believe in and rest in Jesus.
- Freedom comes from forgiving them and blessing them, in Jesus' name.
- Finally, we can thank God for Jesus' Sabbath rest as you put your inner anxieties down.

Let us put down all our self striving and learn to live with the fullness of Christ in us, with God fully in control. If you are ready to go through this prayer, you can come back to this page at any time and allow the Holy Spirit to minister to you for as long as you need. Don't be afraid of any heavy emotions that might start to stir up inside of you. Allow God to release your suppressed fears and pains inside you and cleanse your spirit. The Holy Spirit is good, gentle, and kind. He knows your needs better than you do. Trust Him to do a good work.

We end today's lesson with two reflection questions as well as a testimony. Please prepare your answers before your next group meeting. We pray that you will be blessed. See you next time.

Time for reflection

1. What do you fear losing the most?
2. Is this fear greater than your fear of grieving God and quenching the Holy Spirit?

Watch the testimony for this lesson



Personal notes