

MINISTRY LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE

Book - 2
Level Disciple



A PRACTICAL GUIDE
TO BECOMING A WORLD CHANGER

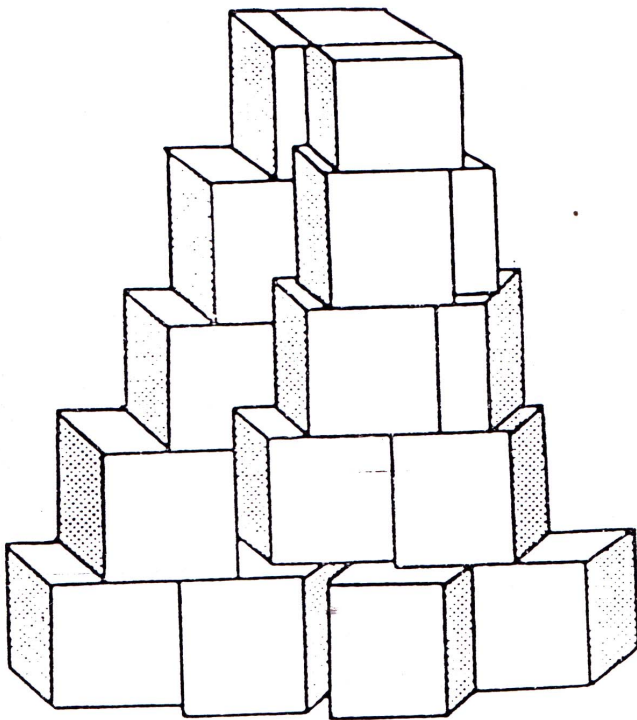
DR DEREK

ENGLISH

MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE

Level: **DISCIPLE**

Study book no: 2



LEVELS:

5. Minister
4. Leader / Pastor
3. Group or cell leader
2. **Disciple**
1. Beginner

Bible Study Course to grow to spiritual maturity making every believer in Christ a minister and to increase in effective and efficient ministry!!!

Easy to use for self-study as well as to teach others!!!

MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE

PURPOSE:

- TO KNOW HIM, THE ONLY TRUE GOD

(Growing / Maturing)

- Josh. 1 : 8, "This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success."
- II Pet. 3 : 18, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen."
- II Tim. 1 : 15, "Study to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth."
- Col. 1 : 27b - 28, "Christ in you, the hope of glory, Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ."

- AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN TO OTHERS!

(Multiplying / Reproducing)

- II Tim. 2 : 2, "And what you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."
- II Tim. 3 : 16 - 17, "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."
- Eph. 2 : 10, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."
- II Pet. 1 : 8, "For if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

<u>PRINCIPLE:</u> "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things!" (Rom.11 : 36)
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(INCREASING IN KNOWLEDGE; MATURING IN CHARACTER; USING SPIRITUALGIFTS)

INDEX Study book no: 2

	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
- Advanced foundation course (12 Lessons)	133
(1) The Bible	
(2) God	
(3) Man and sin,	
(4) The Lord Jesus Christ	
(5) Salvation: repentance and faith	
(6) Water baptism	
(7) Prayer / Worship	
(8) The Holy Spirit: Person and baptism	
(9) Work, fruit & gifts of the Holy Spirit	
(10) The Church	
(11) The Lordship of Christ (stewardship)	
(12) Fruitfulness/ Evangelism	
- Witnessing to personal contacts – how to share your testimony	161
- Compact survey of the Bible	165
- The blood of Jesus: its power	175
- What is love? (Understanding “agape”-love)	183
- What does it take to follow Christ and be His disciple?	187
- Understanding fruitfulness: called to be fruitful	197
- Study on the fruit of the Holy Spirit	202
- Short studies on: Holiness / Fear of the Lord / Suffering / Tame your tongue	206
- Relationships in the family (Parts 1 + 2)	216
- Relationships in the world	225
- The Bible and sex – beating sexual temptation	227
- Praise and worship in a nutshell	235
- A brief study on praise and worship	238
- Establishing a daily prayer and devotional time (6 Chapters)	243
(1) Establishing a devotional habit	
(2) Thanksgiving and praise	
(3) Confession and cleansing	
(4) Order and obedience	
(5) Intercession	
(6) Countries and nations	
- Establishing an effective prayer life	261
- Fasting as a lifestyle	273
- One year prayer calendar for the nations of the world	275

ADVANCED FOUNDATION COURSE

LESSON No. 1 THE BIBLE - The Word of God

The Bible : is God's revelation of Himself to man. A revelation of:

- a) His nature
- b) His purpose

The Greek word for Bible is 'Biblos' means Book. It contains 66 books, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. It was written by approx. 40 authors. The O.T. was completed from 1400 BC up to 400 BC. Between 400 BC and 30 AD there was a silent period. The O.T. was originally written in Hebrew and N.T. in Greek. From Moses up to John the total period was 1600 years.

Some of the authors were kings, some were captives, some were prophets, some were scribes, some were doctors, some were shepherds, some were scholars, and some were fishermen. They were from all walks of life. Yet, when one puts all of their writing together, one has one book.

These 66 books in all, put together form one book. No single book of the Bible is complete without the whole, and the whole is incomplete without every single book. Together it has a theme, a plot, a conflict, a climax and a conclusion. It is the longest thread of thought woven in the fabric of history. These men wrote on some of the most controversial subjects in the world, yet all their writings harmonise. There is not one clash or contradiction in all they have to say.

Their writings make reference to the disciplines of science, history, geography and topography; and in all cases the references are amazing in their accuracy. Archaeologists often use the Bible as a reference book and have come to appreciate its reliability. In the field of science the Bible writers often spoke beyond the bounds of the human learning of their of time, and their statements were found to be correct only by later discoveries.

In the field of history they often recorded events which had not yet taken place. This recording of history before the events happened is called prophecy. These were not mere guesses and broad general statements. They involve the foretelling of hundreds of episodes in detail of both major and minor events which were not fulfilled until hundreds of years after the prophecies were made.

Unity, harmony, accuracy, and fulfilled prophecy of the Bible are but four of the reasons it is impossible for this book to have originated with men alone. There is no other book like this. This is THE book from God!!

Yet the greatest proof of all is in the message that it brings. Here God reveals to man things which He cannot know through his own wisdom. "But as it is written: '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.' But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1 Corinthians 2: 9-10).

The Bible tells us who we are, where we came from, why we are here and where we are going. In it God reveals to us that He is our Creator, that He is our Ruler, and that He will be our Judge. He shows us His favor and His wrath, His power and His patience, His judgment and His mercy. This is the greatest account ever told, the wonderful story of Divine love. Everyone who comes to a knowledge of its contents will realise that no human could write a book like this.

The Old Testament begins with Genesis and ends with the book of Malachi, it tells the story of God's dealings (working) with mankind from the beginning of the world until the birth of Jesus. The Old Testament can be further divided into four main sections. These sections are: **Law, History, Poetry, and Prophecy.**

The New Testament begins with Matthew and ends with Revelation. These books were written by 8 men who wrote what God told them to. The New Testament is divided into 4 main sections. These sections are: **The Gospels, History, Epistles, and Prophecy.**

The first 4 books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) are called the gospels. The word "gospel" means "good news." These books relate the good news of the coming of Christ to save man from his sins. Furthermore they give the account of the birth, life, teachings, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

Thus, to know God is to know His Word.

Concerning the Bible its: -

CENTRAL THEME: **Jesus Christ, God's plan of salvation.**

AUTHOR: The Holy Spirit, God breathed His Word into those who wrote the Bible.

INSPIRATION: Of writings - 2 Tim. 3:16
Of writers - 2 Pet. 1:21
Of the Word - 1Cor. 2:13; 2 Pet. 3:2

CHARACTERISTICS: The bible is found in heaven - Psalms 119:89

The bible is eternal - Mat. 24:35, I Pet 1:25, Is. 40:8

The word of God enables us to know and understand God and is also food for our soul! Matt. 4:4; I Pet. 2:2

In John 1:1 Jesus is called the Word of God and Heb. 1:1-2 shows us that God sums up all He had to say in **Jesus!** Therefore Jesus is the Key to understand the scriptures – Luke 24: 27, 44 and John 5: 39- 40.

In finding Jesus you will have the key to unlock the Bible.

God's word is not just ink on paper, but it is alive – Heb. 4:12. Through God's word we receive life, health, power, strength Prov. 4: 20-22.

God's Word is also creative, it causes things to happen Is 55:10,11 so we need to speak, confess, believe ***and act on it.***

Furthermore, God's Word: Cleanses us, John 15:3; Eph. 5: 25-26
Keeps us from sin, Psalms 119: 9,11
Gives us direction in life, Psalms 119: 105
Brings life: regenerates, I Peter 1:23
Is like a mirror, shows us who and how we really are, James 1:22-25
Will be our judge on the last day, John 12:48
Brings joy, Jer. 15:16

Therefore in order to know God let's take hold of His Word and read and study it, to store into our hearts.

As we read the Word let's read it: -	Lovingly	- Systematically
	Reverently	Resolutely
	Prayerfully	Daily
	Meditatively	

**The reading of the Word also brings blessings: Rev. 1: 3,
and meditation, success: Joshua 1:8.**

IN CHRIST GOD HAS REVEALED HIS FAITHFULNESS
FROM THE BEGINNING OF TIME:

In **Genesis JESUS** is the **Ram at Abraham's altar**
In **Exodus** He is the **Passover Lamb**
In **Leviticus** He is the **High Priest**
In **Numbers** He is the **cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night**
In **Deuteronomy** He is the **City of our refuge**
In **Joshua** He is the **scarlet thread**, out Rahab's window
In **Judges** He is our **Judge**
In **Ruth** He is our **Kinsman Redeemer**
In **1st and 2nd Samuel** He is our **trusted Prophet**
In **Kings and Chronicles** He is our **Main King**
In **Ezra** He is our **faithful Scribe**
In **Nehemiah** He is the **builder of everything that is broken**
In **Esther** He is **Mordecai sitting faithful at the gate**
In **Job** He is our **redeemer that lives**
In **Psalms** He is **my good shepherd**
In **Proverbs and Ecclesiastes** He is **our wisdom**
In **Song of Solomon** He is the **beautiful Bridegroom**
In **Isaiah** He is the **suffering servant**
In **Jeremiah and Lamentations** He is the **Weeping Prophet**
In **Ezekiel** He the **wonderful cover faced man**
In **Daniel** He is the **fourth man in the midst of the fiery furnace**
In **Hosea** He is **my Lover who is Faithful**
In **Joel** He **baptizes us with the Holy Spirit**
In **Amos** He is our **Burden Bearer**
In **Obadiah** He is our **Saviour**
In **Jonah** He is the **great Missionary who takes the Word of God into all the world**
In **Micah** He is the **messenger with beautiful feet**
In **Nahum** He is the **Avenger**
In **Habakkuk** He is the **watchman praying for revival**
In **Zephaniah** He is the **Lord mighty to save**
In **Haggai** He is the **restorer of our lost heritage**
In **Zechariah** He is the **oracle**
In **Malachi** He is the **sun of righteousness with healing in his wings**

In Matthew He is The Christ the Son of The Living God
In Mark He is the miracle worker
In Luke He is the son of man
In John He is the door by which everyone must enter
In Acts He is the shining light who appeared to Saul on the way to Damascus
In Romans He is our Justifier
In 1st Corinthians He is our resurrection
In 2nd Corinthians He is our sin bearer
In Galatians He redeems us from the Law
In Ephesians He is our unsearchable riches
In Philippians He supplies our every need
In Colossians He is the fullness of the God-head
In 1st and 2nd Thessalonians He is our soon and coming King
In 1st and 2nd Timothy He is the mediator between God and man
In Titus He is our blessed hope
In Philemon He is a friend who sticks closer than a brother
In Hebrews He is the blood of the everlasting covenant
In James He is the Lord that heals the sick
In 1st and 2nd Peter He is the chief shepherd
In 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John He is one who has tenderness of love
In Jude He is the Lord coming with 10,000 saints
In Revelation He is The King of Kings and The Lord of Lords

Lesson No. 2 God

When we look at creation, we know that there is a creator, **GOD**. Now there are various theories about God: God is a power or force / there are many Gods / there is a personal creator God. The Bible gives us the true revelation about God but doesn't give us the arguments to prove the existence of God. (Like a director of a company will not try to prove his position to a sales-man!) Talking about God we are so limited to understand that God is the Creator and that He created everything out of nothing by his Word. [Gen. 1:2 / Rom. 4:17 / Heb. 11:3]. We are so limited to understand the eternal, unlimited God [Job 11: 7]

God is the life giver and is complete in himself. Yet He created the universe and men to be loved by Him and to love Him in return.

What are idols? These are false gods [Ps. 115:3-7 / Is. 46: 6-7 / Is. 44: 9-20 / Ezek. 14: 3]

We should not worship them. I Cor. 10:19-22

HOW CAN WE KNOW and FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD?

God has revealed Himself to man in / through:

- nature, Ps. 19:1 / Rom. 1: 18-20
- our personality, Rom 2:14-15 / Eccl. 3:11 (man is moral creation, knowing good and evil)
- the Jewish people, Rom. 9:4-5
- His Son Jesus Christ, Heb. 1:1-3
- His Word, Deut. 29:29

THE NATURE (BEING / ESSENCE) and QUALITY OF GOD:

GOD is:

- A. Spirit, John 4:24
(Spirit-being, immaterial, invisible, yet personal), Deut. 4:15-19 / 1 Tim. 1:17
- B. Light, referring to His majesty and His glory, I John 1:5 / I Tim 6:16
- C. Love, I John 4:8,16 / John 3:16 (merciful, gracious, good and kind)
- D. A Consuming Fire, referring to His Holiness, Heb. 12:29 / Is. 6: 3

ATTRIBUTES OR CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD:

A) - ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD (in other words, requirements for God to be God)

God is:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Eternal | Ps. 90:2, Ex. 3: 14, Deut. 35: 27 |
| 2. Self existent, source of life | Ps. 36:9, John 1: 4 |
| 3. All powerful | Gen. 8: 14, Matt. 19: 26 |
| 4. All knowing | Ps. 147:5, Heb. 4: 13 |
| 5. All present | Ps. 139:7-12, Jer. 23: 24 |

B) - MORAL ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

- | | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 6. Perfect in Holiness, meaning absolutely pure and cannot tolerate sin | I Pet 1:16, Is. 57: 15, Hab. 1: 13 |
| 7. Perfect in righteousness, just | Dan. 9:7, Deut. 32: 4 |
| 8. Perfect in faithfulness | 2 Tim. 2: 13; I Pet. 4: 19. |

In Rom. 1:20, the bible speaks of 'Godhead' referring to deity, furthermore specified as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

One God - Mark 12:29, Deut. 6: 4

Yet three Persons - Matt. 3: 16-17, Matt. 28:19, Eph. 2:18

So the Scriptures gives us the revelation of the eternal Godhead revealed as one God, distinguishable, but indivisible in essence, co-eternal, co-existent, co-equal in nature, attributes, power & glory.

E.g.: water (liquid, solid-ice, vapour) , sun (light, heat, energy) egg (yoke, white, shell), tree (trunk, branches, leaves)

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

John 14:6-9

Through Jesus Christ we can know God as our Heavenly Father whom Jesus came to reveal!

Eph. 3:15, talks about God as the Father of all the families on earth, yet this doesn't teach us about the universal fatherhood of God. As a creator, God is the father of all man, but as a Saviour, He is the Father of those who believe on Him and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord! (Gal 4: 6, James 1:17, I John 3: 1)

The Word teaches that God cares as a Father with great and intense care for His children: (Matt 10: 29-31, Ps. 139: 14-16)

According to the Word of God, let us make every effort in our pursuit of knowing God and not just knowing about Him! Knowing Him in deep personal relationship and fellowship by spending time with Him and living in His Presence each day! (Phil. 3: 10, Jer. 9: 23 -24).

Lesson No. 3 Man and Sin

A. MAN

1. What is man? Ps 8:4-6

MAN IS: -

- a) A created being - created by God in His own image (Gen. 1: 26- 27), the two different words- 'create', to make something out of nothing, to bring into existence. In this way God made spirit and soul. (Zech. 12:1, Heb 12: 9) 'made' to fashion or form as a potter forms a vessel of clay. Like this the body was made. (Gen. 2: 7, Job 33: 4, Ps. 139: 14- 16)
- b) A dependant being - totally dependant on God. (Acts 17: 28)
- c) A moral being – God created man with a free will and the ability to choose(no robot or machine, but the power of choice). God also placed within man a conscience which gives him a moral sense, able to distinguish between right and wrong. (Rom. 2:15).
- d) A love being - capable of choosing to love. Able to receive and give love.

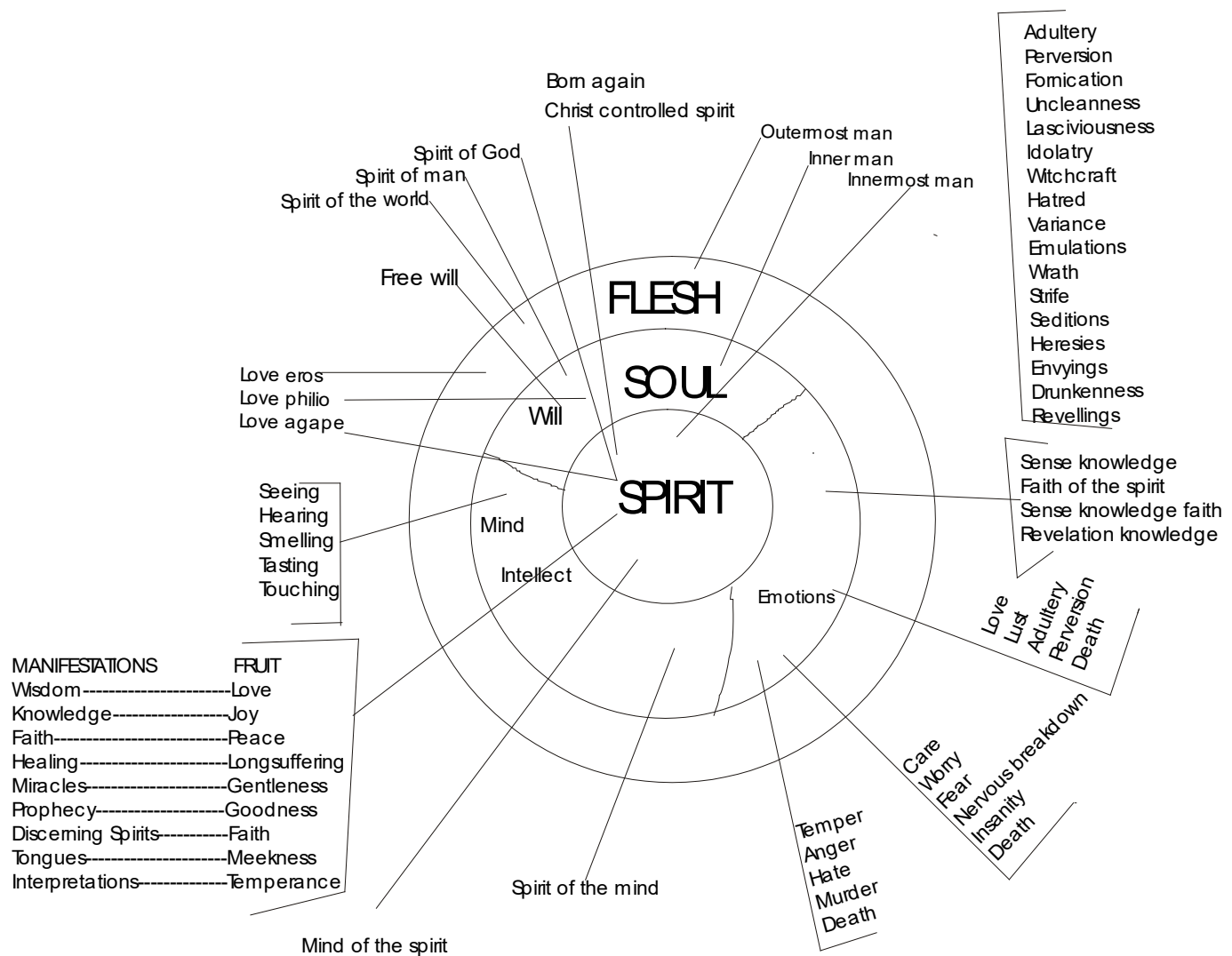
2. Man's make-up

Man is a triune being of spirit, soul, body. 1 Thes. 5: 23; Heb. 4: 12

Three different Hebrew / Greek words referring to three parts:

- a) Spirit- The God conscience part of man, capable of knowing God. God is the God and Father of all spirits (Heb.12: 9). The spirit is the eternal part of man that is able to worship God who is a Spirit (John 4: 24).
Faculties of the spirit: intuition, conscience, communion.
- b) Soul – the self conscience part of man, capable of knowing oneself. (Gen. 2:7).
The breath of life: both the spirit life and the soul life. God is the father of all spirits.
Soul and body come from the parents via the laws of human reproduction. (Eccl. 11: 5) and thus by nature we inherit the sinful nature (Rom 5:12).
Our soul is made up of :
 - Mind -what we think
 - Will -what we want
 - Emotions -how we feel
- c) Body – the world conscious part of man, capable of receiving and knowing things from the world around him. It is the physical part of man which contains his five senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling

God made man for the purpose of relationship and fellowship (Gen.3: 8). And after He created man, He said "it was very good". Gen. 1:31



The divine order of the spirit, soul, and body for victorious living:

Holy spirit
controls
Human spirit ----- 1 Cor. 6: 17
controls
Spirit of the mind ----- Eph. 4: 23
controls
Mind ----- 1 Cor. 2: 16
controls
Will ----- Rom. 12:1- 2
controls
Emotions ----- 2 Cor. 5: 7
controls
Body ----- 1 Cor. 9: 24- 27

This order of functioning will produce a Holy Spirit led life that will have power and holy living.

B) SIN

Love is proven by commitment and obedience. God gave Adam and Eve one simple command. (Gen. 2: 16-17). Yet man disobeyed God, by which fellowship with the Holy God was broken and sin entered the world. Man died spiritually and was removed from the tree of life. (Gen. 3: 22-24) coming under the consequences of sin, judgment and death. And because Adam sinned, in him, we all sinned as we are his offspring. (Rom. 5: 12, 18). Adam's nature became sinful bringing forth sins as a result (Jer. 17: 9; Mark 7: 21- 23). All are under the power/ slavery of sin (Rom. 3: 10, 23; Gal. 3:22).

1. What is sin?

Sin is:

Anything that displeases God. (1 John 3: 4) for sin is transgression (overstepping) of the Law (Rom. 7: 7, 13)

- is an act, it is breaking of the law or commandment
- state of being, fallen state of man without righteousness
- is a nature, nature of man with an enmity towards God

2. The origin of sin

Sin originated with Satan (Is. 14: 12-14; Ezek. 28: 11- 18) and through the disobedience of Adam it came into the world, and man became the slave of sin.

3. What are the consequences of sin?

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------|
| a) Death | Rom. 6: 23, Heb. 9: 27 |
| b) Guilt | Ps. 51: 3, 4 |
| c) Separation | Is. 59: 2 |
| d) Slavery | Rom. 6: 17 |

Isn't God merciful and full of love? **Yes!** But he is also Just and Holy, therefore He cannot let sin go unpunished. Num. 14: 18.

4. Descriptions of sin

- a) Sin is missing the mark or failure of God's standard.
- b) Sin is transgression or overstepping the law.
- c) Sin is iniquity, an act which is itself wrong and forbidden by God.
- d) Sin is lawlessness or rebellion.

Further Scripture references on sin:

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| - Ex. 20: 3- 17 | - Rom. 1: 19- 31 |
| - Gal. 5: 19- 21 | - Col. 3: 5- 8 |
| - 1 Cor. 6: 9- 10 | - Mark 7: 20- 23 |

Lesson No. 4 The Lord Jesus Christ

1. WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

Jesus Christ is the 2nd person in the Godhead (trinity). Being the eternal Son of God totally equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, being the image of the invisible God, being the eternal Word of God. (John 1:1-4, Heb. 1: 2 - 3; Micah 5: 2, Col. 1: 15- 17)

2. THE INCARNATION OF CHRIST

The coming of the Redeemer was already prophesied in paradise [Gen. 3: 15, Is. 7: 14] These were fulfilled when the Holy Spirit overshadowed the Virgin Mary and placed within her womb the seed of the Father God, and in this way the Child would be a sinless creation brought about by the miracle of God. (Luke 1:35). Through this act the incarnation became fact. Incarnation simply means: God taking on Himself human flesh [John 1:14; Gal. 4: 4]

3. THE NECESSITY OF INCARNATION

The sin and fall of man made it necessary for a faithful and loving God to become man in order to redeem man back in relationship with Himself; that's why our Lord is named Jesus (Matt 1:21), because He came to save us from sin.

4. IMPORTANT REASONS FOR CHRIST'S INCARNATION

- To confirm the promises of the salvation made to the patriarchs (Rom. 15: 21)
- To reveal God as Father (John 14:9; Matt. 11: 27)
- To destroy the works of the devil like: sin, sickness, disease, death and bondage (1John 3: 8; Acts 10: 38)
- To live a perfect sinless human life, being our perfect example (1 Pet. 2: 2; I John 2: 6)
- To put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself; the wages of sin is death and the only sin could be dealt was through the death of a sacrifice. Christ being the only perfect sinless man, could atone for sin (Heb. 9: 26; II Cor. 5: 21)
- To prepare for His second coming, which will be the consummation (completion) of God's plan for redemption (Heb. 9: 27-28; Phil. 3: 20- 21)

5. THE DEITY OF CHRIST BECAUSE OF

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • His divine name: Emmanuel | Matt. 1:23 |
| • His divine power | Mark 2:5-7 |
| • Received divine worship | John 9:38 |
| • Claimed equality with the Father | John 10: 30; Matt. 28:19 |

6. THE HUMANITY OF CHRIST

- | | |
|---|---------------|
| • Called the Son of man | I Tim. 2: 5 |
| • Had a normal physical body | Heb. 2: 14 |
| • Experienced human development | Luke 2: 52 |
| • Suffered pain, hunger, thirst, temptation | Matt. 4: 1-11 |

Because of His complete humanity, He can be sympathetic and compassionate towards us (Heb. 4:15 -16). As seen from the mentioned scriptures Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God became the Son of man. In him the deity and humanity was united in one person.

7. THE SINLESSNESS OF CHRIST

As already seen that Jesus was born without sin, without a sin nature. But not only that, He lived His entire life without sin both internally and externally. Jesus lived in complete conformity to the will of God. [Heb. 10: 7; John 17: 4; John 4: 34; Heb. 4: 15] Also others testified that Jesus was sinless [John 18: 38; Matt. 27: 4]

8. THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST

The words Jesus spoke came from the Father [John 1: 49 - 50] and were often revolutionary, [Matt 7: 28 -29] and life-giving [John 6: 63]

Jesus taught on many subjects, but the longest discourses are:

- Sermon on the mount [Matt. Chap. 5 - 7]
- Discourse on mount Olives [Matt. Chap. 25-26]
- Upper room teachings [John Chap.13-17]

The bottom line of all His teachings was **LOVE**. [John 13: 35]

The golden rule: Matt. 7: 12

The summary principle: Matt. 22: 37- 39

In His early ministry Jesus not only taught but also preached and did mighty miracles [Matt. 4: 23 - 24]

He manifested His power over: nature, devil, disease, death etc.

Purpose of miracles: to lead people to faith in Christ [John 11: 45]

9. THE DEATH OF CHRIST

God's holiness demands that man's sinfulness be dealt with and the wrath be executed upon it. But the divine grace restrains immediate wrath waiting for God to provide means for man to escape wrath! This is done by Christ, when He took upon Himself our iniquities and bore the punishments of our sins and the wrath of God which is the death penalty so that we might be free and forgiven [Is. 53: 5 -6,10; I Pet. 2: 24; II Cor. 5: 21; I Pet. 1:18- 20; Rom. 5: 10]

10. THE RESSURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus is alive today of which we are a living testimony. According to the Scriptures, He rose on the third day and is alive today [Luke 24:5-7; Rom 6: 9; Acts 2: 24; I Cor. 15: 20-23]. Jesus was raised to life by the power of the Father and the Holy Spirit [Acts 2: 23-24; I Pet.3: 18; Rom 8:11] and through His resurrection He proved His deity [Rom.1: 4].

11. THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

40 days after His resurrection, He departed visibly from the earth and returned to heaven, where He is preparing the mansions, doing the priestly work of intercession, after which He will return the second time, in glory. [Acts 1: 9-11; John 14: 2-4; Heb. 1: 3; Heb. 9: 24; Rom. 8:34; Matt. 16:27; Rev. 1:7; I Thes. 4: 17].

Lesson No. 5 Salvation: Repentance and Faith

As seen before that all men have sinned and fallen short of God's standard. Since man was unable to save himself, God came down in the person Jesus Christ and made a way for man to be saved (yet not everybody is automatically saved). An act of his will saves a person as he chooses to respond to God's provision of salvation i.e. to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior [Acts 4:12].

HOW TO BE SAVED?

A person gets saved in a process which can be called conversion, which means turning from sin to Christ. In this conversion two things are involved: Repentance and Faith.

REPENTANCE

It means to change one's mind (it is an inner change of mind) resulting in turning towards God, manifest in change of conduct. e.g. The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). He came back to his senses and went back to his father.

- Turning from sin, turning towards God [Joel 2:12-13; Hos. 14: 1- 2]
- Repentance is God's command [Acts 17: 30]
Repentance is required for forgiveness and salvation [Acts 3:19; Luke 24: 49; Luke 13: 3; Mark 1:15; II Cor. 7: 10]

HOW IS REPENTANCE PRODUCED?

Basically it is a gift from God [2 Tim 2: 25] produced by:

- The preaching of the Word Matt.12: 41
 - God's goodness Rom. 2: 4
 - Chastisement Rev. 3: 19
- Fruit of repentance (Luke 3: 8; Acts 26: 20; e.g. Restitution Luke 19:8)

WHAT REPENTANCE IS NOT?

It is not merely sorrow for sin and just continuing in it, neither doing penance nor remorse or regretting the consequences of sin. e.g.: Esau [Heb. 12: 17] and Judas [Matt 27:3- 5].

FAITH

As seen that repentance prepares the heart for the gospel. (Repent and believe Mark 1: 15).

Now faith brings a person into a new living relationship with God and is the channel through which God's grace flows into a man's life. [Heb. 11: 6]

WHAT IS FAITH? Heb 11:1 (Definition)

HOW DOES FAITH COME?

By hearing the word [Rom. 10: 17 -with interest], key: the gospel [1 Cor. 15:3 - 4]

When a person receives the gospel, it releases God's power unto salvation [Rom. 1: 16; 10: 8-10]

SOURCE OF FAITH

A gift of God, Rom.12:3; Eph 2: 8

Human response is: believe and practice Acts 4: 4.

RESULTS OF FAITH:

Justification, Rom. 5:1

Children of God, Gal. 3:26

God is a God of love, desiring people to be restored in relationship with Him through faith in Jesus Christ. That is why the Holy Spirit quickens a persons heart so that he may receive God's Word, respond to it and be saved.

RESULTS OF REPENTANCE and FAITH

Salvation manifested in regeneration. Being born again or being regenerated is being made a new creature by the Holy Spirit by which we are brought into God's family.[John 3:3-7; 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15; 1 Pet. 1:23; John 1:12-13]

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

The assurance of our salvation is brought to us by the Holy Spirit who has come to indwell us the moment we believe Jesus as our Lord and Savior. [Eph. 2:13- 14; Rom. 8: 16].

SUMMARY

Step-wise overview of the salvation process:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| • The Spirit blows like the wind | John 3: 8 |
| • The Spirit quickens and gives life | 2 Cor. 3: 6; John 6: 63 |
| | Compare with |
| | I Cor.2:14 |
| • Faith comes by hearing the Word with interest | Rom. 10:17 |
| • Born again and new life through Word and Spirit | 1 Pet. 1:23; John 3:3-7; |
| | Eph. 2: 8 |
| • Born of God, Sons of God | John 1:12- 13 |
| • Confession brings justification | Rom 10:9 -10 |
| • Manifested regeneration | 2 Cor. 5: 17 |
| • Having received a new heart and a new spirit | Ezek. 36: 26 |
| • Assurance through the Holy Spirit | Eph. 1:13 - 14 |

Lesson No. 6 Waterbaptism

Intro: Acts 2: 38- 41

1. What is water Baptism?

It is only a believer's baptism and is a physical expression of the spiritual truth. Outwardly a person is submerged under water, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the confession of Christ as Lord and Savior. In other words baptism is an outward symbol of an inward reality, that is genuine conversion.

In water baptism we identify with all that Christ did for us. This is the key for a victorious Christian Life!!

In the act of going under water and rising up from it we demonstrate what happened with us in our identification with Jesus:

- He died , so I died in Him
Symbolically we die to sin [Rom. 6:3- 5, 8] (Keep it dead!!)
- He was buried, so I was buried with Him
Immersion symbolizes the burial of old sinful nature [Rom. 6: 4, Col. 2: 12]
- He was raised ,so I have a new life in Him
The old nature was left under water and symbolically we are raised up to a new life in Jesus. We declare that we will live for Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit, as His disciple, considering ourselves to be dead in Christ to the principles of sin and death and alive to God in Christ Jesus. [Rom. 6: 4, 9-11, 13; Gal. 2: 20]
- He ascended, so we ascended with Him
[Eph. 2: 6, Col. 3: 1-3], knowing our legal position in being seated with Him.

NOTE: Water baptism is not essential or required for salvation, but is an appeal to God for a clean conscience, as obedient to His Word.

2. What does the word “baptism” mean?

It comes from the Greek word “*baptizo*” which means: to immerse, dip under, cover fully with fluid. Used originally to describe the immersion of a cloth in dye.

[Mark 1: 9- 10, John 3: 23, Acts 8: 38] “went into the water”, “much water”, “came up out of the water”

3. Who can be baptized ?

Anyone who has genuinely repented of his sin and has been justified by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ [Mark 16:16].

4. Why should we be water baptized ?

- To obey Christ's command Matt. 28: 19
- Jesus was baptized and we have to follow his foot steps Mat 3: 13-17, I Pet 2: 21
- To fulfill all righteousness Matt. 3:15
- As an appeal to God for a clean conscience I Pet. 3: 21
- An outward confession of what happened within; it expresses our identification with Jesus Rom. 6: 1- 11
- Water baptism is a turning point and a part of our testimony

Even as water brings separation, so water baptism separates the old from new. [Ex. 13: 17- 18]

It is a three fold testimony:

- * to the world, we are finished with it!
- * to the church, we're a part of it!
- * to the devil, we now belong to Jesus!

Baptism is also an open confession to the spirit world! (Isn't it interesting to note that in many nations there's no problem to attend a prayer meeting or worship service, but real persecution focuses on the baptism or against those who have been baptised!)

5. Baptism in the Name

"In the Name" puts the name upon the one being baptized i.e. being clothed with that name! (Gal. 3:27). That's why we are to be baptised in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, according to Matt. 28 verse 19. Yet in the book of Acts we read that the believers were baptised in the Name of the the Lord Jesus Christ! Why? Well, the Father is The I AM, "The Lord", His Son, "Jesus" (Meaning: Savior), and the Holy Spirit is "Christ" (in Greek, and means the Anointed). Therefore the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is identical with "In the name of The Father, Son and the Holy spirit [Acts 2:36].

Lesson No. 7 Prayer / Worship

PRAYER

Intro: [Jer. 33: 3; 1 Thess. 5: 17; Ps. 91: 15- 16]

1. Why to pray?

God knows already everything. He knows our needs: yet, we need to pray because we need to become aware of God. Prayer brings into contact with God and enables us to know God better. Prayer is a must because only through prayer we see the things and situations as God sees it. And only through we become aware of what we really need and what we have done wrong. In prayer you begin to experience the spiritual reality and the presence of the Lord.

2. What is prayer?

Some phrases: Prayer is talking with Jesus, it is the breath of the soul, prayer is communion or fellowship with God through Jesus Christ, prayer is seeking the Lord's face, prayer is forgetting every other thing and focusing with your whole heart on God as your source for everything, prayer is offering up of our desires to God for all things lawful and needful, with humble confidence that we shall obtain them through the meditation of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. E.g. I Sam. 1: 10,15-16, where Hannah poured out her soul before the Lord.

Realize that prayer is a two-way communication with us speaking to God and Him speaking to us.

3. Where and when to pray?

There are no limitations in any way, but in order to concentrate it is best to pray in quiet places where we can be alone with God.[Matt. 6: 6; Matt. 14: 23].

So, private prayer in a quiet place, family prayer with a small group and public prayer before a congregation.

1 Thes. 5:17 tells us to pray constantly making us aware of the need of constant fellowship and communion with God. [Ps. 55: 17].

4. Whom to pray to?

Prayer is to be directed and addressed to the Father in the name of Jesus Christ (see the difference with the O.T.), through the power and help of the Holy Spirit [Acts 12: 5; John 14:13 -14; John 16: 23-27; Eph. 2: 18].

5. Preparation for prayer.

Avoid just rushing into God's presence. Focus on God, relax, silence your heart before God, Concentrate on Him, be still and know that He is God [Ps. 46:10]. Remember, you have come to meet the Almighty , and yet He is our father. So prayer is a joy and privilege to meet with Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of any sin, and to search your heart [John 16:8; Ps.139:23- 24]. Confess them to the Lord and receive God's forgiveness through His blood [1 John 1: 9; Heb. 10:19-21].

6. Hindrances to effective prayer:

- Unbelief Heb. 11: 6
- Doubt James 1: 6-8
- Unforgiveness Mark 11: 25- 26; Luke 6: 37
- Laziness James 4: 2
- Wrong motives James 4: 3
- Unconfessed sin John 9: 31; Is. 59: 2
- Vain repetitions Matt. 6: 7

7. How to pray effectively.

- Pray in faith Matt. 21: 22
- Pray in humility, acknowledge God's sovereignty Jas. 4: 6
- Pray with right motives and attitudes Jas. 4: 3
(Ask yourself a question: Is it glorifying God?)
- Plead God's promises, pray in line with God's word Ex. 32:13- 14; Jer. 1: 12
- Pray with and in the Holy Spirit Rom. 8: 26, Jude 20
- Abide in Christ John 15:7
- Pray with a clear conscience 1 John 3: 21 - 22
- Persevere in prayer Luke 18: 1- 8

8. Keys to answered prayers.

- Pray specific having a clear goal Jer. 33: 3
- Having a burning desire Prov. 10: 24; Ps. 37: 4
- Born out of relationship with Christ John 15: 7; Eph. 3: 20
- Persevere in prayer until having peace and assurance Col. 3: 15
- Act in faith and turn prayer into praise Ps. 100: 4

9. What to pray for?

According to the Bible we need to pray for:

- The salvation of all men 1 Tim. 2: 1- 4
- Labourers released in the harvest field Matt. 9: 37- 38
- Those persecuted for the gospel Heb. 13: 3
- Our enemies Matt. 5:44- 45
- Those in authority 1 Tim. 2: 2
- Leaders in the church 1 Tim. 5: 17
- Daily bread Matt. 6: 11
- Wisdom Jas. 1: 5
- Victory over temptation and sin Matt. 6: 13; Matt. 18: 19
- Advancing of the gospel Col. 4: 3
- Every believer to become mature Col. 1: 28
- Second coming of Christ Rev. 22: 17

Various other comments:

- More power in prayer in agreement Matt. 18: 19
- Prayer can be combined with fasting Is. 58
- Specific prayer of the sick with oil Jas. 5: 14- 15
- Prayer against spiritual powers of darkness (spiritual warfare) Eph. 6: 10- 11
- Intercession: which is prayer originated from the heart of God Ex. 32: 9- 10

A Few Additional Notes on Intercession:

The ministry of intercession is probably the greatest ministry of the Christian life. Yet since there is no human glory attached to intercessory prayer, perhaps that's the reason why so few become involved in it! Nevertheless, the Lord is still looking for those who will intercede!

Through intercession a believer reaches out and lays hold of all the mighty resources of God. Intercession opens a channel to the spiritual world through which power can come to this world. Often intercessory prayer can move the prayer-less person to think about God. Unbelievers, made the object and focus of intercessory prayer, have felt upon them the pressure of spiritual influences and become aware of a God whose Presence they had scornfully dismissed.

Please know and note that every spiritual revival that has ever taken place owes more to the ministry of intercession than to any other one thing!!!

Those who have had a testimony of being great intercessors have built and developed their intercessory ministry upon three important building blocks. Please examine the same, and see how you can build them into your own personal prayer ministry.

- The first aspect is: Identification. Compare this to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest who intercedes for us. His life shows this first characteristic of an intercessor – one who identifies with others. (Heb. 4: 14; Heb. 7: 25). Jesus suffered with us, felt our pain, wore our flesh, and came down to our level.
- The second characteristic is: Agony. Jesus prayed, “with loud cries and tears” (Heb. 5: 7). And today it is the Holy Spirit Himself who intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. (Rom. 8: 26). Jesus agonised over men and women, and so should we as intercessors.
- The third block is: Authority. As the intercessor stand in the Presence of God and is sure of himself, because his whole mind is bathed in prayer, he can command things to be done! This is the true hallmark of an intercessor. A breath-taking thought. To know such closeness to God that His will and our will coincide!

How does one go about this ministry of intercession after having decided to give oneself to this ministry in a special way?

- First, dedicate yourself to God and decide how much time you are able to give daily or weekly to this ministry. To be effective, intercession must be unhurried. Mental breathlessness and intercession do not go together. Even if you have only a limited time for intercession you should come to it as though you had unlimited time.
- Second, ask God to lay a need on your heart upon which He wants you to focus. When you start to intercede for others you will find certain things taking hold of you. Remember the above mentioned three laws of intercession: identification, agony, and authority. Ask God to help you, through your imagination, to put yourself in the suffering person's place or in the particular situation that is causing difficulty.
- Third, focus your attention upon the greatness and glory of God. Always when we pray we should be concentrating on God. Think of Him – His power, His might, His omnipotence and, of course, His accessibility through Jesus our Lord!

Once you have a vivid awareness of God you are ready for the fourth and final step: draw your awareness of God and the awareness of the need together in your believing heart. Hold them together as long as you can. Fuse them in the flame of believing intercession until God and the need become one. This is the moment to intercede. Pray fervently, claim the answer by faith, and give yourself to prayer as long as the Spirit directs you. Properly employed, nothing is so mighty as intercessory prayer!

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

As we grow in our personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ, we should realise that although it is good and legitimate to pray and God for things, before we do this we need to learn how to draw near to God in worship! The centuries old Catechism opens with the question: What is the chief end of man? Which is answered in the following way: The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever! God desires first of all that we should learn to worship Him! John 4: 23-24.

Rather than laying our needs before the Lord as we start our prayer time, we should start by focussing on God through worshipping Him. As we worship and learn to focus on God, then everything else will fall into perspective!

God desires our worship not because He craves admiration and worship, or because it makes Him feel good. No, of course not! God encourages us to focus on Him because He knows that in contemplating Him we complete ourselves! It is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His Presence to men. When we open in our hearts the door of worship, God comes through that door and gives himself to us. Thus, we are the beneficiaries of worship, not Him!

By the words “praise and worship” we mean: the whole of our response of love and appreciation to the Lord. They sum up our purpose and reason for living: “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (Eph. 1: 6, 12, 14). God is looking for worshippers, people who are totally given over to Him, fully committed, totally devoted, who love Him, adore Him and serve Him from a totally pure and blameless heart with every fiber of our being.

Thanksgiving, praise and worship:

- ◆ We THANK Him for what He has given to us.
- ◆ We PRAISE Him for what He has done for us.
- ◆ We WORSHIP Him for who He is.

With what different postures can we express our heart's overflow of praise and worship:

- A laughing mouth – Ps. 126:2.
- A singing mouth – Ps. 89:1; 105: 2.
- A bent knee – Ps. 95: 6.
- A bowed head – Neh. 8:2.
- Clapping hands – Ps. 47: 1.
- A shouting voice – Ps. 95:1; 98: 4-6.
- Lifted hands – Ps. 28: 2; 134:2.
- Face on the ground – I Kings 18:39; Rev. 11: 16-17.
- A dancing body – II Sam. 6: 13-14; Ps. 149: 3.

Lesson No. 8 The Holy Spirit

I, INTRODUCTION

The HOLY SPIRIT is the third divine person of the eternal Godhead, co-equal, co-eternal and co-existent with the Father and the Son. It is His ministry to convict and convert a man, as well as to reveal the Son and the Father to the believer. Since the glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit in all His glorious operations is working through all who believe on the Father through the Son.

The Holy Spirit is God!

This is clearly mentioned in the Bible [Acts 5:3-4]

The Holy Spirit has divine attributes:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|
| -Is eternal | Heb. 9:14 |
| -Is omnipotent (All-powerful) | Luke 1:35 |
| -Is omniscient (All-knowing) | 1 Cor. 2: 10-11 |
| -Is omnipresent (present everywhere) | Ps. 139: 7-10 |

II, The Holy Spirit is revealed as a Person

The Holy Spirit is a person, He can communicate and make Himself real to us. He is an intelligent, free-will, living Being, who possesses personal properties, having a character of His own, being able to think and speak, and having His own personality: mind, will, and emotions.

- The Holy Spirit has a mind / intellect: Rom. 8: 27, I Cor. 2: 10- 13
- The Holy Spirit has a will: I Cor. 12: 11
- The Holy Spirit has emotions: Eph. 4: 30; Rom. 15: 30.

That the Holy Spirit is a Person is furthermore seen very clearly in the use of the Greek pronouns. Although the word "Spirit" is in the neuter gender, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself used personal pronouns in the masculine gender like (He, Him) when He spoke of the Holy Spirit.

III, The Holy Spirit in the O. T.

The Holy Spirit was already there at creation, Gen. 1: 1- 2, but is in the O.T. often symbolized by various emblems, like water (Ps. 72: 6), fire (Ex. 19: 18), wind (Is. 40: 7), dew (Ps. 133: 1-3), oil (Ps. 23: 5).

IV, The Holy Spirit in the N. T.

As we read the gospels, we see that the whole life of our Lord Jesus as the perfect man was governed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus was born of the Spirit, filled with the fullness of the Spirit, led by the Spirit, etc., and finally offered up on Calvary by the eternal Spirit and resurrected by the same Holy Spirit. (e.g. Acts 10: 38).

Now if Jesus depended upon the Holy Spirit in such a manner, how much more should we as believers constantly depend upon the Holy Spirit! All that God has for us and wants to do in and through us will only be done by the operation of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Hence, the need for believers to open our hearts to seek the fullness of the Spirit working in us!

V, The Holy Spirit in our lives

In John 16: 7, Jesus said it is better He goes away, because then He will send the Holy Spirit, the Counsellor. He is the Helper, the One who gives us divine ability to overcome weakness in our own life when we trust in Him and depend on Him. He is the One who helps us because He loves us!

Therefore, every believer should know the reality and power of the Holy Spirit, bringing life right into the centre of their being and strength into their lives (John 7: 38- 39). Without the Holy Spirit we can never live in the power of God.

VI, The Holy Spirit baptism

The two main functions of the Holy Spirit are:

- 1, impartation of **life**, John 3: 3- 6; II Cor. 3: 6b
- 2, impartation of **power**, Acts 1: 8a

Being born-again by the Holy Spirit, every believer has the Holy Spirit; yet there is a fullness. Jesus, the baptizer with the Holy Spirit (John 1: 33) wants to fill us till overflowing with the Holy Spirit and empower us to live for God.

Compare: John 20: 21-22 and Acts 1: 4-5 with Acts 1: 8. (Like a glass emerged in water)

Other examples in Acts: - Jerusalem, Acts 2: 1-4

- Samaria, Acts 8: 14-17
- Cornelius, Acts 10: 44-48.

VII, How to receive the Holy Spirit baptism?

-Everything we receive from God is free, but by faith. Gal. 3: 2.

-There must be a hunger, thirst and desire for more of God in our lives, Ps. 42: 1-2; John 7: 37-39.

-Ask of the Father in faith, Luke 11: 11-13, and receive sovereign or administered by the laying on of hands of Spirit-filled believers.

Suggested procedure:

Concentrate fully on Jesus, yield to Him totally, empty yourself and relax in His Presence.

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you and receive by faith His fullness.

Along with the baptism in the Holy Spirit comes the a b i l i t y to speak in new tongues / languages. Mark 16: 17. See also I Cor. 14: 5a, where Paul wants a l l to speak in tongues.

VIII, Effects of the Holy Spirit baptism

- 1, Towards Jesus: you will know as never before that Jesus is alive as Lord with power and authority today. (John 16 : 14; Acts 2: 33-36).
- 2, Towards God: you will experience how deeply God loves you (Rom. 5: 5), and come into a new assurance of Him as your Father (Rom. 8: 15; Gal. 4: 6) and be set free to love and praise Him with joy and confidence (Eph. 5: 18-20).
- 3, Towards God's Word: you'll get a new appetite for the Bible and greater ability to hear God speak to you through it (John 16: 13-15; II Tim. 3: 16).
- 4, Towards the Holy Spirit: you'll become very sensitive to His Presence and guidance (Eph. 4: 30; Rom. 8: 14) and will be³ more open to receive other gifts of the Spirit (I Cor. 12: 7-11).
- 5, Towards others: you'll become more open to other people, more loving towards them and more eager to be an active part of the church which is Christ's Body (Gal. 5: 22-23; I Cor. 12: 12-13).
- 6, Towards the world: you will grow bolder in witnessing for Jesus (Acts 4: 31).

Lesson No. 9 Work, Fruit and Gifts of the Holy Spirit

I. The work of the Holy Spirit in the live of the believer:

- a. The new birth is brought about by the Holy Spirit – John 3: 5- 6
- b. He lives in us – John 14:17, Rom 8: 9, I Cor.6: 19
- c. He gives us assurance of salvation – Rom. 8: 16
- d. He will be our Counselor forever – John 14: 16
- e. He is our Teacher – John 14: 26, I John 2: 27
- f. He convicts of sin – John 16: 8
- g. He strengthens our inner being – Eph.3:16
- h. He leads us- Rom. 8: 14
- i. He empowers us to be God’s witnesses – Acts 1: 8
- j. He helps us in our weaknesses – Rom. 8: 26
- k. He enables us to pray – Rom. 8:27- 28, Jude 20
- l. He produces fruit in our life – Gal. 5: 22- 23
- m. He imparts spiritual gifts as He wills – I Cor.12: 7- 11

II. The fruit of the Holy Spirit:

The fruit of the Spirit is the evidence in our lives of the work of the Holy Spirit in changing us into the likeness and nature/character of Jesus (in actions and attitudes).

Even as a tree is known by its fruit, even so the fruit of the Spirit identifies us with Christ. Moreover, the Lord expects fruit from our lives – John 15: 2, 8, 16.

In other words the fruit of the Spirit deals with our personality and character; they are a life-style coming from a heart-attitude that is fully surrendered to the control of the Holy Spirit.

In Gal.: 22 - 23 we find the nine graces of the fruit of the Spirit listed:

1. **Love**: Greek “agape” means divine love. A strong, tender and compassionate devotion to the well-being of some (self-giving, self-sacrificing).
2. **Joy**: A deep gladness or delight which is born out of a personal relationship with God.
3. **Peace**: Tranquility of mind, quietness and rest, and a spiritual well-being based on forgiveness at all times.
4. **Patience** or long-suffering: to bear long with the offences and weaknesses of others, without murmuring or resentment.
5. **Kindness** or gentleness: being gentle, cultured, refined, respectful and understanding in character and conduct.
6. **Goodness**: being good, virtuous, benevolent and generous in behaviour.
7. **Faithfulness**: Trustworthy, reliable, committed and loyal to God and men.
8. **Gentleness** or meekness: being considerate (or even flexible) towards others, having strength and tempers under control.
9. **Self-control** or temperance: Self-restraint, which is keeping the carnal desires and fleshly impulses under control.

NOTE: our attitudes are what our character / personality is!

III. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit:

A. What are Spiritual Gifts?

Spiritual gifts are certain powers given to men by the Holy Spirit and freely bestowed and manifested through our natural faculties (mind, mouth, hands) in the service of others for their blessing and God's glory.

B. How to receive Spiritual gifts?

These gifts are not to be obtained or possessed, but are sovereign given as the Holy Spirit wills (I Cor. 12:11). Yet they are to be desired, especially prophecy – I Cor.12:31; 14:1.

C. What are they?

Nine are listed in I Cor.12:8-10

1. **The Word of Wisdom**: divine revelation of God's purposes as to how to handle a particular situation.
2. **The Word of Knowledge**: divine revelation of certain facts regarding a person or situation.
3. **Discernment of spirits**: divine revelation and insight into the spirit world as to what spirit is present or at work.
4. **Faith**: supernatural trust in God for miracles
5. **Working of Miracles**: divine enabling to perform supernatural acts.
6. **Gifts of Healing**: divine enabling to impart God's power to heal the sick.
7. **Prophecy**: the utterance of a special message from God in a language known to the speaker or hearer.
8. **Tongues**: supernatural utterance in a language unknown to the speaker.
9. **Interpretation of Tongues**: supernatural interpretation of the meaning of an unknown tongue.

As we see, gifts of the Spirit are visible, audible and tangible expressions of God's miraculous attributes – His power, knowledge, wisdom, etc.

D. Other Gifts of Grace:

These are mentioned in Rom. 12:6-8. In short, they are:

- a. **Prophecy**: Ability to speak God's special message
- b. **Serving**: Assistance or help to encourage others.
- c. **Teaching**: Ability to interpret God's truth and communicate it clearly and systematically.
- d. **Encouraging** (or exhortation): Motivate people to action, using the authority of God's Word.
- e. **Contributing**: Ability to make and distribute money to further the cause of the gospel.
- f. **Leadership** (administration or rulership): Ability to lead others and manage the Church affairs.
- g. **Showing Mercy**: To comfort those who are most often ignored.

E. Ministry Gifts:

These are mentioned in Eph.4: 11 and they are:

1. The Apostles (Govern)
2. Prophets (Guide)
3. Evangelists (Gather)
4. Pastors (Guard)
5. Teachers (Ground)

Lesson No. 10 The Church

I What is the Church?

The church is not: A building, a meeting place, organisation, institution or denomination !

Greek word for church: “ecclesia”, means: called out ones

The English word “church” comes from the Greek word “kuriakos”, which means: belonging to the Lord !

Definition of Church: A group of people called out from the world-system and belonging to Christ (to be “in Christ”)

Yet, it is not just a calling out, but also a gathering together unto Jesus! Matt. 18:20 (having been gathered, i.e. by Jesus)

The word church can be used in two meanings:

- Universal Church : All believers from all places (e.g. Matt. 16:18)
- Local Church : A specific group of born-again believers in a given location (e.g. Acts 8:1); it is your spiritual home where you meet with other believers for the purpose of worship, spiritual growth and fellowship.

The foundation of the church is Jesus Christ, I Cor. 3: 10- 11; Eph. 2: 20.

In Matt.16:18 is peter (Greek – *petros*) the single piece of rock and rock (Greek – *petra*) is the large mass of rock or cliff of rocks.

II Various pictures of the Church

There is no single picture adequate enough to describe what God had in mind for his people. The following Biblical pictures are used to illustrate various aspects of the church:

- a) A City – Matt 5: 14, which has impact in its surroundings
- b) A Temple – I Pet.2: 5, Eph . 2: 20- 22, a temple made of living stones, a habitation or dwelling place in which God lives by His Spirit.
- c) A Family – Eph. 2 : 19, the household of God the Father. Entrance through adoption when we receive Christ (John 1 :12)
- d) A Flock – I Pet.5: 2- 4, Christ the Shepherd who knows his sheep, speaking of personal relationship.
- e) A Bride – Eph.5: 22- 32, revealing the intimate relationship between Christ and the Church like bride and bridegroom.
- f) A Body – Eph. 1: 22- 23; I Cor.12: 12- 27, where the church is compared to an organism with every member having a ministry to perform.

III The Purpose of the Church

As a church the born-again believers gather together for a purpose, which includes:

- To teach and instruct doctrine (Acts 2: 42), instructions about God’s truth and how to practically live it out.
- To experience true fellowship (Acts 2: 42- 44, 46). Of course with the Lord and with one another. Taking sincere interest in others, sharing lives together and encouraging one another.
- For prayer (Acts 2 : 42). Prayer in unity has tremendous power and effect (Matt. 18: 19; Acts 4: 31). And natural and spontaneous praises would spring up, resulting in worship to God (Eph.5: 19- 20).

- For the breaking of bread (communion)(which will be discussed later on in this Chapter).

IV Other features of the Church

- (a) The Church was not only a community of believers, who cared for one another, but the church also has a mission to reach the lost! God's purpose concerning man is to seek and save that which is lost, to be worshipped by men and to build a body of believers in the image of His Son Jesus Christ. In this light is it the responsibility of the church to be God's agency to evangelise the world - Acts 1: 8; Matt. 28: 19- 20.
- (b) The church is also the place where He is perfecting his people to become like Jesus in character through the ministries of apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists and pastors so that the believers may grow up in maturity, Eph. 4:11-16.
- (c) The Church is also the place where God has established authority. Jesus is Lord and Head of the Church, but at the same time He also establishes leaders to lead the church in His purposes and to whom we have to submit – Hebr. 13: 17; I Tim. 5: 17. Through it's leaders the Lord requires us to maintain godly order and discipline, that the name of the Lord may not be blasphemed – See I Cor. 5: 13.

V Ordinances of the Church:

In the church we basically maintain two ordinances.

An ordinance is: A symbolic practice appointed by Christ to be administered in the church as a visible expression of the saving truth of Christ.

1. Water-Baptism

In which we identify with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection (Rom.6: 3- 4) (See Lesson 6)

2. The Lord's Supper

In the New Testament we see quite a strong emphasis on together-ness (Hebr.10: 25)

The Holy Communion is instituted and inaugurated by Christ directly out of the Passover meal : Jesus Himself fulfilling this typology, being the Lamb of God (Matt.26 : 26- 29)

The Lord's Supper has no saving power and is meant only for believers. Whenever we participate in it, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again in glory – I Cor.11: 26, doing it in remembrance of Him! Participating in the benefits of His death as by faith we receive cleansing for our spirits and health for our bodies (1 Cor.11: 24- 25; Luke 22: 19- 20).

The elements used are bread and the cup of the fruit of the Vine referring to the body and blood of Jesus our Lord, which He gave for our redemption when He died on the cross!

Lesson No. 11 The Lordship Of Christ (Or Stewardship)

I Intro.

Matt. 6:24 shows us that we cannot serve two masters.

Luke 14:26 challenges us to put Jesus above all else.

Luke 6:46 says “Why do you call me “Lord, Lord”, and do not do what I tell you?”

In other words, when we accept Christ as Lord, He has to be on the throne of our lives, and His Word has to influence every area of our lives: money, work, time, friends, life-partner, relationships, etc. Since Christ became our Lord, we become stewards (1 Cor. 6:19), realising that everything we have comes from God (Acts 17:25). And we, as good stewards, have to be faithful and dedicated to the Master, always acting in His interests!

II The Impact of the Lordship of Christ in our lives

We will discuss this impact for the following areas:

Time

Time gone by never comes back. Therefore we must make the most of our time, using it for the Lord – Eph.5: 15-17. Manage time properly through goal setting, schedules and priorities. Our best time should be devoted to God, and be spent in Praise & Worship, prayer, reading and study of God’s Word, and waiting on the Lord (Called a daily “Quiet Time”). Ps. 145: 2; Ps. 55: 17; Col. 3: 16a; and Is.40: 31. This should be our first aim and priority in life to know God and by taking time developing our relationship with Him. Also participating in Sunday Worship should have a high priority! Heb.10: 25.

Finance

God’s heart was (and still is) to give. He gave his best. His only begotten Son Jesus Christ! We as God’s children should have the same heart as God has and should consider giving as a privilege (Acts 20:35). Through giving we honour God (Prov. 19: 17; 11: 24; Luke 6: 38).

In the O.T. we see that tithes (10% of our resources) were first given by Abraham, the father of our faith, to Melchizedek (Gen.14:18- 20). This was before the Law was given! To give tithes for a believer is a direct way of acknowledging the High Priestly ministry for the Lord Jesus Christ (See Heb. Ch.7).

Not to give a tenth of what we receive back to God is to rob God, and to deprive ourselves of a great blessing from God! (Mal. 3:8-10). In the N.T. believers should give freely and cheerfully, according to the leading of the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 9: 7), but with a basic minimum of 10%, as Jesus Himself re-affirmed tithing (Matt. 23: 23).

The purpose of tithes:

In the O.T. the tithes supported the Levites, the tribe without land, who served in the worship and ministry to God. Today tithes are basically used for the support of those in full time ministry, for the running of the church, and for the furtherance of the gospel (outreach) (Luke 8:3; Gal.6:6; I Cor.9:14).

In addition to our regular committed gifts (like tithes) (I Cor.16:2) we may have the privilege and opportunity to make free will offerings to the Lord (II Cor. 8:2-4). These contributions might be for special projects or for the needy.

Underlying principle: Sowing in faith (II Cor. 9: 6).

Work / Business

God wants us to be engaged in some kind of employment or work. Already before the Fall, God had given work and responsibility as a very important part of man's life (Gen. 2:15). After the curse man was to work by the sweat of his brow (Gen. 3: 19). Throughout the Bible idleness is condemned, and if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat (II Thes. 3: 10- 12).

The Lord is calling us to be an example and to engage in the work He has given us!

If unemployed, actively seek godly work and in the meantime trust God and look to the Lord in faith to supply your needs.

In the place of Work:

- Don't work just for the money, but for the Lord Jesus and His glory. (Eph.6: 7)
- Be submissive and respectful to your employers and to everyone in authority over you (Eph. 6: 5- 6)
- Be hard-working, honest and trustworthy (Titus 2: 9- 10)
- Should you be responsible for managing other people, do so as unto the Lord. Kindly, fair and without favouritism.

Family Relationships

With family life constantly under attack, we as Spirit-filled believers have to set a standard based on God's Word!

Key Points:

1. Husbands to love and lead their wives as head of the family (Eph.5: 23)
2. Wives to respect and submit to own husband, as unto the Lord, even when he is not yet saved (Eph.5: 33, 22; I Pet. 3:1)
3. Partners to submit to one another in the fear of God (Eph. 5: 21)
4. Children to be brought up in love and fear of the Lord (Eph.6: 4; Prov.22: 6)
5. Children are to obey their parents in the Lord and care for them when they grow older (Eph.6: 1- 3; I Tim.5: 4, 8).

Conduct

- Cultivate the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5: 22- 23)
- Walk in the fear of God (Ex. 20: 20)
- Be thankful in all circumstances (I Thes.5: 18)
- Obey the Word of God (Jas.1: 22- 25, Luke 11: 28)
- Control the tongue (Prov. 18: 21; Jas. 1: 19; 3: 8- 10); Eph.4: 29)
- Self-control (Prov. 25: 28; Prov.15: 1, 18)

In closing, in every area our life we should show forth the attitude of Christ, coming forth out of a heart filled with God's love.

And our motivation should always be: Do I do it for the glory of God? ! (I Cor.10: 31; Col.3: 17; I Pet.4: 11b).

Lesson No. 12 Fruitfulness / Evangelism

I Intro

God saved us because He loved us! Yet, He also had a purpose in saving us: to know Him and to make Him known !

John 15: 16 states that God chose us to Go and bear fruit! And through that the Father will be glorified! (John 15: 8)

II The Great Commission

Because of god's great love, He sent Jesus to save mankind. After Jesus had completed the Father's work, He gave His disciples a command: "to preach the gospel and make disciples amongst all the people groups of the world" (Matt. 28: 18- 20) God Wants each one of us to be fishers of men! (Matt. 4: 19)

III What is the Gospel ?

The Gospel is: Good News that through faith (total trust in , dependence upon, reliance on) in Jesus Christ men can receive forgiveness of their sins, and eternal life being restored in fellowship with God through Jesus Christ (See also I Cor.15: 3- 4, John 17: 3)

IV What is the Purpose of Evangelism ?

That through the preaching of Christ (II Cor.4: 5), people may turn to God!

In other words : Get them Saved ! (Acts 26: 18; Rom. 10:14-15)

Another way of putting it is: Sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God! (I Cor.3: 6- 7).

We who have been sent as Christ's ambassadors (II Cor.5: 20) and called to be His witnesses in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1: 8).

Remember, our commission is to make disciples, not just believers! A disciple is a person who changes his life, whereas a convert only changes his mind! Therefore, evangelism is rather a beginning than an end in itself. The ultimate purpose is to present every man perfect in Christ (Col.1: 28). In bringing up new converts in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, its is important that we impart our teaching to faithful men who can in turn reproduce (II Tim. 2: 2).

- Where to start?

Evangelism should be a life-style ! We should share Christ naturally out of the abundance of our heart ! Acts 1: 8 gives a good principle of increasing areas of responsibility. We could start sharing in our home, family, place of work, school, neighbourhood, city, country or even other countries.

- How to start?

- A. Begin to pray and ask God for opportunities to share, and for boldness to witness (Acts.4: 29- 31)
- B. Where your heart is, there is your treasure: begin to give towards evangelism/ outreach
- C. Go and get involved in sharing God's love! (Prov.11: 30).

MAY YOU ALL BEAR A 100-FOLD FRUIT FOR THE MASTER !! PRAYER: JUDE 24-25.

WITNESSING TO PERSONAL CONTACTS (“*OIKOS*”) – How to share your testimony

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

Before actually speaking to anyone about the Lord, we must talk to God about him or her. Ask God to give you His love and burden for the lost. Pray in faith, believing that He will enable us to do the work, which He has led us to undertake by His Holy Spirit. Keep a prayer journal and learn to pray specifically for individuals to receive Christ.

WHAT IS WITNESSING?

Witnessing is simply introducing the lost to the Lord Jesus in an environment of love and friendship.

SUCCESS IN WITNESSING

If you are faithful to present the truth of the gospel to those who do not know, you are a successful witness no matter what their response. Success in witnessing is simply taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the result to God. The only way we ever fail in our witness is if we fail to witness.

FEW GUIDELINES FOR WITNESSING/ SHARING THE GOSPEL

- Be wise, make the most of every opportunity, Col. 4: 5.
- Let your conversation be always full of grace, Col. 4: 6, seasoned with **salt**, so that you may know how to answer every one.
- Associate- build relationships with the person by salting.

ASSOCIATE - BUILD RELATIONSHIPS BY S.A.L.T.i.n.g.

S.A.L.T.i.n.g.

	<u>KEY</u>	<u>EXAMPLE</u>
S - <u>Say something</u>	Break the ice	“Hi, good to see you!”
A - <u>Ask a question</u>	Ask a Friendly and non-threatening question that shows that they matter to you	“How have you been this week?” “How is your mother?”
L - <u>Listen</u>	Acknowledge that they Matter to God and to you, and that you want to understand them	Listen with your heart, eyes and ears.
T- <u>Turn the Conversation deeper</u> i- introduce Jesus or something related to the Christian faith. n- note the response g- go for the landing	Keep the conversation going in the direction that you want. Everyone has felt needs and soft spots that you Can land on for ministry Find the landing spot or airstrip for effective ministry.	“Is there anything that I could do to help?”

Turn the conversation into something deeper by introducing Jesus or something spiritual

For example by:

- 1) SHARING THE GOSPEL,
- 2) SHARING A PERSONAL TESTIMONY
- 3) SHARING THE BRIDGE ILLUSTRATION
- 4) SOLICITING PRAYER REQUIRES
- 5) INTRODUCE A CHRISTIAN TOPIC

1) SHARING THE GOSPEL

There are four main elements in sharing the gospel

- 1) GOD - loves you; John 3: 16; Rom. 5: 8.
- 2) MAN - has sinned; Romans 3: 23, Romans 6: 23, Isaiah 59: 2.
- 3) CHRIST - is the answer; John 14: 6, Acts 4: 12, 1 Timothy 2: 5; 1 Peter 3:18.
- 4) FAITH-is the key; Romans 10: 9- 10; John 1:12, Ephesians 2: 8- 9; John 5: 24.

2) SHARING YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY.

“For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard”- Acts 4: 20.

The spiritual parent should always be ready to share how Jesus Christ has impacted his life.

Your testimony is important because of

1. INTEREST - People may not be interested in the Christian faith but are interested to hear your testimony or story. It provides evidence of God at work in your life. Matt.5: 14- 16.
2. IDENTIFICATION - People can identify with your struggles and search for God.
3. IRREFUTABILITY - People may argue about the Christ being the only way to God but they cannot argue about your testimony or story.

HOW TO PREPARE A PERSONAL TESTIMONY.

A. Follow a three-point outline.

1. Before: What was your life like before you received Jesus Christ?
2. How: How did you come to know or receive Christ? (emphasise receiving Jesus by faith.)
3. After: What happened after you received Christ?

QUESTION TO CONSIDER AS YOU WRITE YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

1. Before I received Christ.
 - a. What was my life like? What were my attitudes, needs, problems?
 - b. Around what did my life revolve the most? From what I get my security or happiness?
 - c. How did those areas begin to disappoint me?
 - d. To what source did I look for security, peace of mind, happiness? In what ways were my activities unsatisfying?

(Remember that examples will establish you as a credible witness in the minds of non-Christians. Avoid religious focus. Do not spend a great amount of time talking about the church activities before your life began to change. Like wise, avoid being explicit and sensational in speaking of drugs, immorality, crime or drunkenness)
2. How I received Christ?
 - a. When was the first time I heard the Gospel? How? (When was I exposed to true Christianity?)
 - b. What were my initial reactions?
 - c. When did my attitude begin to change? Why?
 - d. What were the final struggles that went through my mind just before I accepted Christ?
 - e. Even though there were struggles, why did I decide to accept Christ?

3. After I Received Christ

- a. Specific changes and illustration about the changes Christ has made in my life, actions and attitudes.
- b. How long did it take before I noticed changes?
- c. Why am I motivated differently?

4. What if I received Christ at an early age?

If you received Christ at an early age, you will be able to follow the three-point outline. However, you will probably put a greater emphasis on your life after receiving Christ.

HOW TO PRESENT YOUR TESTIMONY.

Rehearse your testimony until it becomes natural.

- A. Share your testimony with conviction in the power of the Holy spirit.
- B. Be joyful. Ask the lord to give you a pleasant and natural countenance.
- C. Speak clearly but in a natural, relaxed tone. Speak loudly enough to be heard.
- D. Avoid nervous mannerisms such as rubbing your nose, swaying, jingling coins in your pocket, playing with a pencil or clearing your throat.
- E. Avoid using emotional pressure in your testimony to obtain decisions for Christ. Only God Through the Holy Spirit Changes hearts (Mathew 16: 17; John 3: 5- 6; 1 Cor. 2: 4- 5.)
- F. Avoid mentioning denominations, people or churches by name, particularly in a negative manner. Statements like "I attended the First Christ Church before I became a Christian..." should be avoided, keep your conversation positive and focused on what God has done in your life.
- G. It doesn't have to be long, just 3 minutes is about the right length for any situation.
- H. Be genuinely interested in other person. Take time to listen and care about the difficulties they are experiencing.
- I. Be pro-active, yet patient and loving. Never resort to high pressure, but actively and lovingly seek to bring others to faith in Jesus Christ. Remember God has commissioned you to proclaim and not convert.
- J. Link your testimony to the conversation.
- K. Don't use Christian jargons. While terms like "saved", "lost", "sacrificed", "justified", "redeemed", "salvation," etc. can be very meaningful to Christians, but they do not communicate effectively to non-Christians.
- L. Never argue. Never try to reason with the listener's sphere of expertise.
- M. Always leave something to read.

You should write out and memorize your own three-minute testimony. Practice delivering it conversationally, perhaps with a friend. You'll be surprised at how often it will come in handy- and at how effective it can be in helping you move from casual. Conversation to the actual gospel.

PARTNER ACTIVITY: PRACTISE YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY EVALUATION CHECKLIST:

POINTERS

- SHORT? Was it within 3 minutes?
- SIMPLE? Are there words that non-Christians will not understand, for example, “justified,” “salvation,” and “redeemed”?
- CLEAR? At the end of the sharing, would a person know how to receive Christ if they wanted to?
- CONCLUDED? Was a response asked for?
- FRIENDLY? Is it conversational and non-threatening? Did you smile and maintain eye contact?
- FOCUSED? Is there a theme that runs through your testimony is the central issue that shows the contrast in your spiritual outlook before and after you met Christ?

OBSERVATIONS

(like: Good points of strengths;
Areas to be improved.)

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COMPACT SURVEY OF THE BIBLE

THE CREATIVE WORK OF GOD

	Genesis 1	Genesis 2
Creation Accounts	God the Creator Elohim Good as Powerful Creation of the universe Climaxes with man The six days of creation	Good the covenant-keeper Yahweh God as personal Creation of man Climaxes with marriage The sixth day of creation
Six days of Creation	In the first three days, God shaped the Creation Day 1: light Day 2: water, atmosphere Day 3: earth, vegetation	In the second three days God populated the creation Day 4: sun, moon, stars Day 5: sea creatures, birds Day 6: animals

TEMPTATION: THE TWO ADAMS CONTRASTED

1 John 2:16	Genesis 3:6 (First Adam)	Luke 4:1-13 (Second Adam – Christ)
“the lust of the flesh”	“the three was good for’ food”	“command this stone to become bread”
“the lust of the eyes’	“it was pleasant to the eyes”	“the devil... showed from all the kingdoms”
“the pride of life”	“a tree desirable to make one wise”	“throw Yourself down from here”

Principle: righteousness is creative; sin is destructive (Gen. 2:17; Rom. 6: 23)

Practice: Genesis 1-11, the prologue not only to Genesis, but the entire Bible, begins with the ordered and life-giving activity of the holy Creator. The fall of man and the consequent spread of sin stand in stark contrast to the work of Good and illustrate the disorder and death that always accompanies rebellion against the purposes of the Lord. God is not mocked; in a moral and spiritual universe, sin must be judged. What must you do, according to Romans 3:21 - 26, to escape the condemnation of your Creator?

HISTORY OF ISRAEL: THE PEOPLE

THE PATRIARCHS and BONDAGE IN EGYPT (430 years until Exodus, Ex. 12:40; Gal. 3:17)

- 2135 B.C. - Birth of Abraham
- 1991 B.C. - Beginning of Egyptian Middle Kingdom
- 1875 B.C. - Birth of Joseph
- Jacob enters Egypt with his family
- 1525 B.C. - Birth of Moses
- 1445 B.C. - The Exodus

THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

Genesis 12: 1- 3 God initiated His covenant with Abraham when he was living in Ur of the Chaldeans, promising a land, descendants, and blessing.

Genesis 12: 4- 5	Abraham went with his family to Haran, lived there for a time, and left at the age of 75.
Genesis 13: 14-17	After Lot separated from Abram, God again promised the land to him and his descendants.
Genesis 15: 1- 21	This covenant was ratified when God passed between the sacrificial animals Abram laid before God.
Genesis 17: 1- 27	When Abram was 99 God renewed His covenant, changing Abram's name to Abraham ("a father of many nations"). Sign of the covenant: Circumcision.
Genesis 22: 15- 18	Confirmation of the covenant because of Abraham's obedience
This covenant was foundational to other covenants.	Land: Palestinian covenant (Deut. 30) Seed: Davidic covenant (2 Sam. 7) Blessing "old" (Ex. 19) "new" covenants (Jer. 31)

SPIRITUAL DECLINE IN THE PATRIARCHAL AGE

<u>First Generation</u>	<u>Second Generation</u>	<u>Third Generation</u>	<u>Fourth Generation</u>
Abraham	Ishmael and Isaac	Esau and Jacob	Joseph and his eleven brothers
Abraham: Man of faith Believed God	Ishmael: not son of promise Isaac: called on God believed God	Esau: unspiritual little faith Jacob: at first compro- mised, later turned to the Lord	Joseph: man of God showed faith Brothers: treachery, immorality, lack of separation from Canaanites
Abraham: Built altars to God (Gen 12: 7-8) Gen.13: 4,18; 22: 9)	Isaac: built an altar to God (Gen. 26: 25)	Jacob: built altars to God (Gen. 33: 20) (Gen. 35: 1,3, 7)	No altars were built to God in the fourth generation

Principle: The destructiveness of sin is overcome by a faith that takes God at his Word in spite of appearances and circumstances to the contrary (Gen.15:6; John 3:16; Heb. 11: 8- 22)

Practice: Beginning in Genesis 12, God drew forth a man who would be the Father of the people from whom and to whom the Messiah would come. Abraham became a friend of God through faith. In spite of appearances to the contrary, he went to a land he had not seen, believed God's promise of a son, and offered up that son at the same area where God's own Son would be crucified. Because he believed God, his faith was accounted to him for righteousness. In the same way, you can enter into a relationship with God by placing your trust in the person and work of His Son. Have you made that decision?

HISTORY OF ISRAEL: THE LAND

1445 - 1405 B.C. - Exodus and wilderness wanderings of Israel

1405 - 1398 B.C. - Conquest of the promised land - Joshua

1398 - 1043 B.C. - Period of the Judges - ending with Samuel

1043 B.C. - Saul anointed as Israel's first king

Principle: Revelation demands obedience, and obedience brings blessing (Deut. 6: 1- 15; Josh, 1: 8; John 15:12- 17).

Practice: After redeeming His people from bondage, the Lord spoke to them in power and glory at Mt. Sinai. The revelation of the Mosaic law required a response of obedience. Their success as individuals as a nation would depend on the degree of their conformity to God's moral, civil, and ceremonial law. Likewise, disobedience would lead to disaster (e.g., the wilderness wandering and

servitude in the time of the judges). As believers in the Christ, our success is measured by the degree of our conformity to His character. To what extent is Christ the Lord of your life?

After their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, the children of Israel needed to learn to walk with their God. The Law was given to instruct the people about the person and the ways of their Redeemer so that they could be set apart to a life of holiness and obedience, not to save anyone but to reveal the people's need to trust in the Lord. As Paul told the Galatians, "Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith (Gal. 3: 24).

The Law combines poetry, salvation history, legislation, and exhortation. The three major divisions of the Law (Deut. 4: 44) are the testimonies (moral duties), the statutes (ceremonial duties), and the judgments or ordinances (civil and social duties). The moral portion of the Law is summarized in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20: 1- 17; Deut. 5: 6- 21).

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS (Moral Law)

1- 4	Duties to God	"You shall love the LORD your God" (Matt. 22: 37)
5-10	Duties to man	"You shall love your neighbor" (Matt. 22: 39)

THE JUDGES: A CASE STUDY IN DISOBEDIENCE

Each of the seven cycles found in Judges 3:5-16:31 has five steps; sin, servitude, supplication, salvation, and silence. The cycles connect as a descending spiral of sin (2:19) with Israel vacillating between obedience and apostasy.

Cycle	Oppressor	Year of Oppression	Judge Deliverer	Years of Peace
1. (3: 7- 11)	Mesopotamians	8	Othniel	40
2. (3: 12- 30)	Moabites	18	Ehud	80
(3: 31)	Philistines		Shamgar	
3. (4: 1- 5: 31)	Canaanites	20	Deborah/ Barak	40
4. (6: 1-8: 32)	Midianites	7	Gideon	40
5. (8: 33-10: 5)	Abimelech	3	Tola/Jair	45
6. (10: 6-12: 15)	Ammonites	18	Jephthah/ Ibzan/ Elon/ Abdon	6 / 7 10 / 8
7. (12: 1-16: 31)	Philistines	40	Samson	20

HISTORY OF ISRAEL: THE KINGDOM

1043 - 931 B.C. - Reign of kings Saul, David, Solomon

931 B.C. - Civil war divides the kingdom: (1) Israel (10 tribes) and (2) Judah (2 tribes)

722 B.C. - Assyria conquers Israel

586 B.C. - Babylon conquers Judah

516 B.C. - Exiles of Babylon return to Jerusalem: in three stages: Zerubbabel, Ezra, Nehemiah

Principle: Obedience grows out of a heart for God (Deut. 6: 5; I Sam. 13: 14; I Chr. 28: 9; Acts 13: 22).

Practice: Saul and David are a study in contrasts. The key to Saul's failure was his lack of a heart for God; the key to David's greatness was his obvious love for the Lord. David's relationship with God became the standard by which all the kings of Judah would be measured. To know God is to love Him, and to love Him is to obey Him. Read Psalms 23 as a model of a man who was intimate with God. What are the things that may be hindering your growth in the knowledge of God?

KINGS OF ISRAEL:

1. Jerobaom I
2. Nadab
3. Baasha
4. Elah
5. Zimri
6. Omri
7. Ahab
8. Ahaziah
9. Jehoram
10. Jehu
11. Jehoahaz
12. Jehoash
13. Jeroboam II
14. Zechariah
15. Shallum
16. Menahem
17. Pekahiah
18. Pekah
19. Hoshea

KINGS OF JUDAH:

1. Rehobaom
2. Abijam
3. Asa
4. Jehoshaphat
5. Jehoram
6. Ahaziah
7. Athaliah
8. Joash
9. Amaziah
10. Azariah
11. Jotham
12. Ahaz
13. Hezekiah
14. Manasseh
15. Amon
16. Josiah
17. Jehoahaz
18. Jehoiakim
19. Jehoiachin
20. Zedekiah

THEMES OF THE POETIC BOOKS

BOOK	KEY WORD	THEME
Job	Sovereignty	God revealed Himself in His majesty and power to Job. It became clear that the real issue was not Job's suffering (caused by Job's sin) but God's sovereignty.
Psalms	Worship	The five books of psalms span the centuries from Moses to the post-exilic period covering the full range of human emotion and experiences suited for services as the temple hymnal, they were set to music and refused on worship.
Proverbs	Wisdom	Proverbs was designed to equip the reader in practical discernment, discipline, and discretion. The development of skills in all the details of life are stressed, so that beauty and righteousness will replace foolishness and evil through dependence upon God.
Ecclesiastes	Vanity	The Preacher applied his great mind and resources to the quest for meaning and purpose in life. He found that wisdom, wealth, works, pleasure, and power all led to futility and striving after wind. The only source of ultimate meaning and fulfillment is God Himself.
Song of Solomon	Love in Marriage	The beautiful song portrays the intimate love relationship between Solomon and his Shulamite bride. It magnifies the virtues of physical and emotional live in marriage.

Principle: To have a heart for God is to approach life from His perspective (Job 42:1- 6, Ps. 1; 19; 63; 73; 119; Prov. 2:1- 9; Rom. 12: 1- 3).

Practice: The poetic books record the struggles of men like Job, David, Solomon, Asaph, and others to gain a divine perspective on their lives and circumstances. As they learned to set their mind on the person, powers, and perfections of God, their wills and emotions came into alignment with His truth. True wisdom is seeing life from God's side, and this is rooted in setting our minds (meditating) on the things above (Col. 3: 1 - 3). Try dipping into the psalms and proverbs on a daily basis and prayerfully ponder what you read.

THE PATH TO TRUE SUCCESS

Question	Principle
1. What is Wisdom?	Wisdom is the key to a life of beauty, fulfillment, and purpose (Prov. 3: 15-18). Wisdom is the skill in the art of living life with every area under the dominion of God. It is the ability to use the best means at the best time to accomplish the best ends.
2. What do we pursue	The treasure of wisdom rests in the hands of God. Since it comes from above (Prov. 2: 6 cf. James 3: 17) we cannot attain it apart from Him.
3. What are the conditions for attaining wisdom?	True wisdom can only be gained by cultivating the fear of the Lord (Job 28: 28; Ps. 8:11; 111:10; Prov. 1:7; 9: 10).
4. What is the fear of the Lord?	To fear God is to have an attitude of awe and humility before Him (Prov. 15:33). It is to recognize Him as our creator and our complete dependence upon Him in every activity of our lives.
5. Why have so few people developed this fear of God?	The temporal value system of this world is based on what is seen, while the eternal value system of Scripture is based on what is unseen (II Cor. 4: 16- 18; 5: 7). The former exerts a powerful influence upon us, and we struggle with giving up the seen for the unseen.
6. What can enable us to choose the eternal value system?	This choice is based on faith (believing God in spite of appearances and circumstances), and faith is based on trust.
7. How do we grow in faith?	Our ability to trust God is directly proportional to our knowledge of God. The better we know Him, the more we can trust him.
8. How can we increase in our knowledge of God?	We become intimate with God as we talk with Him in prayer and listen to His voice in Scripture. The better we know God, the more we love Him and want to respond to His desires for our lives. Faith in God is simply trusting Him as a person, and trust is manifested in action.

THE PROPHETIC BOOKS: THE HOPE OF THE JEWS

PROPHETS BEFORE THE EXILE	EXILE PROPHETS	PROPHETS AFTER THE EXILE
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To Israel:	To Judah:	To Jews in Babylon:	To the Remnant after returning
(Dates in brackets indicate years before Christ - B.C.)			
Amos (760)	Joel (835)	Daniel (605)	
Hosea (755)	Isaiah (740)	Exekiel (592)	Haggai (520)
	Micah (735)		Zechariah (520)
	Zephaniah (630)		Malachi (432)
To Nineveh:	Jeremiah (627)		
Jonah (760)	Habakkuk (607)		
Nahum (660)	Lamentations (586)		
To Edom:			
Obadiah (840)			

Principle: God's disciplines are designed to restore a heart for Himself (Jer. 17: 5, 7; Joel 2:12- 13; Heb. 12: 5- 11).

Practice: God had to discipline His people because of their moral and spiritual rebellion and their refusal to heed the warnings of His prophets. Reproof is designed to bring repentance and repentance brings restoration. The same prophets who pronounced the condemnation of God also announced the consolation of God. Similarly, because God loves us, He must sometimes chasten us as His children to train us in the ways of righteousness. How do you respond during these times? Are you teachable or intractable?

THEMES OF THE PROPHETIC BOOKS

BOOK	KEY WORD	THEME
Isiah	Salvation is of the Lord	Two-fold message of condemnation (1- 39) and consolation (40-66). God's judgement on the sins of Judah, the surrounding nations, and t the world, followed by future salvation and restoration.
Jeremiah	Judah's last hour	Declaration of certain judgement of God against Judah. God promises to establish a new covenant with His people.
Lament-ations	Lamentations	This beautifully structured series of five lament poems is a funeral dirge for the fallen city of Jerusalem.
Ezekiel	Future restoration	Ministry to the Jewish captives in Babylon before and after the fall of Jerusalem. The fate of Judah's foes and an apocalyptic vision of future.
Judah's Daniel	God's program for Israel	Outlines God's plan for the Gentile nations (2-7) and portrays Israel during the time of Gentile domination (8 -12)
Hosea	God's love for Israel	The story of Hosea and his faithless wife illustrates the loyal love of God and the spiritual adultery of Israel.
Joel	Day of the Lord	A recent locust plague illustrates the far more terrifying day of the Lord. God appeals to the people to repent in order to avert the coming disaster.
Amos	Judgement of Israel	In eight pronouncements of judgement, Amos spirals around the surrounding countries before landing on Israel. He lists the sins of Israel and calls for repentance.
Obadiah	Judgement on Edom	Condemns the nation of Edom (descended from Esau) for refusing to act as a brother towards Judah (descended from Jacob).
Jonah	Revival in Nineveh	The repentant response of the people of Nineveh to Jonah's one-line prophetic message caused the God of mercy to spare the city.
Micah	Judgement and restoration of Judah	In spite of divine retribution against the corruption of Israel and Judah, God's covenant with them will be fulfilled in the Messiah's future kingdom.
Nahum	Judgement of Nineveh	About 125 years after Nineveh repented under the preaching of Jonah, Micah predicted the destruction of the city because of idolatry and brutality.
Habakkuk	Live by faith	Troubled with God's plan to use the Babylonians as His rod of judgement on Judah. Habakkuk praises the Lord after gaining a better perspective on His power and purposes.
Zephaniah	Day of the Lord	The coming day of the Lord is a time of awesome judgement followed by great blessing. Judah stands condemned, but the Lord will restore the fortunes of the remnant.
Haggai	Reconstruction of the Temple	After the Babylonian exile, Haggai urges the Jews to put God first and finish the Temple they had begun so that they can enjoy God's blessings

Zechariah	Prepare for the Messiah	Like Haggai, Zechariah exhorts the Jews to complete the construction of the Temple. He relates it to the coming of the Messiah in a series of visions and messianic prophecies.
Malachi	Appeal to the Backsliders	The spiritual climate of the people had grown cold, and Malachi rebukes them for their religious and social compromise. If they return to God with sincere hearts, they will be blessed.

HISTORY OF ISRAEL : THE REMNANT

Principle: True restoration results from being molded by the Word within rather than the world without (Ezra 7: 10; 9: 10-14; Is. 46: 3- 4; Acts 7: 51- 53).

Practice: Even after the chastening of the exile, most of the returning Jews became entangled once again in the affairs of the world and neglected their relationship with God. For some, the problem was external religiosity without internal reality; for others, the problem was being more influenced by culture than Scripture. God has always had to work with a faithful minority who love Him enough to stand against the tide of the world system. Is your quality of life different from that of those who love the world more than the Lord?

THE LIFE OF CHRIST

Principle: Jesus, the living Word, lives His life in and through us as we walk in dependence upon Him (John 1: 11- 1; 10: 10; 15: 4- 5; Gal. 2: 20)

Practice: In Christ, God personally revealed Himself in human flesh: to see Him is to see God (John 12: 45; 14: 9), to know Him is to know God (John 8: 19), to receive Him is to receive God (Mark 9: 37), to honor Him is to honor God (John 5: 23), and to reject Him is to reject God (Luke 10:16). He is the vine, the source of life; we are the branches, the channels of life. It is only as we draw our life from Him that we bear lasting fruit. To what extent are you looking to Jesus as the true source of your security, significance, and fulfillment?

HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Overview of the Book of Acts: (key: Acts 1: 8)

Chapters	Acts 1 - 7	Acts 8 - 12	Acts 13 - 28
Spread of church	In Jerusalem	In all Judeah and Samaria	To all the earth
The Gospel witness	In the city	In the provinces	In the world
Theme	Power and progress of church	Expansion of the church	Paul's three journeys and trials
People addressed	Jews	Samaritans	Gentiles
Key Person	Peter	Philip	Paul
Time period	2 years (A.D. 33-35)	13 years (A.D. 35- 48)	14 years (A.D. 48 - 62)
Development	Triumph	Transition	Travels and trials

Principle: Christ's life is reproduced in others when we take the initiative to witness in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28: 18- 20; Acts 1: 8; Col. 4: 2- 6).

Practice: The Book of Acts records the spread of the gospel from the city of Jerusalem to the whole province of Judea and Samaria, and ultimately through the Roman Empire and beyond. These first-century Christians were sold out for the cause of Christ and transformed their world as their lives became living epistles of the Good New, God has called us to a life-style of evangelism in which we build relationship with non-Christians. These friendships in turn become natural

bridges for communicating the gospel. Take a close look at Colossians 4: 2- 6 to learn how to become more effective as an instrument of the Holy Spirit to reproduce the life of Christ in others.

THE WRITINGS OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Principle: God wants us to grow in our understanding that Christ's life and destiny is our life and destiny (2 Cor. 4:16- 18; Eph. 1: 3, 17- 19; 3: 16- 19; Phil. 1: 21; 3: 20- 21; I Pet. 1: 3- 9).

Practice: Paul, Peter, and the other apostles learned the secret of developing an eternal perspective in the midst of earthly problems. They were able to live above their circumstances and rejoice even while being persecuted because of their firm grasp on who they were in Christ and where they were going. In spite of his imprisonment, Paul could write, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain: (Phil. 1:21). Are you looking more at "the things which are seen" or at "the things which are not seen"? The former are temporary, but the latter are eternal (2 Cor. 4: 18).

Who am I?

I am the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13).
I am the light of the world (Matt. 5:14)
I am a child of God (John 1:12)
I am part of the true vine, a channel of Christ's life (John 15: 1, 5).
I am Christ's friend (John 15:15)
I am chosen and appointed by Christ to bear His Fruit (John 15:16).
I am a slave of righteousness (Rom 6:18).
I am enslaved to God (Rom. 6:22).
I am a son of God; God is spiritually my Father (Rom. 8:14- 15; Gal. 3:26; 4: 6).
I am a joint heir with Christ, sharing His inheritance with Him (Rom 8:17).
I am a temple –a dwelling place-of God. His Spirit and His life dwells in me (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19).
I am united to the Lord and am one spirit with Him (1 Cor. 6:17).
I am a member of Christ's Body (1 Cor. 12: 27; Eph. 5:30).
I am a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).
I am reconciled to God and am a minister of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18- 19)
I am a son of God and one in Christ (Cal.3: 26,28)
I am an heir of God since I am a son of God (Gal. 4:6-7).
I am a saint (Eph. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:2; Phil.1:1; Col. 1:2).
I am God's workmanship-His handiwork born a new in Christ to do His work (Eph. 2:10).
I am a fellow citizen with the rest of God's family (Eph. 2:19).
I am a prisoner of Christ (Eph. 3:1; 4:1).
I am righteous and holy (Eph. 4:24).
I am a citizen of Heaven, seated in heaven right now (Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:6)
I am hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).
I am an expression of the life of Christ because He is my life (col. 3:4).
I am chosen of God, holy and dearly loved (Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4)
I am a son of light and not of darkness (1 Thess.5:5).
I am a holy partaker of a heavenly calling (Heb.3:1).
I am a partaker of Christ; I share in His life (Heb.3:14).
I am one of God's living stones, being built up in Christ as a spiritual house (1 Pet. 2:5)
I am a member of a chosen race, a royal priest hood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession (1 Pet. 2:9- 10).
I am an alien and stranger to this world in which I temporarily live (1 Pet. 2:11).
I am an enemy of the devil (1 Pet. 5:8).
I am the child of God and I will resemble Christ when He returns (1 John 3:1,2).
I am born of God, and the evil one – the devil – cannot touch me (1 John 5:18).
I am *not* the great "I am" (Exod. 3:14; John 8: 24, 28, 58), but by grace of God, I am what I am! (I Cor. 15:10)

Since I am in Christ, by the grace of God...

I have been bought with a price; I am not my own; I belong to God (1 Cor. 6:19- 20).
I have been established, anointed and sealed by God in Christ, and I have been given the Holy Spirit as a pledge guaranteeing my inheritance to come (2 Cor.1:21; Eph. 1:13- 14).
Since I have died, I no longer live for myself, but for Christ (2 Cor. 5:14-15).
I have been made righteous (2 Cor. 5: 21)
I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The life I am now living is Christ's life (Gal. 2:20).
I have been blessed with every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3).

I was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and am without blame before Him (Eph. 1:4).
 I was predestined-determined by God-to be adopted as God's son (Eph. 1:5).
 I have been redeemed and forgiven, and I am a recipient of His lavish grace. (Eph. 1:7)
 I have been made alive together with Christ (Eph. 2:5).
 I have been raised up and seated with Christ in heaven (Eph. 2:6).
 I have direct access to God through the Spirit (Eph. 2:18).
 I may approach God with boldness, freedom and confidence (Eph. 3:12).
 I have been rescued from the domain of Satan's rule and transferred to the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13).
 I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins. The debt against me has been cancelled (Col. 1:14)
 Christ Himself is in me (Col. 1:27).
 I am firmly rooted in Christ and am now being built in Him (Col. 2:7)
 I have been spiritually circumcised. My old unregenerate nature has been removed (Col. 2:11).
 I have been made complete in Christ (col. 2:10).
 I have been buried, raised and made alive with Christ (Col. 2:12- 13)
 I died with Christ and I have been raised up with Christ. My life is now hidden with Christ in God. Christ is now my life (Col. 3:1-4)
 I have been give a spirit of power, love and self-discipline (2 Tim. 1:7)
 I have been saved and set apart according to God's doing (2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5).
 Because I am sanctified and am one with the Sanctifier, He is not ashamed to call me Brother (Heb. 2:11).
 I have the right to come boldly before the throne of God to find mercy and grace in time of need (Heb.4:16).
 I have been give exceedingly great and precious promises by God by which I am partaker of God's divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).
 I have been justified-completely forgiven- and made righteous (Rom. 5:1).
 I died with Christ and died to the power of sin's rule over my life (Rom. 6:1- 6)
 I am free forever from condemnation (Rom. 8:1).
 I have been placed into Christ by God's doing (1 Cor. 1: 30)
 I have received the Spirit of God into my life that I might know the things freely given to me by God(I Cor. 2:12).
 I have been given the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16)

THE BLOOD OF JESUS: Its power

At the conclusion of my message in the church, I invited those who needed prayer to come forward. One woman brought her teenager daughter and asked me to pray for the girl. Just as I started to pray, I sensed the Lord clearly instructing me to do something I did not understand: Get the ring off her finger the Lord said.

I was perplexed. *Is this really God?* I thought, *What does the ring have to do with my praying for her?*

The Lord spoke again even stronger: “Get the ring off her finger. “

When God spoke those words again, I took the girl by the hand and asked, “what is this ring you are wearing?” Looking closely, I saw the silver band had a little snake engraved on it-with the head showing and the body coiled around the ring.

When I glanced back to the girl’s face, I notice her puzzled expression. *What difference does it make?* She seemed to be thinking. *Just go ahead and pray for me.*

I was bewildered as she was. But I knew that Lord had said “Get the ring off” so that’s what I intended to do. Using my thumb and two fingers, I tried to slide the ring from her finger. Though it was a loose-fitting ring, it wouldn’t budge. As I continued to pull, the muscles in her body tightened, and she screamed. Then an ugly, guttural voice spoke through her, chilling me to the marrow, “Leave her alone!” the voice shouted. “She’s mine!”

The moment I heard those words, I knew God had give me the right instructions. Holy anger surged within me because I knew I was in a battle with the power of Satan. Seeing what was taking place two men came over to help me. They held my shoulders as I waged this frightening, but necessary, battle for 15 to 20 minutes. Over her shrieks I finally cried, “I apply the blood of Jesus Christ!” The moment I said those words, her rigid body relaxed, the ring came off her finger and her screeching turned into a sigh of relief. Completely delivered from demonic bondage, the young woman asked Christ to come into her life.

"Well, you may say, “do you really believe the ring had something to do with her condition?”

Yes. That ring symbolized her rebellion against God and her commitment to the forces of evil. But I believe the power of the blood of Jesus cancels out any covenant made with the power of hell.

THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB

The power of Satan and his demons is very real. The New Testament has much to say about how demons operate. They tempt and deceive people. They enter people to possess and control them. They afflict people with all types of sicknesses and infirmities. They even attack, oppress and accuse the people of God. But we have an invincible weapon in our warfare against the forces of evil: the Blood of Jesus Christ.

Revelation 12 describes the defeat of Satan and his forces by the servants of God. How do they win the victory? They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony” (verse.11).

The Scriptures give at least seven reasons why the blood of Jesus has the power to overcome Satan.

1. We are redeemed by the blood. "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold...but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Christ’s sacrificial death paid the price to ransom us from bondage to sin, death and Satan.

2. We are justified by the Blood. “Much more then, having now been justified by His Blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him” (Rom. 5:9). Because of the shed blood of Christ, imputed to the sinner and received by faith (Rom. 3:25), God declares us to be righteous in His sight and releases us from the guilt and penalty of sin.

3. We are sanctified by the blood. "Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate" (Heb. 13:12). Like the scapegoat on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), Jesus suffered outside Jerusalem's gates to remove our sins from us.

4. We are cleansed by the blood. "If we walk in the light as [God] is in the light...the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). When we walk obediently in the light of God's will, Christ's blood provides continuous cleansing for our sins.

5. We are reconciled by the blood. "It pleased to father...to reconcile all things to Himself, by [Christ], whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now he has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight" (Col. 1:20-22).

In our sinful condition, humanity is alienated from God. But through the sacrifice of Christ, we are restored to a right relationship with our Creator.

6. We have access to God through the blood. "Now in the Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). We can enter boldly and confidently into the very presence of God "by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us" (Heb. 10: 20).

7. We have an eternal covenant sealed in the blood. "May the God of peace, who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead... through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work" (Heb.13:20-21)

The covenant God made with the Israelites was ratified when the people were sprinkled with the blood of sacrificial animals (Ex. 24). The new covenant is ratified with the shed blood of Jesus Christ "the mediator of a better covenant" (Heb. 8:6). Christ's blood is the seal on the blessings of the new covenant: pardon, peace, provision, protection, the presence of the Holy Spirit and much more.

Sin separated us from God and made us subject to the power of the Satan. Only one who was fully God and fully human could pay for mankind's sins and rise again to be a living Savior. To accomplish that, the Son of God became "flesh and blood" so that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14-15).

Through His shed blood, Jesus broke sin's grip on us, released us from Satan's power, delivered us from the fear of death and set us free to live for Him. That's why Satan and his demons are helpless against the blood.

POWER TO DELIVER

I did not realize it at the time, but from the days of my childhood, our family was involved in practices that were more pleasing to Satan than to God. I still can remember what we called "walking through fire", a small flame was lit in a container incense was placed on it, and all the children in our home would step across it. We were taught that such practices would keep evil away.

When we moved to another city, a fortune-teller would visit our house to read my mother's coffee cup. Most people here drink strong coffee in little cups. After the coffee is gone, the little grounds that remain form a pattern when the cup is turned over. The fortune-teller, supposedly an expert in such matters, would read the pattern and predict the future.

Even after I became a Christian, my parents continued such practices in our home. When I tried to warn my family that these things were dangerous, they only laughed at me. But I believe these occult practices opened our household to demonic activity.

I remember a weird experience one night after I came home from church. An unusual, oppressive feeling was in the house that night. When I got into bed I heard noises downstairs-the refrigerator door being slammed, dishes breaking and horrible laughter. Instantly I said, "Lord, cover me with Your blood, please protect me." Then I heard footsteps running out of the house. After that

incident, I began praying with great fervour that every member of my family would find Christ. One day I sensed the Lord telling me: “use your authority as a believer.”

Although I had only been a Christian about two years, I had been taught about the power of Christ’s blood. And I knew that Jesus had given His followers “authority...over all the power of the enemy” (Luke 10:19). Once I realized that He had given me the power and authority to resist the devil, I began to command Satan to take his hands off my family.

The results were miraculous. As soon as I began praying this way, the Lord appeared to my mother in such a powerful dream that she stopped inviting fortunetellers to our home. Not long after that, both my parents came to a little church to hear me preach the gospel. When I returned home after the service, they were waiting for me. “Son”, my father asked, “how can we know this same Jesus you know?” That night, I lead my parents to Christ. And later, one by one, all my brothers and sisters were born into the family of God.

You may have members of your family who are unsaved, but don’t be discouraged. By applying the blood of Jesus, believers can experience God’s power to deliver us and our loved ones from the devil’s power.

APPLYING THE BLOOD

The idea of “applying the blood” first occurs in the Old Testament. To set His people free from bondage to Pharaoh, the Lord sent plagues on the Egyptians but protected the Israelites. The last and most terrible plague killed the firstborn son of every Egyptian household in a single night (Ex: 12)

God instructed His people to take the hyssop plant and to apply the blood of a perfect lamb to the lintel and doorposts of their homes. To those who were faithful in applying the blood, God made this promise: “The Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood...the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you” (Ex. 12:23).

The night of deliverance has been celebrated down through the years in the Jewish feast of Passover. This feast was a fore-shadowing of the sacrifice of Christ, the perfect Lamb who brings deliverance from bondage for all who believe. “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (I Cor. 5:7).

How can we apply the blood to our lives and our households today? Not with hyssop, but with faith. The New Testament tells us: “God set forth [Christ] to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith” (Rom. 3: 25). This means that propitiation-the offering up of Christ as a sacrifice to turn away God’s wrath against sin-is effective through faith.

The first step then, to applying the blood of Jesus is to *trust in the power of His blood, His cross, His death and resurrection*. To experience the benefits of Christ’s shed blood, we must first have faith in Christ’s finished work on the cross and in His power to save, heal, cleanse and deliver.

A second step in applying the blood is to *speak of Christ’s shed blood in our prayers*. As apostle Paul said, “We... believe and therefore speak (II Cor. 4:13)”. By speaking in faith of Christ’s blood, we can experience His power as we pray for our needs and as we intercede for our loved ones and others.

Jesus taught His disciples that some prayers required using the command of faith against any “mountain” blocking their way (see Mark 11: 22- 24). Jesus used such commands to resist Satan, cast out demons, and heal sickness and infirmities. The book of Acts contains many accounts of the disciples following His example.

Likewise, the Holy Spirit many lead us to directly oppose Satan and his demons For example, we might command demonic powers to be silent, to depart or to take their hands off a person, a family or a situation. Whenever we oppose the forces of evil, we should claim the power of the blood as the guarantee of Christ’s victory over Satan.

Another way we can apply the blood is to celebrate Christ's blood in our praise *and worship*. Christ's blood, His cross, His death and resurrection are our glory. When we sing and praise God for the blood, we honor Christ and drive back the enemy.

Let me be clear: The blood does not have "magical" power by itself. Nor is there any magic formula or phrase that activates the power of the blood. The power comes from the Lord Jesus Himself. He is the one who acts on our behalf when we apply His blood to our lives by affirming our faith in prayer and praise.

EVERY DAY

When I tell people I apply the blood of Jesus every day, I am often asked: "why should you apply the blood every day? Isn't it applied when we are born again?" I don't become born again daily. But every morning I surrender again my body and mind to God, and ask the Holy Spirit to fill me anew. In the same way, every day I apply the blood of Jesus. Each day in prayer I appropriate the benefits of the cross of Jesus Christ: redemption, forgiveness, sanctification, cleansing, reconciliation, protection and dwelling in God's presence and victory. Not a day goes by that I do not pray for my wife and my children, asking the Lord to cover them with His blood. And when I pray with them, I claim the benefits of the blood and ask that God would allow nothing to come into their lives except what is from Him. Those prayers have had an impact on my family-in more ways than one. One night I overheard our little daughter praying, "Lord," she said, "You shed your blood for us, and I ask You to cover all of us". Then she prayed for us one by one. Another time I heard her say, "Now, Satan, you hear me real good: you can't touch me. The blood of Jesus is covering me." Seeing our children grow in their understanding and faith is a wonderful benefit of applying the blood in prayer.

THE BLOOD AND REVIVAL

As a young believer, I attended a church on Sundays pastured by an outstanding Bible teacher who became a spiritual mentor to me. One of his favorite themes was the blood of Jesus. His accounts of the out pouring of the Holy Spirit at the turn of the century will never be erased from my memory. Pastor told the story of the mighty move of the Holy Spirit that came to Scotland in 1908. He said that the visitation came spontaneously when a member of the prayer group suddenly raised his hands and cried, "The blood of Jesus." Immediately the Holy Spirit descended on the gathering, and people began receiving the Pentecostal experience all over the room. That revival eventually spread throughout England.

I believe that today, perhaps in preparation for a great revival, the Lord is once again bringing the blood of Jesus Christ to the attention of the church. What should we do to experience a blood-washed, blood-bought, Holy Spirit revival? We should confess and forsake our sins, claiming the cleansing blood of the Lamb. We should preach and witness boldly, telling others about Christ's saving blood. We should pray with power, claiming merits of His blood against the forces of evil. Above all, we should offer up praise and thanksgiving to our loving Savior for His precious blood: "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (Rev. 1:5-6)

THE POWER OF BLOOD OF JESUS

An understanding of, and faith in, the blood of Jesus is one of the greatest weapons at your disposal!

You wouldn't try to operate a six cylinder car with just four cylinders. You wouldn't think of taking a trip with only two-thirds of the money you knew you needed. Yet, every day, believers the world over try to live the Christian life utilizing only one or two of the three major power sources God has provided

We find those three sources of spiritual power identified in I John, chapter five. John starts the chapter by talking about winning the life. Look at verses 4 and 5: "For whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" A few verses later we discover the three power sources that make such a victory possible. "For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood; And the three are in agreement. " (I John 5: 8)

Most of us are familiar with the role of the Holy Spirit as a source of power. You'll remember that Jesus told the disciples that 'you shall receive power, after the Holy Spirit comes upon you...' (Acts 1: 8). The Bible frequently talks about operating in "the power of the Holy Spirit".

The second reference, "the water," is a little less obvious. This is actually referring to the Word of God. In Ephesians 5, Paul tells us that Jesus is cleansing His church "with the washing of water by the Word". We see water used as a type or symbol of the Word in many other passages of Scripture.

Once again, most believers understand that God's Word is a vital source of power for those who desire to live in victory. But what about that third witness- the Blood? How many of us truly know why the blood of Jesus serves as a source of power for the Christians? More importantly, how many of us know how to put that world-overcoming power to work in our lives?

More than just a Song

Not too many years ago it wasn't unusual to sing about the blood of Jesus in church. Great old hymns such as "*Power in the Blood*", "*Are You Washed In the blood?*", and "*There is a Fountain*" rang out in Sunday morning services across the land. Somewhere along the line, however, the church lost sight of some precious truths about the blood. Most churches don't sing those songs anymore. Perhaps we got too sophisticated and intellectual for such seemingly primitive imagery. More likely, the Devil is subtly trying to steal this great weapon from the Church because he fears it so greatly. The truth is, an understanding of, and faith in, the blood of Jesus is one of the greatest weapons at your disposal. For example, look at Revelation 12: 11, "And they overcame him [Satan] by the blood of Lamb and by the word of their testimony...". The New Testament is filled with reference to the importance of Jesus blood in our lives. For example, the Bible says the blood of Jesus: Gives us life (John 6:53); Brings us close to God (Eph. 2:13); Purges our consciences (Heb. 9:14); Gives us boldness to approach the throne of God (Heb. 10:19); Sanctifies us, Making us holy (Heb. 13:12); And cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5).

But you may be thinking, "how do I appropriate all those things to my life?" That's a fair question. Often born again, blood washed believers don't feel sanctified, cleansed bold and all the other things we just read about. That answer is found in Romans 3:24-25, "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God has set forth to be a propitiation [substitute] through faith in his blood". In other words, the power that releases our redemption comes through "faith in his [Jesus] blood". Do you want to be redeemed from sickness, poverty, shame and everything else Jesus died to deliver you from? Well, the power to bring that redemption into reality comes by faith in His Blood! No wonder, the Devil so desperately wants to keep believers from talking about and studying about the blood. Faith comes by hearing (Romans 10:17), and as we hear the Word of God concerning the power in Jesus' blood, faith in that blood rises up in us and we break the power of the enemy over our lives! So, get ready to hear some faith building news about the wonderful blood of Jesus.

Taking a Lesson from Creation

Is it possible that we can learn some things about what the blood of Jesus does in our lives by studying the working of our own blood? It may surprise you to discover the answer to that question is "yes!" Look at Romans 1:20, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-His eternal power and divine nature -have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse." According to this verse, we can learn about the invisible things of God by observing His creation. So if we want to understand something about the blood of Jesus-now an invisible spiritual substance-we should study its most obvious natural counterpart our blood. This is doubly appropriate because the New Testament frequently characterizes the Church as "the Body of Christ". Paul frequently used the working of the human body to illustrate spiritual truths. It's amazing to see the parallels between the ways your blood is used to bring life to your flesh and the way the blood Jesus brings the life of God to you, a part of His body.

Don't get alarmed! I'm not going to throw a lot of complex biological jargon at you. The concepts I'm talking about are familiar to any school student. As you probably know, your blood is primarily made up of plasma (the liquid part of your blood) and three kinds of cells- red cells, white cells and platelets. It's these cells that I want you to consider for a moment. They teach us some remarkable things about the role of the blood of Jesus in our lives.

A Source of Nourishment

First, let's look at the plasma and red blood cells. The red cells, carried along by the plasma pick up oxygen in the lungs. Nutrients are picked up in your digestive tract. Together, these two elements carry vital, life giving substances to every cell in your body. This is why blood flow is so vital to health. Where the flow of blood is restricted, that part of the body ceases to receive oxygen and nourishment and thus begins to die. Naturally, if you didn't eat or breathe there would be no oxygen or nutrients for the blood to carry. This truth has a spiritual parallel. Spiritually, we have to cooperate by providing the spiritual nutrients necessary for our spiritual health. How do you "eat" spiritually? By feeding on the Word. If you never go to church or open your Bible, you give the blood nothing to carry. If you'll do your part-if you'll feed on God's Word diligently-you can be assured that the blood of Jesus will be operating to make sure you stay spiritually well nourished

A Source of Cleansing

The blood does more than just carry vital nutrients to your cells. It also carries away waste products and toxins. In other words, the blood is constantly cleansing your whole body. Every moment, you are literally being washed by your blood! I call this amazing process, waste management. Your blood carries all the waste products of metabolism and carries them to where they can be eliminated from the body. It's really a remarkable process when you study it. Your blood provides the ongoing cleansing that is necessary to keep your body health and strong. The spiritual parallels are obvious. If we're rightly related to the blood of Jesus by faith, we can know that His blood is cleansing us through and through. The Word confirms this truth over and over. Look, for example at I John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sins." Revelation 1: 5 echoes this beautiful truth, "And from Jesus Christ...Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. " Forgiveness of sin isn't just a one-time thing the moment we're saved. It's an ongoing process. We see God's provision for this type of cleansing in 1 John 1: 9 as well. To born-again believers, John wrote, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." As believers, we're invariably going to be touched by unrighteousness in ways that will inhibit our fellowship with God. That's why it is so important to remain rightly connected with God's cleansing agent, the blood of Jesus. You need to be cleansed daily. Being washed in the blood on a permanent basis will see to it that unrighteousness does not move you away from God, your source of life and blessing.

A Source of Defense

We've talked about plasma and red blood cells, but there is more to the marvelous functioning of our blood, God also equipped us with white cells and platelets. These represent the armies of your body's defense system. The white cell exists for one reason alone-to ward off invasion from without. Any time your body is invaded by foreign bacteria or viruses (which is essentially every time you breathe, eat or touch something), the white cells immediately move to destroy the invaders. It is only when your God-given immune system is suppressed or inhibited that sickness or infection takes root in your body. If you're taking care of your body -feeding it properly and getting appropriate rest- your immune system should be able to fend off any attack.

The same is true about your spiritual defense system as well. The blood of Jesus is sufficient to overcome any attack. As we saw in Revelation 12: 9, we overcome Satan by "the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony". If you're taking care of yourself spiritually, there isn't anything on earth the devil can bring against you.

A Source of Balance

So far, we've seen that our natural blood system works to nourish us, cleanse us and defend us from attack. It has a fourth function as well. Your blood carries hormones that regulate growth and balance in all your body's systems. Many physical disorders and problems result when the levels of those hormones get out of balance. A proper mix of those substances, however, will keep your body functioning properly and regenerating itself.

Likewise, a proper Relationship to the blood of Christ will keep you spiritually balanced and healthy. When I see believers getting into deception or getting out of balance in some area of life, I can be reasonably sure they're not applying the blood of Jesus consistently and effectively. The blood of Jesus will keep churches from getting off into the fringes of doctrinal error. And it will keep you from getting drawn off into some strange doctrine that will ultimately be disastrous for you.

Applying the Blood

Up to this point, all the wonderful things we've discovered that the blood of Jesus does for us have had one condition attached to them. We've seen that we must be properly related to the blood in order to experience all the blessing it provides. But "How do I apply the blood of Jesus to my life"? The Bible has some clear and simple instructions along those lines. First of all, it does matter how you apply the blood of Jesus to your life. We see a vivid example of this in the Old Testament. Remember the account in Exodus of the death angel passing through Egypt. God's people had been given detailed and explicit instructions on how to sacrifice a lamb, prepare it and, most importantly, how to take its blood and apply it to the door posts of each house. The careful application of that blood to the door posts would protect all those inside from the Destroyer (Exodus 12). They couldn't just apply the blood any way they pleased. They couldn't say to themselves, "I don't want to mess up my freshly painted door posts with a lot of blood, I think I'll just sprinkle a little on my welcome mat instead." Anybody who tried that would have found themselves at the mercy of the Death Angel that awful night.

That first Passover was a type and foreshadowing of the protection we can enjoy because the blood of the ultimate Passover Lamb, Jesus. Like Israel in Egypt, we must apply the blood in a specific way. I'm convinced that a failure to do so is a big reason why majority in the church experiences so little of God's power and protection today. One of the primary and most frequently overlooked keys to applying the blood to our lives involves getting connected to the body. In I Corinthians 12, Paul likens the Church to the various members of the human body. Simply stated, a hand can't receive blood flow if it is cut off and separated from the body. I know that sounds quite obvious, but you'd be amazed at the number of Christians who think they can ignore this spiritual law. I constantly encounter Christians who seem to think they can enjoy the nourishment, protection and balance that comes through the blood and yet remain totally unconnected from the rest of the body of Christ. Invariably, these people can't quite understand why they are experiencing so many problems.

There is a place in the body of Christ where you-your gifts, talents and resources-belong. It is there and only there that you have access to the life giving flow of the blood of Jesus. I know this may ruffle a few feathers, but I believe with all my heart that means getting plugged in to a local church that is preaching and teaching the uncompromised Word of God! That's where you're going to get the continues flow of the blood of Jesus in your life. You have a place in Christ's body. This is what Paul refers in Ephesians 4:16.

Do it by faith

Finally, as we saw at the beginning, you must apply the blood of Jesus by faith. Thank God daily for the blood of Christ. Talk about it. Speak it over your family. Paint it one the door posts of your life by honoring it and giving it place in your thinking. Then you'll be accessing one of God's three great power sources for victory in this life. As you combine it with the others-the Spirit and the Word-you'll find yourself experiencing more blessing and victory than you ever thought possible.

What is Love? - Understanding “AGAPE” or God's love!

What is Love?

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres, Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13: 4- 8a)

The word most often used for ‘love’ in the New Testament is ‘*agape*’. This is a characteristic word of Christianity as it expresses an idea little known outside Christianity. It is a word expressing a love which is sacrificial, unconditional and selfless. God showed us what this word meant by sending His Son Jesus into the world to suffer and die for us who are totally unworthy.

“This is how we know that love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” (1 John 3: 16).

“But God demonstrated His own love for us in this; While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8).

“This is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son.” (1 John 4: 10)
(See also Ephesians 2: 4- 5; John 3: 16).

Furthermore God helps us to love Him. Agape expresses the deep and constant love and interest of a perfect being towards entirely unworthy objects producing and fostering a reverential love in them towards the Giver, and a practical love towards those who are partakers of the same, and a desire to help others to seek the Giver. (A. E. Vine: Expository Dictionary) In other words, God loves us deeply despite our feelings and He also helps us to love Him in return, to love other Christians and to love the people in the world so as to bring them to Him. To love God in this way means living to please Him by putting Him and His desires first in our lives. To truly love God with all our being is the greatest commandment of all (Matthew 22: 36- 40; Deuteronomy 6: 4- 7).

How Should We Show Our Love for God?

1. We should be grateful for who God is. God is the Father is a God of love forgiveness, mercy, faithfulness and justice etc.
2. We can give thanks and rejoice over all God has done for us. He has done mighty deeds for us that He did not need to do, especially in sending His Son Jesus and revealing Himself to us. He has made a way for us to become part of His Kingdom and to actually become His children (1 John 3:1)
2. We should desire to know God better, especially as we read and meditate on His Word and fellowship with Him in prayer.
4. We can live a life that pleases God. This is actually shown when we:
 - make important for ourselves what is important to Him (e.g. growing to be like Jesus, showing love to one another and helping to fulfill the commission of Jesus to make disciples for Him of all nations.)
 - live a lifestyle that pleases God rather than ourselves or the world (1 John 2: 15 – 17)
 - willingly take on God’s burdens for the world, especially in prayer (Matthew 6: 9 – 10).
 - willingly make sacrifices for God and even be willing to give up all if He asks us to (Mark 12: 41 – 44).
5. We should be obedient to God’s Word and His commands (John 14: 15; Matthew 7: 21 – 23; 1 John 5: 2 – 3).
6. We can tell God that we love Him when we pray, speak, praise and sing.
7. We can show our love by total commitment to God and all that He stands for (John 21: 15 – 17).
8. We should love our brothers and even our enemies. Agape love is determined to seek the other’s best.

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death.” (1 John 3: 14)

“If any one has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.” (1 John 3: 17 – 18).

“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” (Matthew 5: 44).

(See also John 13: 34 – 35; Romans 12: 9 –10; Galatians 5: 14; 1 Peter 4:8)

Love Is Important

Love is the most important quality in God’s Kingdom. Knowing all, moving mountains, giving all we have to the poor, and even dying for our faith mean nothing if we do not have love (1 Corinthians 13: 1 – 3). Knowledge and the gifts of the Spirit are important, but in the end all will be revealed and these things will not be so important. Therefore, if we base all our lives and ministries on these things, we will end up with nothing because these things will fade away and be lost. They will be like children’s toys which are fun and needed when we are children, but useless when we are adults. We need to grow up into more important, productive and fruitful things such as faith, hope and love (most importantly love). Love is the big aim of Christianity, not healing or prophecy. Love never fails but all else will pass away. The gifts of the Spirit may be the means to express God’s love but so often we concentrate on the gift and forget why it was given. Gifts are there to point people to Jesus and show people the love of God (1 Corinthians 13: 8 – 13). The passages in the Bible on the gifts of the Holy Spirit are always balanced by passages on love. They go hand in hand because power without love is dangerous. Power should only be a way of enabling and expressing love. Love is what counts! Love for God and others should be the motivating force behind all our work for God.

Love Holds the Body of Christ Together

God’s love is the cement that holds together the church, which is the Body of Christ. We need to work at this by acts of thoughtfulness, encouragement and unselfishness. We need not only to watch our actions but also our reactions to what others do or say! This is love put to the test. Remember that God is patient with your faults and He wants us to be patient with other people’s faults. Perhaps you may regard your faults as trivial compared with others, but they and God may not see it that way! (Matthew 7: 1 – 5).

Where would we be without a forgiving God? (Hebrews 9: 27 – 28). A forgiving spirit is what you must have in your heart even before the person who has wronged you has said he is sorry. No one is perfect apart from Jesus! We all fail, especially in the area of relationships. Look for the good in people and not at their faults: have patience with those who have weaknesses (1 Timothy 1: 15 – 17). When fellowship breaks down between believers, you are responsible to act, even when the other person is totally in the wrong. God wants those people restored to a right place with Him, so forgive them and win them back (Ephesians 4: 32). ‘Bearing with one another’ and having a forgiving spirit are synonymous concepts i.e. the same (Colossians 3: 13), but they are not automatic reactions that follow our becoming a disciple of Jesus. These actions involve a deliberate act of the will. We need to make a deliberate choice to maintain unity despite the cost to ourselves in the body of Christ (the church).

Those That Love the Lord Have Many Blessings

Including:

- God is faithful, keeping His covenant of love to a thousand generations (Deuteronomy 7: 9; Exodus 20: 6).
- God’s love will follow them (Psalm 23: 6).
- God watches over them (Psalm 145: 20).
- God loves them (Proverbs 8: 17).
- In all things God works for their good when they are called and walking in His purposes for their lives (Romans 8: 28).
- “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for

those who love Him.” (1 Corinthians 2: 9)
-God lives in them (1 John 4: 16).

Five Ways That We Receive God’s Love:

1. Directly from God, that is, we let God build His love into our lives (1 Thessalonians 3: 12; II Peter 1: 3).
2. By knowing God in increasing measure. We do this by spending time with Him; praying, listening, seeking and worshipping etc. (John 17: 26; 1 John 4: 8).
3. By understanding God’s commands and then obeying them (John 14: 21). As we put God first, others second and ourselves last, it creates a framework for God to work His love into our lives.
4. By yielding our lives to the Holy Spirit so that He can produce His fruit of love in us (Romans 5: 5; Galatians 5: 22).
5. By making a conscious choice to actually put on love and put aside all things that are not what God wants. Love is available to us, we can put it on or reject it, work towards it or ignore it (Colossians 3: 12 – 14; 2 Peter 1:5 – 9). Pursue love along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart (2 Timothy 2: 22).

Love Is The Goal

The apostle Paul had love as the goal for his ministry. In 1 Timothy 1:3 – 7 Paul shows us that we need three things in order to build the love of God into our lives. The reason for this is that if these three things are not line with what God wants, they actually block out God’s love and so we are unable to receive God’s love in the way He intends for us and the way we need to. These three things are:

1. **A pure heart:** Our hearts need to be clean and pure before God can give us of Himself. To be clean we need to avail ourselves of the work of Jesus when He shed His blood on the cross. This shed blood enables us to receive God’s forgiveness and His cleansing if we simply confess our sin. We also need to forgive others, because God wants us who have been forgiven much not to hold grudges or debts against others. Purity also speaks of consistency. We need to be the same and react the same no matter who we are with or what the situation is (1 Peter 1:22; 2 Timothy 2: 22; Matthew 5: 8).
2. **A good conscience:** We need to be at peace with our conscience, because if it is troubled, we have crossed a boundary built into ourselves and moved into situation of sin. Our conscience is God’s alarm bell and when it is disturbed we get out of sorts with ourselves and with God. We need to have a clear conscience as this enables us to come boldly into God’s presence again and freely receive God’s love into our lives (1 Timothy 1: 19; Acts 24: 16). When we ask God to forgive us for the sin that triggered off our conscience, then the blood of Christ will cleanse our conscience and make it clear again (Hebrews 9: 14).
3. **A sincere faith:** we are to live by faith. “Without faith it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6). We are meant to have faith to stand by and faith to go beyond our limits. To do this we cannot rely simply on our own human resources. We need to step into God and out of ourselves. This means giving God control. It is like giving God not just the steering wheel but the whole car! He is then free to go where He wants and we just go along with Him. Then God can build into our lives the love which is so important (Galatians 5:6).

Questions and Discussion Points

1. Does God appreciate sign of our love for Him? (Mark 14:3 – 9).
2. Read Luke 10:25 – 37. What should we do to inherit eternal life?
Who is our neighbour?
How should we treat our neighbours?
3. Read 1 John 4: – 21. Where does love come from?
How is love made complete in us?
Can we rely on the love God has for us?
Why is love made complete in us?
Is there any fear in love, and why?
Can we love God and hate our brother?
4. Discuss ways in which you could improve your relationships in the church and in the world.
5. God sacrificed His Son for us. What can we willingly give to Him and give up for Him?

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO FOLLOW CHRIST AND BE HIS DISCIPLE?

As the auditorium lights dimmed and the curtain began to rise, the concert-goers ended their conversations and turned their attention to the stage. The conductor strode to the podium and bowed in response to enthusiastic applause. Then the conductor turned to face the orchestra. He raised his baton and began the concert with a dramatic gesture. What followed was one of the strangest concerts imaginable. After the harmonious first minutes, only a few musicians continued to follow the conductor's lead. The others seemed to play only when they felt like it, or they played a completely different tune. A violinist sauntered out in front and tried to perform a piece he had written. A trombonist broke into a jazz number. Chaos reigned. The audience sat for several minutes in stunned silence, then walked out in disbelief.

Fortunately, the situation described above is fictitious. Skilled musicians who agree to play in an orchestra simply do not behave that way. They sign on with the agreement that they will follow the conductor's lead. They are part of a symphony, not soloists who just happened to be playing at the same time.

Unfortunately, we who have declared ourselves to be followers of Christ can behave as the members of that imaginary orchestra did. We may not like to think so, but we all have a tendency to want to direct our own lives. We tend to focus on self-survival and self-promotion, and we think we are wise enough and strong enough to take care of ourselves. Our goals take on greater importance and urgency than God's goal for us. And again, though we would be reluctant to admit it to anyone, we act as if God is supposed to help us get what we want out of life. This can happen even when we know the truths expressed in the Bible.

Although we are thankful for what Christ did for us on the cross, and we gladly accepted His offer of forgiveness and eternal life, we may have gotten distracted. We may have forgotten that as part of His "symphony" – subjects of His kingdom and members in His church- we are to submit to His direction of our lives. He is the Conductor, the Head, the King whom we serve. Doing what He wants us to do is what our new life is all about. He longs to lead us through a life that will demonstrate to a watching "audience", the unbelieving world around us, that we know what it means to be His people. He wants us to demonstrate the validity of our profession of faith.

Here we seek to point to the essential elements of a life that follows our Conductor's lead. As we do that together with other believers, we will bring beautiful praise to Him. And we will discover the joy of experiencing God's approval both now and forever.

What Does Christ, Want From Us?

- What does a conductor want from musicians?
- What does a teacher want from students?
- What does a boss want from employees?
- What does a coach want from players?
- What does a parent want from children?
- What does a general want from soldiers?
- What does a ruler want from citizens?

All these relationships have elements in common. Every leader desires his followers to take directions, make use of his help, do whatever is necessary to complete assignments, place loyalty to him above other relationships and put his teaching into practice.

When we consider what Christ wants from us, we may feel uneasy. After all, how we relate to Christ affects more than a musical performance or the outcome of a ballgame -it affects all of our relationships, our eternal well-being, and our joy here and now. For many of us the demands may seem too hard to achieve. Even though we may admit that our relationship with Christ is not what it should be, we are afraid of what wholehearted obedience to Him will cost us. The stories of great Christians who spent hours in prayer every day or patiently endured persecution or left everything to serve Lord may have left us feeling hopelessly inadequate. We wonder what the Lord really

expects from ordinary people like us. And besides, so many believers around us seem to have lost their enthusiasm and we don't want to "stick out like a sore thumb." We feel the pressure to confirm to the status quo of the Christian community in which we worship and serve. But we know that there should be more to following Christ.

In this study, we will rediscover what it means to be a disciple of Christ. We will see that devotion to Him is not for only a few special people. He doesn't demand the impossible from us. He knows what we are made of, and He will patiently guide us as we learn more and more of what it means to obey Him. He also offers His strength to help us carry out His commands.

The type of life that Christ want from us can be summarized by four key words: dependence, risk, loyalty, and imitation.

DEPENDENCE

Jesus said, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch can not bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches, He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing.....These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15: 4 - 5, 11).

What have you heard through the grapevine? Jesus used the analogy of a grapevine to communicate the most important element of obedience to Him. Our obedience must grow out of a close relationship with our Lord. Just as a branch of a grapevine produces fruit only as it is connected to and drawing nourishment from the vine, so too we can produce the fruits of obedience only as we are continually connected to and drawing nourishment and strength from our Lord.

That kind of life, a life of ongoing dependence on Christ, not only pleases Him but also produces the greatest joy in us (John 15: 11). So what we are considering is not a morbid resignation to a life of misery as we carry out our duties for God, but a life that will give us the greatest sense of personal fulfillment. That sense of satisfaction and our fruitfulness comes as we "abide" in Christ.

How are we to "abide" in Christ? To live in close relationship with Christ, we must depend on Him for wisdom, strength, and direction in life. To have an intimate relationship with Him, we must not be deliberately holding on to some rebellious attitude or action that we know we should confess and forsake. The barrier to our relationship will be removed and we will be forgiven if we confess our sins (I John 1:5 - 10). Abiding also means that we listen attentively to what God has to say to us in the Bible-not merely getting our daily quota of Bible reading for the day but thinking and praying about what we are reading. Just as you show respect and love for a person who is talking to you by carefully listening and responding so too we need to make our time of Bible reading an occasion to get to know God. To abide also means that we spend time expressing to the Lord our deepest thoughts, hurts, desires, and details of our lives. He wants us to talk to Him about our success and our sources of shame. He cares about us. A Bible teacher wrote, "Once you have begun to cultivate this deeper communion with Christ, you have no desire to return to the shallow life of the careless Christian".

This matter of abiding in Christ is essential if we want to please God. We cannot live the Christian life in our own strength by the power of our own will. We must live with a continual reliance on Christ. Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing" (John 15: 5). He didn't say we could do some things or a few things-He said we could do nothing to please God without His working in and through us.

Jesus as we were saved by God's grace through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8- 9), we are now to live for God by trusting Christ. The apostle Paul made this point in his letter to the Galatian believers. He said, "After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" (Gal. 3: 3). And to the Romans, Paul wrote, "In the gospel a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). Faith requires dependence on Christ, relying completely on Him - first for our salvation and then for the ability to live the Christian life.

What happens when we try to live without depending on Him? If we are not relying on Christ, we end up in one or more of the following conditions. We will be:

- Defeated by sinful habits.
- Preoccupied with a list of do's and don'ts
- Self-deluded and hypocritical
- Plagued by inner emptiness
- Exhausted by busy self – effort
- Frustrated by a sense of distance from God
- Trapped by worldliness

What kind of fruit is produced in the lives of those who abide in Christ?

Galatians 5 lists several characteristics of someone who is living in dependence on Christ and the indwelling Holy Spirit. The “fruit of the Spirit” includes love, joy, peace, longsuffering and self – control (Gal. 5:22- 23).

- Faith
- Virtue
- Knowledge
- Self-control
- Perseverance
- Godliness
- Brotherly kindness
- Love (self-sacrificing love - "Agape")

Peter said, “If these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (II Pet. 1: 8).

We need to evaluate our lives on the basis of the characteristics that Paul and Peter said should be part of the lives of those who are walking with Christ, depending on the Holy Spirit who lives within. Are we bearing spiritual fruit? If not, why not?

How does prayer show our dependence on Christ? A well-known missionary who lived about three centuries ago went to a foreign land and died there at age 29. He left a diary that reveals he normally spent at least 2 hours in prayer every day and that he often fasted and prayed for a period of 48 hours. Martin Luther said that when he expected an especially busy and trying day he would prepare for it by spending 3 hours in prayer.

Does this mean that God expects us to pray at least 3 hours every day? Does God want us to set aside 12 hour periods for prayer and fasting? May be, but not necessarily. Although He wants us to pray, He has not given us a minimum time – frame. While all of the believers who made a great impact for God prayed, not all of them spent hours every day in prayer. Some talked with God calmly, simply, briefly, and expectantly. And God answered them too! When Paul wrote, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thes. 5:17), he probably was not telling us to pray 24 hours a day. He was aware that time is needed for working, eating, and sleeping. But we should be so God-conscious all the time that we are continually in an attitude of prayer about what is going on in our lives.

In John 15, Jesus indicated the importance of abiding in Him if we are to receive answers to prayer (John 15: 7). When we are close to Him, our requests will be in line with His will.

What can we do to remove any barriers in our relationship? First John 1:9 tells us, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”. This verse is not a formula for salvation. When we accepted Jesus as our Savior, we were forgiven, received into God's family, and made citizens of heaven (Rom. 5:1 -2; Eph. 2:1-10). If we have been forgiven, why do we need to confess our sins? And what will happen if we refuse to confess certain sins because we don't want to quit doing them? How detailed must this confession be?

Even though we are completely forgiven the moment we put our faith in Christ as our Saviour, sins committed after that point in time can create a barrier to a close relationship with Him. Therefore, we must talk to God about our sins, acknowledging them, accepting His forgiveness, and asking Him to help us gain the victory over them. When we confess our sins, we express to God our realization that we sinned against Him. We need not plead. We need not ransack our minds to dredge up transgressions that were committed without our realizing it. We need not work ourselves into deep feelings of guilt. We need only to acknowledge the sins of which we are aware and ask the Lord to help us overcome them. The demand is simple, but the consequences of taking sin lightly can be very serious. If we decide that we don't want to confess our sins because we don't desire to give them up, we can expect discipline. In Hebrews 12:6-7 we read. "For whom the Lord loves He chastens and scourges every son whom He receives. If you endure chastening, God deals with you as sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?" A joyful Christian life is impossible for those who think lightly of their sins.

The most fundamental issue, therefore, that we must understand to live an obedient life is this matter of dependence. The kind of obedience God is looking for comes out of a relationship of trust and love for Jesus Christ. When we are reliant on Him, obedience will be our heart's desire.

Thinking it over. How would you describe your relationship with Christ? Are you growing closer to Him, learning more what it means to depend on Him throughout your day for strength, wisdom, guidance, and the ability to serve God through your words and actions? Are you taking time to read the Bible prayerfully, asking God to show you what you need to know and do? Are you setting aside time in your schedule for prayer? Identify the obstacles that keep hindering a close relationship with Christ and ask Him to help you to overcome them.

RISK

Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost?" (Luke 9:23- 25).

What have we gotten ourselves into? Many people have asked that question when they were faced with great personal risk. A mountain climber, for example, may wonder if the risk is worth the thrill of reaching the top. When his muscles feel as if they will give out, when winds whip at him, when doubts about his safety rope enter his mind, or when his breathing becomes difficult because of the lack of oxygen, he will be tempted to quit. Many followers of Christ also may wonder what they have gotten themselves into. When they read the words of Christ about taking up a cross and losing their lives for Him, suddenly they may feel that they have signed up for a suicide mission rather than what they hoped would be more like a pleasure cruise. They may have initially been told that if they receive Jesus as Savior He will bring peace and joy to their lives, and they didn't anticipate the hardships.

What does it mean to deny ourselves? "It is not the denial of food, fellowship, and other good things just to make ourselves feel miserable. It does not mean developing a weak, nonassertive personality. It means putting Christ's claims and commands above our own desires. If what we know Christ wants from us clashes with what we want to do, we say no to ourselves and yes to Him. That's a big order! But it's neither outlandish nor unreasonable. With God's help we can obey it. And we will be happier when we do.

What does it mean to take up our cross daily and follow Christ? Jesus is asking that we be willing to commit our lives to Him, to follow in His steps, and even to die for Him. It doesn't mean that we must make ourselves suffer or do things just to invite persecution. To take up the cross may involve much persecution, as has been the case in many countries of the world, or it may involve little. It is the attitude, not the amount of suffering and shame we endure, that counts in God's sight.

What does it mean to lose our lives for His sake? When Jesus said, “Whoever loses his life for My sake will save it” (Luke 9: 24), He did not mean that we should seek a martyr’s death. His point has to do with how we invest our lives. If a person invests his life into the pursuit of selfish pleasures and earthly fame, he will “lose it”. After all, this earthly system is temporary. On the other hand, the person who invests his life for God will reap great reward. Like the kernel of wheat that is buried and dies, only to spring up and reproduce itself, the believer who “loses his life” will find it in a glorious eternity (John 12: 24- 25).

Should we really take these words seriously? It is quite obvious that missionaries like David Livingstone, Hudson Taylor, and William Carey took these words seriously. They left all the comforts of life at home and endured unbelievable hardships to take the gospel to foreign countries. The same goes for many today and not just foreign missionaries. Whether they are translating the Bible, working on an assembly line, programming computers, or caring for children, they can be courageous representatives of the Lord.

How have believers been persecuted? The writer of Hebrews, referring to godly people of the Old Testament era, said they endured “mocking and scourging”, “chains and imprisonment”. They were stone....sawn in two....slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheep skins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented” (Heb. 11:36- 37). During the early years of the church, Stephen was persecuted and stoned (Acts Chap. 6-7), the apostles were continually harassed because of their witness for Christ.

Church history tells us that all the apostles except John were executed, and at times during the first few centuries Christians were hunted like wild animals, put to death by being thrown before hungry lions and by being burned like torches. In the centuries that followed, millions have suffered and died as martyrs for Christ. Many people in recent history have suffered for their faith in prison camps or psychiatric institutions. Some estimates say over 150,000 people still die as martyrs each year! Even in democracies, devout Christians are often made the objects of ridicule and unfair treatment.

Should we expect persecution today? On the night before His crucifixion, Jesus warned His disciples, “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15: 20). To Timothy, Paul wrote, “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

We who believe on Jesus Christ and want to please Him will experience some opposition from people who don’t want to follow God’s ways. Whether it be at the workplace, at school, in the neighborhood, or even at home, when we choose to do and say what would please Christ, we will find some resistance. People who live only for their own pleasures feel rebuked by the lifestyle and teaching of those who are trying to live out their faith. They express their antagonism by misrepresenting what Christians believe, ridiculing them, or going out of their way to offend them.

How can we avoid needless persecution? While the Bible tells us to expect persecution and teaches us that such trials can be a means of building character (Rom. 5:1-5; James 1:1-8), it never encourages us to seek trouble. On the contrary, it urges us to be good citizens and to go out of our way to please our employers (Rom. 13:1- 7; 1 Pet. 2:11- 25). Paul said we should pray “for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Tim. 2: 2). We are to live at peace with others – to the extent that we can do so without compromise (Rom. 12:18).

Peaceful conditions, however, present us with a different kind of challenge. We can easily succumb to the temptation to be earthly minded, to live for the things of this world. If we do, then we are the losers. But if we focus on the eternal while enjoying the present, we will enrich ourselves and others. In many ways this is a greater challenge than enduring opposition. And through His Spirit we can be heavenly minded while enjoying life on earth.

Thinking It Over. Has your devotion to Christ caused you to seem “strange” to your friends, co-workers, neighbors, family? Have non-believers always responded positively when you talked to them about your faith? Are you willing to let people know that you are a follower of Christ? What

happens when you refuse to participate with your friends in an activity that you know would displease the Lord?

LOYALTY

When speaking to a large crowd, Jesus said, “If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14: 26). Jesus told the Twelve, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matt 10: 37).

What kind of loyalty does Christ require? Jesus asks us to put our allegiance to Him above any other relationship. This applies to any people, any material goods, and any self-serving personal goals.

That sounds radical, doesn’t it? Christ even used the strong word hate to describe the attitude we should have toward all others, even family. He put the matter in such strong terms because He takes loyalty and disloyalty so seriously. How can family and friends challenge our loyalty? To answer that, let’s consider the life of William Carey (1761 – 1834). When 31-year old Carey told his wife that he felt God wanted him to go to India as a missionary, at first she didn’t want to go. That was understandable since they had three small children and a fourth on the way. Her tears deeply moved her sensitive husband. After talking about it, they agreed that they would go, but not all at once. Their 8-year old son would go with him and a year or two later she and the younger children would join him. When Carey’s father learned of the plan, he exclaimed, “Is William mad?” Then he did all he could do discourage him from going. Carey, however, believed that God wanted him to go to India. He was determined to please God even though it meant strained relationships with the people closest to his heart. How was Carey obedient to the words of Jesus to “hate his father and mother, wife and children?” (Luke 14: 26). He showed a tender love for his wife, his children, his parents. He didn’t hate them. This is true if we define hatred as a feeling of malice, which desires harm or hurt for someone. But in the Bible it is used to denote taking action that prefers one oppressor over another. So, we can say of William Carey that he loved the Lord so much that in his actions he appeared to hate his family.

Perhaps you or someone you know has had to face rejection from family members because of a decision to accept Christ as Savior. Sometimes a profession of faith in Christ leads to being shunned by the rest of the family. Maybe those you love don’t like a decision you make to do what is right, to be honest, or to be committed to purity. May be they were pressuring you to tell a lie, break a law, or reject Biblical principles. In such cases, the choices are painful and heart-wrenching. We long for closeness with family members. But if we have to make a choice, our allegiance must go to Christ!

What else competes for our loyalty? In addition to the tension that can be produced in a family by conflict over allegiance to Christ, many other people and activities assume the place in our lives that only Christ deserves. The apostle Paul warned the believers in Rome, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom 12: 2). John also told us to be ware the lure of the world (1 John 2: 15 – 16). To allow an ungodly culture-instead of Christ-to shape our attitudes and actions is to unwittingly give allegiance to Satan (I John 3: 8; 5: 19).

Just before the Old Testament leader Joshua died, he challenged the people of the new nation of Israel to affirm their loyalty to the Lord. He said, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh 24: 15). Jesus spoke about something that can pull our loyalty away from Christ - money. That’s some thing we all have to deal with. He said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (money)” (Matt. 6: 24). And Paul warned “the love of

money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness” (1 Tim. 6: 10).

How is self-centeredness a type of loyalty? In the previous section, we saw how the command to deny self (Luke 9: 23) applies to our boldness in risking our lives and reputations for the sake of Christ. In this section, we can apply the command to deny self to the matter of putting loyalty to Christ ahead of loyalty to our self-centered ways of thinking and living. Self-centered devotion to our own selfish interests is really the heart of sin. Adam and Eve were the first traitors to God’s cause, and ever since then all people have tended to put loyalty to self above loyalty to God. Romans 3 reminds us, “There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God...There is no fear of God before their eyes.” (Rom. 3: 11, 18). Decision of loyalty involves the factor of risk also. Noah, for example, chose to live for God instead of following the ways of the people around him (Gen. 7 – 8; Heb. 11: 7). Moses chose to be loyal to God and His people rather than to enjoy the benefits of living as part of Pharaoh’s royal family (Heb. 11: 24 – 27). Daniel and his three friends chose to be considered traitors to the king rather than compromise their devotion to the Lord (Dan 1:8, 3: 1 – 28; 6:1 – 23). Rahab shifted her loyalty to the God of Israel when the Jews were about to attack Jericho (Josh 2:1 – 21; Heb. 11: 31).

Yes, God wants you to love your spouse, your children, your parents (Eph. 5: 25, 28; Titus 2: 4). He wants you to show respect for your government. He wants you to love yourself for your government. He wants you to love yourself because self-love is the standard by which you must measure your love for your neighbor (Matt. 22: 39; Luke 10: 27). But your love for God is to be so strong that you put obedience to Him above your own desires and the desires of your family, your friends, your employer, and your community.

Thinking It Over. How does your use of time reveal your loyalties? How do your thoughts reflect your level of devotion to the Lord? What pressure to compromise have you felt at home or at work? Where is your treasure? (Matt. 6: 21). Do your standards of behaviour reflect God’s purity, or are you being shaped by the world?

IMITATION

Jesus said to His disciples, “You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13: 13 – 15). On another occasion, Jesus urged His disciples, “Follow Me” (Luke 9: 23).

The apostle John wrote, “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2: 6). In a letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor. 11: 1).

What does it mean to imitate Christ? To imitate someone is to copy his or her actions as closely as possible. It is to model our lives after the characteristics of someone we look up to. Children imitate their parents. Consciously or not, they pick up from Mom and Dad a way of speaking, walking, and relating to people. Through what the parents do and say, the children learn how to respond to the many circumstances of life. If Dad comes home and kicks the dog, his child may think that’s acceptable behavior and do the same. And if Dad is careful to be absolutely honest in all his conversations and dealings, then the child often will pick that up too.

As children of God through faith in Christ, we are to imitate Christ. We are to learn what it means to obey God by living as Jesus lived. If we are living in dependence on Him, spending time with Him in prayer and learning about Him in the Bible, we will want to imitate His way of life.

As believers, we are to follow the example of Christ, becoming more and more like Him in attitude and action.

Much of what we have said earlier could be applied to this matter of imitating Christ. So let's first note how we are to be like Him in the three areas we have already discussed, then we will suggest additional ways that we are to model our lives after His.

How did Jesus show dependence on the Father? Even though Jesus is God the Son, during His time on earth He voluntarily gave up the independence use of His divine abilities in order to identify with us (Phil. 2:5 – 11). He lived in dependence on the Father and the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do....I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge and My judgement is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" (John 5: 19, 30). Christ lived in constant fellowship with the father. He prayed often, taking time to talk with His Father and receive direction for his ministry. The author of Hebrews told us that Jesus learned obedience through suffering (Hebr.5: 8). He responded to temptation and persecution in the right way because He was relying on the Father.

How did Jesus put Himself at risk? The most obvious answer is that He was willing to suffer the ultimate agony of enduring the penalty for our sin on the cross. He gave His every life to do what the Father wanted Him to do. Peter wrote, "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 Pet. 2: 21). In many other ways throughout His earthly life, Jesus took the abuse of people who did not appreciate what He had to say. He confronted the hypocritical religious leaders condemned the unbelieving, spend time with the outcasts of society in order to bring them salvation, and did what was right no matter what anyone else said.

How did Jesus show His loyalty to the Father? During Christ's temptation in the wilderness, Satan said he would give all the nations to Jesus if He would worship him (Matt.4:8- 9). Jesus, however, expressed His loyal devotion to the Father by saying, "It is written, "You will worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve". (Matt. 4: 10).

On another occasion, a huge crowd of people had gathered around Jesus. Enemies were accusing Him of being a partner of Satan because he was casting out demons (Mark 3:20 – 30). Jesus' family said, "He is out of His mind" (v. 21). When the message reached Jesus that His family wanted to talk with Him, He looked at the people around Him and said, "Here are my mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother" (vv. 34-35). His loyalty to the Father and His followers took priority over even His family.

In addition to imitating Jesus' example of dependence, risk, and loyalty, we can find other ways that we can follow Him. These ways include how He served others, how He responded to needy people, how He forgave, how He resisted temptation, and how He handled possessions.

How did Christ serve others? Jesus described His life this way: "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20: 28).

The apostle Paul pointed to the life of Christ as our example when he was urging the Philippians to serve one another in love. He told them not to be self-centered but to look out for the interest of others (Phil. 2:3- 4). He encouraged them to adopt the same attitude as Christ, who took the role of a servant and "humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death" (v.8).

In Paul's correspondence with the Corinthians, he wrote, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11: 1). Paul wanted them to imitate the self-sacrificing attitude of Christ, especially because it will help people find salvation (1 Cor. 10:33).

Jesus demonstrated humble service in a dramatic way when He washed His disciples' feet (John 13). He said, "If I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (vv. 14-15). We are to imitate His humility and be willing to put aside our "rights" in order to help others. This loving service for people is directly tied to our love for God. Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). John wrote, "This is His commandment: that we should Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment" (1John 3: 23).

In fact, Christlike love summarizes all the commands that God wants us to obey. When talking to a religious teacher, Jesus said that all the commandments could be reduced to two: love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and love people as yourselves (Matt. 22: 34- 40).

How did Christ respond to needy people? Jesus treated them with love and compassion. He helped the sick and welcomed social outcasts like “tax collectors and sinners” (Matt. 9: 10). He was moved with great compassion when He saw the many people who were so spiritually needy, and He longed for more workers who would spread the news that could bring them salvation (Matt.9:36- 38). He fed thousands of people who were hungry (Matt. 15:32- 39). He graciously gave salvation to a repentant thief who was dying on a cross next to Him (Luke 23:39- 43). Even while Jesus was on the cross, he arranged for His mother’s care (John 19:25- 27). He was patient with doubting Thomas (John 20:24- 29). He gently reassured Pete of His love and encouraged him to remain faithful, even after he had denied the Lord (John 21:15- 23).

How did Christ forgive? In a letter to the Ephesians, Paul told us, “be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us” (Eph. 4: 32- 5: 2). We may not always find it easy to imitate Jesus by forgiving others who have hurt us deeply. But we will experience the joy of forgiveness and the sweetness of fellowship with God to the extent that we forgive those who have wronged us (Matt. 6:14-15).

Just think of all God has forgiven you. Then realizing that no one has wronged you nearly as much as you have sinned against Him, start praying for those who have wronged you and be willing to forgive them.

How did Christ resist temptation? During His time in the wilderness before He began His public ministry, Jesus faced intense temptation (Matt. 4:1- 11). Satan tried to get Jesus to satisfy His hunger by making stones turn into bread. The devil attempted to get Jesus to test the Father’s care for Him by jumping off a tall building. And Satan promised a short cut to rule over the kingdoms of earth if Jesus would worship him. In each case, however, Jesus responded with the truth and power of God’s Word. The writer of Psalm 119 said, “Your Word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Ps.119: 11). The apostle Paul referred to the Word of God as the “sword of the Spirit”, which we are to use in our warfare with Satan’s forces (Eph 6: 17). That is part of God’s provision to help us escape even the most powerful temptation (1 Cor. 10:13).

How did Christ view possessions? To a rich young ruler who asked what he had to do to receive everlasting life, and who claimed that he had been a good, law keeping person, Jesus said, “One thing you lack; Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven” (Mark 10:21). To His disciples Jesus declared, “Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail” (Luke 12:33).

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism (1703-1791), took these Scripture passages so seriously that he lived economically and gave away his income as fast as he received it. His slogan was, “Earn all you can, save all you can, give all you can.” By standards of his day he earned a great deal of money, but when he died a few months short of his 88th birthday he left almost nothing. He had practiced what he preached.

Does the Lord demand from all His followers, as He did with the rich young ruler, that they sell everything they have and give it to the poor? Apparently not. His friends, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha continued to live in their Bethany home. As we read the book of Acts and the Epistles, we do not find the apostles making this demand. The Lord wants us to enjoy the good things He gives us, but He reminds us that we are to share what we have with others, with an eye toward reaping in eternity. We are to realize that money and possessions are temporary, and that we should be much concerned about investing in heavenly treasures (Matt 6:19- 21).

These are just a few ways we can imitate Christ. As we spend time reading the Gospels, we will discover many other ways that we can become like Him in our responses to various people and to different kinds of situations.

Thinking It Over: Our goal as followers of Jesus Christ is to know Him better and become as much like Him in this life as is humanly possible. That won't happen overnight. It is a process of growing and maturing that will not be complete until we see Him.

If that truly is your goal, how do you need to rearrange the priorities of your daily life? In what ways are you following Christ's example? In what areas of life have you been going your own way?

At the close of a stirring musical performance, an audience may cry, "Encore! Encore!" (meaning: call for repetition of the song) That's crowd's way of telling musicians that they like what they've heard, and they want to hear more.

At the end of the day, after we have finished our work, eaten our meals, responded to all sorts of situations, and related to all types of people, can we imagine Jesus saying, "Encore! Encore!" to us? Would He want a repeat performance tomorrow?

This is not to suggest that He expects us to be perfect today and every other day. He understands that we sometimes fail, that we need to work continually on our lives, that we are involved in a process of growth. But would He be pleased by the progress we are making in our dependence on Him, our willingness to take risks for His sake, our loyalty to Him, and by our desire to be like Him? Would He like an encore?

At the end of our life's day, when we stand before Christ, the greatest words we could ever hear will be these: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt 25: 23). His highest praise will go to those who by faith accepted His gift of salvation and who continued to depend on Him.

Jesus is the Conductor of our lives. If we follow His lead, the "music" we produce will receive His "Encore!" now and a "Well done!"

Understanding Fruitfulness: Called to be Fruitful

Introduction

Fruitfulness, in effect, is the goal of discipleship. The outcome of growth in personal holiness and gift ought to be effectiveness for the sake of the Kingdom of God within our lives. Fruitfulness is productive for our own development. Someone who is continually being productive will be healthy and motivated in their outward walk with God. Stagnation brings frustration which leads back into a lack of fruitfulness.

The Holy Spirit is given to us in order that we should bear fruit for God in our lives. By our willingness and yieldedness we can enable Him, or by our disobedience and stubbornness we can prevent Him (Luke 12:21). God's purpose for us is that our whole lives, that is, every part of our life, should be rich toward Him, bearing fruit for our benefit and to His glory. Jesus said that it was by their fruit you shall know them (Matthew 7:16- 20). Many of the most common reasons for lack of fruitfulness lie within areas which relate to our personal lives and emotions. Unless we get our house in order in these areas of our lives, the inner battles and fears will always dominate us and overwhelm us whatever potential there might be for God.

Four major areas we need get as head to get to grips with to be fruitful and to achieve for God

1. Having a clear understanding of faith

A disciple is a person who commits himself to live continually in the Word of Jesus. But for that to be real, there needs to be an openness to and an understanding of spiritual truth. This can only be achieved by actually getting to know the Scriptures, not just in our intellect, but in our heart. Doing this will aid us to discern truth from error. If we are to be effective in our evangelism, then we need to develop a clear understanding of what we believe and why we believe it. You don't need to take a course in theology to do this. The Holy Spirit has promised to be the teacher and guide for all who seek to know more of the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:9- 16). The same is true for our daily living. An understanding of the faith into which we have been called delivers us from the petty dominance of our own feelings and emotions. There is a great spiritual strength to be gained from standing in the faith. This means that we have got hold of the tremendous truths of Scripture and have made them our very own, so that now we have a foundation for our lives that is more secure and stable than our feelings or circumstances.

2. Integrity in the whole of life

Our lives are like car batteries. They are made up of more than one cell. For that battery to function effectively every cell needs to be in a good condition. If one or two cells are damaged the efficiency of the whole battery is affected. It is just the same with our lives. Maturity has to do with the whole of life. It is no good putting a lot of emphasis on the spiritual areas without realising that Jesus needs to be Lord of the whole of life. Spiritual power has to do with confidence. We cannot be confident before God if we know that a certain part of our life is a contradiction to all the rest of it (1 John 3:21-22).

3. Discipline of time and life

Most people waste a tremendous amount of time and energy simply because they don't exercise a real stewardship in the area of their time and its employment. We don't need to become slaves to any time and method mentality, rather we need to ask questions about the purpose of our lives and the use of our time. We need to live in God given spiritual discipline (2 Timothy 1:7). Lack of spiritual discipline means that we find ourselves living under the wrong kind of pressure, with no clearly established priorities in our life. Such a lack of purpose soon breeds spiritual dissatisfaction and a loss of spiritual vitality.

4. Spiritual goals and their fulfillment

We need to set goals for our lives and know what we are aiming at in our service for Christ (Philippians 3:12).

Overcoming Myself

To be effective for God we need to know where we stand with ourselves. We need to recognise what affects us; what areas we need to know the overcoming power of Christ and, above all, where we need to alter our reactions and responses from the negative to the positive to enable us to be free to operate without fear or favour in the zones into which God has called us.

Three Enemies of Personal Freedom and Effectiveness for God:

1. Fear

This is the worst enemy which presents itself in a multitude of disguises. "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The man who fears is not made perfect in love".(1 John 4:18) In this verse of Scripture we are dealing with selfless, sacrificial – 'agape' love, the strong love of God which rids us of this awful grip of fear. Fear is also the half brother of insecurity. One of the most common factors which robs us of our effectiveness in ministry is our odious comparison with others, and the lack of peace and security we feel about our own ministries (2 Corinthians 10:12). On the other hand there is a kind of comparison which can be stimulating and lead to an even greater effectiveness. This is the kind of comparison which is based on a confident understanding of our own life and ministry in the Lord, and which views others with openness and gratitude and seeks to learn lessons and take principles from their experience.

2. Pride

Brokenness needs to be the central principle of our lives and ministry, because Satan can so easily find an opportunity within a successful life and ministry to give gratification to the flesh. Pride dims spiritual eyesight and hardens the heart. It leads to a loss of spiritual sensitivity so that, not only do we become closed to God, but also blind to the needs of other people. In fact, the heart of Scriptural humility is not a mean-minded attitude but openness to God and to others. This is the hallmark of real humility and meekness and it is the opposite of a proud and haughty spirit (Proverbs 6:16- 19). We can be as spiritually gifted as it is possible to be, but all the good of it and the potential of fruitfulness is destroyed by having a wrong spirit and attitude. God only deals with pride in one way: He opposes it. It was this sin that led to the fall of Satan or Lucifer from glory, and thence to every sin that has infected the human race. Pride is no light thing as far as God is concerned and He opposes it on every hand (1 Peter 5:5- 6).

3. Inconsistency

This is a lack of dependability. When we change direction with every wind that blows and keep altering our principles and attitudes, other people do not know where they stand with us. This breeds a terrible insecurity in others and leads to a breakdown of confidence in our relationships with them. To be effective with and for other people, they need to be able to depend on us, even if they don't agree with us. God purpose for all our lives is integrity and maturity of heart and life. The three greatest needs of effective, fruitful leadership are: integrity, humility and faith. Leaders need to be available to people. Other people need to be able to read their lives and perceive the grounds for their action and behavior. People who are really fruitful into the lives of others are not only those who teach the principles, but who manifest them. To be effective we need to know our gift and our call and not to feel apologetic about either. A humble man is a man who has opened his will to the will of God. He is a person who sees himself in the light of God's call on his life and his true position in Christ. This is the secret of true humility, because we then are truly open to whatever God wants to do in and with our lives. (2 Chronicles 16: 9)

We reproduce what we are: that is the greatest principle of fruitfulness. If we are weak in character we will produce moral weaklings who are no more consistent than we ourselves. If we live in fear of others and with unresolved fears as the motivating factor in our lives, then we will reproduce that

fear in the lives of those with whom we associate (in fact, it will determine with whom we associate). We cannot lead others into faith unless we ourselves are people of faith. The root of fruitfulness is within ourselves. This is why we need to be open to God. It is why we need to allow the Holy Spirit to search us and cleanse us from every wrong motive, every personal doubt and fear, and from the inconsistency which is so often the hallmark of our human endeavours. We need our own personal lives to be sorted out, to free us for the demands of life and ministry God wants to make of us.

We need to catch God's vision for our lives. Some people never get God's vision for their life, because they never seem to get into that fit enough state in their own inward life where they can hear or receive God's vision. Their continual lack of spiritual maturity seems to disable them from being led forward into any sense of purpose for their lives. Vision can determine preparation of life. We need to allow God to continually deal with us to make us fit for the vision He wants us to fulfil. If we can see what God wants to do with our lives, we can also often see what needs to change in us in order for that to become a reality.

If we want to be fruitful in what God has called us to, we need lives to match the challenge. However, we don't need to be gifted in every way before we can be fruitful. Praise God, He can and will make up for the deficiencies of our nature, so that we can more purposefully pursue His will (James 1: 5).

Fruitfulness is becoming what we are meant to be in Christ. It is being totally open to the Holy Spirit and allowing Him to deal with those negative areas in the power of the cross. It is the surrender of our wills and human frailties to the Lord, so that He can reshape us into a more perfect vessel, ready for the Master's use (2 Timothy 2:20 – 21). We need to make room for God's Word and purpose for our lives.

Changing the Polarity

A real part of the secret of fruitfulness lies in learning how to respond to the difficulties and challenges that arise in life (that is, how to handle the negative and respond to the positive). To be fruitful we need to learn how to handle life and to make the things that happen to us productive to the glory of God. We need to learn how to handle success as well as failure so that Satan does not have an opportunity in our lives through pride. Pride turns faith into presumption; and then the pride of life and place becomes the motivation for our work and service. Even our successes need to die at the foot of the cross of Jesus so that in a real sense we remain nothings for God's use (Philippians 4:11 – 13).

Seven Areas We Need to Learn How to Grow Within:

1. Discouragement

This affects us all to varying degrees. The greatest times of discouragement often are those which follow immediately after some moment of spiritual victory or success, because all our inward resources are drained and we are, therefore, vulnerable.

Discouragement introduces a false sense of values and so we fail to see things as God sees them or even be realistic in human terms.

Discouragement causes us to run away from our real responsibilities and it can introduce self-pity. Self-pity is one of the most destructive forces of human nature. It turns us against ourselves and envelops us in a cloud of darkness through which we are unable to see reality. Self-pity paralyses us to our responsibilities for others and makes us spiritually and often physically immobile.

Discouragement causes us to blow everything out of perspective. When we are discouraged we need to encourage ourselves in the Lord. We need to get our eyes on God and begin to see things as He sees them.

2. Comparisons

We do not serve the Lord in a vacuum. We part of the body of Christ as a whole, and at times we are very closely related to others who are serving the Lord with their own gifts and in their own

way. This ought to be a cause of great rejoicing: that God has, in His infinite wisdom, chosen a whole variety of people and enabled them in various ministries to serve the Kingdom. However, often it causes pain because of feelings of inadequacy and deficiency in our own hearts. Instead of feeling joyful at their fruitfulness, we feel threatened. So, instead of speaking positively about others, we become critical and negative, always looking for a loophole that will allow us to pull down instead of build up.

“As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17)

To enable this to occur as it should, we need to do three things:

- recognise as clearly as we can, our own calling before the Lord and live within that. It is a most dangerous thing to live inside the calling of another man.
- relax in God’s power and always try to be aware that unless God does it in you and through you, no one else will.
- rejoice in the fruitfulness of others by focussing on what is positive.

3. Disappointment

This often comes from the failed aspirations and hopes of our own hearts. A sense of failure can prove disastrous to effective ministry. Disappointment can also come from the lives of others when our hopes for them are not fulfilled. We should let disappointments be a ‘proving ground’ for faith. We need to stand back from the intensity of the disappointment in our spirit and let the heat go out of it, so that it can become a refining fire for our faith. It does our souls good to not always get what we want when we want it (2 Corinthians 4:16 – 18).

4. Pressure

We need to face the fact that any real ministry is going to carry with it a proportionate measure of responsibility. Responsibility carries pressure with it. If we face pressure in the wrong way it will crush us. The pressure of need or of a particular faith enterprise can prove a tremendous stimulus or a heavy burden. Right pressure moves us into action and can be very productive when taken on in the power of God. (James 1: 2).

If we are to be fruitful, particularly on behalf of other people, we will need to develop the gift of recognising right and wrong pressure, and the ability to accept what is right and throw off what is wrong. Pressure develops perseverance, which is an absolute necessity in the days in which we live, because it develops within us a greater capacity for the work God has given us. Pressure shows us our capacity and, when handled correctly, also increases it. Pressure also demonstrates areas of weakness within our lives and personality, so that we can become aware of trouble before it starts, or take the necessary spiritual steps to effect a change. The trouble comes when we are carrying wrong pressure. This happens when we have accepted a task or position which we are neither called nor fitted for. Satan will see to it that our eyes will call the tune, and instead of being at peace to accept and work within the will of God for our lives, we will become subject to the demands and pressures which the Father never intended for our lives.

Our gifts and capabilities are polished under pressure. We know how lazy we are and how long it would take us to go anywhere for God, and so He knows best how to be a proper Comforter to us, by prodding us forward into action in the power of God.

5. Disagreement

Somebody once said, “Conformity in behaviour in an organisation is essential, conformity in ideas in an organisation is tragic.” How can two walk together unless they are agreed? Within a ministry there needs to be basic agreement of spiritual ideas and approach. However, loyalty does not necessarily mean that you agree with each other over every minute detail. It is not spiritual leadership that demands this type of conformity, but spiritual dictatorship. Part of everyone of us wants everybody else to agree with us all the time, but this is rarely the case. As individuals we are not the holders of all truth and virtue. Creative conflict is a very productive element in the development of our own thought and ministry. Through the pressure of the people’s approaches and ideas we often have our own modified or confirmed, and if they are confirmed then they are all the clearer and all the stronger for the challenge of the seeming conflict. Anyway, we should be

more mature than to regard this as conflict. Of course, there are boundaries beyond which differences are no longer creative, because they lead to warfare between the groups of people rather than to useful discussion.

6. Gossip, slander and misunderstanding

A gossiping tongue can inflict terrible wounds in another person. Some who play fast and loose with their tongue never stop to take stock of the damage that is caused, sadly often beyond repair (Proverbs 18: 8; Proverbs 16: 28; James 3: 6). We need to learn certain lessons very quickly:

- there is no self defence league in the Kingdom of heaven. It is no good getting on to your high horse and attempting some kind of misguided defence. If we respond by lashing out immediately, we will be in danger of being bitten twice, because here we are confronting an evil which comes from the very pit of hell. The tragedy is, of course, that is an evil that has pervaded the entire body of Christ.

- we need to know when to leave it alone or when to lift and confront it with the truth. There are times when either course of action may be right and we need the gift of discernment in the Holy Spirit to know the difference. There are times when gossip is based on nothing more than misinformation, and it only takes a small dose of the truth to put it right.

- we need to know how to let the hurtful word challenge our own life and action. Often criticism has a grain of truth in it from which we can learn something.

Gossip rarely disturbs and certainly cannot destroy a heart and life at peace with God. If you know where you stand and have that open relationship with the Father that tells you all is well, then you have nothing to fear. "The peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:7)

7. Hurts and personal problems

Hurts can lead to a terrible crushing of the spirit.

"A man's spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit who can bear." (Proverbs 18: 14).

It is at times like this that the Lord wants us to throw everything on to Him. There is no other answer to this deepest need of our spirits. The Father knows our spirit as He created it. He knows how to handle it, how to heal it, how to woo it back to life again. He knows how to pour His balm into our hearts without allowing us to indulge in self pity. His hand is loving but strong.

"Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7)

STUDY ON THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

KEYSCRIPTURES:

- Partakers of His divine nature (II Pet. 1: 4)
- Put on the new nature (Col. 3:9 – 10, Eph. 4: 22 - 24)
- Conformed in to His image (Rom. 8: 29; II Cor. 3: 18).

1. INTRODUCTION

The devil will always try to bring to naught the testimony of Christ. We see that also in the church of Galatia. They started off walking in Christ, but the Judaists destroyed the work after Paul (Gal. 3: 1- 3). The church fell away from grace and ended up under the Law again (Gal. 5:1-4). In Gal. 5: 16 Paul exhorts us to walk consistently in and controlled by the Spirit in order to conquer the desires of the flesh. In Gal. 5: 19 – 21 we read what the works of the flesh are, and also Paul's warning, "that those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God". But against the fruit of the Spirit there is no charge of the law. God gave Moses the Ten Commandments to keep his people in line! But we see that legalism leads to bondage. Yet we are not bound by or under the bondage of the law, when we are led by the Spirit (Gal. 5:18), because "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty! (II Cor.3: 17). We have all freedom within the law of grace! Let the Christ, we live in us come forth. Treasure in earthen vessel.

2. CONDITIONS OF BEARING FRUIT

For bearing fruit the following conditions must be met:

- a) We must have contact with living water (Ps. 1:1- 3), having contact with the Holy Spirit. [Fellowship with the Holy Spirit, the Life-giver (II Cor. 13: 14)].
- b) Death to self! – [Heart of the gospel] (John.12: 24 – A grain of wheat has to die to bring forth fruit). We have to lose our own interests, take up our cross and follow Jesus (Mark 8:34). Jesus is looking for fruit in our lives, and according to our fruit bearing we are going to be judged. In our lives we cannot serve two masters (Matt. 6: 24). If we surrender our life to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we'll keep it for eternity (John 12: 25).
- c) Being pruned or chastised (John15:12). God will prune us to bear more and more fruit, but this pruning process will never be by diseases or sinful ways! We are baptised with the Holy Spirit and with fire, which purifies! Our purpose for life on earth is: becoming like Jesus, being transformed into the image of Christ!
- d) To abide (John 15: 5). To bear fruit is to have a consistent relationship with Jesus (Prov. 4: 23 – "Keep your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the issues/ springs of life" - keep your heart soft and open to the Lord through fellowship with Him. Allow the Spirit's work [treasure in earthen vessels].

3. BRINGING FORTH FRUIT

We can't force ourselves to bring forth fruit. Therefore, don't strive but abide consistent in the vine! [Like faith, which does not work out of formulas but from a living relationship with Jesus!] Religion and tradition are bondage, because then we conform ourselves to the outward, external standards of men. But these rituals won't take us to heaven; we need to walk by grace and controlled by the Spirit (Rom. 8:1- 2). Now the Spirit of God works in us to transform us into the likeness and image of Christ: to become more like Jesus, wherefore the fruit of the Spirit are given. The word "fruit" in Gal. 5: 22 means, fruit that has already been plucked; plucked from the life of Jesus. So, the fruit of the Spirit is in our life, because we have the Holy Spirit in us; our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, but we have to let it be born by faith in our heart! Therefore,

FRUIT is: the inner personal qualities that:

- control our social relations - it controls how we behave with one another, because we have a godly inner quality.

- are principles of conduct – how I act, what I do, what I say.
- The fruits of the Holy Spirit deal with our personality/ character; they are a life-style and come from a heart -attitude. The Spirit will remove worldly life-styles and characteristics, so we can become more like Jesus; this is the sanctification process. The fire of God is turned on in our lives, which makes us more holy because fire purifies. The Holy Spirit will purify our spirit, which then must enter into our soul!
- (NOTE: See also most the fruit described in the churches of Rev. 2 and 3).

THE VARIOUS FRUIT:

(1) LOVE

We are called to love (Matt.22: 37- 39) and enabled by the Holy Spirit (Rom.5: 5).

When we talk about love we can distinguish four types of love according to four Greek words:

- a) "Eros" – which is sexual love; the physical love shared between husband and wife.
- b) "Storge"- which is the love between family members; "Kith and kin".
- c) "Phileo" – which is the love existing in friendships. This kind of love is often based on feelings. It also may make it's demands like: "If you are in love with me, you will do what I want you to do" (these demands may be quite self-centered).

d) "Agape" – which is the God-kind of love; it exercises itself by love; sacrificial; giving towards the other; based on actions. In the world there is always an "if" in love; it is always conditional! We can't base love on emotions, because our emotions go up and down !

Born-again believers start with agape-love, which is love by faith. They open themselves in the spirit realm because they love by faith. Agape is divine love, which is the strong, tender and compassionate devotion to the well-being of someone else.

Love is something to be pursued II Tim 2: 22. When we love by faith, we will get compassion and a heart for the people. The love of GOD is patterned in Jesus and He never set conditions for His love! God's love is unconditional – God is love! (John 3: 16). So, love is not selfish, but it seeks the good of others! Jesus came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. We were born to be a blessing! And as a blessing we'll be blessed! (John 13: 35 – Love is our testimony; Matt.5: 44 – Love your enemies; Matt. 7: 12 – whatever you wish men would do to you, so you do to others. The Golden Rule based on love!)

(2) JOY

Joy is a deep gladness that is born out of a (deep) personal relationship with God! Our relationship with God needs to be consistent, so that deep inside we know that God is with us! So joy is not an emotion, but a state of being. We can cultivate the fruit of joy and let it remain by making melody in our hearts to the Lord, (Eph.5: 18-19) and by being thankful (Verse 20).

Joy is also a sense of fulfilling His will. Real joy comes when we are obedient to God. We have to surrender our will to God's will, for we are here to please our Father in heaven and make Him glad! (John.15: 10- 11; Phil.4: 4).

The joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh. 4: 8). So don't let the devil steal your joy, because then you have no strength; and when you're not strong, you're weak; when you are weak, you can't resist the devil; and when you can't resist, he won't flee; and when he won't flee, you're in trouble. (Hab. 3:17-19; Joy not dependent on circumstances, but joy in the Lord.)

(3) PEACE

The Greek word for peace means: rest, a oneness. In the N. T. Peace refers to:

- (a) tranquility of mind (by yielding to His will)
- (b) spiritual well-being based on forgiveness at all times. Peace of mind!

Peace with God will affect our relationship with one another. We will walk in love, which is the foundation of the fruit (Rom. 14: 17- 19). We see as principle here: to follow peace is to edify one another, which is just another branch of love. We are on earth to live for the praise of His glory (Is. 43: 7). The more we centre around Jesus, the more the fruit of the Spirit will start manifesting itself

(John 15). The Bible tells us clearly that there is no peace in our heart unless we are born-again! (Rom. 5: 1). Peace with God is to walk with Him and to know Him through Jesus Christ!

Rom. 15: 13 says we have to put our trust (or faith which is to trust, obey, yield) in God because He will never let us down. And if we walk in peace with God, we won't be worried about the future. (Phil. 4: 6- 7). Here peace means: to be at rest, harmony and secure in the midst of turmoil and strife. It tells us we don't have to have worries or anxieties, for we pray the answer, and therefore we give Him thanks. Verse 7 is a tremendous promise. When we do things God's way we'll get God's results. Then God's peace will pass our understanding it will keep our minds, and keep us from getting insane. Our mind is very powerful and we must renew it; put on the helmet of salvation!

Learn to share everything with God and that will give us peace and prevent us from getting bitter! To be at peace with God is to do His will!

(4) PATIENCE

Long-Suffering is: to bear long with the offences and weakness of others without murmuring or resentment.

Patience is: a) steadfastness, and
b) forbearance.

Steadfastness is something that is steady. Fastness means something that is there. Forbearance is the ability not to get yourself in the knot or wound up because you're running out of time. When we learn to organize our life, our forbearance will be much better, and we won't run into panic.

Jesus has provided everything for us since Calvary. Our responsibility is to work out our own salvation by grace, which means: divine ability! Having the fruit born in our lives is grace. But the more we learn (do study II Tim. 2: 15), the greater our responsibility. Bearing fruit takes a consistency, a constant abiding in Christ (John. 15: 1-10). Patience is being steadfast, to be on an even level. Hanging on to God, keep on walking with God, regardless of the circumstances, our problems, etc. God doesn't want us to live a 'one-day-up-next-day-down'-life, but a straight and level life.

I Tim. 1: 16 Long – suffering is sticking with a person till he comes right and then still helping him further! And going that extra mile with a person. Forbearance is to make sure you reach your destination, and we need to forbear one another.

II Tim. 4: 2 – Unfailing in patience. Patience is taking on what God wants you to do. (e.g. Giving up a bad habit) and still having patience with others. When a brother goes into error, go and correct him in love, and be forbearing with him, stand with him in prayer instead of condemning him. Our faith will be tried, but then we need to be forbearing, keep on going, be patient and exercise our faith. When we go through a storm in our life, we need to be patient, so that at the end we lack nothing.

(Jam. 1: 2- 4; Rom. 5: 4- 5 $\Rightarrow$ tribulation _____ {Perseverance
(or suffering) {Endurance
{Patience

(5) KINDNESS

Kindness portrays excellence of character in the sense that we respect and understand others! It is getting a grasp of the human personality and their need. Being gentle, cultured and refined in character and conduct. We have to live for the praise of His glory (Is. 43:7), which refers to character/ personality. The reason the Holy Spirit brings this fruit in our life is for the benefit of others. The heart of God is to reach the world! The Holy Spirit works the fruits through us to reach and touch others!

One of the biggest problems in any relationship is misunderstanding. Often we don't really want to understand others because we label them as weird. The moment we understand a person we'll respect him. Therefore, get to understand the people by talking and spending time with them. Jesus exercised a great deal of kindness, e.g. the woman who committed adultery. God's kindness

has the intention to bring people to repentance, which is to change your mind and inner man to accept God's will!

Rom.2: 4 – God's kindness is towards those who walk in disobedience- to bring them to repentance.

Rom.11: 22 – God's motivation for kindness is to meet the need of humanity (Eph.2: 7).

(6) GOODNESS

Goodness: suggests in a general sense an ideal character of being virtuous, benevolent and generous. Goodness is very close to kindness; they almost blend together, and there's no clear distinction. Goodness is: upright in heart and real. Essential in goodness is the heart-attitude, and not just the outward appearance of doing good works. Attitude builds character, but goodness is for the glory of God. (Eph.5: 9 and II Thess.1: 11 - "Fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness." Matt.5:44-48 - do good to enemies).

(7) FAITHFULNESS

Faithfulness: denotes loyalty; trustworthy / reliable / commitment. It is a fundamental trait of Christian character, especially to God and men. (e.g. Heb.3:1- 6)

II Tim. 2:13. God remains faithful towards us, His Word and His character. God can never break the covenant that was made with us through Jesus Christ. Stewardship of - time, possession, money, etc. requires also faithfulness on our part.

Luke 19:17 - He who's faithful in little, will also be faithful in much. Because the servants were faithful to their master, they were faithful to his possessions and made money.

Principle: faithfulness to God is necessary to grow in God! Faithful people are teachable. Be also faithful to what you've learned. What God entrusts into your life, you're responsible to give it out again. Build also your ministry on people who are faithful and loyal (II Tim.2: 2; Col. 1 :7).

(8) GENTLENESS

Gentleness is: a) being submissive to the divine will of God, or

b) Considerate towards men (maybe even flexible).

Gentleness or meekness, is not weakness! But it's humility.

E.g. - a) Jam.1: 21 -They received the word of God in a gentle spirit.

E.g. - b) Gal.6: 1 - A spiritual person is one who is controlled and responsive to the Spirit (never revengeful), one who walks in the Spirit, not condemning, but restoring. (Moses -Num.12: 3).

Don't be meek in the wrong way, or otherwise the devil will walk over you! Don't be gentle with sin!! Compare Jesus in the temple cleaning! (Matt.21:12-13).

I Cor. 4:19- 21 - Power, referring to a moral excellence of soul !

We see Paul acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus in every step; dependence.

(9) SELF-CONTROL

Self-Restraint or moderate in the indulgence of the appetites and passions.

Self-control is keeping the fleshly impulses under control (I Cor.7: 6- 9) - by yielding to and walking by the Spirit (Rom.6:12- 14; Gal.5: 16). Letting the Spirit reign and not the flesh. Finally, self-control comes down to every area of our life: our thoughts, imaginations, food, mouth, lust, eyes, etc. (Jam.1:12-16 - Don't give in to temptation). Emotions are God-given, but we must control them (I Cor. 9: 25- 27; Prov.16: 32). See also (II Tim.1: 7).

HOLINESS

The greatest miracle that God can do today is to take an unholy man out of an unholy world, and make that man holy and put him back into that unholy world and keep him holy in it!

(A) You must be holy, because...

1. God is holy
“Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet.1:16)
2. God’s will and calling concerning you is holiness.
“This is the will of God, your sanctification”
“God called us to holiness” (1 Thes. 4:3, 7)
3. Without holiness, you cannot worship, serve or see God.
“worship the Lord in...holiness” (Ps. 96:9)
“Serve Him...in holiness” (Luke 1:74-75)
“Without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14)

(B) You must be holy in...

1. Thoughts
“...evil thoughts...defile a man” (Matt. 15:19, Ps. 119:113)
2. Words
“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth” (Eph. 4:29)
“...every idle word...account of it in the day of judgment” (Matt. 12 :36; Jas. 1: 26)
3. Deeds
“God will bring every work into judgment” (Eccl. 12: 14)

(C) Steps to Holiness...

1. Search you heart, confess your sins and forsake them.
“Search me, O God” (Ps. 139:23)
“whoever confess and forsakes his sins shall obtain mercy” (1 John1: 9; Prov. 28:13)
2. Rely upon the Blood of Christ, the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.
“The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from us all sin” (1 John 1:7)
“Sanctify them by your truth” (John 17:17)
“You are sanctified by the Spirit” (1 Cor. 6:11)
3. Believe God’s promises
“He is able to present you faultless” (Jude 24)
“you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life” (Rom. 6:22)

Holy Living:

- FEAR THE LORD - Prov. 9: 10

There are wrong and right kinds of fear. "Fear not" is a precious message of Scripture, used about 50 times, and with its variations it is used 366 times. Remember the Lord's words. "It is I, be not afraid?" But the fear of the Lord something we must have. See these verses: Job 28:28; Psalms 19:9; 2 Samuel 23:3; Deuteronomy 6:13.

1. Here are some things we are NOT to fear:
 1. Idols or other gods – 2 Kings 17:38.
 2. Man – see Saul's mistake in I Samuel 15:24. Notice Proverbs 29:25.
 3. Earthly calamities, for they signify the near return of our Saviour- Luke 21:25-28.
 4. Future punishments – Hebrews 10:27.
 5. We are not to fear "fear", for the believer casts his fears on the Lord – I Peter 5:7.

Only one fear remains, and that is the holy fear, holy awe and reverent respect of the Lord God.

2. What is the fear of the Lord?
 1. It is a hatred of evil – Proverbs 8:13.
 2. It is wisdom – Psalms 111:10.
 3. It is a treasure – Proverbs 15:16; Isaiah 33:6.
 4. It is a fountain of life – Proverbs 14:27.
 5. It is clean – Psalms 19:9.
 6. It endures forever – Psalms 19:9.
 7. It is godly – Hebrews 12:28.
3. What are the results of fearing the Lord?
 1. It brings pleasure to the Lord – Psalms 147:11.
 2. It brings acceptance with God – Act 10:35.
 3. It causes the Lord to comfort His children – Psalms 103:13.
 4. It brings blessings – Psalms 112:1.
 5. It brings separation from evil – Proverbs 16:6.
 6. It brings Christian fellowship – Malachi 3:16.
 7. It brings answered prayer – Psalms 145:19.
 8. It brings long life – Proverbs 10:27.

- THE QUIET TIME - Psalm 5: 3

The quiet time is the secret of a Christian's victorious living without it, spiritual defeat is certain.

1. Abraham's excellent example for the morning quiet time:
 1. He got up early in the morning. This is an excellent practice.
 2. He had a special place to meet God. We should, too.
 3. He did this daily, not now and then only or when he felt like doing so.
 4. He stood before the Lord, waiting for the Lord to speak to him.
2. Material for the quiet time:
 1. A Bible. Read the Bible faithfully according to a set plan(Read from cover to cover)
 2. A notebook and pen to record some lesson from the Word.
 3. A book with prayer requests and space for the answers.
3. A plan for the quiet time:
 1. Have your quiet time at the same time each day if possible.

2. Aim at a systematic plan, probably half time reading and half time praying.
3. Don't be rigid. Continue praying, if the Spirit leads. If the Word shines with new light, read on and be filled.
4. A suggested order: a song of praise and worship; a brief prayer, Bible reading, and then prayer. Use the Word of God as a basis for prayer and petition.

- **SEPARATION** – 1 John 2:15

“Love not the world....” What does not word “world” mean here? The next verse explains it: it means this present world system (or society), which is controlled by Satan.

1. Some things we know are wrong:

1. Marriage between a believer and an unbeliever is forbidden - 2 Corinthians 6:14 –17; Amos 3:3.
2. All unrighteousness (evil deeds) and all works of darkness - 2 Corinthians 6:14. This may include business partnership also.
3. Belial, the old devil, and unbelievers- 2 Corinthians 6:15.
4. Idols - 2 Corinthians 6:16.
5. False teachers – 1 Timothy 6:5.
6. All known forms of sin and immorality (drinking, etc) –1 Peter 1:16.

2. Basic rules to follow:

1. I must separate from anything that might overthrow my faith in God.
2. I must separate from anything that would destroy my testimony.
3. I must separate from anything that would debase my morals and lead me to sin.
4. If my action causes my brother to stumble, then I must not do it – 1 Corinthians 8:13.
5. I must separate from anything that harms my body – physically, mentally or emotionally.
6. Is it pleasing to Jesus Christ? If He would not do it, then I must not – 1 Peter 2:21; 1 Cor. 10: 31.
7. Will it strengthen my testimony? Weaken it? – 2 Cor. 6:17.

Answers to questions about sufferings and trials

Believers will surely experience the love and peace and joy which our Lord Jesus came to bring. However, that does not mean that they will never experience sufferings or trials or hardships in their lives. In fact, there may be times when believers suffer hardship just because they are believers

Throughout history, many of the world's greatest Christians have been able when it says, "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God". (Acts 14:22)

- Does the Bible teach that believers will be spared from all suffering and hardship in this life?
No, believers may expect to experience trials of one kind or another.
"Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted". 2 Tim. 3:12
Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart I have overcome the world".
John 16: 33.
- What encouragement does the Bible give to those who suffer trials or persecution?
God promises never to leave us or forsake us.
"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." Deuteronomy 31: 8.
"Cast all your anxiety on the Lord because he [God] cares for you". 1 Peter 5: 7.
- What purpose do trials serve in the life of believers?
Trials help to strengthen character, prove the genuineness of our faith, and lead to future glory.
"Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the test of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." James 1: 2- 4.
"(Trials) have come so that your faith .. may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." 1 Peter 1: 7.
- What promise is given to those who suffer for Christ's sake?
They will receive a great reward in heaven.
Jesus said, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven."
Matthew 5:11-12.
- What should believers do if they suffer trials or persecution?
They should commit their lives to the Lord, continue to live a Christian life, and concentrate on the glory to come. (Heb. 12: 2)
"Those who suffer according to God's will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good". 1 Peter 4:19.
"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal." 2 Corinthians 4:17- 18.
- What attitude should believers have toward those who persecute them?
They should love them in Christ, pray for them, and seek to do them good.
"Jesus said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:44- 45.
"Do not repay anyone evil for evil... Do not take revenge. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:17,19,21.
- Doesn't God care that his people suffer persecution?
He certainly does! But God does not want believers to take revenge; He Himself will do what is just and right with those who persecute His people.

“do not take revenge , my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written, ‘It is mine to avenge; I will repay, ‘says the Lord”. Romans 12: 19.

- What comfort do believers have in the midst of their trials and difficulties?
We have the assurance that God is working out everything for the spiritual good of those who love Him.
“and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.” Romans 8: 28.

TAME YOUR TONGUE!

“But the tongue no man can tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8).

In this verse from his epistle, James is talking about the tongues of believers. He is issuing a call to the church to gain control of their tongues – before they are destroyed by them!

How serious is this matter of taming the tongue, you ask? Can an “unruly tongue” really be that sinful?

Indeed, many Christians right now are waging intense spiritual warfare against powerful habits such as drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and lust. They can’t imagine an unruly tongue as being a very serious sin. I can almost hear the reaction of the believer who is engaged in a titanic struggle with some great temptation. “Hey, pastor –you’ve got to be kidding! I’m fighting the battle of my life, trying to get victory over a demonic stronghold, and you’re talking about little words. How can you compare a loose tongue to the kind of battle I’m engaged in?”

Dear saint, I tell you, an untamed tongue is the world’s dead list weapon! An unsanctified, loose tongue is worse than drug and alcohol abuse it is worse than any sin of the flesh! The Bible calls the tongue a world of iniquity, a defiler of multitudes, a taste of hell on earth! (see James 3: 6).

Let me show you from God’s Word how dangerous and damning an unruly tongue is:

1. An Unruly, Careless Tongue Negates Everything Spiritual in Your Life!

A loose tongue renders all religion absolutely worthless! It can make your every spiritual activity totally useless in God’s eyes. “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridles not his tongue, but deceives his own heart, this man’s religion is vain” (James 1:26”).

James is speaking here of those “among you” –that is, in the church. These aren’t drug addicts or street people they are part of the body of Christ who appear pious, spiritual. They are active in the work of the Lord. But their tongues are unbridled, out of control!

James is zeroing in on those who seem to be holy, kind, gentle, loving – yet who move about the church or on their job or in their family with acid tongues, always listening to and telling morsels of gossip. They think nothing of murmuring and complaining. God says their religion all their show to spirituality is in vain. It’s valueless, worthless!

Beloved, I do not want to stand before the judgment seat of Christ and discover that all my works for the Lord-my entire spiritual endeavor–has been in vain! I don’t want to hear Him say, “Son, you did mighty works in My Name. You established drug rehabilitation centres, homes for alcoholics. You preached to countless thousands and won many to my Kingdom. You fed the hungry, clothed the naked, cast out devils, healed the sick. “But it was all for nothing – all in vain! I simply don’t know this man who spoke with a divided tongue. You used your tongue to bless and then condemn! Out of your mouth came such sweetness – many wonderful, uplifting words. But there were also bitter, unkind words – killing, hateful, envious words! You took my warnings on this matter of the tongue too lightly. I wanted you that all your spiritual activity was in vain if you did not control your tongue. But you did not heed!”

Beloved, think of all you have done in your walk with God – all the tears you’ve shed for others, all the compassionate, caring acts you’ve performed. You’ve even been willing to lay down your life for others. Yet all that is in vain if you have spewed out careless words! You may wonder, “Surely God isn’t so unloving that He would discount my spirituality simply because I said something uncharitable?” I am speaking here of Christians whose tongues have never been tamed. They are habitual gossips, complainers, murmurers. They speak against God’s people without blinking an eye! Here is what God says about such uncharitable tattlers: “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing”(I Corinthians 13:1-3). All your spirituality, all you sacrificing, is rendered worthless because of an uncharitable, untamed tongue! Can you imagine dying for Jesus – being

burned at the stake, giving all your money to feed the poor, forsaking all in this life for the Lord – yet it is all in vain?

You won't receive martyr's reward because when you stand before the judgement seat the Lord will say, "you did it all with the wrong motive. You didn't have love in your heart! You had bitterness inside, and it came out through your mouth. Your tongue was not charitable and loving – it was bitter, unkind, acid. All your works have profited you nothing!"

2. The Words You Speak Reflect what is in your Heart!

"O generation of vipers, how can you being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12: 34).

Whenever I said something naughty as a child, my mother washed out my mouth with soap. But it wasn't my mouth that needed cleansing – it was my heart! You see, your tongue speaks only what is in your heart. Those are the very words of our Lord Jesus Christ. And He says that loose, careless, evil talk can come only from an evil, unclean heart! We as believers have not yet taken seriously what our Lord has said about taming our tongues. He has made it a heart issue – an issue of life and death! Not only does my careless tongue discount all my supposed spirituality – it also makes me face the indisputable fact that my heart is unclean, defiled. Something of hell-fire is smoldering inside me!

If I hear sensual, lustful words coming out of my mouth...if I speak any gossip... if I tell a dirty joke... if I run another person down...if I speak unkindly or jealously about someone...if I raise my voice and scream at my family...if name calling pours from my lips...if I utter curse words...if a stream of angry words flows out of my mouth...then I must ask myself: "what unclean, filthy stuff is still treasured up in me that I could talk this way?" I've got to examine my heart and ask, "where does this come from? There must still be something I haven't dealt with, or I wouldn't be saying such things. Why do I go on gossiping and bad mouthing? Why do I utter such mean, careless words? What unsanctified strong-holds still hold my heart?"

Careless, unruly talk is not just a flaw. It is not just a weakness or a habit we fall into occasionally. You can't say of a fellow Christian, "Oh, sometimes he can hurt you with his words, but most of the time he really is sweet and kind. And he loves the Lord deep within. He doesn't mean to hurt anybody." No! James says all of that person's spirituality is discounted! And more than that, Jesus says he has an unclean, evil heart!

Do you know someone at church who occasionally comes up to you and whispers, "Did you hear what I heard...". Mark it down: no matter how pious that person may appear, no matter how she may pray or praise God in church, there is something evil in her heart – something wrong that has not been dealt with by the Holy Spirit! Jesus gives this matter serious weight:".. out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things"(Matthew 12:34-35). Jesus is saying, "If you are careless with your tongue – quarrelling, complaining, murmuring, tattling – you have a serious heart problem! Your heart is not right with God, and it goes very deep. There is an evil treasure stored up in you, just as a snake has bags of poison stored behind his jaw. If deadly poison is coming out of you, it is because the bag hasn't been drained!" No minister, no Christian worker is exempt from this warning of the Lord! To all of us Jesus says, "Check your heart find out why you still speak unguardedly and carelessly!" Both a fountain send forth at the same places sweet water and bitter?" (James 3:11).

Whenever I allowed a morsel of gossip to come out of my lips, I must stop and say to the Lord, "Master, there must still be in my heart a root of jealousy or envy. How else could I take it so lightly to judge my brother or sister? It must be there is much cleansing, much Holy Ghost dealing, left to be done in me! Oh Father, dig deep into my heart and pluck out the roots of bitterness, covetousness, pride – whatever it is!"

Recently a young convert was overheard by one of our staff as he tried to excuse the adultery of a brother in Christ. This new Christian said, "No problem – the blood of Jesus covers all our sins. He's covered." My young friend, you've got it all wrong! The blood of Jesus covers only those sins that are truly repented of and forsaken. The blood never excuses or overlooks sin. Your brother

living in adultery needs to fall before Jesus, confess his sin, and cry out for power to overcome the lure of that Delilah he is living with! And so it is with the sin of the tongue! We dare not continue mouthing off gossip, slander, argumentative words – and then lie down at night and utter a casual prayer of confession: “Lord, if I’ve said anything wrong today, forgive me, cover me with the blood”.

No! God wants to get at that evil in your heart – that bag of poison hidden inside you! It doesn’t need to be covered but uncovered, and removed. God wants to root out the cause of it and to heal you of it completely. Your trouble is you pray to be covered by the blood when you’ve never truly repented and gotten to the root of the evil!

3. On Judgement Day we will have to answer for every careless, vain word we ever spoke!

“But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgement. For by the words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned” (Matthew 12:36-37).

We seem to think our words simply fall to the ground and die, or vanish into thin air and dissolve into nothingness. Not So! Our words live on – they do not die! You may say, “But I only told this gossip to one friend, and he promises never to repeat it. It will end with him.” No, it won’t. Every single word you and I utter is recorded, written down in eternity-and we will hear them all repeated to us word by word at the judgement. Those words will condemn us unless we confess them, forsake them, and pull up the evil roots that caused us to utter them!

You ask, “Can’t I just pray one blanket prayer and say, Jesus forgive me. Blot it all out!” No – not if you refuse to deal with the root of your sin! I recall coming under deep conviction some time ago, after sharing a vicious bit of gossip with a friend. What I said was indeed true – it was about a moral situation I’d had to deal with concerning a certain minister. His name came up in the conversation, and I said, “Don’t trust him. I know something about him!” Even as I mouthed off, I felt condemned. The Holy Spirit whispered to me, “Stop right there! Nobody needs to know that. Don’t say any more, because there’s no purpose to it – it’s just gossip. Even though it’s true, don’t repeat it – because it can hurt the man’s character!” What I’d already said was bad enough. But then I blurted out the very details! I knew I should have been quiet. And, sure enough, I was deeply convicted by the Spirit. So I later called my friend and said, ‘I’m sorry – that was gossip. I was out of order. Please don’t repeat it. Try not to even think about it.’ My friend assured me it was a dead issue. “I don’t know the man,” he said. “And I never repeat such things.” That seemed to satisfy my spirit at first. But the Spirit’s conviction still nagged at me. Why? Why couldn’t I let it go? Because when you plant something in someone else’s mind, you can’t pluck it out! Even if it is never repeated, it does not die there! The feeling that continued to nag at me was: “why did I do it? God, do I have something against him? Did I secretly delight in his fall? Why was I not more interested in his recovery? What kind of heart do I have? Lord, forgive me, but also heal me of this. I don’t want to face You on Judgement Day with any unresolved evil in me!” Is my sin covered by the blood of Jesus? Yes – because I fully acknowledged that I had sinned grievously. And I allowed the Holy Spirit to show me some of the legalistic pride left in me. I allowed Him to humble me and heal me! Now, whenever I begin to say something against somebody, I obey the Holy Spirit as I hear Him say, loud and clear, “Stop!”

Jesus warning has awakened the fear of God in me: “for by the words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned” (Matthew 12:37). By our words! Jesus didn’t say we would be condemned by lust or drugs or alcohol; those are all ugly sins, and yes, there will be judgment because of them. But, rather Jesus told us, “you’re going to be judged by your words – by what you’ve said!” I ask you – are you one who bless with your tongue, yet also curses! “With [the tongue] bless we God, even the Father; and with it curse we men, who are made after the image of God. Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things should not be so” (James 3:9 – 10). The Greek word for curse here means “to tear down, bring one down, denounce as evil.” And indeed, so often out of our mouths come praises to God, worship and blessing of Him – but also evil gossip that tears down the reputation of His servants. Such loose talk tears down the body of Christ! It opposes the work of God! Yet you can damage a person’s

reputation without saying a word – simply by making negative facial expressions. On one occasion I was asked about a certain individual with whom I'd had to deal concerning a number of problems. When asked about the person, I didn't say a word- I just wrinkled up my nose and shook my head. The person inquiring told me, "Well, you haven't said a word, but you've told me everything I need to know." I'd planted negative thoughts in that person's mind! This also has to do with an untamed tongue. Now, some believers are very careful not to speak their thoughts: they aren't careless with their words. Yet the good things that many Christians say are hypocritical-because their thoughts are full of evil! "...they bless with their mouth, but they curse inwardly.:" (Psalm 62: 4). These people take your hand, smile warmly, and say nice things to you, such as, "How are you? Nice to see you. You're looking so good!" But as they turn away, they mumble to someone nearby, "What a phony-pretense! Did you see how much weight she's gained? Here eyes look terrible!" ...they Flatter with their tongue" (Psalms 5:9). No Christian should have this kind of attitude! Rest assured, there are roots of bitterness and rebellion in that person- something desperately wrong in her heart! A true believer who walks closely with the Lord couldn't even conceive any of that kind of behavior.

You say, "Now, wait a minute, pastor. First you tell me how serious it is to have a loose tongue. But now you say I'm going to be judged by my mere thoughts about people?" Absolutely-yes! "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he ..." (Proverb 23: 7). "(Love)....thinks no evil" (1 Corinthians 13: 5). Show me a person of a suspicious nature, and I'll show you someone with a legalistic spirit. That person has a stubborn nature, perhaps never fully yielded to Jesus. He always suspects others of falling into the things he himself is greatly tempted to do!

Perhaps the most dangerous person, though, is the one who passes along gossip-who gets involved in conversations that are not edifying, but destructive-and yet believes he meant no harm! When you question him about it, he might even get tears in his eyes and say sorrowfully, "I'm not like that. I love my church and my pastors-I love the body of Christ. Yes, I may have said something that could be construed as gossip or careless. But God knows my heart. I've never meant any harm." Such an attitude is dangerous! The Bible says great fires are caused by little sparks! And your little spark can ignite a big fire, even though you don't mean it to get out of hand. "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindles!" (James 3: 5). You can nonchalantly share a few weak points about somebody-and it can end up affecting their character, spirit and very nature. It doesn't matter what your motive was, the damage is done. Your little spark has already started a fire, and it's raging out of control. It could damage a reputation. It may bring someone shame, disgrace and sorrow. And no matter what your motive was in telling it, you are still guilty-you are the fire bug! It was your unruly tongue that started it all!

How can you gain control over the deadly weapon of your tongue?

You cannot tame your own tongue – God must do it!

"But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison" (James 3: 8)

How does God expect us to bridle or tame our tongue when His Word says no man can do this? Jesus gives us the answer: "...With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19: 26).

You can no more tame your tongue by yourself than a wild horse can tame itself. Wild horses are tamed by experienced trainers who "break" them. And the Holy Spirit is your trainer. Only He can break our unruly, wild tongues!

The prophet Isaiah provides us with an example of how we can heal our tongue:

- a) Isaiah drew near to the Lord, and he prayed for a vision of God's holiness. He said, "... I saw ... the Lord...upon a throne, high and lifted up..." (Isaiah 6: 1). Anyone who wants to live pleasing to the Lord must constantly go into His presence until he obtains a vision of God's holiness. All healing, all true blessings, all victories begin at His throne. That is where we see God in His holiness!

- b) In God's holy presence Isaiah was deeply convicted of having unclean lips. "Then said I, woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips...for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (verse 5). Why did Isaiah cry out, I am a man of unclean lips?" It was because he'd seen the King of Glory! "I've seen Him in my mind – I've seen the glory of His holiness! And I know He will not tolerate sin!" Our sin becomes exceedingly sinful when we are in God's presence. The light of His holy countenance exposes everything that is unlike Him!
- c) Isaiah allowed the Lord to touch him and cleanse him with His holy fire. "then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongues from off the altar; and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, look this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away, and your sin purged" (verses 6-7). God's Word is a live coal-and the Holy Spirit is its fire! Right now you have been touched by the Holy Spirit through this message. And God wants to put His fire to your tongue and sanctify it. He can do it for you-if you'll let His Word convict you! He is the only One who can do it. Your part is simply to confess as Isaiah did, "Woe is me, I'm unclean!"

The secret to victory over drugs, alcohol or an uncontrollable tongue is closeness to Jesus – intimacy with Him! Drawing near to His presence will reveal what is in your heart. Many Christians continue to gossip and slander because they never really have been close to Christ. They have never been intimate enough to see how unruly their tongue is!

Let this word go straight to your heart and purge you with its fire. Confess, "Yes, it's me, Lord! I'll not let this word pass me by! Purge my lips, purge my tongue. Cleanse my mouth and my heart!"

Ask the Holy Spirit to put such conviction in you that each time you start to say something, unthinking or unkind, He will raise a flag and wave it at you. Ask Him to make you supersensitive to His voice – and then obey Him when he speaks. He may stop you in the middle of a sentence with Holy Spirit conviction, and you'll say to the person you're talking to, "I'm sorry – God told me to stop. Let's drop it right now, forget it!"

May only blessings come forth from your life – from a pure heart and a kind tongue – tamed by prayer and by the Holy Spirit!

RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FAMILY (1)

The family is unique. It is God's first institution for humankind. The family is the first hospital, the first school, the first day-care center, and the basis for the first experiences of culture. The family is the first manufacturing plant, the first form of charity, and our Lord chose the home setting as the first center for the church.

The family is indeed unique. Yet there is no institution more threatened today than the family. It faces cultural, economic, and revolutionary forces that often seem overpowering. The peddlers of pornography, the advocates for abnormal sexual life styles, the dealers in drugs, the manipulating media which seemingly often promotes sexual promiscuity, the voters who allow our schools to teach a valueless education, and a host of other negative influences are eroding the fabric of the family. The Bible, however, reveals the family as primary, purposeful, and productive

1. The Family is Unique in Plan.

The Bible gives a primacy to the institution of the family. It has much to say about marriage, sex, and the family in both the Old and New Testaments. The primary place that God should have in family life is revealed in Psalm 127:1, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labour in vain who build it." Without God it is virtually impossible for a family to have totally fulfilling relationships with one another.

The family is God's first institution for human beings. In the Garden of Eden, God gave woman to man and man to woman. God established marriage to give Adam and Eve happiness and meaningfulness. The family is the basic unit of society. Every generation is dependent on the family to pass on knowledge, values, and skills to succeeding generations.

In Ephesians 3 Paul cited the church as being like a family when he said, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The church takes different individuals and molds them together into one unit, and thus provides 'a building block' of society. A family is also one unit, made up of different individuals, and molded together into 'a building block' of society. Both family and church provide an avenue and a basis for relationship, responsibility training, and guidance in making right choices.

The family begins with the husband and wife in marriage. There is no relationship quite like this in all the earth. It is bound by love, sealed with commitment, and protected by faith in God. It is different from the love of a friend for friend, a student for a teacher, or a patriot for country. Marriage is different in intimacy. The husband and wife become one in purpose and in physical union. Marriage gives a complete picture of love, the reciprocal love of a husband and wife.

The family as a unit shares training. Children learn from their parents as role models. Children adopt, often without realizing it, their parents methods of resolving controversy, discipline, and expression. If the parent is a dreamer, the child will often have great aspirations. If the parent is a hard worker, the child will often become a hard worker. If the parent is neat, orderly, and logical, so, also the child is likely to develop these traits. And, naturally, children most often resemble their parents physically. Most importantly of all, the earnest faith of godly parents will affect the lives of their children.

Today, many families end up broken. Also many "single parent" families exist. Often grandparents or other family members step in to fill the role of a missing parent. Death, divorce, desertion, separation, and unwed mothers are some of the chief reasons leading to single parenting. Financially, emotionally, and spiritually, the single parent is overburdened.

The "blended family" is a family formed by two former families. This often creates a whole new set of problems for all those involved. It may create tension between a spouse and children of a spouse and tension between the children of both parents.

2. The Family Is Unique in Purpose

Three important areas within the family reflect its purpose. Building relationships, creating responsibility, and training to make right choices.

Building solid relationships stands at the forefront of family development. Children look to their parents as examples. If they see in their parents a strong sense of love, honesty, mutual respect, and consideration, they will likely develop these traits in their own lives and look for a mate that exemplifies the same. The fact that parents are faithful to each other, even though they have realistic problems, will cement the idea of staying together in the minds of their children.

In the home a child learns responsibility. He must discover early that he is accountable to others and ultimately for others. Children, both boys and girls, need to be taught to pick up their clothes, put towels away after baths, clean the wash basin after using it, and put away their toys after play. They need to learn to respect the property of others. Wives will rise up and call the parents blessed who have so trained their husbands, and likewise so will the husbands thank the Lord for parents who have so trained their wives.

Children also develop responsibility by being taught to deal with tragedy and crises. Parents should set the right example in facing suffering associated with the loss of a family member, a job termination, or other tragedy. Perhaps done one of the greatest areas of responsibility is in the matter of finances. If the parents set the example of living within their financial means, the children will likely do so.

If the church is primary in the lives of the parents, their children will likely grow up to respect it. If the parents tithe and practice lives of stewardship, the children are more likely to do so. When parents pray for their leaders, whether faithful or fallen, and sincerely encourage other rather than criticizing and condemning them, they will not be surprised when they see these traits developing in their children.

The family setting is the first place for learning to make right choices. Joshua spoke of the importance of choices long ago when he said, "Choose you this day whom he will serve... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15). It is important for parents to make the right choices for their children, and model right choices before their children. Parents that seek the will of God in prayer for the simplest matters-when to buy a car, where to get a washing machine repaired, how to give a talk, where to work, and how to move to new employment-will influence their children to be Holy Spirit-led.

There is a great deficit in many homes for Spirit-led leadership. Personal Bible study and family devotions create an attitude of respect for God's Word. The Bible furnishes either direct teaching or important principles for making every choice in life and settling every problem.

3. The Family is Unique in Preparation for Living

Someone has said that one of the best things a father can do for his children is to love their mother. May I add that one of the best thing a mother can do for her children is to show love and respect for their father. Love is the best gift parents can give their children. The first obvious way to communicate love to a child is to do so in words. We need to tell our children we love them when they go to bed, leave the house, go to school, and even when we are disappointed in them. We need to tell them we love them when we have to discipline them.

Love is communicated by doing things for and with our children. Parents with children at home (and even grandparents) can rotate taking them out to a meal. Make that time theirs to talk about anything that interests them. When parents go away on trips leaving their children behind, a single gift or a postcard can teach a valuable lesson in love. By loving our children we teach them how to love others. No wonder Paul said the greatest gift is love (1 Cor. 13:13).

Listening to our children is another way of developing a sense of love. Few things are more important than allowing a child to articulate her desires, fears, frustrations, hopes, and dreams. Listening is a link to love. Helping a child with his homework may be an important lesson in love. Even if parents (or grandparents) do nothing more than sit in the same room and read while homework is being done, they have communicated concern and interest.

Go back through your memory to your childhood. Make a mental list of your father's and mother's lesson in living.

Another preparation for life learned in the home is how to meet problems. Problems arise within every normal family. Families face them from within the family setting and from without in the

larger context of the community. The difference between a healthy and a hurtful family is not the absence of problems but how a family deals with them. Problems of finances, health, work, and interpersonal relationships face every family. Family circles can often be utilized to learn the value of communications and resolving differences. Families can sit down for a problem-solving session asking, what shall we do?

The family is unique in preparation through education. The most formidable years of education and training are spent in the family setting. Children learn how to study, develop interests, and increase their physical as well as scholastic skills. The first few years of a child's life are crucial to what he will become physically, emotionally, and mentally.

One of the most important gifts parents can give their children educationally is teaching them to read well. There is an exciting world and education awaiting the good reader. Another area that is important to the family is recreation. Quality time can be spent with children on vacations and in travel. Families of limited means can plan picnics, go on outings to recreational parks, and go to athletic events. There are a lot of vacation spots within one's own state. Imagination is the only limitation to creative recreation. Many families relax by camping out together. Wise planning can save family money.

Summary

The family is God's unique creation for cementing society. The family is the basis of relationships, responsibility training, and guidance in making right choices. Our family is worth our time and effort!

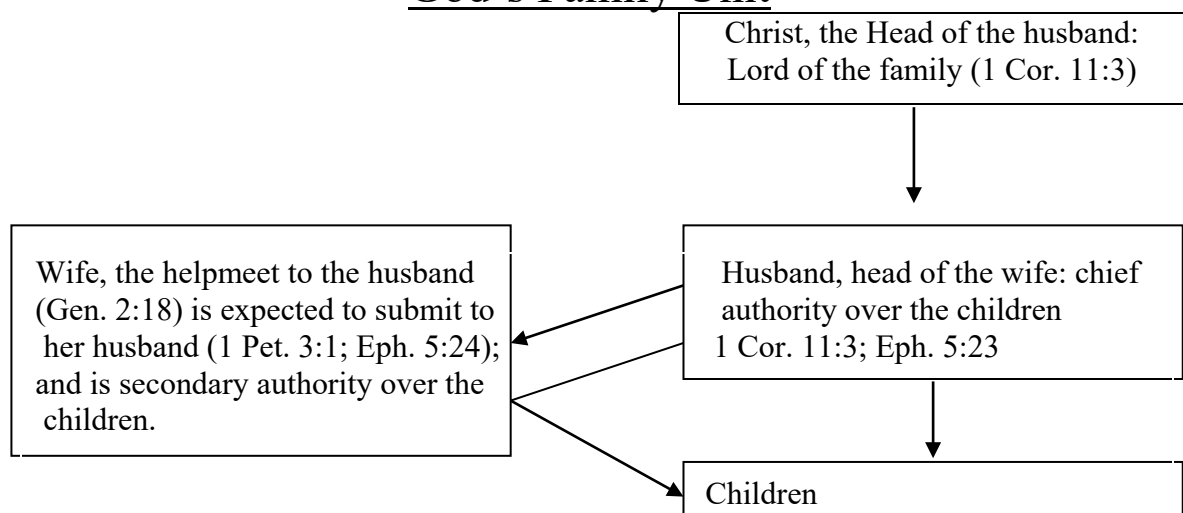
RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FAMILY (2)

Introduction

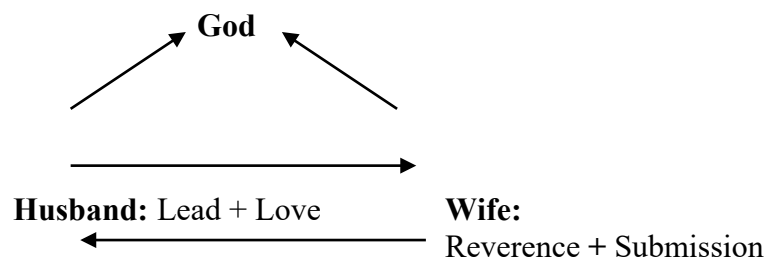
The family unit was instituted by God (Genesis 1:27 –28; Genesis 2:24). It was designed to be a stable cell in which men, women and their children could express the principles of the Kingdom of God. The family was to enable the multiplication of the human race and also the spiritual growth of all its members. Today, however, this family cell has broken down. Instead of being, as God intended a stable base around which society can develop, the family has become a fragmented institution which has far reaching crippling effects on society as a whole. If God's principles for family life are re-established, then the family can once again be the stable foundation for life that it was designed to be and this will allow each member in it to have a strong protection from the troubled world in which we live.

God has ordained special relationship roles within the family that each member must adopt for the family unit to function successfully.

God's Family Unit



A. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUSBAND AND WIFE:



(N.B. As they draw nearer to God,
so they draw nearer to each other.)

The Husband's Role

1) He is to be head (Genesis 3:16; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23)

The husband is to be head of his wife just as Jesus is Head of the man and Head of the church. This is a God ordained position. It is God's divine order. The husband is God's delegated authority over his wife and children. This is a role of responsibility and authority. The husband lives under the authority of Christ and he is responsible to

Christ for the headship and care of his wife (and family). As head of the family, he is to stand before God to seek the mind of God regarding the spiritual, emotional and physical needs of his wife and family. He is also to pray God's protection and blessing on them. It is not a matter of feeling unworthy or incompetent, but seeing that this is the husband's role. He is to function as a priest for his family (1 Peter 2:9). He should represent God's authority to his family and represent his family before God. He should give spiritual direction to his family, bring godly discipline and also make the salvation of his whole family a primary concern. If the husband lives as he should, the God will honour and bless both him and his family.

2) He is to love his wife (Ephesians 5:25, 28, 33)

This is a command; not an option. The word for 'love' here is 'agape' in the Greek and this is a self-sacrificial love just like the love Jesus showed when He died for us. This type of love demands right behaviour and is not just based on good feelings. 1 Corinthians 13:4 – 8 shows us that this type of love is patient, kind, unfailing etc., these are qualities the husband should possess. It is the sacrifice of self. So many marriages fall short of God's best because the husband takes his wife for granted and does not continue to behave in a loving way towards her. He is, therefore, failing to carry out his God ordained relationship role. The husband is to love his wife as himself. Just as he would do everything possible to look after himself, so he is to do everything possible to look after his wife.

3) He is to feed and care for his wife

God has made women so that when they marry, their desire will be for their husband and his rulership (Genesis 3:16). Women are also more emotionally sensitive than men. Therefore, the husband has the role before God to meet the practical and emotional needs of his wife. He must give her loving attention, communicate with her, and be romantic because his wife will need this. "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." (1 Peter 3: 7)

4) He is to praise his wife (Proverbs 31: 28)

The husband has the role of pastor to his wife, to enable her to develop by natural talents as well as to see that she blossoms in her spiritual ministry. Although the husband has authority and responsibility over all that takes place within the family unit, he must fully respect his wife's sphere of duty and competence. In this sphere, it is his place to provide broad oversight, leaving the immediate responsibility and authority in her hands.

Seven practical Steps for the Husband

1. The husband must know the woman's opinion is as valuable as the man's.

It is the husband's responsibility to build self worth in his wife and communicate his gratefulness for God's workmanship in her life thus far. Failure to believe that her opinions are as important as his will breed seeds of resentment. A woman's intuition is often more accurate than a man's logic. This is clearly emphasised by her emotional sensitivity to the needs of the children. Failure to take the time to help her express what she feels may produce frustration and feelings of inadequacy with her.

2. The husband's attitude towards his wife's everyday decisions has a direct effect on her attitude towards his major decisions.

In situations where the husband does not have to have his way, if he is sensitive to his wife and willing to decide in her favour, it will be easier for her to submit to him when

he makes decisions in which she has a differing opinion. This is showing deference (respectful yielding or granting the wishes of another) on his part.

3. The husband should know how to empathise with his wife.

The husband should try to feel as his wife feels, especially when she is ill or emotionally down. He needs to be sensitive to her needs, communicating love and reverence for her. A woman's cycles are often more pronounced than a man's. The wise husband will plan to be sensitive to her lows and seek to avoid such common phrases as: 'What's the matter with you now?'.

4. The husband should learn to bear his wife's burdens.

There should be a sufficiently deep and warm relationship between husband and wife that both are free to share burdens and problems without fear of rebuke or rejection. When the wife wants a listening ear, it is not the time to give her solutions to her frustrations. Husbands and wives usually already know what their weaknesses are in their partner's eyes. When one compliments the strengths and achievements of the other, there is motivation to improve and please the other even more.

5. The husband should be compassionate.

There is a tendency for many men to develop the idea that a real man is one who is dogmatic, authoritarian and headstrong. At best, these false ideas will get obedience, but they will fail to gain the wife's respect. It is the husband's responsibility to both love and lead (Proverbs 18:12). It is also imperative that the husband teaches his lips to say what he means them to say (Proverbs 10: 13). The husband needs to learn to deal with the real problem rather than verbally attack his wife's character. When his wife upsets him, his motivation should be to discern what caused her to do what she did, rather than to condemn her failures.

6. The husband should learn to use good manners at all times.

The husband's manners towards his wife should have improved since their courting days. To be careless in this area communicates the idea that he takes her for granted and he has a lower opinion offer. A woman tends to believe what she feels and experience. If she cannot feel that special attention, she is not likely to believe that her husband really cares.

7. The husband should set a godly example for living (1 Peter 5: 3).

This means the husband should show justice, kindness, goodness and love etc., and be willing to forgive.

The Wife's Role

Wives should submit to their husbands as to the Lord (Ephesians 5: 22). Wives should even submit to a husband who as yet is unsaved (1 Peter 3: 1) and they should respect their husbands (Ephesians 5: 33).

1. A wife needs to have her focus on the Lord, developing her relationship with Him, in order to have a good relationship with her husband. In fact, it is important that both the husband and the wife have their focus on the Lord. The closer they get to the Lord, the closer they will be drawn to one another.

2. A woman's intuition can be more accurate than a man's logic. Often she cannot put her feelings into words on the spur of the moment, but this should not be basis for her to disregard her own opinions; rather she should share them with her husband.

3. How should a wife handle a disagreement which develops between her husband and herself, especially when she feels the husband is wrong? A wife needs to recognise that God is the Head of her husband, therefore she can commit this difference to the Lord in prayer and ask Him to speak to her husband. If a wife maintains her attitude of

submission both to her husband and to God (1 Peter 3:1 – 7), then God will change her husband's mind, especially if he is about to make a decision that would ultimately destroy God's purposes for their marriage or family.

4. **A wife should not try too hard** to keep her husband from getting it 'wrong', because the husband's pride and authority may be threatened and he will do just the opposite to have 'his way'.
5. **A wife should pray for her husband daily** and encourage him in his role as the head of the family and in his work etc. (Proverbs 12: 25).

B. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARENTS AND CHILDREN

The Parents' Role (Colossians 3: 18 – 20)

Parents are entrusted with the responsibility of developing their children's God given potential. Therefore, they must raise their children in a godly way (Ephesians 6: 4). In fact, the aim of the parents should be to present their children mature in Christ for service to God. Children well trained in the ways of God will not turn from those ways when they are older (Proverbs 22: 6). Parents do not own their children, but God has entrusted them with the stewardship of those children.

The Responsibility of parents to their Children

1. Children should be wanted and loved

Love shared among family members is essential to a family's survival. Without a love a home becomes a house where people merely eat, sleep and leave as quickly and as often as possible. Parents misdirect their love when they show more concern for family projects (e.g. home improvements) than for family members; favour one family member over another (even unintentionally); put their job before the family; spoil their children by refusing to say 'no' and by giving them all they want, whether they need it or not; and exercising little or no consistent discipline (i.e. instruction and correction)

2. God considers children to be a blessing

They are:

- the heritage of the Lord, i.e. God given (Psalm 127: 3)
- a blessing and not a curse (Deuteronomy 28: 4)
- arrows of the mighty: a quiver is six! (Psalm 127: 4 – 5)
- the Lord's reward (Psalm 127: 3)
- like olive shoots around your table (Psalm 128: 3)
- a crown (Proverbs 17: 6)

3. Children must receive correction when necessary

Parents should discipline their children to avoid spoiling them (Proverbs 29:21). If parents avoid taking directive influence over their children's lives – the devil certainly will not. Children must learn that bad behaviour is disciplined, not in anger but in love. God disciplines us because He loves us, and parents should discipline their children because they love them (Hebrews 12:5 – 11).

Correction of children is important for three basic reasons:

- foolishness is bound up in a child (Proverb 22: 15; Proverbs 23:13-14)
- foolishness left in a child will produce pride (Proverbs 14: 3)
- foolishness and pride left in a child will eventually destroy him/her because this brings: contention (Proverbs 13:10), strife (Proverbs 28:25), and shame (Proverbs 11:12; Proverbs 29: 15).

4. Children are not to be provoked but brought up in the training and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3: 21; Proverbs 22:6)

‘Training’ can be defined: ‘to mould character by drilling, discipline, repetition; and preparing for contest’. Training is more than teaching, because teaching helps a child know what he is to do, whereas training influences him and sees that he does it. The former deals with the mind and the latter with the will. Not to watch and correct mistakes, but to watch and prevent mistakes is true training. Early years of childhood are marked by the liveliness of the feelings and the susceptibility of impressions, and these are used by the parent to create feelings of all that is good, making it attractive and desirable. The power of effective training lies, not in that which in a parent might say and teach, but in what he is and does. We cannot teach children ideals we fail to live up to ourselves. When we live what we teach we are able to teach others to live (Proverbs 20: 7). Parental love, inspired by God’s love, exercises a mighty influence in the home and it inspires effective nurturing of children. Love that draws is more than law demands.

5. Children need to be allowed to grow up and establish independence

Parents need to entrust their children to the Lord and let them grow up. This needs to be done sensitively by the parents at the right time. It is right for children to grow up and lose their dependence on their parents.

Guidelines are good things to give children, but parents should not be legalistic about them especially when children get older. Communication between parents and children needs to be developed. There needs to be communication to find out reasons behind behaviour, and understanding of attitudes leading to adjustments to guidelines if necessary. Sometimes children feel and declare that their parents are over protective; they worry too much; they don’t listen; they are hypocritical (i.e. they profess to be something they’re not). These things could never be said of parents who love their children in a godly way, because these parents are desirous of being changed in character and behaviour by the operation of God’s Word and His Holy Spirit. God’s way is for children to be brought up in such a way that they become Christians themselves and go on to lead their own lives, still with love and respect for their parents. Remember, rebellion in a teenager is not just a phase through which every child must pass. Rebellion against parents a sin. It is the same as rebelling against the Lord who has appointed the parents to be responsible for their children’s welfare. In order to avoid this, parents should allow their children to have their independence at right time.

C. The children’s Role (Colossians 3: 20)

God expects children to obey, honour and respect their parents. This is their relationship role. The fifth commandment is: “Honour your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” (Exodus 20: 12).

This is the first commandment with a promise attached.

Children should seek to be like Jesus, especially in their attitudes and reactions. Jesus was subject to parental authority even though it seemed at times to run contrary to His Father’s business, Jesus, because of His obedience, grow in wisdom (mentally) and in stature (physically) and in favour with God (spiritually) and man (socially) (Luke 2:46-52)

Children need to seek to maintain a positive, non-angry, non-bitter attitude towards their parents (Ephesians 6:1 – 3). They should seek the forgiveness of God and their parents if attitudes have become wrong. This will release them from guilt, built up of tensions and flare-ups of temper. It is never right to hold on to bitterness or resentment (Mark 11: 25). Children should develop confidence in their parents ability and submit to what their parents

think is right for them. If what a child's parents ask is contrary to God's way, then the child should ask Him to put those He has placed over them to right.

Children are to obey their parents in the Lord and care for them when they are older (Ephesians 6:1 – 5; 1 Timothy 5: 4 – 8).

Summary and Application

1. The family unit is instituted by God. Men, women and children should find stability within it and should enable the spiritual growth of all its members.
2. The family unit is to have Jesus Christ as its Head, i.e. Jesus is to be Lord of the family.
3. The husband is Christ's delegated authority over the family. He is to be head of his wife and the chief authority over the children.
4. The husband is to love and lead his wife and he is to act as a priest to his family.
5. The wife is to be the husband's helper or helpmeet. She is expected to submit to and respect her husband.
6. It is God's desire to save whole households through the prayers and example of the believers in those households (Acts 16: 31; 1 Timothy 2: 14).
7. Parents do not own their children. They are God's stewards who have the responsibility of bringing up their children in a godly way and of developing their children's God given potential.
8. "Discipline your son, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to his death." (Proverbs 19: 18)
9. Children need to be taught the Word of God (Deuteronomy 6:1 – 7)
10. Correction/discipline or pride/rebellion – the choice lies with the parents in regard to their children's upbringing.
11. Children are expected to obey, honour and respect their parents.
12. "Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children." (Proverbs 17: 6).

RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORLD

Relationships to Government and Civil Leaders, as citizens

As disciples of Jesus we should be good citizens and an example for others to follow. We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ and we need to live lives that are consistent with God's Word, particularly in the light of all the moral trends in our world today. We all need to remember to learn the important Biblical principle that all government, both national and local, has been set up by God and that we should be subject to authority, no matter who we are (1 Peter 2: 13 – 17). Paul refers four times in Romans 13: 1–7 to God's part in civil government. Now when Paul wrote to these Christians, they were living in a world and society that had been subjected to the force, violence and taxes of Rome. Paul, knowing all this, wrote:

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgement on themselves.” (Romans 13: 1 – 2)

Paul did not instruct the Christians to protest or organise a frontal attack. No! He knew that the church would not change the structure of the world by direct action. Such methods would be alien to the teaching of the New Testament, Jesus said,

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” (Matthew 5: 5)

Christians had only one direct action and that was to declare the gospel. Christians were to be salt to the earth and light to the world (Matthew 5: 13 – 16). Living and declaring the gospel was priority number one, and by this means they eventually turned the world upside down. Many people had to die for their faith to achieve this, many were beaten or put in salt mines to work, but in the end they triumphed. If you lack the boldness to do this, then ask God and He will provide (Acts 4: 29 – 31).

The law of the land is there for our protection. We may not like it or agree with it and we may even refuse to accept certain government decisions, but unless it violates a higher level of authority, i.e. God's Word, then we are obligated by God to abide by it (Titus 3: 1). We must not submit to any level of authority if such authority contradicts God's Word (Matthew 22: 21). Also, as Christians, we must keep our conscience clear before God! (Acts 24: 16), because ignoring our conscience will be ignoring God's alarm bell and this will introduce tension and hardship into the life of a believer (1 Timothy 1: 19). All authority is under God, and rebellion against any level, without call to a higher level, is rebellion against God.

Submission to authority begins in childhood. The attitude children learn to have towards their parents' authority will usually be the attitude they will have towards all authority. Only as we live our lives in submission to authority can there be maturity in our lives. The key to freedom is not to get out from under all authority and to do our own thing, as most people assume, but rather, leaning to relate and to respond to the authority that God places over our life. We need to pray, intercede and give thanks for all in authority, so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This creates a good 'atmosphere' for us as disciples of Jesus to live and share the gospel, because this is what God wants (1 Timothy 2: 1 – 6).

At Work and Business

It is God's will that we should be engaged in some kind of employment. Before sin entered the world, and before the resulting curse came upon mankind, God had given work and responsibility as a very important part of man's life (Genesis 2: 15). Following God's curse upon the soil, man was to work by the sweat of his brow (Genesis 3: 19). Idleness is condemned in the Bible. We are all commanded to “settle down and earn the bread we eat.” In fact, the Bible says, “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.” (2 Thessalonians 3:6 – 15).

1. The employees (or slaves)

As disciples of Jesus they:

- Should not work just for the money, but for the Lord Jesus and His glory (Ephesians 6:7).
- Should be submissive and respectful to their employers (masters) and to everyone in authority over them, so that God's name is honoured and not slandered (1Timothy 6:1–2; Ephesians 5–6)

2 The employer (or master)

As a disciple of Jesus, the employer should be just and fair in all his dealings with his employees and manage them as unto the Lord: kindly, fairly, and without favouritism. In fact, employers are just employees of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is closely watching how they treat their employees. Righteous example and responsible administration are required of them. (Colossians 4:1).

3. God's promotion principles

- Watch the small things: "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much." (Luke 16: 10).
- handle money wisely: "If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches." (Luke 16:11).
- treat other people's interest and property with care: "If you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own." (Luke 16:12).
- humble yourself before God: "Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time." (1 Peter 5: 6)
- be a servant: "If anyone wants to be first, he must be very last, and the servant of all." (Mark 9: 35).

4. The Unemployed

As disciples of Jesus they should:

- beware of the 'social security mentality'.
- actively seek work and employment.
- look to God in faith to supply their needs.
- not be idle, but work anyway to serve the Lord in all their ways and seek to know the places of His appointment (James 4: 15; Proverbs 3:5 – 6).

Life Principles

- Be an example and earn the right to speak by the way you live.
"Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5: 16)
- Say cheerful and do not join the arguing, grumbling and complaining that is all around you (Philippians 2: 14).
- Whatever you do, do with faith, because if you cannot do it with faith, it is sin (Romans 14: 23).
- Whatever you do, do it for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10: 31)
- Remember the words of Jesus: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." (Luke 9: 23).

THE BIBLE AND SEX

Introduction

Disciples of Jesus should have a different attitude to sex than those still in the world. Their attitude should be regulated by what God says about it and not 'if it feels good, do it'. God is not against sex. In fact, He thought of the idea and created us as sexual beings (Genesis 1: 27). God wants us to enjoy ourselves, but within certain protective boundaries. Sex is not only for pleasure, but also to keep the human race going. God wants the children we produce to be born into a loving and caring family situation. This is why God laid down strict rules for sexual practice. These rules are designed to prevent men and women using sex solely for pleasure, without the commitment of marriage, and the loving caring family that marriage makes possible.

Breaking God's rules leads many into despair and unhappiness, and it not only affects the rule breakers, but also those who are the innocent victims of their sin, such as the little children in broken homes, too young to understand what it is all about.

We do not only please God when we are careful to obey what He has said about sex in the Bible, but we ensure the fullest enjoyment of this precious gift, because we are obeying the Creator's instruction manual.

Sex is Good and Pure

The Bible shows us that sex within marriage is something honourable and beautiful.

"Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral." (Hebrews 13: 4).

Sex is for marriage and marriage only.

The Bible and Adultery (Mark 7:20 – 23)

Adultery is when a married person has sex with someone of the opposite sex to whom he/she is not married. This involves the breaking of solemn marriage vows made before God and man. God knew just how threatening this was to marriage, so He forbade in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20: 14) and under the law of Moses, punishment for breaking this law was stoning (John 8: 4 – 5).

The Bible and Sex Outside of Marriage (Acts 15: 20)

The Bible calls this 'fornication' or sexual immorality. It is 'sleeping around' or indiscriminate sex among unmarried people. Even sex between unmarried people who love and care for one another is not God's way. The world may generally accept this and feel that those who don't are old fashioned or weird, but God asks Christians not to follow the pattern of the world and stand up and be counted. God will give you His grace and strength to do this.

"Don't let the world squeeze you into its mould." (Romans 12:2)

Psychologists, counselors and doctors tell us from their knowledge of those involved in pre-marital sex that many are psychologically scarred. God knew what He was doing when He made the rule of no sex outside of marriage. We can be sure that it is for our very best. Keeping within the guidelines of what God asks us to do as a Christian has a way of enriching our lives beyond any other way of living. Love is the overriding principle. Love is laying down my life in favour of yours and this becomes our source of joy. Marriage was intended to be a union of body, mind and spirit, but because the physical desire is strong, it has become blown out of all proportion. Sex is meant to be a part of a total relationship i.e. practical, emotional, intellectual and physical. To separate physical sex from the rest of relationship is to miss out on the 'wholeness' God had in mind for men and women.

The Bible and Flirting

This means 'to play at courtship' or pretending to make love merely for amusement with no serious intention of marriage. Love is too important for play-acting, because one partner may be serious while the other is not, which may lead to great hurt. Christian young people should be allowed to

have friendships with the opposite sex, because this is necessary part in the learning process. They need to learn how to relate to each other and accept one another. They need to be given opportunities to meet members of the opposite sex because this, in most societies, is the only way of meeting their partner. The love of Christ, however, must rule in the midst of all this.

Single people should not limit themselves to only one close friendship with the opposite sex, unless they sense that this is the right person for them to marry. It is also wise to be careful when counseling members of the opposite sex, especially when alone, because this can lead to unwanted emotional attachments. Paul advises Timothy to treat young women as sisters with absolute purity (1 Timothy 5: 2), and this is good advice.

The Bible and Courting

Marriage is a 'yoke' because it encourages two people to walk together. The Bible exhorts us not to be yoked together with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6: 14). God does not want us to be married to unbelievers because this causes conflict of interest and loyalty. If you are already married, God can use you to bless your unbelieving partner (1 Corinthians 7:14). Courting develops a relationship in preparation for marriage. Petting obviously has a part to play, but the rule of no sex outside of marriage still applies. A couple wanting to please God will not engage in 'heavy' petting (that is, caressing the intimate part of your partner's body) because this is the lead up to sexual intercourse. This would be encouraging a strong temptation. You can drive a car up a steep mountain track at 100 miles an hour and make it, or you can do it at a safe 30 miles an hour. Going the fast, more exciting way, however, can end up in disaster. Love can wait but lust cannot. God's ideal is for the bride to present herself to her husband on their wedding day as a pure virgin (2 Corinthians 11: 2). If your relationship is right in God, you do not need a trial run in order to find out if you are sexually compatible with one another. God will have all that in hand. Remember, love should be the overriding principle in all relationships.

The Bible and Self Control

"Sexual desire is like an inner fire (Proverbs 6: 27 – 29). To have a log fire in the house may be beautiful if it is burning safely in the grate, but if it's burning merrily on the lounge floor the house could burn down. Self control keeps the fire in the grate, that is, it keeps sex in the right place for the right person at the right time."

God commands us to be self-controlled and holy (1 Peter 1:13 – 15).

Masturbation is a substitute for self-control. To masturbate is to stimulate your own sex organs with the intent of obtaining the climax of sexual excitement that God intended for the marriage act. Masturbation, in itself, is not a sin like sexual immorality or adultery, but if it is accompanied by sexual fantasies and impure thoughts, it is sinful (Matthew 5: 27 – 28). It is also a sin when it masters you and you cannot control it yourself (1 Corinthians 6:12; Titus 2:11 –12). You do not have to masturbate. Self-control is possible and it is God's ideal. Having decided to go God's ideal way, you shouldn't give up because of failure. Remember, masturbation isn't a sin. God doesn't disown you because you do this. God loves you and cares for you. Just do not let it master you (Micah 7: 8; 1 Thessalonians 4:3 – 4). The battle with sexual temptation is really a battle in the mind. If you win there, you win the battle (2 Corinthians 10:3 – 5). Areas of weakness need to be strengthened, while strongholds in our minds need to be demolished. God has given us all the resources we need to do this (Romans 12: 2; Ephesians 4: 22 – 24).

The Bible and Homosexuality

This is men having sexual relationships with other men, or women with women (called lesbianism). God detests all such forms of unnatural sex (Leviticus 18:22 – 23). God created men and women for each other and not to have sex within their own sex grouping (Romans 1:26 – 27; 1 Corinthians 6:9 – 10). As Christians, we should hate any form of unnatural sex, but also remember to have compassion towards those caught up in such ungodly acts. There is no truth in the statement, 'Once a homosexual, always a homosexual'. Anyone can be washed, sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11). As Christians we have

been crucified with Christ and it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us (Galatians 2: 20).

The Bible and Sex in Marriage

The Bible is simple in this area:

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24).

“The husband should fulfil his martial duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self control.”(1 Corinthians 7:3 – 5).

Love needs to be at the centre of any marriage, love wants the other person’s best. Love needs to be the motivation behind every action in the marriage relationship.

Summary and Application

1. “Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.” (1 Thessalonians 4:11 – 12).
2. God calls us to live as good citizens and to submit to the governing authorities which He has established.
3. God requires that we work because He abhors idleness.
4. Employees need to work for the Lord in their job situation and be submissive, respectful and obedient to their employers.
5. Employers should be just, fair and kind to their employees. They should follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ and not lord it over their employees, but rather be a servant to them.
6. Men and women were created by God to enjoy sex.
7. God is not against sex unless it is outside of marriage.
8. “To the pure, all things are pure.” (Titus 1: 15).
9. A disciple of Jesus should live a self controlled life in regard to his sex life.
10. A disciple of Jesus will act righteously towards those of the opposite sex and do or say nothing that would dishonour God.
11. God detests unnatural sexual relations.
12. Sex inside of marriage should have love as its motivation and mutual submission as its core.

Sex: Love or Lust?

Human sexuality is a part of God's creation. Sexuality is therefore good. There is no evil in human sexuality where it is used in accordance with God's plan and purpose. Sex and marriage, according to the Biblical teachings are good, God-intended, and positive.

Since human sexuality is good, Christians should have a positive attitude toward it. In the Bible, it is not sexual behaviour that determines character, but rather character that determines sexual behaviour.

The expression of human sexuality

Human sexuality is most completely expressed in sexual intercourse. It must be expressed in the intended fashion to achieve God's will concerning the act. Sexual intercourse is intended for the husband and wife within the marriage relationship and is restricted there to. We can make several observation from the Scriptures:

1. Pre-marital sexual intercourse is not keeping with God's will – 1 Cor. 6:13; 1 Thes. 4:2.
2. Extra-marital sexual relationship is not keeping with God's will – Matt. 15:19-20; Ex.20:14; Heb. 13:14.
3. Proverbs explicitly teaches the danger of both pre-marital and extra-marital sex – Prov. 5:1-5; 6:20-35; 7:1-27; 23:28.
4. Proverbs teaches the importance of being satisfied with one's own wife - Prov. 5:15-23.
5. Proverbs upholds the rightness of proper sex and shows the destruction of wrongly used sex – Prov. 7:1-27; 5:15-23.
6. Proverbs specifically warns against the sin of adultery – Prov. 6:27-29; 16:32.
7. The Song of Solomon teaches the beauty and dignity of married sexual love.
8. Adultery is prohibited expressly in the Ten Commandments – Ex.20:14.
9. Jesus repeated the commandment prohibiting adultery (Mk.10:19) and even added that looking upon a woman to lust after her amounts to the commission of adultery (sexual intercourse between a married man and a woman who is not his wife, or between a married woman and a man who is not her husband). Fornication (sexual intercourse between any two people not married to each other) is also condemned by the Lord (Mk. 7:20-23; 10:11-12).
10. Paul speaks out strongly against sex outside of marriage in many letters – 1 Cor. 6:9-20; Gal. 5:19-23; Eph. 5:3-12.

As God's children dedicated to the discovery and implementation of God's will for our lives, our answer to the questions concerning sex, as to any other must come not from the ever changing mores of society, but from search of God's unchanging timeless Word. And that Word clearly says concerning sex: "Wait until marriage." Any other use of sex is an abuse of it and it is not in keeping with God's plan and purpose. That is why sexual abuses have heaped up problems in our society –problems to the individuals, to family, to society and to the nation as a whole.

Common objection to waiting until marriage:

1. Sex is a natural drive given to us by God. How can this natural God-given drive be wrong when way we want. Whenever I'm hungry I eat, when I'm sexy, I have sex. What's wrong with it? people ask.

It is agreed that our sexual drives are God-given, and therefore good. But the same God who gave us sexual drive has also given us His commandments and guidelines on the appropriate context for the fulfillment of those drives. Jesus Christ wants to share all your sex life by being the mediator between you and your husband or wife. He wants to unite you spiritually as well

as physically and emotionally, in the context of your total commitment to Him and to each other.

The analogy between food and sex is extremely weak. Do you view your partner like a bowl of soup? Note how de-personalising these commonly heard analogies for sex are! Our pleasure-satiated culture drums into us that men and women are mere objects to be used rather than people to relate to.

2. What's wrong with having sex so long as it doesn't hurt anybody?

How will you know it won't hurt anybody? We are not omniscient beings. How will you know about his or her conscience, the guilt or hurt, or his or her sensitivity to the Holy Spirit? How do you know you won't leave deep spiritual and psychological scars in your sexual partners? You do, when you violate God's clear commandment! You are disobeying Him and grieving the Holy Spirit of God (Eph. 4:30).

3. Isn't sexual relationship a necessary preparation for a happy marriage?

The assumption that a man and a woman can establish sexual compatibility before a marriage is a myth. In a marriage, the sex act takes place under completely different conditions: you are husband and wife; you have a unique relationship to each other, there is no rush; no guilt; no fear of being discovered. In the light of these factors, how can we test sexual compatibility before marriage? How long will you test it? Your assumptions will be your conclusions. God's order is not experiment and then marry, but marry and then experience.

As for the fear of sexual incompatibility, again the exhortation is to trust God's guidance and leading in choosing your life partner, rather than your own experimentation.

Dating

Dating is used here in reference to that socially accepted practice in Western cultures, defined by Webster as "an appointment for a set time, got social engagement with a person of the opposite sex." Dating is not an ancient custom, nor is it universal. Neither the practice nor the institution of dating is mentioned in the Bible. The Bible teaches about the family, and about the husband wife relationship, but dating is never mentioned. Dating, as it is known today is a peculiar part of the American culture.

In the American culture scene, dating is part of a trial-and-error process. It can involve numerous false starts in the process of choice that will eventually result in the selection of a marriage partner. But in the dating process problems and situations will arise which will necessitate thought provoking decisions on the part of both parties. Physical or sexual problems can arise in the dating relationship. A relationship which increasingly focuses on the physical or sexual involvement can eventually have that involvement as an end in itself. Physical attraction and romantic love can become a dominant factor in the dating situation.

Dating is not a prerequisite to marriage. We must be aware of the dangers and tempting situations involved. In dating, it will be extremely difficult to refrain from physical contact which can lead to other sexual experiences. God has intended us to be holy. If the Christian wants to know how to depart himself from this, he should mould his character through active study of God's Word.

The Bible teaches that young men should treat girls as sisters, in all purity (1 Tim. 5:2). Both sexes should treat each other with honour, dignity and respect, as well as with reserve and restraint. God requires us to discipline our desires and thoughts so that we do not use them unwisely and out of His will.

In most Asian cultures, things are quite different. It can be said without any qualification, that in many Asian nations, if a believer wishes to retain his testimony and be useful to God, he should not date a person of the opposite sex even where marriage is intended. He should also as far as possible avoid going out anywhere alone with a member of the opposite sex – especially after dusk. Anyone familiar with Asian culture will immediately understand the reason for this. Believers should be

careful not to give any cause for scandal.” So in the matter of dating we should take into consideration, our ministry, our public testimony and our relationship with our own people.

If God gives a life partner with whom you have perfect harmony you can count it as one of your greatest blessings. Next to the salvation of your soul, the most important decision you have to make in life is that of choosing your life partner. Seek God’s will and guidance in this matter. Wait for His time. Only God’s arrangement will work in this matter. You ought to be praying about this matter regularly yourself. God may lead you to the person He has chosen for you, either directly or indirectly, through your parents or friends.

The Bible clearly commands us not to be “unequally yoked with unbelievers” (2 Cor.6:14). The Lord can never sanction the marriage of a believer with an unbeliever. If you are a child of God, you have no business in engaging in a marriage if the proposed partner is an unbeliever. (Thus making Satan your "spiritual" father-in-law!!) You may readily know the example of some believer whose unsaved partner was saved after marriage. God in His mercy and grace may do that. But the Word of God does not permit us to use this as a method of winning souls. We are to be governed by the clear teachings of God’s Word and not by the example of others.

God will honour your pure motives and sincere desires. Honour Him and His Word and He will honour you!

BEATING SEXUAL TEMPTATIONS

We live in a generation saturated and sunk, drenched and drugged with sex. Push-button sex is Satan's No.1 enticement for this "Me First" generation which says, "I want pleasure and I want it now!" A whopping 77% of the 1665 respondents to a popular magazine poll in 8 metro cities of Asia a few years ago, admitted that they longed for sexual temptations so that they could yield to them! Many popular figures admit openly to yield to such temptations. And even some of Christianity's star preachers are yielding to it. And so, why should I then be an exception?" asks that typical, tired, stumbling, Christ-believing youngster. Why is that? It's because sexual temptations are powerful, penetrative and almost permanent. So if you can't beat them, you think, "Let me join them." Well, you CAN beat them. Study of the Scripture shows seven ways to beat sexual temptations. "Win the battle against sex and you win the battle of your life. Lose it, then you lose the battle of your life," Let's start –

1. Flee the source!

Beating other types of temptation may require "resisting" (1 Pet 5: 9) while beating sexual temptations requires "running" – away from the source – be it a person, a situation or a place (2 Tim 2: 22). Joseph did it. And he won. He fled from the person – "he refused to even be with her" and then from the situation – "left his cloak... and ran out" (Gen. 39:10, 12). The young man of Proverbs 7 did not. And he lost. It was expected because "He was going... near her corner" (Prov. 7:8). King Solomon, a man who had seen it all, has some solid advice: "Do not go near the door of her house" (Prov. 5: 8). If your eyes keep zeroing into the object causing the temptation, like how David's telescopic eyes zeroed in on a bathing Bathsheba, be sure you've bought the ticket to disaster (2 Sam. 11: 23; Judg. 16: 1). Like how you'd look away when your eyes spot an electric welding arc, deliberately look away when your eyes spot a sexually seducing source. A man who plays the fool and stays at close quarters with sexually seducing sources still expecting to come out clean is like a wishful thinking fool who expects his clothes to be not burnt after having scooped fire on his lap (Prov. 6: 27).

2. Develop a Busy Lifestyle!

David lazily shrunk away from the job he was supposed to be doing – making war. So he ended up doing what he was not supposed to do – making love with another man's wife (2 Sam. 11:1- 2). On that catastrophic day he woke up in "the evening" (2 Sam. 11:2). I'd imagine he slept right through the morning and got up only in the evening. "The bed of sloth is often the bed of lust," wrote Matthew Henry, the great Bible commentator. When Amnon lazily shrunk into his bed even though he was perfectly alright, he ended up raping his half-sister (2 Sam. 13). The message is clear: laziness is a sure fire-ticket to sexual sin. Standing waters gather filth, haven't you noticed?

3. Take Drastic Measures!

When Jesus said "gouge" your eye which "causes you to sin", He advocated the use of drastic steps to check and curb the onslaught of sexual passions (Mt. 5: 28 – 39). Most Bible Teachers, when they check into any hotel give specific instructions to the hotel-owner to block all pornographic channels that go into the television in their hotel room. They understood Jesus' "gouge-your-eye" message right. Billy Graham once narrated an incident about how one of his associate evangelists staying alone in a Paris hotel locked himself in and threw the key out through the window when the temptation to go out and visit the strip-tease joints in Paris where no one would know him became almost unbearable. That evangelist too understood Jesus' "gouge-your-eye" message right. The Bible says that bulls with the habit of goring have to be kept penned up (Ex. 21: 29). "Believer bulls" who know that they have special weakness for "sexual goring" should "pen up" themselves with self-imposed drastic steps for beating sexual temptations.

4. Have an Accountability Friend!

“Two are better than one....if one falls down, his friend can help him up” (Eccl. 4:9-10). Thus wrote Solomon, I believe, because he missed an accountability friend in his life. His father had a Nathan who could look into the eyes and tell him, “You may be king, but you need to measure up,” when he fell into sexual sin. But Solomon had no such court-prophet-friend –someone who’d not only pat him on the back when he was on song, but also kick him on the butt when he went wrong.

Having a friend with whom you can share with confidence the struggles you face in beating sexual temptations – even the failures – and giving him the authority to check you will go a long way in helping you beat it. “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another” (Prov. 27: 17). I am really benefited in my life with the help of an accountability friend. It really works.

5. Flood your Mind with Scriptures!

From the famous warnings against the adulteresses in Proverbs we read this: “These commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light ...keeping you from the immoral woman” (Prov. 6:23- 24). Quote the Scriptures and you won’t court the devil when he brings those seductive temptations to you. Here is one “Bible Bomb” I drop when I encounter sexual temptations: “Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes” (Prov. 6: 25). Matthew 5: 28, Job 31:1 are the potential “bombs” to bust sexual traps. Then you can say with David, “I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You” (Ps. 119: 11).

6. Wait for your Time!

God told us never to lie, never to steal but never did He tell us, never to have sex. He only told us to wait for the right time – marriage. Just remember, you are not banned from sexual pleasure. Just remember a day is coming when you can have all of it – the day of your wedding. Believe me, that very thought would puncture the pressure which gigantically builds up as we set out to beat sexual temptations.

7. Divert your Energies!

Any red-blooded young man would have a copious quantum of sexual energy which, unless diverted for other nobler purposes, will definitely lead to the inevitable sexual sin. Blocking a furiously flowing river may be smart, but easing the pressure off the dam walls through diversion canals is brilliant, right? Ask David, he’ll give a diversion idea – “advance against a troop”, scale a wall” (Ps. 18: 29). Or ask the popular shoes ad fellows and soon would come this ready reply: “Move. Hit a ball. Climb a hill. Run a mile. Don’t sit there. Just do it!” I’m not kidding – when your sexual energies magnetically pull you to watch a blue movie, perhaps that’s time to diffuse that energy into the blue waters of the beach, swimming! Join an evangelistic outreach program. If “the glory of young men is their strength, “what can be more glorious than giving off our “best strength” to the Saviour, rather than to sinful pleasures (Prov. 20: 29; 5:9)?

Praise and Worship in a nutshell

A brief comparison between praise and worship:

Praise

Celebration
Vociferous
Warfare
What He has done
Receiving favour or things
God's command
Saw His act
Happiness
Thank you

Worship

Contemplation and Reflection
Stillness and Quietness
Wonder
Who He is
Giving Honor
Our willingness
Know Him
Holiness and Humility
I love You

The different postures of praise and worship:

A. The Laughing Mouth

"Our mouths were filled with laughter, and our tongues with songs of joy." Ps 126:2.

B. The Singing Mouth

"I was sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations." Ps 89:1

"Sing to Him, sing praise to Him; tell of all His wonderful acts." Ps 105:2

C. The Bent Knee

"Come let us bow in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Ps 95:6

D. The Bowed Head

"...Then they bowed down and worshipped the Lord with their faces to the ground." Neh. 8:2

E. The Clapping Hands

"Clap your hands, all you nations; shout to God with cries of joy." Ps. 47:1

F. The Shouting Voice

"Come let us sing for joy to the Lord; let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation." Ps. 95: 1.

"Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn – shout for joy before the Lord, the king." Ps. 98:4-6.

G. The Lifted Hands

"Let us lift up our hearts and our hands to God in heaven, and say...." Lamen. 3: 41.

"Hear my cry for mercy as I call to you for help, as I lift up my hands toward your Most Holy Place." Ps 28: 2.

"Lift up your hands in the sanctuary and praise the Lord." Ps 134:2.

H. The Grounded Face

"When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried,...." 1 Kings 18: 39.

"And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God,..." Rev. 11: 16 – 17.

I. The Uplifted Head

"Lift up your heads, O you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors...." Ps. 24:7

"I lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from?" Ps 121:1

J. The Dancing Body

"Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourine and dancing." Ex 15: 20.

"David, wearing a linen ephod, danced before the Lord with all his might,..." 2 Sam 6:13–14.

PRAISE AND WORSHIP

The words 'praise and worship' cover the whole of our response of love and appreciation to the Lord. They sum up our reason for living:-

This people I have formed for myself; they shall declare my praise (Is 43:21; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14 'to the praise of the glory of his grace').

The following bring out the difference in focus:

- We **thank Him** for what He has given to us.
- We **praise Him** for what He has done for us.
- We **worship Him** for who He is to us.

N.B. Worship = appreciating God because He is worthy to be praised. (Rev. 4:11; 15:12).

KEY : Jesus shed His blood to give us the privilege of worshipping the Father (Heb. 10:19-22).

Worship is what the Father is seeking!

Jesus said 'But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and Truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is a spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and Truth.' (John 4:23 – 24).

Notice that this teaches further:-

1. We worship the Father!
As His redeemed sons and daughters we 'love Him because He first loved us'.
2. We worship 'from our spirits'
i.e. (1) We must be born-again of the Holy Spirit to do this.
(2) We must be filled with the Holy Spirit to do this acceptably (Phil 3: 3).
(3) We can in worship especially use our God-given language to 'sing Spirit' (1 Cor. 14:15).
3. We worship from our hearts
 - (1) We worship 'in truth' – out of the reality of a life lived in fellowship with God the Father through Jesus His Son.
 - (2) We offer 'heart-felt' worship with our hearts in our mouth! (Matt 15:8-9).
We seek to express the 'melody in our hearts' (Eph. 5:19) and the joy that Jesus brings us. (Luke 1:46-47).
4. We worship with our understanding for we worship a God "we know" (John 4:22; Acts 17:22-23; 1 Cor. 14:15).
5. We worship from the will. We do not praise God because we feel like it but because He desires it. "I will bless the Lord at all times" (Ps. 34: 1).

HOW CAN WE PRAISE THE LORD TOGETHER

Key: Romans 15: 5- 6.

1. By singing

'Sing joyfully to the Lord' (Ps. 33:1)

'Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.....'(Eph. 5:19)

N.B. There is variety here:

Psalms = words sung from the Bible, especially the Psalms.

Hymns = compositions which especially exalt Jesus as Lord.

Spiritual Songs = original songs either prepared or spontaneous, inspired by the Holy Spirit which express our experience of the Lord.

Remember: 'He has put a new song in my mouth – Praise to our God'. (Ps. 40:3)

2. By lifting up hands

'Lift up your hands and bless the Lord'. (Ps. 134:2, Ps. 63:4).

N.B. This expresses either dependence on the Lord or victory in the Lord.

3. **By making music**

Praise him with the trumpet, lute and harp, timbrel, stringed instruments and flutes'. (Ps. 149:3)

4. **By dancing**

'Praise him with dance.' (Ps 150:3-4).

N.B. This is a symbol of a larger truth, that our whole lives –body, soul and spirit are given to the Lord in response to His love. 'Offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy acceptable to God.' (Rom 12:1).

5. **By our whole lifestyle**

'Do everything without complaining.....always giving thanks God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' (Phil. 2:14; Eph. 5:20; 1 Thess. 5:16-18)

6. **By being sensitive**

(a) Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit at all times.

This means we must pay attention to what is happening or being said. Watch for the "flow of worship", for the direction the meeting is taking. Be alert for the Holy Spirit to emphasise a certain theme or to call for a specific response.

(b) Be sensitive to the prompting to use gifts the Holy Spirit has given you, especially 'tongues and prophecy'. Remember 'tongues' is usually addressed to God as a form of praise, blessing, or prayer (1 Cor.14: 2, 15-16) and the 'interpretation of tongues' should reflect this God-ward direction. Seek to prophesy. At your major gatherings for worship and prayer sense whether your contribution is of sufficient weight to edify the whole church. If so, come to the front, check with a leader and use the '(a)'.

(c) Be sensitive to what other people are doing in worship.

We are worshipping together as one body, not as a collection of individuals. Don't get lost in your little world, oblivious of everyone else. Even while worshipping the Lord we are called to edify each other (1 Cor. 14:12). Seek to be of one heart and one mind so that we can worship with 'one voice' (Rom. 15:5-7).

(d) Be sensitive to those who are leading the meeting and guiding the worship. Follow their example and the directions they give. In this way we will truly worship together and maintain godly order (1 Cor. 14: 40).

(d) Be sensitive to the occasion.

Our public worship is perhaps the most important thing we do together. Your involvement should reflect this. We worship a Holy God, a loving Father. Show Him respect in worship, show Him your love; don't stand with hands in pocket, arms folded. Rather be actively involved. 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy acceptable of God, which is your reasonable service'. (Rom. 12:1)

KEY: Now you are saved, you have SOMEONE TO SHOUT ABOUT and SOMEONE TO SING ABOUT.

A BRIEF STUDY ON PRAISE AND WORSHIP

INTRODUCTION:

We talk a lot about praise and worship and worship services. But what does it really mean. Better still, what does God desire and want from us!

Foundation: John 4: 23 - 24.

3 principles of true worship:

- (1) Worship has to do with the kind of people we are, rather than the worship services we attend.
- (2) Worship is a spiritual exercise and can only be carried out by and in the Spirit.
- (3) Worship must be a meaningful expressing of the truth of God that is real to me in my own life.

God shows us a glimpse of His own heart. God is seeking and desiring, and searching out people. II Cor. 16:9 – God is seeking those whose heart is blameless towards Him.

God is concerned about our hearts. God seeks worshippers whose hearts are completely His, who are like David who was a man after God's heart.

NOTE: God is not seeking worship, but worshippers! He did not create us to perform a duty but to enjoy a personal intimate relationship with Him. God is looking for a people who are totally given over to Him, fully committed, totally devoted, who love Him, adore Him and serve Him with every fiber of their being. A worshipper is a lover-that's why God is concerned with our hearts and not just with our outward actions.

Let's look at the following scriptures:

Psalms 86: 12, "I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever."

Psalms 111:1, "I will extol the Lord with all my heart in the council of the upright and in the assembly."

Ephesians 5:19, "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord."

In Luke 6: 45 Jesus compares our hearts with a storehouse for treasure.

Our mouths speak whatever fills our hearts. A worshipper is someone whose mouth speaks from a heart filled with worship. How do we get a heart full of worship? By responding in love to the Lord's great love for us – Exodus 34:6 –7; Eph. 5: 25 – 27.

God the father is seeking worshippers, but what does He find in men's heart? Gen. 8: 21, Jer. 17: 9. Why did the human heart become foolish and darkened? Rom. 1:20 – 21. It failed to:

- a) Honour God as God;
- b) Give thanks to God.

That's why we have fallen short of the glory of God. Because we were made for God's glory, to be worshippers who would honour Him in glorious awareness of all that He is and give thanks to Him in deepest appreciation for all He has done. And see, how far we have fallen from our purpose and calling – Eph. 4: 17 – 19.

That's why the natural man is cut off from the life of God and therefore incapable of worshipping God.

Praise God! He didn't leave us like that but sent Jesus Christ to give us a new heart. Ezek. 36: 26 – 27; Jer. 31: 33; Heb. 8: 10.

Only through this work of the Holy Spirit in the new birth are our inmost desires brought in line with God's desires, because He has written His law in our minds and given us a heart to love and obey Him. That's truly the love of God who redeemed us; we who were once slaves of sin, and made us fit to be His worshippers. Oh, who can measure the depth and height and breadth of God's love – Psalm 40: 23. Glory to God He has lifted me up.

In I Peter 2: 9 – we are called a royal priesthood. Jesus is appointed King of kings and Lord of lords, but He is also a High Priest of a heavenly priesthood. Jesus was taken from among men so that He can represent men and appointed by God so that He is acceptable to God.

Why is this important for us?

Heb. 4: 15 – He is able to sympathise with us.

Heb. 7: 24- 25 – He is able at all times to save because He offered up Himself.

Heb. 7: 27- Praise God we have Jesus our perfect High Priest- Heb.8 : 1.

We, who have been born of the Spirit, are born into His family. We are from the same Father and therefore Jesus is not ashamed to call us brethren. (Heb. 2:11, Rom. 8: 29).

Under the new covenant we do not have a few special people to be our priests. We are ALL called to be priests to God.

Is. 61:6priests of the Lord.

Rev. 1:6.....Jesus made uspriests to His God.

Every single believer is a priest to God the Father. Each one of us has been taken from among men that we can represent men and appointed by God so we are acceptable to Him.

Heb.10: 19 – 22, says that with confidence enter the sanctuary through His blood.

We can come with confidence before God's throne of grace to offer up spiritual sacrifices – I Peter 2:5.

Heb. 13: 15 – A sacrifice of praise to God! Through Jesus we have been given constant ACCESS into the very presence of God's holiness, so we can always approach God and minister to Him in praise, worship and prayer with confidence and boldness.

NOTE: This is always and only through Jesus, His blood, His sacrifice; we can only approach God on this basis and not on the basis of anything that we are or have in ourselves. It is always through Jesus! John 14: 6.

Worship in Spirit

The Old Testament the old covenant provided a picture (in the outward forms) of spiritual realities, yet had in themselves no inner spiritual value what so ever (Heb. 8:5, 10:1, 11). The reality is found in the new covenant. The old was eternal and of the flesh, the new covenant is of the spirit and internal. The Spirit is the hallmark of the new covenant. Everything is of the Spirit and is accomplished by the Spirit. II Cor. 3: 6.

In the New Covenant worship is a spiritual exercise, Phil. 3: 3. Every act of worship or service to the Lord is to be done in dependence on the Holy Spirit. In the Old Testament to become a priest one had to be born in to the priestly family of Aaron by natural birth whereas in the New Testament the priesthood is open to those who are born of the Spirit. (John 3: 8; 1: 11).

Secondly, the Old Testament priest had to be anointed to his ministry, before he was able to minister to the Lord (Lev. 8: 12). In the New Testament, we all have an anointing, the Holy Spirit, given to us by God. I John 2: 20; II Cor. 1: 22; Titus 3: 4 – 6.

Even as the first believers were anointed with the Holy Spirit, Acts 2: 4, so we too need to be filled and baptised in the Holy Spirit to praise and worship God (Acts 2:11) in new tongues. In I Cor. 14: 15 Paul talks about singing with the spirit, which simply means: singing in tongues as a way of praising and worshipping the Lord. It allows our spirit to express love and praise and joy to the Lord without having to try and find the right words. Although we don't understand what we say or sing it edifies or builds up ourselves as well. (I Cor. 14:4). Of course, we have to maintain a balance, so we also sing with our minds. Songs and psalms give us suitable words with which we can praise God in our natural languages.

Although we might have been filled or baptised in the Holy Spirit, we need to be "go on being filled with the Holy Spirit", Eph. 5: 18. We need to be filled continually with Him and rekindle the gift of God which is in us (II Tim. 1: 6). We need frequent experiences of the Holy Spirit's power within us, we need a fresh touch of the Lord again and again. Like embers that need to be fanned

into flame or rekindled, so we are to stir up the Holy Spirit within us. Not that there is any reluctance on the Lord's part, but it is all too easy for us to neglect the glorious person who lives in the temple of our bodies (I Cor. 6: 19 – 20). We can grieve Him (Eph. 4: 30) and quench Him (1 Thes. 5: 19) through sin and neglect. We need to take time to cultivate our relationship with the Holy Spirit.

Worship in Truth

In Col. 3: 16 – 17 it is seen that praise and worship spring from a continual attitude of thanksgiving, of always in everything giving thanks. Note also the emphasis on the importance of the Word of Christ in relation to worship. In our hearts we need to make room for the Word of God to come and live. And who is the Word else but Jesus Christ Himself.

Therefore, when we sit down with the Word we are not coming to a book, but to a Person. The Lord is with us and in us, and He speaks the words we need right into our hearts and that's why we need to pray the scriptures through, this is how the Word of Christ comes to dwell inside us. As we communicate with the Lord through his Word we get to know Him personally better, our relationship grows deeper and we become increasingly confirmed to Him.

“Confess” is another important word in the Scripture. It means: to speak it openly. Not just of sins, but that Jesus Christ is Lord. (Phil. 2: 11). If we believe the truth in our hearts and confess it with our mouths, it becomes established in us. We are strengthened in the truth!

Our public worship, in order to be real, sincere and true, has to be consistent with our private /personal devotion to the Lord. It can only be a reflection! See here the need and self-discipline to seek Him daily in our personal devotional times or ‘Quiet time’. We need to establish a time with God daily where we sing to the Lord, pray and praise in tongues and express our love to Him. We can jump, shout, dance, kneel or whatever. Because if we can't do these things in private, our public worship will be just a show rather than a true expression of our heart and life with God!

Let's look for moment at David and how he started his days:

Psalm 59: 16- 17 ; Psalm 57: 7 –11; Psalm 71:8; Psalm 92: 1 – 4

Let's learn from this “man after God's heart”, and even when we don't feel like it, yet because He is worthy, begin our days by blessing, praising and glorifying our God. At the same time, take time to pray and commit your day unto the Lord (Prov. 16: 3), read a portion of Scripture and meditate upon it to be successful (Josh 1: 8). This time can also be used to be silent and wait upon the Lord, begin to listen to His voice, so we can know what to do and what to speak. (Is 50: 4). Do you take your daily walk with God seriously and is it your priority?

Because God is worthy He deserves our very best! Therefore, also when we go to a meeting, how do we go? Are we going to get something or to give something? We need to come prepared to give, to minister unto the Lord, to give to the Lord the glory due to His holy Name. We need to be changed in our patterns and thoughts. Do you give to God the best of your time, talents and resources? Are you truly a kingdom seeker under the Lordship of Christ? Malachi 1: 6 – 14.

TOWARDS A DEFINITION OF PRAISE AND WORSHIP

The words ‘praise and worship’ cover the whole of our response of love and appreciation to the Lord. They sum up the reason for living. Is. 43: 21; Eph. 1: 12. Therefore we should thank God for what He has given to us. We should praise God for what He has done for us. We should worship God for who He is to us. We need to cultivate and have a thankful heart to God who has done so much for us, so we can give thanks to Him and worship Him in spirit and truth.

WHAT IS PRAISE?

There are 7 Hebrew words used in the Old Testament and others in the New Testament to express the idea of praise e.g. bless, laud, magnify, glorify, exalt, giving thanks. These roughly fall into two categories:

1. **COMMENDATION**: Words that have the idea of speaking well of the Lord, of boasting, of telling how great and wonderful He is.
2. **APPRECIATION**: Words that express thankfulness or gratitude for who the Lord is but in particular for all that He does for us.
 - Acknowledging God for all He has done for us, Is. 25: 1
 - Exalting God, Ps. 34: 3; Ps. 99: 5
 - Honouring God, Dan. 4: 34 – 37
 - Magnifying God, Luke 1: 46; Acts 10 : 46
 - Marvelling at God, II Thess. 1: 10
 - Glorifying God, Rev. 15: 4; Ps. 29: 1

Why should we praise God?

- God is enthroned on the praises of His people, Ps. 22: 3.
- Nothing can praise God like man, Ps. 115: 17 – 18.
- Praise life up and rejoices in God's great deeds, both now and in the past, Ps. 98: 1.
- Praise proclaims God's greatness and majesty to the world, Ps. 66: 1 – 8.
- Praise releases God's blessing to us, Ps. 67: 5 – 7.
- Praise releases God's power, Ps. 149: 6 – 9.
- Praise is a sacrifice that pleases God, Ps. 107: 21 – 22; Heb. 13: 15 – 16.
- God is worthy to receive our praise, Rev. 5: 9 – 14.

From the scriptures we are exhorted and commanded to praise God. It is an act of the will – something we can choose to do or not. At times it may require a sacrifice from us, but we praise God because he is worthy not because we feel like it. So we praise Him whatever circumstances we're in and regardless temporary feelings. (spirit over mind and mind over feelings).

One of the most noticeable features of praise is the great variety of ways it may be expressed. Praise is essentially an outward expression, usually vocal as in 'telling', singing and shouting. It is often also physical with hand-raising, applauding, leaping and dancing. It's also emotional with rejoicing, delighting and exulting.

Scriptures: Ps. 34: 3; Ps. 47: 1, 6; Ps.81: 1; Ps.96:1; Ps. 98:4; Ps. 134: 2; Ps. 149:3. And together with worship Ps. 95: 6.

From the psalms we find that praise is often accompanied with different kinds of musical instrument. Let's look at some of these mentioned in: Ps. 81: 2 –3, Ps. 98: 5 – 6, Ps. 150: 3 –5.

WHAT IS WORSHIP?

Worship = Worth-ship = Appreciating God because He is worthy! (Rev. 4: 11; Rev. 5: 12). Often we find in the Scriptures the expression "Fell down and worshipped, e.g. Gen. 24: 48; Matt. 2: 11. The Hebrew words for worship mean: To bow down. And they also carry in their meaning the thought of a relationship, as between a dog and his master, i.e. adoring love. The most often used Greek word for worship means: to kiss the hand, to pay homage or reverence (Ps. 2: 11- 12).

So the Hebrew and Greek words used for worship actually paint a picture of falling down before the Lord, somewhat overwhelmed and kissing his feet in intimate adoration. This worship in action is beautifully illustrated in the story of the woman who poured perfume on Jesus' feet (Luke 7:36-50). In this event we see an expression of love springing from a deep awareness of forgiveness and acceptance.

Based on this, one has defined worship in the following way: “worship is to feel in the heart and to express in some appropriate manner, a, humbling, but delightful sense of admiring awe and astonished wonder”.

Worship is a response from the heart. As the Holy Spirit within us takes the things of Christ and reveals them to our heart, so we feel that humbling yet delightful sense of awesome wonder and overwhelming love. Such an experience is often beyond words to express. We may feel like kneeling before the Lord, or tears of love and joy may run down our cheeks as we revel in the incomparable grace of God towards us! These holy moments of revelation is the depth to which the Father is calling us in our worship!

Yet our worship of God is not limited to these moments of holy awe and wonder. We, as disciples of Jesus Christ, should live our whole life as worship unto God, i.e. our work, free time, study, family life, etc. should glorify God! Therefore, in one way, worship equals excellence!

True worship of God involves us giving 100% of our lives to Him, being totally available and totally obedient to Him. Worship of God is a life-style of bringing glory to God, I Cor. 10:31.

ESTABLISHING A DAILY PRAYER AND DEVOTIONAL TIME

Chapter 1 - Establishing A Devotional Habit

As we approach this important subject of establishing a daily devotional habit, that is-the need to spend time every day with Jesus in prayer, we must understand afresh the importance of prayer. We need to see how important it was to Jesus, to His disciples and to the early church.

A. PRAYER AND THE EARLY CHURCH

I would like to begin by looking at the early chapters in the Book of Acts. Here we find what the church of Jesus Christ was like as it was first formed. It began in this way.

1. Prayer Birthed The Early Church

After Jesus' resurrection, He left special instructions for the disciples. They were to wait (pray) in Jerusalem until they were endued (clothed) with power from on high as the Father had promised (Luke 24:49). Luke, the writer of the Book of Acts, tells us what happened next: "It was not long afterwards that Jesus rose into the sky and a cloud carried Him away so that the disciples could not see Him anymore" (Acts 1:9). The disciples were on the Mountain of Olives when this happened. They then walked the one kilometer back to Jerusalem, and met together in a second floor room. Here they held a prayer meeting that lasted for ten days. Some 120 people were there.

The Festival Day of Pentecost came ten days later. They were still praying together, when all at once there was a sound from Heaven like a powerful wind. It filled the house where they were seated....and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

Following a powerful sermon by Peter, some 3,000 people were saved. They joyfully joined with the other believers. Daily they were taught by the apostles and met together in each other's homes for fellowship, breaking bread and prayer (taken from Acts 1:1 – 2:42).

The Church was birthed from the womb of prayer. Ten days of prayer produced the Pentecost outpouring of the Holy Spirit – and most miraculously 3,000 new believers. The people of Pentecost were a people of daily prayer!

2. Prayer – A Powerful Force

Not only did the daily prayer life of the early Church produce their Pentecost, but it went on as a powerful force in the unusual days that followed: "Now Peter and John went into the Temple one afternoon for the three o'clock daily **prayer** meeting" (Acts 3:1).

You know the story – that when the lame man who sat at the Gate called Beautiful was healed! Through that miracle, the number of believers grew to 5,000.

The rulers were unhappy, however, and jailed both Peter and John. The next day they let them go, but warned them not to do any more preaching about Jesus. How did Peter and John respond to that threat? "They returned to their own group, and told them everything that had happened. When they heard their report, they all began to pray. "When they had finished praying, the place where they were gathered was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and went on boldly speaking the Word of God" (Acts 4:23, 24, 31).

Again in Acts 5:12 we read, "And the apostles did many wonderful miracles among the people. They regularly met in the Temple area known as Solomon's Hall." This was to have their times of prayer together.

Another interesting story is told in Acts 6:14. The leaders are facing a problem in their fellowship and they need a solution. Their answer is a wise and practical one. It allows the apostles the time they need to continue in "**prayer** and the ministry of the Word."

In Acts 7:55-60 we learn about Stephen, who was the first Christian to die for his faith. As he is brought to his knees by the stones of his enemies, he cries out in prayer. Heaven hears that **prayer**, and the Lord Jesus is seen standing at the right hand of God ready to receive his spirit.

The theme or topic of prayer continues in Acts 8:14-15, “When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. When they got there, **they prayed** for the new believers that they might receive the Holy Spirit.”

And in Acts 9:10-11 we read: “In Damascus there was a believer by the name of Ananias. The Lord showed him in a vision (dream) what He wanted him to see. He said ‘Ananias!’ And Ananias answered, ‘Yes, Lord; I am here.’ The Lord said, ‘Get up! Go over to Straight Street to Juda’s house and ask for a man from the city of Tarsus. His name is Saul. You will find him **praying** there.’

You will recall that Saul had just met Jesus on the road to Damascus. He had been brought to the ground, and blinded by the bright glory of God. His spiritual eyes, however, had been opened and he was wonderfully born again. Completely changed!

It is likely that Ananias was at prayer when he received his vision. At the same time Saul was also at **prayer**, because he didn’t know what to do. Those prayers were to have an effect that would reach down through history to our very day!

Yes, the people of Pentecost are a people of **prayer**. When they pray, the Holy Spirit moves in power. There is forgiveness, healing, miracles and guidance! They pray all the time, and everywhere, and God is there to do His will.

You might say the Book of Acts is a report of a very special prayer meeting. It began at Pentecost by God’s Spirit and never did stop. For the believers in the early Church, **prayer** was a daily practice. It was a habit as natural and important as breathing. Indeed, it was the breath of their new life in the Spirit!

B. DEVOTIONAL PRAYER – A DAILY HABIT

Now, it is this daily habit of devotional **prayer** that God was dealing with me about. He spoke directly and told me I had forgotten the discipline (regular practice) of daily devotions. I had allowed other things to crowd out my daily quiet times alone with Him.

I think of myself as a **prayer** and worship person. I know you do too. As a church leader, I will often lead in prayer in church meetings. I frequently pray with my people in small groups. I pray with individuals who come to me for spiritual help. There are times when God will move me into special sessions of intercessory prayer for people around the world and others. Throughout the day I often turn to God for counsel as needs arise.

Furthermore, I have taught on **prayer**. I have written and preached much on the subject. So, I am not a stranger to **prayer** in either understanding or practice. However, I did have a problem; my morning devotional **prayer** time was no longer a daily habit!

It wasn’t something that I suddenly stopped doing. Other things – even good things – just seemed to take over my time for daily private **prayer**.

As an example, for me it is much easier to read the Bible every day than it is to pray every day. I think most people find that true. Of course, the study of God’s Word is important, but the direction and correction I was receiving had to do with my **prayer** life. (People who pray more, also read more of God’s Word).

The Lord made it very clear that I needed to start a daily habit of personal prayer once again. It was a practice which I first began back in my early school days. Somehow, it had slipped to lesser place of importance in my day with God.

Now He was saying that I needed to learn it all over again. And I did! I went back to school with Jesus. I learned some precious lessons that I want to share with you – from my hearts to yours.

As a church leader, the Lord first required that I share my failure with my people. I told them that probably many, if not most of them didn’t have a time of daily devotions either. For some of them, their fault could be traced back to their church leader – who had not provided the example.

Then I told them how God had lovingly and wisely instructed me to renew my daily practice of morning **prayer**. I had willingly listened to God and obeyed.

Because I had renewed my own prayer life, I was ready to teach them truth that was fresh from God's heart to mine. And this is the purpose of our teaching time in our services at our church as well.

How Long Should I pray?

The first question that comes to most people's mind is how much time they should spend in morning prayer. I am going to tell you a rule right now. Don't set a specific time limit. You will defeat yourself right from the start. Prayer will become a task or heavy burden rather than a door into a loving relationship with your heavenly Father.

Set Aside A time For Prayer

We need to set aside a time to pray. If we are going to spend more time in prayer, it means we will spend less time doing something else. Therefore, we must decide what must be removed so that prayer can take its place. Most of us waste a certain amount of time in the evening with unnecessary things. For instance I had formed the habit of listening to a late evening news and weather report on the radio before going to bed. I decide to give that up. Everyone most likely has something they could cut back on in the evening to allow an earlier bedtime. Twenty-five to thirty minutes less at night means we can arise that much earlier in the morning. That is just the time that could be needed to start our practice of daily devotions.

Prayer: Fellowship with Jesus

It takes a certain amount of will power to get a habit started. Once the pattern is formed, it becomes a natural part of our life. We know and feel that something is missing when it is left out. We really miss being with the Lord in that personal and special way. It truly becomes a time of close companionship that is sweet and satisfying.

We know of course that to miss a time of daily devotion with the Lord does not mean the rest of the day is doomed for failure. Our basic trust is in the One to Whom we pray, not just our prayers. God is faithful to help us anytime we turn to Him. It is true, however, that some things might be avoided, and others more easily overcome when we have been fully prepared through our morning prayers. We also need to know that while our times of personal devotion are a blessing to us, they also bring great pleasure to the Lord. He really wants to be with us, and cares very much for us! What a privilege is ours to greet the Lord at the beginning of each new day, and to know He desires to be a part of every detail of our lives. May we daily honour His presence by our prayers.

CHAPTER 2 - Thanksgiving and Praise (Offering up yourself)

A. DAILY PURPOSE IN PRAISE

The Bible says in psalm 100: 4, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise." There are two basic reasons for which we can praise God:

- For Who He is – truth about God's nature and character.
- For what He has done – gifts, blessings, protection, answers to prayer etc.

1. Praise Him for Who He is

I can tell you something right now, dear one. Praising God every day for Who He is will change your life! You might begin by simply saying: "Lord, I praise You today because You are my Saviour. You have not only saved me from my sins of the past, but You are also my Saviour right now. I know You will save me from many things even today –from fears, doubts and angry words. I really thank You for being such a strong and faithful Saviour".

On the next day you can take another side of God's character and think about that. "Lord, I praise You because You are almighty. You are stronger than anything that might come my way today. I can be sure that You will protect and strengthen me no matter what may happen."

Then again you might want to thank the Lord for being the Truth: “Lord, I praise You for being so faithful and true. I can always trust the truth of Your Word– it will never fail. In Your truth is freedom, and I can walk in that wonderful liberty today.”

In this way you can continue to praise God for a different part or aspect of His nature every day. I have seen books which give a special name for Jesus for each day of the year. You could make up your own list for a week at a time. I can assure you praise and worship will become fresh and meaningful.

2. Praise Him for what He has done

Also praise the Lord for what He has done. There are some part blessings for which we just can’t thank the Lord enough. We keep thanking Him over and over again. That is wonderful to do, but also keep up to date. Pick out something special that God did in your life yesterday for which to praise Him. That will keep our prayer-and-praise life bright and fresh.

B. OFFER UP YOUR BODY TO THE LORD

Romans 12: 1 tells us to do that “Christian brothers, I ask you from my heart to give your bodies to God because of his loving-kindness to us. Let your bodies be a living and holy gift offered to Him.” He is pleased with this kind of gift. When you think of what God has done for you, is this too much to ask? This is the true and spiritual worship which he desires.

It is spiritual worship to offer our bodies to God. How do we offer our bodies? One way is to kneel down. If you can’t kneel, sit before the Lord with a humble heart. (They were all sitting, when the Spirit first came on the Day of Pentecost). It is good, however, to kneel when we can. In this way we show our desire to humbly submit and offer ourselves to God. It is more than just a religious form of ritual. It means we are bowing our hearts before the Lord.

There are many ways other ways to offer our body to the Lord. This morning I danced before the Lord. It was only for a short time, but I did it with a heart filled with praise and joy. The Scriptures also tell us to lift up our heads and our hands unto the Lord. “Clap your hands all you people, and shout to the Lord with a voice of victory” (Psalm 47: 1). It does not have to be the same act of praise every day. But do offer your body in some way to the Lord at the beginning of the day.

You will find it much easier to resist the claims of the world for your body if you do. Hands lifted to God in holy praise early in the morning will not so quickly give way to unholy acts of disobedience. When our bodies are not offered and submitted to God, we can suffer from all kinds of problems. Overeating, laziness and unholy sex are all body sins. Body praise is one way we can become strong in resisting the “world, the flesh and the devil.” Let us offer our bodies to God in praise every day!

C. SING A NEW SONG

Psalm 96: 1 says: “Sing unto the Lord a new song.” How is this possible? From Whom do we receive these new songs? It is from the Holy Spirit and His gifts.

Three ways of singing

Paul describes this “....I will sing with the spirit...” (1 Cor. 14: 15). Paul used the gifts of the Spirit to help him sing new songs. The following verses refer to three ways of singing to the Lord. “Speaking to yourselves in **a) Psalms** and **b) hymns** and **c) spiritual songs**, singing and making melody in your heart **to the Lord**” (Eph. 5: 19). “....teaching and admonishing one another in **a) Psalms** and **b) hymns** and **c) spiritual songs**, singing with grace in your hearts **to the Lord**” (Col 3: 16).

Most of us sing psalms and hymns. What are "spiritual songs"? These are "new songs" the Holy Spirit gives us. They are available to all Spirit-filled believers who will use the enabling provided by the Spirit.

Singing the Psalms

King David was the sweet singer of Israel. How did he begin each day? The answer can be found in the Psalms themselves: “Morning by morning I lay my needs and desires before You and wait with great hope and expectation” (Psalm 5: 3). “I will sing of your strength; in the morning I will sing of your love (Psalm 59: 16). “My heart is set, O God. My heart is set, therefore I will sing and give praise. Wake up, my soul! Wake up harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn” (Ps. 57: 7- 8).

How long will all of this take? May be three or four minutes at the beginning. But as our spirit is joined with His Spirit in joyful song, we will forget all about the time and wonder how it could have passed so quickly. Besides the Psalms, other Scripture-passages can be sung as well. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will give us our own tunes.

This is what Paul and Silas experienced in prison. “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God... And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were looses” (Act 16: 25- 26). What power there is in singing TO THE LORD.

We can be sure of one thing. Whatever effort we make in singing praise to our God will be a sweet sound to His ear.

D. WORSHIP IN THE SPIRIT

“But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeks such to worship Him” (John 4: 23). Ephesians 5:18 –19 says, “Be ever filled with the Spirit....sing and make music in your heart **to the Lord**.”

Our prayer and singing may be “in the Spirit” (1 Cor. 14: 14 – 16). Singing and praying in the spirit has a special meaning. It means to sing and pray in a tongue or languages which comes from the Holy Spirit.

The song or prayer is made up of sounds or speech which has not been learned. This language is not understood by the mind of the one praying or singing. Nor is it usually understood by someone nearby who may be listening. It is, however, understood by God because it is by His Spirit. “For he that speaks in an unknown tongue speaks not unto men, but unto God...” (1 Cor. 14: 2).

The Apostle Paul tells us (Rom. 8: 26, 27) that sometimes we don’t know how to pray or what to pray for as we should. However, the Holy Spirit can pray to God through us with sounds or languages we don’t understand. Paul assures us that such praying is always in line with the will of God.

Often after praying “in the Spirit,” we will begin to pray with our native or learned language in great power and wisdom. In 1 Corinthians 14: 14-16, Paul refers to this as prying with the “understanding” (or the interpretation of what we prayed in other tongues). Praying “in the Spirit” can be followed with “praying with the understanding”. Praying in tongues is a powerful tool and gracious gift of God’s Holy Spirit. It should be an important part of our daily devotional life.

Singing in the Spirit can have a similar purpose. Sometimes we just can’t put into words how much we love the Lord Jesus. Again the Holy Spirit helps us by giving sounds and songs of praise in a languages we don’t understand with our minds. We do know in our hearts that it is an overflow of love, joy and praise to God, and that we are being strengthened in our spirit (1 Cor. 14: 2, 4, 17, 18).

The above teaching explains how we can use the gifts of the Spirit in our private devotions. In our private devotions we can take great freedom. We will be built up, and the Lord will be pleased.

Paul is thankful to God that in his private devotions he prays in tongues (languages given by the Spirit) more than anyone else (1 Cor. 14: 18). What a powerful example for us to follow in our own daily life of devotion!

Chapter 3 - Confession And Cleansing (Offering up your heart)

A. INVITE A SEARCH

Along with our bodies we also need to offer our hearts to God. We should ask and invite the Lord to search our hearts. The Psalmist says it with these words: “Lord, search me and know my heart. Try (test) me and know my thoughts, and see if there are any evil way in me. Lead me in the way that last forever” (Psalm 139: 23 – 24). This is not the prayer of a man who at the time was in deep sin or great failure. David experienced such times. Psalm 51 is his prayer of repentance for adultery and murder (sometimes called “the sinner’s Psalm). But this was not the case when David wrote Psalm 139.

In the earliest verses of this Psalm, David speaks of God’s loving hand upon his life. He knows that the Lord is with him everywhere, and all the time. He knows that God made him in a wonderful way, and has a wonderful plan for his life. He goes on to say that the Lord’s promises of blessing to him are like the sands of the sea in number. He is aware of God’s great love, which is very precious to him in every way. This Psalm is a picture of a man who is living in fellowship with God. Yet, he is asking God to search his heart, and try his thoughts for some inner evil that he might not know about. This Psalm tells us in the opening verses that God knows us better than we know ourselves. How wise it is to invite His search; to let Him point out any danger areas in our lives that might bring hurt or harm to ourselves or others.

When I was a boy, my dad would give me a list of things that I was to do every Saturday. It was a hard work, and usually took four hours or more to finish. Then I could spend the rest of the day playing. When dad would come home in the evening, he would take the list and look around to see if everything had been done right. Sometimes he would point out some hidden corner which had not been swept perfectly clean. I would take a little hand brush and finish the job properly right there and then.

Now my dad was not putting me down in some unkind way. He was just helping me to learn how to do a job right the first time. When I would get the job done, he was always ready to say: “That’s good work, son.” As you might know, next week when I would sweep the floor I would remember all the “hidden corners” – places I had not seen before. It is possible for all of us to have “hidden corners” in our hearts that need to be swept clean. I don’t say this unkindly, but there are many people who are caught up in sinful habits that they have little awareness of. They will eventually reap what they sow. The results of their sin will bring the harvest of pain and punishment in time. Then they will wonder, “Why did this happen to me?”

Church leaders spend many hours trying to help people with personal problems resulting from hidden sins. They are thinking, saying and doing wrong things and don’t even know it. Very few people come and say, “I just decided I was going to turn my back on God, and live a sinful life.” Most of the time they come hurt and wounded on the inside because they don’t know how to walk with Jesus, or hear His voice. If we ask the Lord to show us our hidden sins, He will speak to us, and help us to sweep every little corner of our lives bright and clean.

As we listen for His voice, and seek to obey His word, we will learn to walk close by His side every day. Then as the night draws near, we too can hear Him say: “That was a good job, son, I am really proud of you.” And that is worth it all!

B. DON’T BE DECEIVED

Deception is believing something is right when it is wrong. 1 John 1:7-10 tells us that as we walk in the light of God’s love and truth, the blood of Jesus keeps on cleansing us from all sin. It also says, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.” This same beautiful Scripture goes on to say, “But if we confess (tell God) our sin, He is faithful to forgive and cleanse us.”

Three Areas For Deception

From this we see there are three possible areas for deception:

- We have no sin. Thinking we have no sin for which to be forgiven.

- We don't need to confess. Thinking if we do sin, God will either overlook it, or forgive us even if we don't face it or tell Him about it.
- We won't be forgiven. Thinking we cannot, or will not be forgiven even when we confess our sin.

Deception Spoils Fellowship

If we are deceived in any one of the three areas, our fellowship (walk and talk with God) will be spoiled. We will find it hard to **pray**, praise or worship the Lord. God's Word won't bring the joy and peace it once did. It will be hard for us to look full into the face of our Lord. We may try to act like everything is all right, but deep on the inside we know something is wrong.

Hurting Hearts. Those who believe they never sin at all, keep having problems caused by their sin. But they don't know why they have them – or why their heart still hurts.

Hardened Hearts. Those who sin but feel they don't have to tell God, because He forgives them anyway, can become hard of heart. After a while they don't even hear the Lord trying to warn them. To walk so far away from God is very dangerous.

Was this the problem of the Pharisees?

“And (some) of the Pharisees...said unto Him, Are we blind also? Jesus said unto them, if you were blind, you should have no sin; but now you (falsely) say, We see; therefore your sin remains” (John 9: 40-41). The Pharisees were deceived and did not know it. Therefore their sin remained.

Heavy Hearts. Those who feel that even though they tell God their sins, He will not really forgive and forget, will always have a heavy heart. They ever walk under a dark cloud of guilt and condemnation.

How good it is to be open and honest and say that sometimes we do fall or fail. God is ever ready, however, to forgive, restore and strengthen us. He also wants to teach us how to walk above the call and fall of sin. The way to live beyond sin is to come to Him before we sin. It is easier to come to Him beforehand rather than afterwards.

Be Sensitive To The Spirit

In our morning devotion we can tell the Lord that we have no desire to be deceived during the day. We really want to walk in the light of His love and truth. We want to know and feel His presence with us all the time. In this way we can serve and obey Him with gladness of heart. We should ask God daily to make us very sensitive to His Holy Spirit. For He can warn us when we are in danger. He will also let us know very quickly if we sin against His love or truth.

I think we all understand that if we fail God during the day, we don't lose our salvation. The littlest sin, however, can quickly spoil our **fellowship** (our walk and talk with God). We then want to be always ready to ask Him for His forgiveness, because we do not want our fellowship with Him to be broken. We want to please the Lord Jesus in all things, and grieve Him in none!

C. SET A GUARD OVER YOUR MIND AND MOUTH

David wrote, “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation (thoughts) of my heart be pleasing in your eyes, Oh Lord, my Strength and Redeemer” (Ps. 19:14).

Someone has said that while we can't keep the birds from flying overhead, we can keep them from building a nest in our hair!

Guarding Your Mind

Three main sources of thoughts

Thoughts and temptations can come to our minds from many different places. In fact, there are three main sources:

- The World – from what we see and hear.
- The Flesh – from our old sinful nature.
- The Devil – from the spirit world.

However, just because a thought comes to our mind doesn't mean we have to dwell on it. Unholy thoughts unchallenged – will lead to unholy words and deeds. We need therefore to cut them off short, and replace them with holy thoughts.

Make Jesus Lord of your mind

We can begin the day by asking God to keep our minds. When a wrong thought arises, He will then quickly let us know. One easy way to stop it short is to say, “Lord Jesus, you see that thought too, and we are not going to give it any more time or attention, are we?” Talking to Jesus has great stopping power. Our flesh hears it. The spirit world hears it. This keeps us from carrying the thought on, or coming under a false sense of guilt or condemnation. Every Christian will have wrong thoughts at one time or another, but Jesus can be the Lord of our minds as well as our hearts.

Guarding Your Mouth

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue...” (Prov. 18:21)

- Words are powerful!

We also want to watch our words. Words have feeling and meaning, and are very powerful for good or evil. They can hurt or heal. They can bring joy or sadness. They can build up or tear down. They can minister love or fear – life or death! Sometimes words may have little effect other than to waste time. “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgement” (Matt. 12:36). Time is life, and to waste one is to waste the other.

- Know when to speak!

We have all had the Lord warn us about our words at one time or another. May be we were about to speak, but the Lord said, “Don't say it; it is not needed right now.” May be we didn't know at the time how important it was to keep the words to ourselves. But God did! (Ps. 141: 3). Other times the Lord might tell us to speak out. He has set something in our hearts from His heart, and He wants His people to hear the word. That is the time to speak out in faith. Words from the Lord will always bring life!

Beginning each day by talking with God will help us to hear His voice throughout the rest of the day. This is an important reason for developing the habit of daily devotions.

D. KEEP THE GOAL IN VIEW

The apostle Paul speaks of this in Philippians 3:13-14, “No, dear brothers, I am not all that I should be yet. But I do one thing. I forget everything that is behind me, and look forward to that which is ahead of me. My eyes are on the goal. I press on to win the race and get the prize. That is the purpose for which God is calling us to heaven in Christ Jesus.” This is a very special verse to me. In fact, I have taken it as my life verse. There is a reason this part of God's Word is so important to me. Let me tell you the story that is behind it. When I was fourteen years old, I was listening to a woman preacher. She was an evangelist who had come to preach in our church. One night when she was preaching, she told how she had come very close to death's door. She and some other people were in a dry riverbed when an unexpected flood of water came rushing down upon them. They joined their hands together in prayer and stood against the force of the oncoming water. By “pressing against” the power of the rushing river, they were able to stand together, and finally move on to a place of safety. She told the story to help us understand the words Paul used in “pressing on” to reach God for our lives. I was deeply moved in my heart that night. I told the Lord: “That is the kind of person I want to be. I want to always ‘press on’ and win the very best that you have for my life in Christ.” That still is my long – range goal and life purpose in the Lord. Long – range goals are reached by completing a series of daily short – range goals. Everyday in God's plan for our lives there is a number of little goals to be reached. These are little “jobs” He wants us to do.

During our morning prayers God will bring several things to our mind that will be part of His plan for the day. (We will discuss this in more detail in our next section.) These are little jobs He wants us to do. When we complete these little tasks in faith and obedience, we will have “pressed on” toward God's greater, long – range goal for our lives.

Every morning during our devotional time, we should give both our lives and the day back to God. We should pray that we “press on” no matter what may come against us. We will not give up in our effort to do God’s will. We can reach our goals in God. We will win our heavenly prize.

Chapter 4 - Order And Obedience (Offering up your day)

A. SURRENDER YOUR DAY TO GOD

“Commit your way unto the Lord. Trust also in him, and He will bring it to pass...Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him to act” (Ps. 37:5, 7). The two little words, “commit” and “rest,” are of great importance. They form the divine doorway through which you pass into your daily walk with the Lord.

By “committing” the things to God which we are powerless to change and “resting” in the sure knowledge that... He will work all things together for our good” (Rom. 8: 28), we bring divine order to each day. We should not shout orders to God. Come before the Lord each day and say “Jesus, I want to talk to You about today.” Then you tell Him what you are concerned about. Describe your day to Him point by point – people, places, events, decisions etc.

There are always things that come our way that we don’t expect. That is why we never seem to get everything done that we have planned. Some days, nothing we planned to accomplish gets done. Then we can feel very frustrated or defeated and upset. Fruitless days can be very discouraging. I have discovered that with the passage of time, what I thought were “fruitless” days have turned out to be more “fruitful” than I first thought.

It is encouraging to remember that God is never caught off guard by the “unexpected.” Our plans and purposes may fail, but never His. Nothing will ever be a total waste or loss if we give our life and day back to the Lord every morning. There are days when I have missed my early morning devotional time with God. I failed to order my day before Him. I have been in such a hurry to get going in my work for the Lord that I didn’t take the time to wait upon the Lord of the work.

Usually on such days, by about 10.30 or 11.00 a.m., my day had become very confused. My head feels and sounds like a busy hive of bees with all kinds of things buzzing in and out. Have you had days like that? I can run into some very thorny and difficult things by 11.00 o’clock in the morning, whether I have prayed or not. To have been prepared by prayer provides real spiritual strength.

To have ordered the day before God gives one the faith that He will wisely guide as in the unexpected problems that arise. It makes a great difference in the day-a very great difference!

I am grateful that God’s Throne of Grace is truly one of grace and not of judgement. I am so glad we can readily come to Him even in our failures, and He is ready to forgive and restore.

There are times in the rush and confusion of a prayerless and unordered day that I have dropped to my knees and cried out of God’s help and wisdom. To my joy I discovered that although I had failed to wait upon Him, He was still waiting upon me. It is never too late to pray but we can spare ourselves and others a lot of grief by doing it early in the morning. That is the time to “commit” our day unto the Lord – then we can “rest” in Him.

B. SHOW CHILD-LIKE NEED

“In all your ways look to Him, and He will direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes. Fear the Lord and depart from evil” (Prov. 3: 6- 7). I want you to know how important it is to maintain a childlike dependence on God. As a child needs a father, so we need God. We are totally dependent upon Him. We need Him very much every day.

I have preached the gospel over forty years. But I want to tell you something. Sunday morning when I was praying, I earnestly said: “Father God, this is your boy, I am coming to You as Your child because I need your help today. I don’t want to just follow a familiar religious form in our

Sunday service at church. I want to lead your people into true spiritual worship. Father, I refuse to be 'wise in my own eyes.' To be "wise in your own eyes" means to be proud and arrogant – to feel confident in ourselves – that we can do things without God's help. And, as far as the form or pattern of the church service is concerned, that may be true. However, one can conduct a church service without the people meeting or encountering God. The success of a meeting is dependent upon the power of God's Spirit. We must ever and in all ways rely upon Him. This is the simple child-like dependence that we must maintain. Let us join David in his prayer: "Bow down your ear, O Lord, hear me, for I am poor and needy" (Ps. 86:1).

C. ASK FOR SPECIFIC GUIDANCE

"Show me your ways, Oh Lord: teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation. On You do I wait all the day long" (Ps. 25: 4- 5). I order my day before the Lord by saying, "Father, all throughout this day I will be looking to You. Show me Your ways. Teach me Your paths." I specifically ask God to guide me on many different matters. Then as I come to those points during the course of the day, I again turn to Him and say, "Help me here, Lord." In this way I establish a reference point in the morning to which I can relate throughout the day.

Recently, I was just about to say something when I felt a little check or brake in my spirit as if God's Spirit was saying, "Don't say that!" My remark was not ugly or untrue: It was just unnecessary. I felt like arguing with God: "I know is not necessary, but I want to say it anyway. It is not going to hurt anything." God simply replied, "Don't say it. Just don't!"

Sometimes we overlook or fail to obey God's little stop-sign, and speak anyway. What we thought was a harmless word becomes a very painful experience for someone. Then we are so sorry we didn't heed the warning signal the Holy Spirit set in our heart. Even if it seems that our remark caused no harm, we feel a little said that we went ahead anyway, just to satisfy our compulsion to talk. In this case, I did keep my words to myself, and felt the approval of the Holy Spirit. It is a good feeling to know that our attitude and action was pleasing to the Lord. The point I want you to get is this: my ability to exercise self-control came from my morning prayer time. I had ordered my day before the Lord, and had prayed, "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight" (Ps 19: 14). If we ask the Lord for specific guidance at the beginning of the day. He will faithfully direct us in all the details that will come our way all day long.

D. OBEY INSTRUCTION

Jesus clearly tells us that our heavenly Father will supply our needs: "Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them... Look at the lilies in the field, they do not labour or spin, yet even Solomon in all of his glory was not dressed like one of them...If God clothes the grass of the field....shall he not clothe you? For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things" (Matt. 6: 26-32).

We don't need to worry about what we will eat or wear. Just as our heavenly Father cares and provides for the little birds and the lilies of the field, even more, He cares and will provide for us. But do we just sit and passively wait for His provision? Or is there something we are required to do in order to enjoy His supply? The Scripture answers these questions. God is not going to fulfill these promises without our doing what He requires.

The Bible says, "Ask and it will be given to you..... Pray therefore....Give us this day our daily bread (food)...." (Luke 11:9; Matt 6:9, 11). This is the simple thing God requires, "Ask and you will receive." Don't worry, but do ask! Is God saying that if we don't pray we won't receive? Yes! James says, "...You have not because you ask not" (Jas. 4: 2)

Salvation is a good example. It is for all, and it is forever – but only those who ask, receive it. We receive the gift of eternal life when we ask Jesus to come into our hearts and become our Lord and Saviour. But we must ask. The same truth applies to our daily affairs and needs. We must ask God for our "daily bread." This refers to our material or bodily needs and our spiritual needs as well.

Jesus said, "...My meat (food) is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work" (John 4: 34). What does this mean? Just as the hunger of the body can only be met by eating a meal, the hunger of the heart and soul can be met by doing the will of God. We can only do God's will by knowing His will.

Our Father has a daily plan and purpose for our lives which we discover each day in our devotions. His will is to become the "daily bread" for which we pray. The key to knowing God's will is to ask for it – and ask for it every day. That doesn't mean He will reveal every detail of your day before it happens. It does mean that when the day comes to a close. His purpose for your life will have been completed for that day – IF you asked for His will before the day's activities began.

It may not have been your will, but it will have been His. God will work everything together for His good purpose in Christ Jesus. His will for us is to become like His Son. Nothing will be lost, nothing will be wasted (Rom. 8: 28- 29).

You may not even realise what detail of God's good purpose were fulfilled in a given day. It may have looked like one of those "fruitless" days that we talked about earlier. But give God some time to bring forth the harvest. It may take a week, or a year – or even a lifetime. However, there will come a day when we all can say, "Jesus led me all the way."

Give each day back to God with your life. Order each day before Him. Joyfully ask God for the daily bread of His will for you – and be at peace!

Chapter 5 - Intercession in Reaching The World For Jesus

A. MODEL CHURCH FOR PRAYER AND MISSION

We find an outstanding church in the Book of Acts. It was both a praying church and a mission-minded church, and therefore is of special interest to us.

It was located in the city of Antioch on the northern coast of Syria. It was the first Gentile church, and some noted leaders in early Christianity were among its members. Luke tells us something about its special character and ministry: "There were prophets and teachers in the church at Antioch: Barnabas.... Simeon.... Lucius.....Manaen and Saul. While they were praying, fasting and worshiping the Lord, the Holy Spirit said: 'Set apart from me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' After they fasted and prayed, they laid hands on them and sent them away" (Acts 12:1-3). These three verses hold six ideas that will help us understand the kind of people God uses in reaching out to the world:

- (1) They were a people of the Word.

From the list of prophets and teachers given in verse one, we know they were a people who were taught and grounded in the Word of God.

- (2) They were a people of worship.

It was their practice to "minister unto the Lord". By their worship they welcomed God into their everyday world. His holy presence in their midst was the source of their spiritual life.

- (3) They were a people who know the discipline of fasting

In this they brought in the soulish-sensual part of their beings under the control of the Holy Spirit. Fasting is one way of saying, "I am a spirit-being before I am a physical being."

- (4) They were a people who heard and obeyed the voice of the Holy Spirit.

They were in tune with His presence, and sought His direction for their lives and that of the Church.

- (5) They were a people of prayer.

The second reference to prayer and fasting shows that they knew spiritual warfare would be an important part of their missionary ministry. Their missionaries would be backed up with the battle-power of a praying people.

- (6) They were a people committed to their missionaries.

When they laid hands on them, they linked their lives to those who were being sent out. They would continue to support them in every way possible. Their missionaries would not be forgotten. This description of the church at Antioch gives us a practical introduction from Scripture to the whole subject of intercessory prayer.

We will develop the theme of intercession by considering a number of its different aspects. We will also learn how to break down our responsibility for world-wide prayer into parts which we can manage without being overwhelmed. If we feel a task is too great, there is always the danger we won't even begin.

God wants us to share in the same excitement and joy which the church at Antioch felt when Paul and Barnabas returned and told of the many ways in which their prayers had been answered. Answered prayer is a rich reward for faith and obedience.

B. PRAYER PROBLEMS

Praying for the nations is different from the kinds of prayer we have discussed thus far in our study. The number of countries and extent of their needs requires an approach which is beyond the scope of our daily prayer routine.

Wrong ideas about prayer

Many Christians find it hard to believe that their "little" prayers could really make a difference in the course of international affairs. It is almost beyond their range of reason. Much of this kind of thinking comes from weak and wrong ideas about the nature and practice of prayer. Prayer is not just a good feeling or noble attitude. It is not some vague kind of influence that floats around and hopefully somewhere might do somebody some good. Prayer is the part we play in focusing God's purpose and power upon a specific point of need. God has given us the privilege and responsibility of working out His will on earth as it is in Heaven. He promises to back up our prayers of faith with His power and authority.

Doubts and Discouragement

Without Him we cannot; but without us, He will not!

Because prayer releases God's power, the devil doesn't want us to pray, and will discourage us in any way he can. He wants us to feel our prayers are too short, too weak or too little to have any real effect upon matters so large and far away as foreign affairs. Furthermore, many people have a fatalistic view about the actions and reactions of foreign nations. They believe nothing can be said or done that will make any difference. "What will be, will be." This lying doubt of the devil may be hard to lay aside because we don't always have quick and ready answers as we pray for the nations.

When we pray about daily matters close at hand we often see answers rather rapidly. This builds and encourages our faith. However, the mixed-up matters of the world may require longer periods of time before evidence of God's divine purpose is forthcoming. Even then, much can happen without our notice because we are so far away from the scene. Furthermore, God's ways are not always our ways. Divine process and plan are often beyond our limited scope of understanding.

Paul tells us that even the Old Testament prophets didn't fully foresee the mystery of the Church. The idea that Jews and Gentiles were to become one Body in Christ Jesus was totally outside their circle of thought. Some events in Jewish history must have been very difficult to understand without that revelation. Only in God's time did His purpose become clear.

The principle still applies to us today. God answers our prayers in His way and in His time. Sometimes we know, but sometimes we don't. What we do know is that He has promised to answer our prayers when we pray in faith and obedience.

Wrong Motives

Wrong motives can be another source of difficulty in intercessory prayer. If we are praying only out of a legalistic sense of duty, our effort will soon become a lifeless burden. True intercession must come from a heart and mind which is motivated and directed by the Holy Spirit.

Wrong methods can also defeat our desires for prayer. Our enemy would push us to one extreme or another. If he can't keep us from praying, he wants our prayers to be so vague and general we wouldn't know if God answered them or not. "God bless our family, our nation, the world" isn't really very satisfying to us or to God. That is because faith always seeks to find a focus. With specific prayer comes a sense of definite expectation. In the other extreme, long lists of specific needs without divine direction or even of "vain repetitions" in prayer – many words with little purpose or power (Matt 6:7).

When our motives or methods are wrong, we quickly become discouraged and give up. We are then left feeling both guilty and helpless. We just don't know what to do.

For these reasons we will want to spend some time of both the purpose and practice of intercessory prayer. We need to know what real intercession is, and how it works in a personal and practical way.

C. INTERCESSION DEFINED

I now want to give you a simple definition of intercession. Later on we will discuss the concept of intercessory prayer in greater detail.

Intercession may be defined as: **"praying on behalf of others, under the power and direction of the Holy Spirit, knowing there will be divine results."** The above statement can be divided into three parts. We shall consider them one at a time.

Praying on behalf of others – Intercession means praying for somebody besides yourself. Now the "somebody" may be a person who is near and dear to you. You care very much about his (or her) present welfare, and his eternal well being. So you earnestly and urgently pray for him.

The "somebody" may be someone you don't even know personally – someone who lives in a far, foreign country. May be the "somebody" is a missionary in that country. It could even be the "country" itself. The basic idea in intercession is that it is a prayer on behalf of someone else.

With the power and direction of the Holy Spirit – Intercession is prayer with the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul tells us the Holy Spirit is ready to help us when we don't know exactly how or for what to pray (Rom. 8:26-27).

Many matters are far beyond our understanding. At such times it is a comfort to know we have a Helper who will direct our prayers according to God's will. The Holy Spirit will not only direct our prayers, but will also "prompt" our prayers. There are times when God will bring certain people to our mind. We should take such thoughts and impressions seriously. It is the voice of the Spirit saying, "Pray for this person, and pray for him now" This is your divine call to intercession. Don't put it off. We see, therefore, that in intercession the Holy Spirit tells when, how and for whom to pray. That is God's part. Our part is to obey and pray.

Knowing there will be divine results - Intercession makes a difference. Prayer changes things. Intercessory prayer is the cause that produces the effect. There is a divine result to prayer that can come in no other way.

The idea that prayer can really make a difference in our lives and in our world is totally against the natural mind of man. Many pagan religions teach that we are helpless, hopeless victims of our circumstances. This idea that carries over to the world at large with even deeper and darker feelings. Fate is fixed, the future is set and there is nothing we can do about it. We can only submit to world affairs as they are, for they cannot be changed. One cannot fight against a destiny that has already been determined.

Jesus taught exactly the opposite. His life, death and resurrection proved that this world can be redeemed. It can be brought back into God's original plan and purpose. All is not lost. We are not doomed to die, but destined to live. When Christ came to this earth, He exposed the lie of the devil, and called us to a life of faith, hope and love.

Furthermore, He gave to us the right to pray as He did. His prayers were life changing and earth shaking in their effect. This world will never be the same. But first, Jesus had to step in, Jesus had

to take a stand and expose the Man of Darkness, and the darkness that was in man. Jesus took that step and made that stand. And so must we!

D. INTERCESSION AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

The Spiritual Forces Involved

When we oppose the devil, we will be involved in a spiritual battle. For us to win it is necessary for us to know what spiritual forces are at work. There are three:

- The Spirit of Darkness
- The Spirit of Man
- The Spirit of God

Man's Relation To Spiritual Forces:

- Man subject to the power of Satan

The Spirit of darkness is headed up by Satan, the devil. We are not dealing with a funny little idea. We are dealing with a cruel and clever personality who is opposed to God and God's purpose. Since God created man with holy purpose in mind, it is not surprising that man would become the object of Satan's attack. Satan hates everything that reveals anything of God's divine image or plan. For that reason, the devil deceived Eve and caused Adam to fall from the position of godly character and authority which had been given him. Since that time, not only has man been subject to the power of Satan, but also to the rule of his own fallen nature.

- Man subject to the power of the flesh

The soulish- sensual part of man – the will, mind, emotions and senses of man apart from God's Spirit – is referred to in Scriptures as "the flesh". There is enough ungodly energy in "the flesh" to spoil our lives even without the direct help of the devil. We can do it all on our own!

Man at his best is doomed for decay apart from God. Even his finest earthly achievements finally crumble into dust. Both the spirit of darkness and man's own sinful nature are driving him in but one direction – death and decay. It is a rather dark and dismal picture if it were not for one bright beam of glorious light – the Lord Jesus Christ.

- Man rules through the power of the Holy Spirit

Into this dark world He came, and introduced the gracious gift of God's Holy Spirit. In the power of that life giving Spirit, man is once again able to rule over the dark forces of death and decay. When we submit to Jesus Christ as the Lord of our lives, we come under His authority. In the power of that authority we can oppose the evil forces of the world, the flesh and the devil.

Jesus Christ has set us free, that we might act as His agents and bring that same freedom to the lives of others. He has redeemed us – bought and brought us back into His divine purpose – that we might become ministers of His redeeming grace throughout the whole world.

Intercession: A Powerful Weapon

We fulfill this divine calling in two ways – through prayer and ministry – and in that order. Intercessory prayer prepares the way and clears the air for effective ministry. It breaks the power of the devil's lies which darken the hearts and minds of men. Prayer also supports the missionaries – God's sent ones – who will carry the good news of the gospel throughout the world. They can then touch, love, serve, give, help and minister the life of the living God in the full power and authority of His Holy Spirit.

A successful church is a fellowship of believers who are given to prayer and committed to ministry. And so it was in the church at Antioch. They had been taught in the ways of God and sought to obey His Word and wait upon Him. As they did, God said, "I am going to change the world around you, and I am going to use you to do it." They realised that change would involve fasting and prayer and the sending forth of missionaries. They obeyed. And the world was changed. The course of history turned on the basis of that prayer meeting in Antioch of Syria, 2000 years ago. The flow of the gospel westward, which lifted Europe out of pagan darkness, plague, poverty and despair can be traced to that time of intercessory prayer.

People of prayer can actually change the course of human history as they seek the mind of God and become obedient to his will. So often our salvation is only seen as an escape from a wicked world which is doomed for destruction. God wants to reach the world with His love and grace just as He has reached us. He can only do it, however, through believers who will pray and obey – and by this, make room for him to work.

E. THREE IMPORTANT CONCEPTS IN INTERCESSION

I would now like to enlarge our definition of intercession with three different words that the Lord gave me. These three words have a very special meaning. They are as follow: intervention, intersection and interception. We will take them one at a time.

Intervention

To “intervene” means: to step into a situation with divine purpose in view. Jesus stepped into our world that we might know and experience God’s redemptive purpose for mankind. He had the power and authority to do that. And by doing it, He put the powers of darkness under His feet (Matt 28:18).

He now sends us into the very same world with the same authority: “As the Father has sent me, so send I you... Behold I have given you authority and power to step upon the serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you in any way” (John 20:21; Luke 10:19). Jesus is saying, “You are members of my Body. If these evil things are to be kept under foot, you need to step in. When you see the evil forces of the world, the flesh and the devil at work, you have the authority to intervene. Don’t just let it go.” You say, “But what can we do?” PRAY! Many might respond, “We have prayed, but what can we do now?” Pray! – then OBEY! Intercession is the ground form which divine direction comes. At Antioch, you recall, they fasted, prayed, heard the voice of the Spirit, and obeyed. After they spoke to God, He spoke to them. People who keep asking what to do may need to check the quality and depth of their prayer life.

Intersection

An intersection is the place where two roads meet and cross each other. Sometimes we call it a cross - roads. God will bring all kinds of people, places, and events with their needs and problems “across” our paths. When we bring the victory and power of Christ’s cross into such meeting – places, they truly become divine “cross – roads.” On the cross, Jesus Christ broke all the powers of the world, the flesh and the devil. It was a total triumph – a complete victory! However, the power of the cross must be personally focused on the cross – roads of world need. Prayer is what focuses the power of Christ’s cross on to the problem places of our earth.

Christ has done all that is needed for the world to be saved. Now we must do our part. The principle is clearly seen in the plan of salvation. God so loved the world that He sent His Son to die on the cross for our sins. That was His part. Our part is to come to God in prayer and confess both our sin and the saving work of God’s Son. The power of the cross will never touch our lives or our world until we bring our lives and the needs of our world to God in prayer. That is our part – to pray, then go and tell others. There are many in the daily world of our lives who know little of God’s love or His power. They do not know how to come to Him in prayer. They need someone who can pray on their behalf. The needs begin in our own neighbourhood and reach on out to the whole world.

Perhaps there is a friend who is facing divorce; someone is in prison for preaching the gospel; the crises which occur in our local and national governments; the loss of personal and religious freedom in whole blocks of nations; world wide hunger and disease.... and the list goes on, almost without end. These are all cross roads in human experience where your prayer might determine the outcome.

God is raising up a mighty army of prayer warriors throughout the nation and around the world. They are joining the ranks by the thousands, ten of thousands and even hundreds of thousands as true soldiers of the cross.

Any time you pray, you become a part of a prayer meeting which is growing in size, and will never end until Jesus comes. This is no small thing, for it is the key to God's end – time revival which is to sweep across the entire globe. One of the keys of the kingdom is intercessory prayer. The very gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church of Jesus Christ when she is upon her knees. There may be some who will still want to say "But you have to do more than just pray." That's right. But I have never seen people who "just prayed" and that's all not if they really prayed. As at Antioch, prayer and evangelism will always go together. I must add, however, that I have seen a lot of people who tried to do many "busy things" without prayer. Busy things and busy people without prayer are never very productive. All they do is wear themselves and everybody else out, with little to show for their much effort. Yes, prayer and missionary – evangelism must always go together.

Interception

To "intercept" means: to stop, take over and even reverse the direction of something. We see this in certain types of soccer ball games. The ball is being taken towards one goal. An opposing player stops the ball, takes it over and moves it towards the other goal. What begins as a victory play for one team is changed and – because of the "interception" – the other team wins.

Intercessory prayer does just that. The enemy is coming in. The situation looks hopeless. Then somebody steps in (intervention); applies the power of the cross through prayer (intersection); the situation is taken over for God and the tide is completely reversed (interception). What looked like a victory for the devil becomes a triumph for the Lord. This is kingdom power in action. When Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch from their missionary trip to Cyprus and Asia Minor, they had many such "interceptions" (victories) to share with those who had faithfully supported them with their prayers. It must have been a time of joyful celebration (Acts 14:26-28).

The three principles of intercession worked well for them, and they will for us as well.

Chapter 6 - Countries and Nations (Offering up the whole world)

A. INTERCESSION FOR THE NATIONS

"Ask and I will give you the nations for your inheritance (birth right), and the farthest parts of the earth for your possession" (Ps. 2:8). The Lord has given us a great promise. He has promised us the nations.

I recently purchased a map of the world. I've found it to be a great help in my intercession for the nations. Here is how it works. I follow a weekly prayer chart for my daily prayers, so I felt I should do the same for the nations of the world.

On a certain day I will pray for a certain country, say Israel. "Lord, today I want to pray for Israel". How do you pray for Israel? Our prayers are for the needs in Israel today. As I look at the map of Israel I see a note that reminds me there are about 6 million people in Israel. That thought hits me hard. But, the Lord has said in His Word, "Ask of me and I will give you the nations...." Such a promise is almost beyond my understanding, but I choose to believe it. Now I begin to pray for the multitudes in Israel. I see many places on my map like: Judea, etc. These are regions. As I look at these different regions I see names of various cities and towns: Jerusalem, Gaza, Tel Aviv, etc. When I put my hands on the map and pray, something begins to happen in me. It will happen in you too. Israel becomes more than just a name; it is a real place with real people and real problems. And I sense that God has a purpose for that place and that people.

"How long do you go on doing that?" you say. Not a long time. May be a couple of minutes. Then I say something like this, "Lord, I pray for the people who live in Tel Aviv. In the Name of Jesus I ask you to send the Spirit of grace and salvation upon them. Lord, I now pray for the whole region of Judea". Why do I do it that way? Because it keeps me from just praying in a vague, general way for Israel. I begin to really identify with the people and their needs. The Holy Spirit puts His

passion in my heart for them, and I am moved to intercede on their behalf. I am now praying with meaning and power, not just reciting a list of names.

If I know nothing about the needs, I use the gift of tongues in prayer. The Spirit knows what is needed and makes intercession through me in a language I do not understand. It is not necessary to cover a big list every day. You may only cover one nation or even a part of one nation, but you have a feeling of fulfillment.

B. INTERCESSION BY AND FOR OUR MISSIONARIES

“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for you, I am filled with joy....” (Phil. 1: 3-6). The missionary Paul wrote to the believers at Philippi. To win them for Christ, he had suffered beatings and imprisonment (Acts 16). He loved them and constantly prayed for them. This is what Paul was doing from his prison in Rome when he wrote to the church at Philippi. He was reaching out to those who were an extension of his own life. He kept in touch with them and supported them with his love and prayers. Their fruitful lives were a source of great joy to him. But Paul also counted on the churches he birthed to pray for him. “You also helping together by prayer for us...” (2 Cor. 1:11). This Biblical pattern is one we should follow.

We are to pray faithfully for our missionaries – our “sent out” ones. I pray by name for all the missionaries we have sent out to establish churches. I start and pray my way across the nation for each church leader and his family and the churches which they shepherd. May I suggest you pray for your missionaries the same way. They depend upon your prayers, that all God has purposed through their lives and ministry might be joyfully completed in Christ Jesus.

C. SPIRITUAL WARFARE FOR EVANGELISM

“Pray in the Spirit at all times and in all ways. Be always alert and ever intercede for all of the saints everywhere. Pray also for me that I may freely and boldly proclaim the hidden truths of the gospel” (Eph. 6:18-19). Paul tells us in Ephesians 6 that we are to take up our arms and armor for spiritual warfare and then pray for open doors in ministry. We are to come against the powers and forces of darkness that are at work in the world. As Paul was supported by the intercession of fellow believers, we are to pray for men who are called of God to proclaim His gospel. Miracles of God’s grace don’t come just because an evangelist appears on the scene. Any true man or woman of God knows that real revivals are born out of prayer and intercession.

Jesus called Satan the “strong man”. “No man can enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he will first bind the strong man; and then he will spoil his house” (Mark 3:27). Before we see victories down here on earth, there must be a battle won in the heavenly realm. Satan is the prince of the power of the air. The “strong man” must be bound before he will surrender his territory to Christ’s claim. That is the reason Paul concludes his words on spiritual warfare with a plea for intercessory prayer. Can we settle for anything less?

D. INTERCESSION FOR NATIONAL LEADERS AND PEACE

“...I urge you that prayers and intercession...be made for kings and all others who are in authority that we might live peaceful and quiet lives...” (1 Tim. 2:1- 2). We need to pray in a very responsible way for our national leaders. “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord. As the rivers of water, He turns it where so ever He wills” (Prov. 21: 1). So we need not be timid or fearful, but boldly pray for those in positions of authority. God can turn their heart as He wills when we pray.

E. CONCLUSION

Remember, intercession is not just for a small group of people who are super-spiritual or extra-holy. There are indeed some who have a special calling to intercessory prayer, but the privilege is for all. Even those whom we recognise as veteran prayer warriors had to start somewhere. There is a first time for everything, and most of you are much further along than that. So, start praying and keep praying. You may say, “Well, I started and then I missed a couple of days and now I feel

defeated.” If I were the devil, I would try to make you feel defeated too. I would do anything to keep you from going on with your prayer life.

God doesn’t have a big scoreboard where He adds and subtracts your days of heavy prayer. If that were true, most of us would be so far behind we couldn’t catch up. Your heavenly Father is waiting for you to come to Him just as you are. If you have some failures to confess, do it and receive His forgiveness. Then get on with your prayer life. This is the way to respond to His ministry of grace. Jesus said that if we “ask and keep on asking, we will receive” (Luke 11: 10, Amplified). He seems to be saying our prayers add up, and therefore we should keep on with our praying. It is good to know that when we are praying in the Spirit and in faith, God hears our prayers regardless of how we may feel. Prayer brings results; much prayer brings much result.

Some problems and issues may seem to be bigger than our prayers. This may be so, but they are not bigger than the One to Whom we pray! So keep on growing and praying, and keep on praying and growing. God is going to have His army of prayer warriors, and you can be one of them!

START NOW AND GOD WILL BLESS YOU!

ESTABLISHING AN EFFECTIVE PRAYER LIFE

Prayer is as essential to our spiritual life as breathing is to our natural life. We cannot live effectively for God without a healthy prayer life and we certainly cannot be effective in any kind of ministry without a consistent prayer life.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

As we begin to share some of the simple basic principles of prayer, let me confess from the outset that there are some things about prayer which I believe will remain a mystery until we finally arrive in the immediate presence of God, when the Bible teaches that “we shall know, even as we also are known.” (1 Cor. 13: 12) Although we may understand many things about prayer and can teach many wonderful truths on this intriguing subject, some of the deeper aspects and the more difficult questions seem to have no satisfactory answer this side of eternity. I am sure that every child of God has some questions to ask of God concerning the mysteries of prayer and of some prayers which appear to remain unanswered.

Nevertheless we know sufficient to enable us to establish and exercise an effective and fruitful prayer life which will enable us to love and serve God to the fullest extent of our abilities.

Prayer is essentially a spiritual activity

It is the expression of our spirit to God who is a Spirit. It is the joining and merging of our spirit with His. It is a glorious meeting and intermingling of our spirit and His. It is the sacred communing of kindred spirits. Our spirit man, communing and speaking intimately with the Spirit of God, and He with us. I wish I could emphasise this truth to ensure that you thoroughly understand and appreciate it.

Prayer is not an intellectual activity. True prayer is not the product of our human mind or intellectual faculties, though our minds and thoughts should certainly be involved in the exercise. It is the joining of our spirit with God’s in the creative activity of mutual spiritual communion.

Our spirit is the centre of our being. It is the God-conscious part of man. We are essentially and primarily spiritual beings, housed in physical bodies and operated by our mental faculties. Unless your spirit meets with God, to commune with Him and He with you, you have not prayed.

Prayer is “Drawing near to God.”

“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you” (James 4: 8). In prayer we come aside from all the activities of life and focus our complete attention on to the Lord. It is an act of deliberately withdrawing from everything that requires and demands our attention in order to spend time with God. This is sometimes extremely difficult for people in ministry, for we may reason that our whole life is dedicated to God’s work and that the things that demand our attention are legitimately in His interests. It is sadly possible to be so busily engaged in the work of God that we appear to have little or no time in which to be with God. This is a very subtle and extremely dangerous trap into which many well meaning ministers fall. It is an “occupational hazard” of the ministry in which we become so busy in the work of God that we seriously neglect the personal worship of God. We spend so much time serving God, that we appear to have no time to fellowship with Him.

Prayer is spending quality time with God.

Effective prayer can never be achieved in a hurry. Obviously there are extreme moments when prayer can become effectively operative in a mini-second time. Occasions when we may cry to God in a sudden crisis and He hears and answers prayer as quickly as we can cry out to Him. But, as a general rule the exercise of prayer requires time and should not be hurried. For prayer is not so much what we say to God, as what He may want to say to us and what He may want to accomplish in us as we come before Him in the attitude of surrender and submission which true prayer demands. Personal prayer is so important that we should put it at the top of any list of priorities we may make. Its importance is such that almost every other activity should be placed beneath it in the order of the priorities we establish.

Prayer is a two-way conversation!!!

The most frequent misunderstanding which people have about prayer is the idea that “Prayer is talking to God.” This is a dangerous idea because it is partly true, yet not the whole truth. Obviously one aspect, and an important one, is that of talking with God. But the other side of the equation is that prayer is also an opportunity for God to speak to and commune with us. This is surely the more important aspect. It is not really so important what I tell God. What is far more important is WHAT HE TELLS ME. Therefore when you approach the place and time of prayer come with the understanding that you need to do more than merely talk with God, you must allow the time to wait on Him, listen to Him, and hear what He has to say to you.

Prayer is sharing our heart with God

The Bible frequently speaks of “Pouring out our heart to the Lord.” King David is obviously an outstanding example of this and Psalm 51 is perhaps the clearest instance of it. There were many times when David’s heart was almost overwhelmed with the problems and distresses of life. At those times he would wisely go before the Lord, saying “When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock which is higher than I.” (Ps. 61: 2). At such time David poured out his heart in God’s hearing. He cast all his burdens on the Lord that God might sustain him. (Ps. 55: 22).

Prayer involves waiting upon God.

David frequently advocated the practice of “waiting upon the Lord.” This immediately implies that we should not rush into or out of God’s presence, but rather that we should allocate sufficient time to wait patiently before Him. The concept of waiting also implies the idea of a servant or a waiter, who waits patiently and humbly on his Master. He stands by patiently awaiting a moment appropriate to his Master when He may choose to convey His wishes and desires.

Prayer implies surrender to the Master’s will.

The very practice of prayer is performed as an act of obedience to God. The ultimate reason why we pray is because God has commanded us to do so. So when we present ourselves before Him in prayer we do it in a spirit of submission and surrender to his will and His expressed desire. This attitude alone is good reason for us to pray. Our souls need to renew their surrender to God and obedience to His will.

WHY WE SHOULD PRAY?

Because God wants us to fellowship with Him.

Here is the most remarkable aspect of God’s great plan of redemption, that the Almighty God who created and sustains the vast universe will humble Himself to commune with one of His tiny creations. That the God of eternity takes the time and makes the effort to converse intimately with someone so insignificant as you and I. That He is interested in the minute details of our life and willing to communicate with us about them. These things are a constant source of amazement to me foster a deep sense of awe within me.

Because we humble ourselves when we pray.

Prayer is a beneficial spiritual exercise because in coming to God we humble ourselves before Him acknowledging by our very presence there that we realise our need of Him and our inability to do anything meaningful without His help. In prayer we assume the posture of a servant attending his master. We deliberately humble our flesh and all our human abilities and attainments by placing ourselves at God’s feet in humble submission and petition.

Because we discipline our souls when we pray.

Prayer is a spiritual activity and it requires real discipline of our flesh to engage in it. The natural man does not delight in prayer and his desires and tendencies must be disciplined and brought into subjection in order to spend time before God. This exercise of discipline is essential for our spiritual growth and development. We enrich our spiritual man each time we spend time with God in meaningful prayer.

Because we acknowledge and express our dependence on God.

The very act of coming before God in prayer announces our dependence upon Him. Each time we seek Him out to bring ourselves and our needs before Him we acknowledge to Him our sense of dependence on Him. This is a beneficial exercise that helps us to maintain an appropriate attitude of humble awe before God.

Because we deny ourselves when we pray.

“If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.” (Matt 16: 24). Meaningful prayer frequently requires the denial of our self man. There are so many things that we feel we need to do other than engaging in prayer, so in order to make the necessary time and other than engaging in prayer, so in order to make the necessary time and opportunity to pray we must choose to deny ourselves. In so doing we fulfil the requirement which Jesus makes on all who would be true disciples.

Because prayer is an essential aspect of our relationship to God.

Jesus Himself will always be our finest example and role model in the ministry of prayer. The Biblical account of His life on earth reveals the devoted consistency of His personal communion with His Father. On so many occasions we are told that Jesus withdrew from His activities, the crowds, and from His disciples too, in order to spend time in prayerful fellowship with His Father. If He needed to do this in order to maintain the quality of His relationship with God, how much more do you and I need to concentrate on this aspect? The kind of intimate communion which occurs in prayer is indispensable to the proper development of our relationship with God.

Because God meets our needs through Prayer.

Now we come to the very basics of prayer. The practical “bottom line” of why we should pray. It is precisely because in the wisdom and purpose of God He has ordained that He will meet our needs in response to our prayerful petition.

Hebrews 11:6 tells us, “Without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that comes to Him must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” This is one of the “mysteries” to which I referred earlier. Surely God already knows our circumstances and our needs, why does He then need us to tell Him about them? I believe that the answer to this lies to some degree in the matters I have mentioned above, i.e. His desire for our fellowship, the acknowledgement of our dependency on Him, and the fact that He wants us to spend time with Him in intimate communion.

Because God answers Prayer.

Whether our needs are personal, for ourselves and our family, or for others and for the success of the ministry. God’s answers come in response to earnest prayer. If we pray things will happen. If we do not pray, then nothing lasting or worthwhile will happen. The work of God is advanced only through prayer.

Establishing an Effective Prayer Life.

The whole purpose of prayer is to build a personal relationship with the Lord. This can only be done as we learn to wait in His Presence so that He is able to share the intimate secrets of His heart with us.

In order to have a close personal relationship with the Lord, we need to understand God’s desires and His purposes...for His people, for lost mankind, and everything concerning our daily walk with Him. As we fellowship with Him in prayer and communion, it is possible for His desires, to become our desires. (Psalm 37:4). John Wesley once said “It seems that God is limited by our prayer life – that He can do nothing for humanity unless someone asks Him”. At first glance this statement seems preposterous. However, we read in Genesis 1, that after God had made man He gave him dominion over all the work of His hands. Therefore Adam had dominion over all the earth and all that God had made, an authority given to him by God Himself. After Satan had

deceived Eve, Adam committed high treason and submitted to Satan, who then became the god of this world.

When we look at the condition of the world around us, with all its suffering, wars, hunger and starvation, immorality, hatred, rioting, etc. we realise that if God is in control, it is definitely NOT going His way. No, Satan is the god of this world (II Cor. 4: 4) for a season, until his lease expires. However, we have a great weapon given to us by God, to break down the strongholds of Satan and to intervene on behalf of mankind and the nations of the world. That weapon is PRAYER AND INTERCESSION.

Satan has Adam's lease, God cannot do anything unless someone down here asks Him! 2 Chron. 7:14 says "If my people, which are called by my Name, shall humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land."

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF PRAYER?

1. MINISTRY TO THE LORD.

We are called as priests –"You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation." 1 Peter 2: 9. We are priests unto God. Our ministry to God must take precedence over all other ministry. We minister to Him through praise and worship and commune with Him through prayer. We are able to undertake our priestly duties because of the blood of Jesus. His blood makes us righteous in order to enter into the Holy of Holies. 1 Peter 2:5; Eph. 1: 4- 5; Proverbs 15: 8; 2 Cor. 5: 21; Heb. 4: 16.

2. FELLOWSHIP – OR COMMUNION WITH THE LORD.

Spending time with Him because you love Him. Conversing, i.e. speaking and listening. This will deepen into communion as you share your heart and deepest thoughts with Him. As He made His ways known to Moses, so He will start to share "His desires" with you through the Holy Spirit. Exodus 33: 11 –14; 15: 23.

3. PRAYER IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY CHRISTIAN

The purpose of prayer is to determine God's will in the situation and pray it into existence. Prayer had priority in Jesus' life. He put it before physical rest, social life and food. Prayer was the communication between Jesus and His Father as it should be for us also. Matt. 14: 23; Luke 6: 12.

4. COMPASSION FOR OTHER PEOPLE'S DISTRESSES.

Interceding on behalf of others, such as loved ones in distress, for the unbelievers and those who are lost, those who have not yet come to the Lord, those needing healing or in stressful circumstances. Even giving thanks for situations, and for those who bless us. Eph. 1: 15-16; Phil. 1: 3- 4, 7.

RESULTS OF PRAYER.

1. PRAYER BRINGS RESULTS FOR THE KINGDOM AND GOD IS PLEASED

As you begin to pray, communicating with God, He will speak to you, giving you direction, wisdom, knowledge, strength and protection. Col. 1:9 – 11; Psalm 40: 1- 2; John 15: 7- 8.

2. PRAYER OPENS YOUR SPIRITUAL EYES

An understanding of the Spirit realm comes as you discipline yourself in prayer, praise, fasting, meditating on God's Word and waiting upon the Lord. Ask the Lord to reveal what is taking place in the spiritual realm as Elisha did when he asked God to open his servant's eyes. 2 Kings 6: 16- 17.

3. PRAYER CAN CAUSE GOD TO RELENT

Although at times we feel that the fate of the world is in the hands of dictators, politicians, governors, kings, etc., there are times when praying Christians are able to change the events of

history. You and I may be a strong influence as Abraham and Daniel were in Old Testament times. It is exciting to think that our prayers can actually change national and international events as we wage war in the heavenly. Ex.32: 14.

4. THROUGH PRAYER YOU RECEIVE REVELATION

God will reveal to you through the Holy Spirit what He desires you to pray about, and He may illuminate a problem area in someone's life or in a particular situation. He allows you a fragment of His knowledge. You must seek His clear guidance concerning the way to deal with the revelation that He gives you as you pray. Matt. 11: 25- 26; Luke 10: 22; Phil. 3:15.

5. PRAYER HELPS YOU TO REST IN HIM

God invites you to bring Him your problems and anxieties. As you do this with a prayer of thanksgiving, He promises to put His peace in your heart. Phil. 4: 6-7; 1 Peter 5: 7; Matt. 6: 25-26; Ps. 55: 22.

6. BY PRAYING IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE YOU ARE ABLE TO PULL DOWN SATAN'S STRONGHOLDS

As Jesus had to battle Satan in His wilderness temptation, you too are able to be victorious as He was. He won His war with Satan before He went into public ministry. You also must win before you can fully function in what God has called you to do. Our success is dependent upon winning... in prayer! Josh. 1:3, 11, 15; Mark 3: 27; Daniel 10: 12- 13.

THE MANNER OF PRAYING

The place where you pray is not as important as following the instructions that Jesus gave concerning prayer. In Matthew 6: 5- 6, Jesus speaks about praying in the "inner room". The inner chamber or room was generally situated on the roof of the house. It could be used both as a watchtower to sight the enemy, and also it was considered as a high place for an altar and place of prayer. The Scripture states that when you pray in secret, the Lord will reward you openly. However, it is not necessary to be in an inner room to pray or be in communion with the Lord. It is possible to have constant communion with Him as you walk or drive, even with others all around you. When the Holy Spirit prompts you to pray, you can lift your heart and spirit to the Lord wherever you are. Of course it is good and necessary to set aside time each day for quiet prayer, but also be alert to know when the Holy Spirit is quickening you to an urgent need that requires immediate prayer, regardless of where you are. Here are some places mentioned in the Bible where people prayed:

- In an upper roomActs 1: 13- 14.
- In your houseActs 10: 30; 12: 5 – 7.
- By a riverside.....Acts 16: 3.
- On a beach somewhereActs 21: 5.
- In the wilderness.....Luke 5: 16.
- In a lonely place.....Mark 1: 35; Luke 4: 42.
- On the mountainsMatt. 14: 23; Mark 6: 46; Luke 5: 16; 6: 12; 9: 28.
- Alone.....Matt. 6: 6; 26: 39; Mark 14: 32 – 42; Luke 6: 12; 9: 18.

WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?

"As for me, I shall call upon God; and the Lord will save me. Evening and morning and at noon, I will cry out, and He will hear my voice." Psalm 55: 16- 17. When the Holy Spirit prompts you to pray, obey the urgency of the Spirit. He will give you an inner witness or an urge to pray for someone, or for some particular situation. Your obedient response possibly will save a desperate situation and could change the direction of someone's life for the glory of God.

It is possible to accomplish far more through prayer than in any other way! A famous poet once wrote, "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." This was written more than

a hundred years ago, but it is still true as we live in this fast-paced century. The choice of prayer times rests with each person's situation. Ask the Lord to show you the times He wishes for you to commune with Him. Some examples from Scriptures:

- Morning, Psalm 5: 3; Psalm 88: 13; Mark 1: 35; Acts 2:1 – 4, 15.
- Noon, Psalm 55: 17.
- Evening, Matthew 14: 23; Mark 6: 47; Luke 6: 12; Acts 16: 25.
- Continuously, 1 Samuel 7: 8; 1 Samuel 12: 23; Nehemiah 1: 6; Psalm 72:15; Luke 2: 37; 6:12; Acts 10: 2; Romans 1: 9 – 10; Eph. 6: 18; Col.1:9; 4:2; 1 Thes. 3: 10; 1 Tim 5: 5.

WHAT LENGTH OF TIME DO WE NEED TO PRAY?

Jesus felt that it was quite a normal expectation that His disciples pray with Him for at least one hour.(Matt. 26: 40). Yet at that time when He needed their support they let Him down and they themselves were not prepared for the situation which followed. They made sleep their priority instead of supporting and “watching” with their Lord. There will be times when you are able to pray for longer than one hour. But there may also be occasions when you may only be able to pray for ten or fifteen minutes. Remember that even a short prayer time is better than none at all.

The obvious ideal is to pray until an answer is received or until you have the assurance of the Lord that it is accomplished in the spiritual realm. How? By continual prayer until the Lord gives you a peace about the situation. (Col. 3: 15). Once you feel this peace, then it is good to begin to praise the Lord. Praise brings the victory, so give Him praise and thanksgiving for the victory that has been gained.

Sometimes the answer is long in coming, but don't give up. Remember, the answer is not according to our manipulation, but according to God's perfect timing. He is never late, even if we think He could have answered us earlier! Be like the widow Jesus spoke about in the parable of Luke 18: 1-8.

Before we start to pray, we could consider what posture to be in as we pray. Just as there are various places to pray, so there is also a variety of positions for prayer. The important thing is to be comfortable enough that you are able to concentrate on the Lord, and not be distracted by surroundings or an aching body. The Scripture gives us some examples:

1. Sitting. 1 Chronicles 17:16-27.
2. Kneeling. 1 Kings 8:54; Ezra 9:5; Luke 22:41; Acts 9:40.
3. Bowing. Exodus 34:8; Psalm 72:11; Nehemiah 8:6.
4. Standing. Nehemiah 9:5; Mark 11:25; Luke 18:13.
5. With uplifted hands. II Chron. 6:12-13; Psalm 63:4; 1 Tim. 2:8.
6. Walking. 2 Kings 4:35.
7. Prostrate. Josh 7:6; Ezra 1:1; Matt. 26:39; Mark 14:35.

TYPES OF PRAYER

1. PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING.

The Scripture directs us to “enter His gates with thanksgiving, and His courts with praise. Give thanks to Him; bless His Name.” Psalm 100:4.

David is our great example in Scripture concerning both prayer and praise. In Psalm 103, he writes “bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His Holy Name.” Then he goes on to say “forget not all His benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, Who satisfies you with good as long as you live.” David knew the Lord who he was praising was the God who was active in his life. He was not worshipping a far-off remote God, but one who was identified with his needs. Everything within him called out in praise to the living God because he had experienced His forgiveness and healing, His love, mercy and redemption, His eternal goodness to all His children. David did not speak these words lightly. He knew what it was to be afflicted, persecuted, oppressed, hemmed in on all sides by his enemies; to feel discarded and separated from God, as if

his prayers were not being answered. But his response in those circumstances was to PRAISE GOD!

In many of the Psalms, David both asks and praises at the same time. He was not afraid to come to God and declare openly his need. He does not look at the situation as hopeless, because he knows the power and faithfulness of God...and David trusted Him.

The source of praise is the Holy Spirit activating your spirit to express approval and adoration of God's greatness. Develop the habit of praise during your prayer time.

2. CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS.

In order that our prayer is not hindered, we need to be sure that no sin or guilt stands between ourselves and the Lord. Isaiah 59:1-2 says, "Behold the Lord's hand is not so short that it cannot save; neither is His ear so dull that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He cannot hear." So we see that iniquity or sin can prevent our prayers from being heard, and of course, being answered. As you begin your prayer time, pause and ask the Holy Spirit if there is anything that would separate you from God's presence. Do as David did in Psalm 26:2-3. "Examine me, O Lord and try me; test my mind and heart. For Your loving kindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Thy truth."

If the Holy Spirit does put His finger on something in your life, then you need to confess it to the Lord in repentance and receive His forgiveness. Once an area of darkness has been brought to the light of God's Word and repented of and the sin dealt with, the blood of Jesus covers it and we are told that the Lord remembers it no more. Don't keep bringing up sins that have been dealt with. The Lord says He has buried them and they are forgotten. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9.

One of Satan's wiles is to bring you into condemnation or guilt by constantly bringing past sins back to your mind. He tries to get your thoughts centred on yourself and away from God's mercy. When you confess, it doesn't always follow that you have a deep emotional experience to show you are forgiven. Simply ask, then accept by faith in God's Word that He will do what He says...He is faithful and just...and forgives!

3. FORGIVENESS.

Un-forgiveness is one issue that will always stand between you and your full communication with the Lord. Mark 11:25 says, "And when you stand praying, forgive, if you have ought against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses." This Scripture clearly indicates that we need God's forgiveness to be effective in prayer. This forgiveness only comes as we forgive others. Forgiveness also frees the other person or changes circumstances causing the problem. It allows the Holy Spirit to work, convicting of sin, righteousness and judgement.

Don't let pride keep you from experiencing a right relationship with the Lord. Forgive the person who has wronged you, no matter how hurtful the offence may have been. You will then experience a release in your spirit and your fellowship with the Lord will be restored.

Three possible areas of forgiveness are:

1. Forgiving the person who has wronged you.
2. Absolving God. (Pronouncing Him free from blame) Because in your estimation He did not intervene on your behalf in the way that you expected He would.
3. Forgiving yourself. Feelings of guilt and condemnation about your own participation in situations causing yourself or others some hurt.

Many times you will find it easier to forgive others or to forgive God, than to forgive yourself. You keep self-criticism and condemnation in your heart, but total forgiveness, which includes forgiving yourself, is essential to your effective praying.

Every day you can make a decision to walk in forgiveness that day. Choose to forgive others as God has forgiven you, and do it immediately at the time of the offence, as Jesus did. (Luke 23:34). Forgiveness and repentance go hand in hand (Proverbs 28:13; Matthew 3:6,8). To repent is to feel such regret and remorse that you turn away from your thoughts or actions, releasing others from any resentment or bitterness which you or they may hold. If your thoughts are repeatedly drawn in

a negative way to a person you have chosen to forgive, you must take authority over your thoughts. Command your mind, in Jesus Name to be free of them and substitute thoughts that are true, honourable, right, pure, excellent and worthy of praise (Phil. 4: 8).

After the Holy Spirit has spoken to your heart, accept the Lord's cleaning and forgiveness. Ask Him to refill you with His Holy Spirit.

4. INTERCESSION.

Jesus, our great High Priest provides us with the example of how to intercede. He entered into intercession when He was here on earth and continues to intercede for us in heaven. (Heb. 7:25). So when we intercede, we are following His example.

Intercession has been described as a love response to the prompting of the Holy Spirit for an urgent need. It may just be a cry of help to the Lord, on behalf of someone you love. "Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). God is pleased when you pray for others, coming in intercession on their behalf.

Daniel chapter ten records an instance when Daniel received a message from God concerning great conflict between the angelic hosts. The Hebrew word translated "message" sometimes translates as "burden". Often when the Lord gives you a message or word, there is a heaviness or burden placed upon you to pray that Word into action. Sometimes He directs you to pray the Word of God. At other times you may feel the strong desire to come in spiritual warfare against the powers of darkness.

To intercede, you make yourself available to receive a prayer burden from the Lord. It is a holy trust when the Lord reveals His secrets to you in this way. It must not be taken lightly, and you must show yourself worthy of this trust. When you feel that the Holy Spirit is moving in your heart concerning a situation He reveals, be obedient to cry out to God about the situation that the Spirit brings to your mind. Sometimes He directs us to intercede for spiritual leaders who are under attack. Missionaries in various countries, people in danger or who are desperately ill. Many times one knows nothing of the circumstances of these being interceded for, apart from a directive of the Holy Spirit.

How do you know whom to pray for? One way to begin is to ask: "Lord, what is on your heart? Which is the most important situation? You may wonder how you will know if the Holy Spirit is calling you to pray. The Holy Spirit will indicate by words, messages or thoughts that stir your spirit. Maybe He will bring to your mind a face, a name, family, a church, a nation, etc. as pictures in your imagination. Intercession starts and ends with God. After He gives you a subject to pray over, you should pray until you feel He wants you to move on to the next situation. It is not unusual to experience emotions such as laughter, groaning, weeping or travelling sounds. (Gal. 4:19). This doesn't always happen but it can sometimes accompany deep intercession. Many times you may find yourself praying in an authoritative manner over principles and powers of the evil unseen world.

When the burden for intercession is lifted, you may experience other emotions, such as peace, or joy accompanied with laughter or tears. Regardless of your feelings, know that your petitions have touched the Father's heart.

5. PETITIONS.

To petition simply means: to make a request or supplication in humility to one in authority. So when you petition the Lord you are asking for a specific need. Many people do not get past this type of prayer, but the Lord instructs us to pray this way. 1 John 5:15.

A petition is specific request. An example is Hannah, who came to God with her request for a son, making an unselfish vow to return him to the service of God. God heard and granted her request, and she in turn honoured the vow that she had made. Hannah had wanted a child for a long time, but when she expressed her petition aloud to the Lord, with a pure heart, she received the complete answer to her prayer. (1 Sam. 1 and 2). God encourages you to petition Him. He says, "Ask, Seek, Knock." If you do this, He has promised to answer. (Matt. 7:7-8).

WHY DO PRAYERS SOMETIMES SEEM TO GO UNANSWERED?

Probably a better way of putting this would be “why wasn’t my prayer answered in the way that I thought it would be answered?”

No one can explain why some prayers don’t appear to have been answered. These are the times when we must simply bow to the sovereign will of God, and trust Him knowing that His ways are perfect. We certainly don’t have all knowledge of these things, but we do have some answers, based on the Word of God. Listed below are some of the reasons that our prayers may not be answered.

1. **UNBELIEF.** James 1:5-7....”ask of God, who gives to all men liberally...and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering...for let not that man think that he shall receive anything from the Lord.” Jesus encouraged His followers to believe as they prayed, then they would receive the answer.
2. **FAILING TO ABIDE IN THE LORD.** John 15:7 says “If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask what you will and it shall be done unto you.”
3. **NOT ASKING ACCORDING TO GOD’S WILL.** God’s will is often revealed to us by spending time with His word, and allowing Him to speak to us as we meditate upon it. Certain things such as salvation, for example, are very clear in God’s Word. We need to understand God’s will and desires as we pray. Exodus 32:11-14. 1 John 5:14-15.
On other occasions God may reveal His will to our heart or mind as we wait quietly before Him. Suddenly we realise that He has made us aware of His will.
4. **UNFORGIVENESS.** Matt. 6:14- 15 is a part of the prayer that Jesus taught His disciples when He was instructing them how to pray. “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Read also Matt. 18:21-22; Isaiah 43:25.
5. **UNCONFESSED OR UNREPENTANT SIN.** Sin separated man from God in the first place, in the Garden of Eden and it still does today. Psalm 66:18 states, “If regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me”, and Isaiah 59:2, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear.” We need to search our hearts and ask the Lord to show us if there is a blockage to our prayers because of unrepented sin.
6. **GIVING UP TOO SOON.** Many prayers go unanswered because we give up too easily. The Lord desires for us to wait upon Him faithfully. He says, “Ask, Seek, Knock” (Matt. 7:7), which is a progression of the depth of our prayer. Remember the story of the persistent person who asked his friend at midnight for bread. Eventually, his sheer persistence brought success. (Luke 11:5-8). And that is how Jesus instructs us to pray, not giving up until the answer comes.
7. **LACK OF UNITY.** There is extra strength in corporate prayer, but to be effective, unity amongst those praying is essential. Matt 18:19 says, “That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.
8. **WITH-HOLDING TITHES AND OFFERINGS.** Malachi 3:8-11 speaks of the blessing of the Lord which follows being faithful in tithing, and the punishment which comes from withholding that which belongs to the Lord. The early church were encouraged to give also (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37). Jesus often spoke of giving, and the blessings that accompanied giving.
9. **NOT PRAYING IN JESUS’ NAME.** When Jesus taught His disciples about prayer, He gave them a pattern to follow and we should also closely follow His directions. God’s ways do not change. (John 16:23). “Whatsoever you ask the Father in my Name, He will give it you.” Whenever we approach the Father, we need to remember that we can only do so because of His Son. So we come to Him, in the Name of Jesus. Asking something in Jesus’ Name means asking

God in the authority of the Name of Jesus. That Name has tremendous influence with God. It is a key that opens the door to God's storehouse.

But "asking in Jesus' Name" also means that His Name might be honoured and glorified. We are therefore asking God to do something, and our motive is not selfish or carnal. It is certainly not that we personally might benefit in some way. It is simply and purely that the Name of Jesus might be honoured. That as a direct result of the answer to that prayer Jesus Himself might be esteemed, honoured and glorified.

10. NOT FELLOWSHIPING WITH THE LORD. Many times our prayers are like telegrams – just rushing in and out of God's presence. This is almost insulting to the Almighty. He desires our love, our fellowship, our companion ship. He wants us to spend time in His presence, just enjoying Him. Jesus spent priority time with the Father, and so should we. (Luke 6:12-13).

Other reasons why our prayers may be unanswered, could be one of the following:

- ASKING WITH WRONG MOTIVES. James 4:2-3; Rev. 3:20.
- SPEAKING ILL OF OTHERES. Gal. 5:26; James 4:11; 5:9.
- INDIFFERENCE. Proverbs 1:24,28.
- DISOBEDIENCE. Deut. 1:42-45; Isaiah 1:19-20; Hebrews 4:6.
- IDOLATRY. Deut. 7:25-26; Josh 7; Ezek 14:3.
- PREJUDICE AND HATE. Prov. 26:14-28; 1 John 2:9-12; 3:15-22.
- TOUCHING GOD'S ANOINTED. 1 Samuel 26:5-11; Psalm 105:15.
- FEAR. Psalm 56:4-11; Prov. 29:25. 1 John 4:18.
- NOT EXAMINING YOURSELF. 1 Cor 11:27-31.
- DESPISING GOD'S WORD. Proverbs 28:9.
- NEGLECTING MERCY. Proverbs 21:13.

The five golden keys to see your every prayer answered!

Intro: Read Jeremiah 33: 3 (“The hot-line to heaven”)

The most beautiful example of prayer is found in: I Samuel Chapter I. – Hannah is desperate; expecting a miracle from God. She is praying and weeping. Prayer: “She is pouring out her soul to the Lord.” (Verse 15)

The five object-lessons from the above account are:

1. Pray specific, having a clear goal in mind.
(if not clear in your mind, then first wait upon the Lord, ask Him to reveal His purpose in the matter and reflect on what you really need)
2. Pray with a burning desire in your heart.
Do you really want to see your goal fulfilled and realized at any cost! Scriptures: Prov. 10: 24, and Psalm 37: 4.
3. Prayer needs to be born out of a living relationship with the Lord. God wants us to draw closer to Him through prayer. John 15: 7; Eph. 3: 20.
4. Persevere in prayer until you have God’s peace in your heart and you are sure God has heard your prayer. Scripture: Phil. 4: 6 – 7; Col. 3: 15a.
5. By faith begin to turn your prayer into praise. Thank God for answering your prayer even before the reality has come. Ps. 100: 4; Psalm 50: 23.

PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE INTERSESSION

1. Make sure heart is clean before God. Give the Holy Spirit time to convict of any un-confessed sin (Ps. 66: 18; 139: 23- 24; Ps. 24: 4- 5; Jam. 5: 16).
2. Acknowledge that you cannot really pray without the direction and energy of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8: 26; Prov. 3: 5- 6).
3. Give your thoughts and burdens to the Lord. Ask the Lord to give you the prayers that are on His heart (Prov. 28: 27; Is. 55: 8; II Cor. 10: 5).
4. Ask God to lead you in prayer by his Holy Spirit (Eph. 5: 18; Heb. 11: 6). Thank Him, that He will do it.
5. Bind the enemy of God. (James 4: 7; Zech. 3: 21).
6. Praise the Lord in faith for the time of prayer you are going to have. He is a remarkable God and will teach you new things in and about prayer.
7. Wait on God to bring to mind the things you need to pray for (John 10: 27). Pray everything out on one subject before you go on to the next.
8. Always have your Bible with you. God may want to give you direction or confirmation from it. (Ps. 119: 105).
9. Finish by praising and thanking God for what He has accomplished through prayer. (Rom. 11: 36).

FASTING AS A LIFESTYLE

Fasting is the voluntary abstaining from food for spiritual purposes.

WHY DO WE FAST?

1. Fasting is an Expression of Self-Humblng.
"....I humbled myself with fasting" (Ps. 35: 13). "Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions." (Ezra 8: 21).
2. Fasting is An Expression of your Dependence Upon God for Help.
"Then some came and told Jehoshaphat, saying, "A great multitude is coming against you.... And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. So Judah gathered together to ask help from the Lord, and from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord." (2 Chron. 20: 2 – 4).
3. Fasting is Expected of Us by Jesus.
(Jesus told His disciples:) "But you, WHEN you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matt. 6: 17-18).
4. Fasting Was Practised by the Early Church.
"As they (people in the Church) ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (Acts 13: 2).
5. Fasting As A Church Was Instructed by God.
"Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly: Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord." (Joel 1:14).
6. Fasting Can Change History.
Queen Esther's fasting changed the entire destiny of the Jews.
7. Fasting Prepares Us to Wage War Against Satan.
"But this kind of demon won't leave unless you have prayed and gone without food." (Matt. 17: 21).

HOW SHOULD WE FAST?

Enter into fasting with positive faith.

Your faith should be based upon the conviction that God's Word teaches it as a part of normal Christian discipline.

Do not set yourself too long a period to begin with. Start by setting a short period as your objective, e.g. omitting one or two main meals. Gradually move on to longer period such as a full 24-hour period or even two whole days.

Give time to Bible reading and loudly identify yourself with prayers, praises and confessions in the Scriptures. The Book of Psalms is particularly helpful.

Avoid religious pretensions and boastfulness.

Keep a watchful check on your motives. Take time to read Isaiah 58:1-12 again and again. Note the motives and objectives that are displeasing to God. Then the motives and objectives that are pleasing to Him. Your own motives and objectives should line up with these.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS OF FASTING

When practised with due care and common sense, fasting is beneficial to the physical body. If you are suffering from some wasting disease, such as diabetes or tuberculosis, do not fast unless you have obtained medical approval.

During the fast, you may experience unpleasant physical symptoms, such as dizziness, headache, or nausea. Usually these are indications that your body is going through biological purification. In other words, our body is getting rid of toxins and burning up unwanted fats.

Drink a lot of plain lukewarm water during your fast. Remember, plain water is not food. (Stay away from strong stimulants, such as tea or coffee.)

Exercise self-control when you break a fast. Eating too heavily after a fast can produce serious physical discomfort, and can nullify the physical benefits of fasting.

PRAYER CALENDER FOR THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD

Pray for each city, nation, and people group each day of the year according to the below given calendar with points

JANUARY

¹ <u>EURASIA</u> Kiev Ukraine	² Baku Azerbaijan Azeri People	³ Ashkhaba Turkmenistan Turkmen People	⁴ Tashkent Uzbekistan Uzbek People	⁵ Bishkek Kyrgyzstan Kirgiz People	⁶ Almaty Kazakhstan Kazakh People	⁷ Minisk Belarus Tatar People
⁸ <u>SOUTH-WEST ASIA</u> Hyderabad India	⁹ Ahmedabad India Sindhi People	¹⁰ Jaipur India Rajasthani People	¹¹ Amristar India Urdu People	¹² Pune India Bera Marathi People	¹³ Kolkatta India Bind spirit of Kali	¹⁴ Varanasi India Maliv People
¹⁵ <u>ASIA</u> Manila Philippines	¹⁶ Cambodia Khmer People	¹⁷ Beijing China Aka People	¹⁸ Hong Kong Hakka People	¹⁹ Jakarta Indonesia Batak People	²⁰ Tokyo Japan Burakumin People	²¹ Kuala Lumpur Malaysia Malay People
²² <u>AFRICA</u> Lagos Nigeria	²³ Quagadouo Burkina Faso Mossi People	²⁴ N'Djamena Chad Sudanic People	²⁵ Djibouti Muqdisho Somalia	²⁶ AddisAbaba Ethiopia Amhara People	²⁷ Conakry Guinea Fula Jalon People	²⁸ Benin Cotonou Fon People
²⁹ FEBA and TWR Broadcasts	³⁰ Christian TV-broadcasts	³¹ Unity among Churches in North America				

“And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” Luke 11: 9

FEBRUARY

1 <u>LATIN AMERICA</u> Mexico City Mexico	2 Buenos Aires Argentina	3 La Paz Bolivia	4 Santiago Chile	5 Havana Cuba	6 Quito Ecudaor	7 Guatemala City Guatemala
8 <u>ASIA-INDIA</u> Udaipur Rajasthan Meghs	9 Visakhpatnam Andra Pradesh Lambadas	10 Bhubaneshwar Orissa Khond	11 Bilaspur Chatisgharh Oraon	12 Vadodara Gujarat Patels	13 Shimla Himachal Pradesh Chamars	14 Dehradun Uttaranchal Pants
15 <u>EUROPE</u> London England	16 Bosnia Bosnian Muslims	17 Paris France French People	18 Madrid Spain Basque People	19 Belgrade Serbia Serbian People	20 Bern Switzerland	21 Warsaw Poland Slavic Peoples
22 <u>NORTH AMERICA</u> Washington D.C.	23 Ottawa Cannada	24 Port-Au-Prince Haiti Voodooism	25 Santo Domingo Dominician Republic	26 Jamaica Rastafarians	27 Chicago New York U.S.A.	28 Paramaribo Suriname

**“And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find;
knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”**

Luke 11: 9

MARCH

1 <u>PACIFIC</u> Canberra Australia	2 Wellington New Zealand	3 Papua New Guinea	4 Solomon Islands	5 Tonga	6 Vila Vanuatu	7 Suva Fiji
8 <u>MIDDLE EAST</u> Jerusalem Israeli Jews	9 Turkey Turks Kurds	10 Cairo Egypt Fellaheen	11 Tehran Iran Iranian Refugees	12 Muslim Strongholds	13 Baghdad Iraq Arabs	14 Amman Jordan Berbers
15 <u>EURASIA</u> Pastors	16 Dushanbe Tajikistan Farsi People	17 Yerevan Armenia Armenians	18 Chisinau Moldova Gagauz People	19 Buddhist Strongholds	20 Ulaan Baatar Mongolia Mongolians	21 Riga Latvia Tatars
22 <u>SOUTH-WEST ASIA</u> Kabul Afghanistan Hazaras	23 Dhaka Bangladesh Bengali	24 Kathmandu Nepal Awadhi	25 Islamabad Pakistan Chitral	26 Colombo Sri Lanka Malay Creole	27 Male Maldives Dhivehi People	28 Hindu Strongholds
29 <u>ASIA</u> Taipei Taiwan Chinese Mandarin	30 Hanoi Vietnam Vietnamese	31 Yangon Myanmar Bama Peoples				

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” John 15:7

APRIL

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<u>AFRICA</u>	Gaborone	Bangui	Brazzaville	Libreville	Banjul	Accra
Luanda	Botswana	Central	Congo	Gabon	Gambia	Ghana
Angola	Tswana	African	Adamawa	Pygmy		Kwa
Bantu		Republic				
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
<u>LATIN</u>	Santa Fe de	San Jose	San Salvador	St. George's	Gautemala	Tegucigal
<u>AMERICA</u>	Bogota	Costa Rica	El Salvador	Grenada	City	pa
Montevideo	Colombia				Guatemala	Honduras
Uruguay	Amerindian					
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
<u>BRAZIL</u>	Brasillia	Bind spirits	Porto	Eight	Belem	Amerin-
Belo	Brazil	of	Alegre	million	Brazil	dians in
Horizonte		witchcraft in	Brazil	street		200 tribes
Brazil		Brazil		Children in		in Brazil
				Brazil		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
<u>EUROPE</u>	Zagreb	Prague	Copenhagen	Helsinki	Berlin	Athens
Brussels	Coratia	Czech	Denmark	Finland	Germany	Greece
Belgium	Croats	Republic &	Danish	Finnish	Germans	Greeks
Flemish		Slovakia				
		Czechs				
29	30					
<u>ASIA</u>	Pyongyang					
Vietiane	North Korea					
Laos	Koreans					

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” John 15:7

MAY

1 <u>NORTH AMERICA</u> Oranjestad Aruba Antillean Creole	2 Nassau Bahamas	3 Bridgetown Barbodos	4 Hamilton Bermuda 360 Islands	5 Road Town, British Virgin Islands 36 Islands	6 Georgetown Cayman Islands	7 Roseau Dominica
8 <u>PACIFIC</u> Kolonia Micronesia	9 Avarua Cook Islands	10 Noumea New Caledonia	11 Fongatela Tuvalu	12 Papeete French Polynesia	13 Agana Guam	14 Baraiki / Tarawa Kiribati
15 <u>MIDDLE EAST</u> Riyadh Saudi Arabia	16 Damascus Syria Bedouim	17 Tunis Tunisia	18 Abu Dhabi United Arab Emirates	19 Sanaa Yemen Yemenis	20 Algiers Algeria	21 Manama Bahrain
22 <u>EURASIA</u> Tbilisi Geogia	23 Vinius Lithuania	24 Bucharest Romania Romanians	25 Karelia Russian Federation Karelian	26 Khakassis Russian Federation Khakass People	27 Dagestan Russian Federation Laks	28 Chechen Ingush Russian Federation
29 <u>ASIA</u> Bangkok Thailand Thai People	30 Seoul South Korea Kaue Sung Natives	31 Singapore Hakkien People				

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” John 15:7

JUNE

1 <u>SOUTHWES</u> <u>AISA</u> Thimphu Bhutan Drukpas People	2 Patna Bihar India	3 Lucknow Uttar Pradesh India	4 Karachi Pakistan	5 Kanpur India	6 Coimbatore Tamil Nadu India	7 Chennai India
8 <u>AFRICA</u> Yaounde Cameroon	9 Praia Cape Verde Islands	10 Moroni Comoro Islands	11 Malabo Equatorial Guinea	12 Asmara Eritrea	13 Bissau Guinea- Bissau	14 Maseru Lesotho
15 <u>LATIN</u> <u>AMERICA</u> Belmopan Belize	16 Cayenne French Guiana	17 Cordoba Argentina	18 Stanley Falkland Islands	19 Recife Brazil	20 Managua Nicaragua	21 Panama City Panama
22 <u>AFRICA</u> Durban South Africa	23 Pretoria South Africa	24 Al Bayda Libya	25 Mogadishu Somalia	26 Khartoum Sudan	27 Mibane Swaziland Niguni	28 Dar-es- Salaam Tanzania Bantu People
29 <u>INDIA</u> Allahabad Bhotspuri people	30 Leh Ladak India					

“If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, you shall ask what you will, and it shall be done unto you.” John 15:7

JULY

1 <u>EUROPE</u> Budapest Hungary	2 Reykjanik Iceland	3 Triana Albania	4 Dubin Ireland	5 Rome Italy	6 Luxembourg	7 Amsterdam Netherlands
8 <u>NORTH AMERICA</u> Fort-de-France Martinique	9 Plymouth Montserrat	10 William-stand, Netherlands Antilles	11 Castries St. Lucia	12 Basseterre St. Kits and Nevis	13 St. Pierre and Miquelon	14 Kingstown St. Vincent
15 <u>PACIFIC</u> Nauru Micronesia	16 Matautu Wallis and Fortuna Islands	17 <u>EURASIA</u> Buryatia Russian Federation	18 Gorno-Altay Russian Federation	19 Tuva Russian Federation	20 Sakha Russian Federation	21 Zagreb Croatia
22 <u>MIDDLE EAST</u> Nicosia Cyprus	23 Cairo Egypt	24 Kuwait City Kuwait	25 Beirut Lebanon Berber People	26 Rabat Morocco Mahra	27 Muscat Oman Balochi	28 Doha Qatar
29 <u>AFRICA</u> Dakar Senegal	30 Victoria Seychelles	31 Freetown Sierra Leone				

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints:” (Eph. 6: 18)

AUGUST

1 <u>INDIA</u> Delhi Sindhis	2 Srinagar Jamu & Kashmir Kashmiris	3 Darbhanga Bihar Santal tribals	4 Darjeeling West- Bengal Bhramins	5 Ranchi Jharkand Magai tribals	6 Bhopal Madya Pradesh Gond tribals	7 Ajmer Rajasthan Rajputs
8 <u>AFRICA</u> Abuja Nigeria	9 Lome Togo Kwa	10 Kampala Uganda	11 Kinshasa Zaire	12 Lusaka Zambia	13 Harare Zimbabwe	14 Raga Sudan
15 <u>AFRICA</u> Abidjan Ivory Coast	16 Nairobi Kenya Nilotic	17 Maseru Lesotho	18 Monrovia Liberia	19 Antananarivo Madagascar Malagasy	20 Bamako Mali Mande	21 Port Louis Mauritius
22 <u>CHINA</u> Beijing Mandarin	23 Shanghai Cantonese	24 Strongholds Of Taoism	25 Yumen Kyrgyz	26 Lhasa Tibet	27 Wenzhou China	28 Changsha China
29 <u>SOUTH AMERICA</u> Trujillo Peru	30 Valparaiso Chile	31 Mar del Plata Argentina				

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints:” (Eph. 6: 18)

SEPTEMBER

1 <u>Middle East</u> Tel Aviv Israel Palestinians	2 Peace of Jerusalem Gaza Strip	3 Palestine West Bank	4 Western Sahara	5 Aswan Egypt	6 Cyprus	7 Baghdad Iraq
8 <u>EUROPE</u> Oslo Norway	9 Lisbon Portugal	10 Ljubjana Slovenia	11 Stockholm Sweden	12 Bilbao Spain Basques	13 Strongholds of occult/ witchcraft in UK +Ireland	14 Frankfurt Germany
15 <u>EURASIA</u> Islam Strongholds	16 Armenia Armenian refugees	17 Donestsk Ukraine	18 Bishkek Kyrgyztan	19 Ashkhabad Turkmeni- stan	20 Khar'kov Ukraine	21 Theran Iran
22 <u>EAST ASIA</u> Kobe Japan	23 Phuket Thailand	24 Brunei	25 Sumatra Indonesia	26 Port Moresby Papua New Guinea	27 Islamabad Pakistan	28 Najin North Korea
29 <u>EAST ASIA</u> Macau China	30 Surigao Philippines					

“Pray without ceasing.” I Thessalonians 5: 17

OCTOBER

1 <u>NORTH AMERICA</u> Las Vegas U.S.A.	2 Denver U. S. A.	3 Dallas U. S. A.	4 Boston U. S. A.	5 Vancouver Canada	6 Toronto Canada	7 Montreal Canada
8 <u>ASIA-CHINA</u> Shenyang China Hui	9 Changchun China Manchu	10 Urumqi China Uygur	11 Xigase Tantric Buddism	12 Lanzhou China Dongxaiang	13 Jina China Manchu	14 Strongholds of Buddhism
15 <u>MIDDLE EAST</u> Damascus Syria Bedouin	16 Haifa Israel Jews	17 Mashhad Iran Luri	18 Alexandria Egypt Arabs	19 Islam Strongholds	20 Jiddah Saudi Arabia Shahara	21 Mecca Saudi Arabia Mahra
22 <u>NORTH AMERICA</u> Miami U.S.A.	23 Houston U.S.A.	24 Pittsburgh U.S.A.	25 Portland U.S.A.	26 Atlanta U.S.A.	27 Kansas City U.S.A.	28 Buffalo U.S.A.
29 <u>AFRICA</u> Nouakchott Mauritania	30 Dzaoudzi Mayotte	31 Maputo Mozambique				

“Pray without ceasing.” I Thessalonians 5: 17

NOVEMBER

1 <u>ASIA</u> Ulangom Mongolia	2 North-eastern states of India	3 Philippine Islands	4 Ipoh Malaysia	5 Bandung Indonesia	6 Palembang Indonesia	7 Bali Indonesia
8 <u>EUROPE</u> Vilnius Lithuania	9 Vienna Austria	10 Dublin Ireland	11 Geneve France	12 Milan Italy	13 Palermo Sicily	14 Zurich Switzerland
15 <u>WEST- ASIA</u> Qandahar Afghanistan	16 Strongholds of Hinduism	17 Lahore Pakistan	18 Unity among churches	19 Nagpur Maharashtra India	20 Indore Madhya Pradesh India	21 Harvest of souls in south-west Asia
22 <u>AFRICA</u> Windhoek Namibia	23 Niamey Niger Hausa People	24 Muslim Strongholds	25 Bamalo Mali	26 Arusha Tanzania	27 Johannes- burg South - Africa	28 Antananari- vo Madagascar
29 <u>EAST- ASIA</u> Osaka- Kobe-Kyoto Japan	30 Chiang Mai Thailand					

“Ask of me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.” (Psalm 2:8)

DECEMBER

1 <u>NORTH AMERICA</u> Tattawa Canada	2 Winnipeg Canada	3 Edmonton Canada	4 Quebec Canada	5 Anchorage Alaska	6 Salt Lake City U.S.A.	7 Unity among churches in the United States
8 <u>EUROPE</u> Liechtenstein	9 Barcelona Spain	10 Bordeaux France	11 Prague Czech Rep.	12 Stuttgart Germany	13 Reykjavik Iceland	14 Sarajevo Bosnia & Mostar Herzegovin
15 <u>MIDDLE EAST</u> Sisablanca Morocco	16 El Aaiun Western Sahara	17 Dakar Senegal Wolof	18 Kida Mali Tuareg	19 Tripoli Libya	20 Khartoum Sudan Beja	21 Makoko Gabon
22 <u>EAST-ASIA</u> Sangzhou China	23 Xian China HanChinese	24 Buddhist Strongholds	25 Hohot China Mongolian	26 Chengdu China Yi- Tibetan	27 Sapporo Japan	28 Harbin China
29 <u>AFRICA</u> Abuja Nigeria Youba	30 St. Denis Reunion	31 Kigali Rwanda Hutu, Tutsi				

“Ask of me, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession.” (Psalm 2:8)

**INDIAN STATES: PRAY FOR THE PEOPLES, THEIR STATE GOVERNMENTS,
THEIR SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, SPIRITUAL, EDUCATIONAL AND MORAL NEEDS**

TOTAL POPULATION: MORE THAN ONE BILLION PEOPLE! INDIA needs prayer!

STATE	% of x' ns	PRAYER POINTS	Pop. 1991 (in mil- lions)
Andhra Pradesh	5.0	The new believers – may be involved in more cross cultural evangelism.	66
Arunachal Pradesh	10.	Persecution against the growing church may cease.	1
Assam	4.0	The growing tribal church – for racial harmony.	22
Bihar	2.0	Thank God for the growing number of native workers. 40.8% of population are below the poverty line.	86
Goa	2.0	Revival among Catholics. Evangelising the tourists.	1
Gujarat	0.5	The growing young churches among the tribals – for more native evangelists, opposition to Christianity may stop.	41
Haryana	0.1	Bible translation into the local language Haryanvi. Outreach ministry to Jats.	16
Himachal Pradesh	1.3	To reach the many people groups in the numerous valleys of the Himalayas	6
Jammu & Kashmir	0.2	Communal peace – outreach to the Tibetans and Refugees.	8
Karnataka	2.1	Emerging new congregations among the tribals.	45
Kerala	24.	For revival, more gospel workers to go out to other parts of India.	29
Madhya Pradesh	0.7	Social justice to the Tribals and Dalits. Freedom of religion. Eradication of backwardness by the Gospel.	66
Maharashtra	1.4	Urban social evils such as AIDS – outreach to Bombay slums – the emerging tribal churches. New Churches among Mahrattas	79
Manipur	34.	Drug problem. Tribal church. New believers from Meitei people	2
Meghalaya	57.	Missionary outreach of churches to the North Eastern states.	2
Mizoram	90.	Mizo missionaries to different parts of India,Burma and Thailand.	1
Nagaland	90.	Drug problem, ethnic conflict, missionary outreach to non-tribals	1
Orissa	2.1	The growing missionary movement. Outreach to non – tribals, against persecution. Half population are below the poverty line.	32
Punjab	1.2	Political peace – outreach to the Muzabis.	20
Rajasthan	0.1	Social transformation of backward state. outreach to non – tribals	44
Sikkim	3.3	One of the most unreached states of India	½
Tamil Nadu	6.5	Revival of all the churches. Unity among Christian organisations	57
Tripura	2.0	Tribal congregations – communal harmony. Outreach to Bengali.	3
Uttar Pradesh	0.1	One of the most unreached and backward states in literacy, health and social justice.	139
West Bengal	0.6	Revival of the churches – outreach to the many non-evangelised	68
Uttaranchal			18
Jharkand			21

THIS IS BOOK NO: 2 OF A SET OF 16 BOOKS IN TOTAL, to be studied together in the Ministry and Leadership Training Course, which is a “One-Time-Only” – Project of M.L.T.C.- Ministries.

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