

Being a Spiritually Minded Christian
Part Fifteen
Removing the Chaff

Matthew 3:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

¹²His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

- *John the Baptist introduced the ministry of the Lord Jesus by contrasting his own limited ministry with that of Jesus’ eternal ministry, “but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry.”*
- *John’s earthly ministry was a preparatory one with the sole purpose of preparing the people for the heavenly ministry of Jesus Christ. “He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.” (John 3:30-31 NKJV).*
- *John baptized people in water which reflected the hearts of the people turning to God in repentance. However, Jesus is portrayed as the One who baptizes people in the Holy Spirit and fire, reflecting both the power and holiness of God being released in the lives of His followers.*
- *John then used an analogy from both nature and agriculture to give us some insights into Jesus’ ministry. John used the example of how the chaff is separated from the grain in preparation for use.*
- *The analogies found in nature that are used to reveal spiritual truths are not a result of random chance or people’s creative imaginations but are things God intentionally placed in creation so we can clearly understand spiritual truths. “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20).*
- *For us to appreciate what God is trying to teach us using the analogy of chaff, it is important for us to understand the purpose of chaff and how it is removed.*
- *In grasses (including cereal crops such as rice, barley, oats and wheat), the ripe seed is surrounded by a thin, dry, scaly shell called a husk. As the grain grows and matures the husk provides protection for the grain. If the husk were to be removed while the grain is still growing the plant would be damaged and the grain would fail to develop.*

- *However, once the grain is harvested the husk must be removed before it can be used for human consumption to make flour or other forms of food. The husk that is removed is often referred to as chaff.*
- *Chaff should not be confused with bran, which is a finer scaly material that is part of the grain itself.*
- *The process of loosening the chaff from the grain to remove it is called threshing, traditionally done by milling or pounding. In biblical times the chaff was removed at a place called a threshing floor. The threshing floor had a hard flat surface where the grain was placed and an animal such as an ox or ass would walk around crushing the grain and breaking off the chaff.*
- *Once the chaff had been broken off from the heads of the grain, the farmer would winnow it in order to separate the chaff from the grain. This was accomplished using a winnowing fan, which resembled a pitchfork. The farmer would simply throw the grain up into the air and as the wind blew, the lighter chaff would be carried away and the heavier grains would fall back down.*
- *The chaff while useful when still attached to the grain as it was growing was of no value once the grain was harvested. In fact it hindered the grain from being used until it was removed.*
- *The chaff was also very light reflecting those things in our lives that would be represented by chaff that have no true spiritual value and carry no eternal purpose or glory. Chaff may be referred to in some languages as ‘the empty part of the grain’ or ‘the leaves of the grain’ or ‘the refuse of the grain.’*
- *The Bible refers to a few different things as chaff. The ungodly are compared to chaff.*

Psalm 1:3-4 (NKJV)

³ He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

⁴ The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.

- *The godly are described as fruitful trees while the ungodly are described as “chaff which the wind drives away.”*
- *One reason that the ungodly are compared to chaff is because they have no substance, stability, or spiritual foundation. When the winds of adversity begin to blow and God’s judgment comes they are quickly shaken and perish.*
- *However, the ungodly are referred to as chaff for a second reason. The ungodly are actually important in the development of those who are followers of Christ and who are seeking to develop and mature spiritually.*

- *Jesus taught us that we must learn to love and bless those who have hurt us, cursed us, and even betrayed us. “But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Matthew 5:44-45).*
- *If we want to become just like our Father in heaven, we must learn to love our enemies. However, there is one thing that is absolutely essential if we want to learn to love our enemies—we need to actually have enemies!*
- *Just as the chaff is essential to be present for the grain to develop and mature it is also essential that we have contact with those who oppose the Gospel and persecute us so we can learn to forgive them, bless them, and love them from our hearts just as God does.*
- *Another reason that the ungodly are associated with chaff is because it is through tribulation and persecution that godly character is developed.*
- *Just as chaff is involved in the development and growth of the grain, the Lord uses even the ungodly and the adversities of life to produce godly character in His children. “And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” (Romans 5:3-5).*
- *It is not the tribulation and hardships of this life in themselves that produce godly character and spiritual fruitfulness; it is our response to God in the midst of trials that results in spiritual fruitfulness.*
- *Hardships, losses, and suffering in themselves are never good, but only result in disappointments, heartbreak, and bitterness.*
- *However, when we invite God into the midst of our times of trials and suffering and embrace His love then God works a wonderful miracle in our hearts and begins to transform us into the image of His Son Jesus.*

Romans 8:28–29 (NKJV)

²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

²⁹For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

- *When the Bible says, “we know that all things work together for good” it prefixes it with the condition “to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.”*

- *In Greek, the phrase “to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” actually precedes the rest of the verse.*
- *The Bible doesn’t say that all things are good because there are many things in this life that are not good. Some are even bad, evil, and destructive. However, if we respond to God’s love in the midst of suffering, He will redeem even our painful experiences and out of the ashes of our failures He will bring forth life and fruitfulness.*
- *When we love God and submit to His plan for our lives then He takes even the painful and disappointing things in our lives and weaves them into a beautiful tapestry to produce something good.*
- *The good that He produces in our lives is the very best “good” because it causes us to be conformed into the image of His Son Jesus Christ!*
- *God uses the “chaff” of this life which has no eternal value to bring forth eternal fruit in our lives if we turn to Him, embrace His love, and simply trust Him as He leads us through the process.*
- *There is one more reason that God allows the ungodly, “the chaff,” to abide on the earth for a time. God can do something miraculous with “the chaff” in the realm of the spiritual that cannot happen in nature. God can turn the chaff into grain! He can take those who are ungodly and rebellious and who are following a path of destruction and He can save them, redeem them, and produce righteousness in and through them.*

Ephesians 2:3–5 (NKJV)

³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,

⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)

- *We were once all children of darkness but now God has transformed those who have put their faith in Christ into children of light. We, as followers of Christ, have passed from darkness to light and from death unto life. “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. (John 5:24).*
- *There is another aspect that the chaff can represent in the Scriptures. The chaff can also be an analogy for the natural mind. The natural mind reflects the point of view where everything is evaluated from the temporal or earthly point of view.*
- *The natural mind can be very pragmatic and even set long-term goals as long as those goals can be realized in this life. The natural mind can be useful in terms of making reasonable decisions and becoming a responsible contributor to society.*

- *The naturally minded person is able to pursue education or a successful career. In other words, it is helpful in developing, maturing, and growing into adults.*
- *While the natural mind, like the chaff, is useful in our growth and development there comes a time when the natural mind must give way so we can become spiritually minded.*
- *Once we receive Christ and are born again, God wants us to begin to see things from an eternal perspective and develop into spiritually minded Christians.*
- *The natural mind, while helpful when we were growing and developing as human beings, will be a hindrance as we walk in the things of the spirit. “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Corinthians 2:14).*
- *The naturally minded person is not capable of receiving the things of the spirit because they seem like foolishness to him. The Greek word translated as “foolishness” means “silliness, absurdity” and from which we derive our English word “moron.”*
- *The naturally minded person evaluates everything from what will benefit himself and how it will improve his life now. Christ taught, “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:25-26).*
- *Jesus taught us to live a life of self-sacrifice totally yielded to the will of God.*
- *Apostle Paul explained how the natural mind is to give way to the spiritual mind by using the example of a child growing up into adulthood and putting aside childish things. “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” (1 Corinthians 13:11).*
- *It is not wrong for a child to play with toys and play games with other children. In fact, it is important because through these activities they actually learn many cognitive skills, develop dexterity, and learn how to interact with others. However, it would not be appropriate for a sixty-year-old man to be sitting on the ground playing with trucks—unless it’s with his grandchildren.*
- *The chaff of childish things must be removed and discarded so that one can move on to maturity and adulthood. In a similar way the natural mind must give way to the spiritual mind for one to grow and mature in the things of God.*

Luke 12:16–21 (NKJV)

¹⁶Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.

¹⁷And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’

¹⁸So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.

¹⁹And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” ’

²⁰But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’

²¹“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

- *In this parable Jesus is really underlining the difference between a naturally minded person and a spiritually minded one.*
- *The parable begins with a man who became extremely prosperous. “The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.”*
- *In fact, he was so prosperous that he didn’t know what he is to do with all the abundance he had acquired. ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’ It never occurred to him that God blessed him with this abundance so that he could bless others.*
- *“So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” He planned to keep it all for himself instead of sharing with others and being rewarded by God.*
- *This naturally minded person, thinking he was very wise, decided he would tear down what he has already built to make more room for his abundance so he would be totally secure and self-sufficient. “So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” ’”*
- *While the rich man, being naturally minded, thinking he was extremely wise and probably thinking those who were not as successful were foolish, forgot one thing—he was going to die one day and in fact he was going to die that day!*
- *The naturally minded person only plans for this life and does not prepare for eternity.*
- *However, God’s evaluation of the rich man was quite a bit different. “But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?’”*
- *God did not commend him for his naturally minded ingenuity but instead declared he was a fool. The rich man forgot two things: He was going to die, and second he was labouring and storing up treasures that he himself would never taste.*

- *Jesus summarized the parable by contrasting the natural mind with that of the spiritual mind, “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”*
- *We see that the natural mind and the spiritual mind are at odds and we must decide which mindset we choose to develop and nurture.*
- *King Solomon is an example of someone who acted very foolishly even though God had given him great wisdom. Solomon pursued temporal satisfaction and earthly goals, “I said in my heart, “Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure”; but surely, this also was vanity.” “I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards. I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.” “Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure.” (Ecclesiastes 2:1,4,5,10).*
- *When King Solomon, the naturally minded man, had accomplished all that he wanted to do, he discovered something very sad. “Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun.” (Ecclesiastes 2:11) At the end of his life he found out he has spent a lifetime labouring for things that provided him neither true satisfaction nor eternal value.*
- *King Solomon, as he reviewed his life as an old disheartened king, began with the words, “Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher; “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” (Ecclesiastes 1:2).*
- *The Hebrew word “vanity” means “emptiness, fleeting, futility, nothing” and could be seen as chaff—those things in our lives that have no value, are insignificant, are quickly blown away, only to perish. Thus we could translate Ecclesiastes 1:2 as “chaff of chaffs,” says the Preacher; “chaff of chaffs, all is chaff.”*
- *God gave Solomon great wisdom, riches, and power, but instead of using his resources to produce a great eternal harvest for the glory of God, he collected a storehouse of chaff that would be burned up and produce only ashes.*
- *Another characteristic of chaff is that it is not easily separated from the grain. The grain must be taken to the threshing floor where the oxen tread on it with their hooves until the chaff is separated.*
- *Sometime our natural ways of thinking are so ingrained that it requires pressures, trials, and even times of suffering until we recognize our wrong ways of thinking.*
- *There are a number of times in the Old Testament that we see threshing floors. These examples provide insights into how the chaff of our old ways of thinking is removed.*

Judges 6:36–38 (NKJV)

³⁶So Gideon said to God, “If You will save Israel by my hand as You have said—

³⁷look, I shall put a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said.”

³⁸And it was so. When he rose early the next morning and squeezed the fleece together, he wrung the dew out of the fleece, a bowlful of water.

- *During the time of Gideon, Israel had been oppressed for a long time by their enemies. Their mentality was one of defeat and hopelessness. God appeared to Gideon and said to him, “The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor.” “You shall save Israel from the hands of the Midianites.” Gideon’s response was basically, “Are you talking to me? Israel is weak and my family is one of the weakest in the nation.” (Judges 6:12, 13, 15).*
- *It was at the threshing floor that Gideon asked for a miraculous sign to confirm that God would indeed use him to defeat the Midianites. He then asked for a second sign which God also granted. Then God Himself offered Gideon a third sign so he would be confident in God’s promises.*
- *It was at the threshing floor where Gideon chose to look to God to remove his old mindset that he would continue to live the rest of his life oppressed by the enemy just as it had always been.*
- *When Gideon saw the two miracles, the chaff of his natural mind was removed so that he could become that man of faith, believing God’s Word, and vanquishing the enemy.*
- *When finally Gideon was able to put away his natural way of thinking and begin to see God from a spiritually minded perspective he was able to unwaveringly stand in the face of immense odds and win a resounding victory by the grace of God.*
- *Often, as believers we can have a mindset where our problems look bigger than God. When the natural mind looks at the circumstances that face us all faith is drained away. But when we turn to God and allow Him to prove Himself faithful, then the Lord intervenes and removes the chaff of unbelief by intervening in our lives.*

Ruth 3:2–4 (NKJV)

²Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative? In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.

³Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your best garment and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.

⁴Then it shall be, when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.”

- *Ruth found redemption through Boaz, a prophetic type of Christ, at the threshing floor.*
- *It was at the threshing floor where Ruth's old identity as both an impoverished widow and a foreigner was removed and she saw herself as accepted, beloved, and redeemed.*
- *The chaff of Ruth's natural mind had been removed and she saw that nothing was impossible with the God of Israel who could even take a lowly Gentile widow and make her the great grandmother of King David and put her in the lineage of the Lord Jesus Christ.*
- *All those who have put their faith in Christ need to fully embrace the truth that we are no longer unclean and outsiders, but that we are now children of the King of Kings. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12).*

2 Samuel 6:3–7 (NKJV)

³So they set the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill; and Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart.

⁴And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill, accompanying the ark of God; and Ahio went before the ark.

⁵Then David and all the house of Israel played music before the LORD on all kinds of instruments of fir wood, on harps, on stringed instruments, on tambourines, on sistrums, and on cymbals.

⁶And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen stumbled.

⁷Then the anger of the LORD was aroused against Uzzah, and God struck him there for his error; and he died there by the ark of God.

- *David wanted to bring the ark of God to Jerusalem but unfortunately he followed the pattern set by the Philistines when they returned the ark on a cart. David neglected to heed God's Word and being naturally minded, he thought, "If it worked for the Philistines, it will work for me."*
- *David may have thought it would be easier to carry the ark on a cart as opposed to having men carry it, and by building a new cart it would look very attractive.*
- *However, at the threshing floor of Nachon, the oxen stumbled, the ark shook, Uzzah reached out to steady it and God struck him dead.*
- *This was the place where the chaff of David's natural mind was removed as he realized something very important about God—He is Holy. "David was afraid of the LORD that day; and he said, "How can the ark of the LORD come to me?"" (2 Samuel 6:9).*

- *Once David realized the importance of God’s Word, he became much more careful to obey it. “Then David said, “No one may carry the ark of God but the Levites, for the LORD has chosen them to carry the ark of God and to minister before Him forever.”” (1 Chronicles 15:2).*
- *Many times Christians are not careful in studying and heeding God’s Word resulting in painful and sometimes destructive consequences.*
- *However, even when we fail and experience cleansing at the threshing floor it is never meant for destruction but to remove the chaff of our natural ways of thinking so we can repent and become more spiritually minded.*

1 Chronicles 21:26–28 (NKJV)

²⁶And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called on the LORD; and He answered him from heaven by fire on the altar of burnt offering.

²⁷So the LORD commanded the angel, and he returned his sword to its sheath.

²⁸At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he sacrificed there.

- *There was a time in David’s life when he became fixated on his own success and the greatness of his kingdom. He ordered that the people be numbered so he could know the greatness of his kingdom. However, God’s judgment fell upon Israel because of David’s sin.*
- *As the angel of the Lord held the sword over Jerusalem to bring down destruction, David did not flee from the angel, but to the place where the angel stood. David realized that because of his selfish and proud attitude many of his people had suffered. David also understood God had made him king not for his own benefit, but to care for the people of God, just as a shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*
- *The chaff of David’s natural mind was stripped away at the threshing floor of Ornan.*
- *David had gone from being naturally minded to being spiritually minded, no longer placing his own priorities over the priorities of God. He willingly asked that the judgment of God would come upon himself and his house instead of his people—the mark of a true shepherd, putting his flock’s well-being before his own.*
- *Paul described his disciple Timothy as spiritually minded, “for I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.” (Philippians 2:20).*
- *The Temple in Jerusalem was built on the very spot where David offered up the sacrifice that stopped God’s judgment—the threshing floor of Ornan. “Now Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had prepared on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.” (2 Chronicles 3:1).*

- *The Temple is where Israel experienced the presence of God. Any time we come before God we can experience His wonderful presence and have the chaff of the natural mind removed so that we can become more and more spiritually minded.*
- *What we rejoice in indicates how spiritually minded we are.*
- *Above all else we are to rejoice in God Himself. “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4).*
- *Even in the Old Testament the believers’ joy was found in knowing God, “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.” (Habakkuk 3:18).*
- *Even Jesus warned us not to rejoice in ministry but in our salvation and our relationship with God. “Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” (Luke 10:18–20).*
- *When we are naturally minded we rejoice in things, accomplishments, and even ministry. This will ultimately lead to disappointments and a loss of joy.*
- *However, when we are spiritually minded we rejoice in Christ. We are to be thankful for all the good things God does and gives us. We are to enjoy the blessings God has given us but our source of joy is always to be Christ alone. When our joy is in Christ then it is a joy that does not fade or fluctuate depending on circumstances. “But I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. (John 16:22).*