

The Office of the Keys— A Special Power

KEYS AND THE POWER THEY REPRESENT

"Can I use the car tonight, Dad?"

"I guess so; the keys are on the table."

"Thanks, Dad. I'll see you later."

"Jeff, just a minute ... you'll be careful, won't you?"

"Yes, I will, Dad. You can count on me. I'll remember what we've talked about many times about keys to the car and the power they represent. See you later, Dad."

1. What power does Jeff possess in the keys to the car?

2. From whom has Jeff received this power?

WE TURN TO GOD'S WORD

Let's take a God's-eye view of the world for a minute. There are all the people hustling about trying to find *eternal life*, *peace* with themselves and others, and *safety*. We know that heaven is a free gift in Jesus Christ. But how do people get into the kingdom? Who can open the door for them?

1. Read **Matthew 16:16–19**.

a. What has been given to Peter and the apostles here?

b. What *power* do they have?

2. Jesus gave the keys and the power to the apostles. Who has it now? Read **Ephesians 2:19–20**.



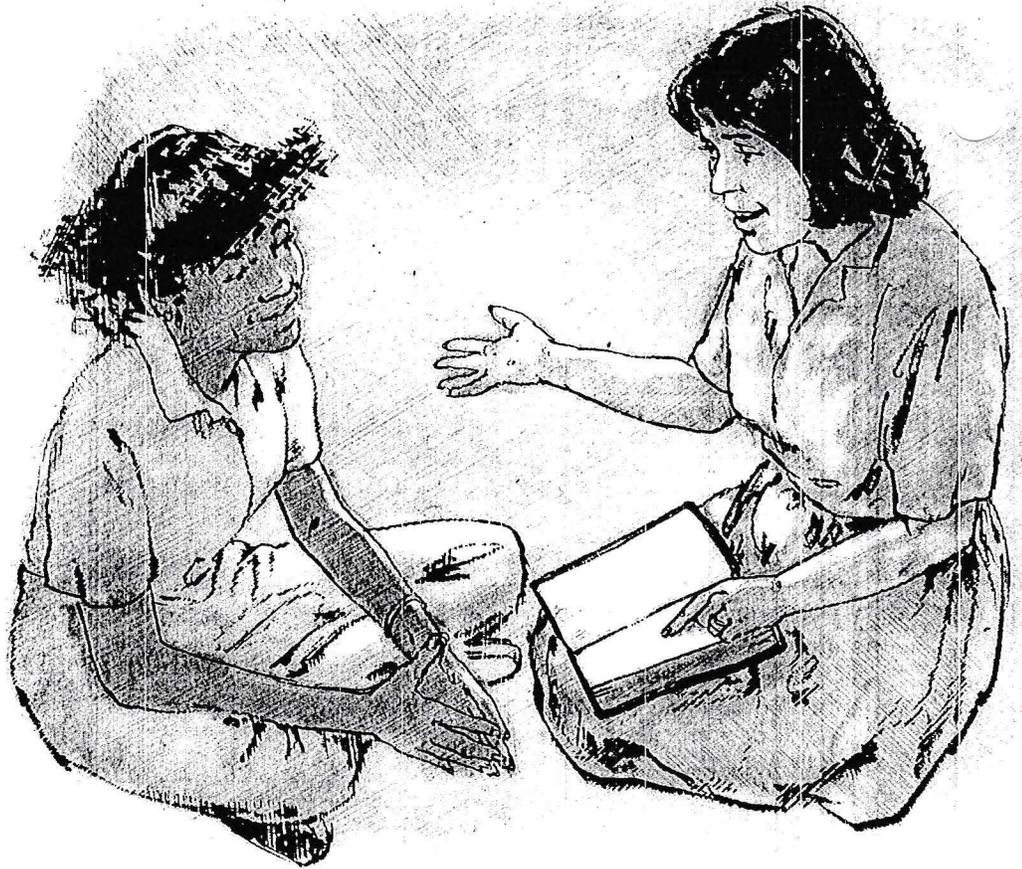
IN POSSESSION OF THE OFFICE OF THE KEYS

If a five-year-old were to ask his or her parent for the keys to the car, a responsible parent would say, "No!" Similarly God would not leave a terrific power like the keys to heaven with just anyone. He would leave it with someone who could use it sensibly.

1. According to **John 20:21-23**, a person receives the keys along with the Holy Spirit. According to **Acts 2:38** when did you receive the keys?

2. Look at **Luke 10:16**, **John 13:20**, and **1 Peter 2:9**. What do these passages say to people who doubt that Christians like you can forgive sins?

3. Jesus has called all who believe in Him into ministry. Read **Ephesians 4:11-12**.



a. Explain the difference between being ministering and being a pastor.

b. How does this passage define ministry?

4. Use your understanding of the Office of the Keys to explain the purpose of your ministry.

TOGETHER IN MINISTRY

Because ministry is most effectively done as a group effort, and because Christ commanded us to come together for work and worship, we form the church. The church—the Greek word means "called out"—is a gathering of believers. One of the ways God's people can carry out the responsibilities and powers God has given

us is to select one person, specially trained to take the responsibility for many of the acts that we are to do as a group. That person is called the pastor or minister. He is the one entrusted with the "keys of the kingdom" for a congregation.

1. What are the pastor's specific tasks?

2. Although the pastor is given the job, all of God's people must remain involved in ministry. We cannot ignore the people we encounter who still are looking for God and for salvation. Each of us must remain vitally involved in forgiving and encouraging one another in the faith and in reaching the lost with the saving Gospel. We are still God's priests. Discuss what that means for you in each of these situations.

a. *Maggie says, "I'm so lonely all the time. No one really cares about me. I wish I were dead."*

As God's ministering son or daughter you say ...

b. *Fredrico says, "Listen, I'm sorry I broke your bike. I didn't mean to. I was careless. Will you forgive me?"*

As God's ministering son or daughter you say ...

c. *Sam says, "I don't believe in God. I don't have to respect His name. I can say whatever I want to."*

As God's ministering son or daughter you say ...

d. *Your mother says, "I'm sorry I was so grouchy today. I know I shouldn't have been. Will you forgive me?"*

As God's ministering son or daughter you say ...

TO REVIEW AND REMEMBER

1 Peter 2:9: "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light."

What is the Office of the Keys?

The Office of the Keys is that special authority which Christ has given to His church on earth to forgive the sins of repentant sinners, but to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written?

This is what St. John the Evangelist writes in chapter twenty: The Lord Jesus breathed on His disciples and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven." [John 20:22-23]

