

MINISTRY LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE

Book - 3
Level Disciple



A PRACTICAL GUIDE
TO BECOMING A WORLD CHANGER

DR DIRK H

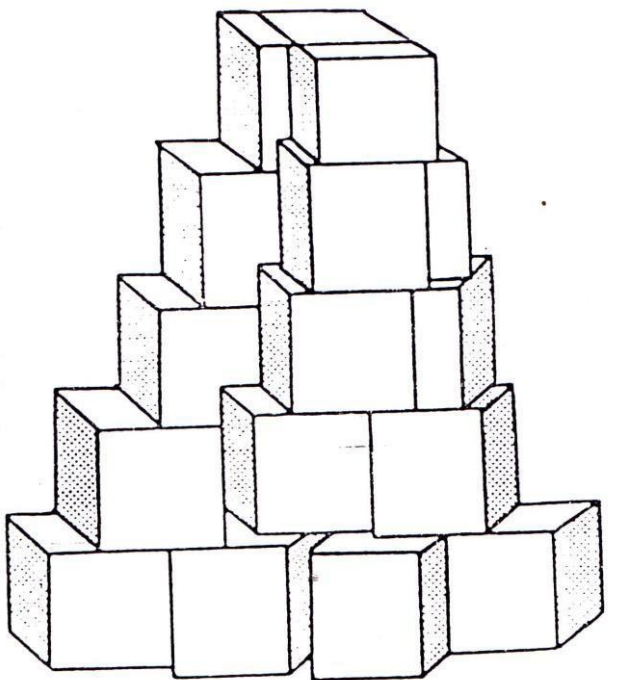
ENGLISH

MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE

Level: **DISCIPLE**

Study book no: 3

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."

PRINCIPLE: "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things!" (Rom. 11: 36)

(INCREASING IN KNOWLEDGE; MATURING IN CHARACTER; USING SPIRITUAL GIFTS)

INDEX Study book no: 3

	<u>PAGE NO.</u>
- How to make godly decisions and knowing God's will	292
- Evangelism starters / some notes on evangelism	299
- Reach out to the lost and you too can be a soul winner (11 Chapters)	305
A. The wisdom of soul winning	
B. What is a soul winner?	
C. Fishers of men!	
D. Taking men alive	
E. The classic case study, let's begin	
F. Some of the ways to approach a person	
G. Leading a person to Christ	
H. Getting to the heart of the matter	
I. Gaining a biblically based assurance	
(10) There are more ways than one	
(11) You are a Christian! - What now?	
- What should be our attitude to one another in the Body of Christ	346
- The importance of finding your place in the Body and be active	348
- The gifts of grace – what are they?	354
- Spiritual authority and submission: introduction	358
- An introduction to the Bible (Short summary of all the books of the Bible)	361
- How to search the Scriptures for yourself	394
- A study on what happens after death?	399
- Relationships, behaviour, maturity and attitude	404
- Living in the freedom of the new nature	410
- Developing a good attitude	416

HOW TO MAKE GODLY DECISIONS

How can you tell if you are making the right ethical decision? These scripture guides can help measure your choices.

Does it violate Scripture? “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your Word... I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you”. (Ps. 119:9-11).

Have I prayed about it? “Don’t worry about anything, instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs, and don’t forget to thank Him for His answers” (Phil. 4:6). When the king of Israel asked Jehoshaphat to go to battle with him, he told the king, “First seek the counsel of the Lord” (1 Kings 22:5). Good advice for us, too!

Who am I trying to please with this decision? “Am I now trying to win the approval of men, or of God? Or am I trying to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10).

Will this decision make me more godly? Or more worldly in my focus? “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—comes not from the Father, but from the world” (1 John 2:15-17).

Would Jesus do it? “But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do”. (1 Pet. 1:15).

Would I be ashamed for others to know I have done this? “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret” (Eph. 5:11-12).

Am I trusting God? “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5-6). A preacher pointed out, “Ultimately, all matters of unethicalness among Christians show a lack of faith and trust that God will provide for them regardless.” “Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf” (Prov. 11:28).

Would I be blameless in the eyes of the law and my employers? “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established” (Rom. 13:1).

Have I sought trustworthy advice? Do you feel you have lost your spiritual, physical, or emotional equilibrium to be a good judge in your situation? “Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Prov 11:14).

How does this decision affect others? “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matt. 7:12). “Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin” (Luke 17:1-2).

Will I have to stretch the truth or lie to pull this off? A poll revealed that 66 percent of those surveyed believe people frequently lie to get ahead at work. “The Lord detests lying lips, but He delights in men who are truthful” (Prov. 12:22)

What will be the long-term effects? “III -gotten treasures are of no value, but righteousness delivers from death”. (Prov. 10:2).

How will this affect my witness? “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong they may see your good deeds and glorify God”. (1 Pet. 2:12)

KNOWING GOD'S WILL

INTRODUCTION

The Scriptures reveal that God is both omnipotent and omniscient, that is, all-powerful and all-knowing. In the book of Isaiah we see that before Him “the nations are as a drop in a bucket” and “its inhabitants are like grasshoppers” (Is.40: 15, 22). We are also told that “there is no searching of His understanding” (Is.40: 28).

When we consider the greatness of God, we understand why David exclaimed, “What is man that You are mindful of him” (Psalms 8:4). He is not only mindful of us, but actually has a purpose and plan for each of our lives.

In this study we will see that God desires for us to know His will. We will also examine the different means He uses to reveal His will to us.

CAN WE KNOW GOD'S WILL?

Yes! Every Christian is given both the right and the responsibility of knowing the will of God. We not only can now it, we are expected to know it. We are told in Ephesians 5:17, “Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”

We have received the privilege and ability to know God's will through our adoption into His eternal family (Gal. 4:5-6). The sign of this adoption is the indwelling Holy Spirit Who comes to “guide you into all truth” (John 16: 13). It is the Holy Spirit within us Who enables us to know God's will in every aspect of our life. Jesus spoke of Him in John 16:14 when He said, “He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.”

The Christian needs to know will of God in these two general areas:

1--How should I live? – This question concerns our moral and spiritual conduct. We need to know how to behave ourselves in a fashion that will please God.

2--What I should I do – This area involves those decisions we must make concerning our life direction. Among these are choices concerning our employment, relationships, how to handle problems, whether to move, involvement in ministry, etc.

The answers to how we should live are clearly revealed in the Bible. Knowing God's will in decisions of direction can be more difficult. Here we will see how to determine the will of God for these kinds of choices.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GOD'S WILL

At one point during the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus began to instruct His disciples on the proper way to pray. The second line in what we call the Lord's Prayer contains the phrase “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). In praying this, Jesus reveals that God's desire is for those on earth to express His will just as it is done in heaven.

This prayer will be fulfilled completely when Christ returns to subdue His enemies and to establish His rule on this earth (Rev. 19 and 20). Until then, His Church is the place where His kingdom is to be manifested. Every born-again believer is a member of His Church, and is to live his life according to the will of God.

We can see the importance of doing God's will in the following reasons:

It assures us of eternal life, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My father in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

It allows us to understand additional truth, “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine” (John 7:17).

It guarantees us that God will hear our prayers “But if anyone is a worshipper of God and does His will, He hears him” (John 9:31).

It secures for us the promises of God, “...after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise” (Heb.10:36).

THE PRIORITY OF GOD'S WILL

Jesus set the pattern for how the believer should relate to the will of God. In John 5:30. He declares His commitment by saying, "I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father Who sent Me." In another place He said, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work" (John 4:34). Because of this commitment, just before His crucifixion He was able to say, "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do" (John 17:4).

Every believer is to have this same level of commitment to doing God's will. We are told to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). We should live our lives and make our choices according of what God would want for our lives.

If the will of God is to be priority in our life, we must be willing to make the following adjustments:

We must sincerely desire to do His will – "...doing the will of God from the heart" (Eph.6:6). God looks upon the heart. If our obedience is not from the heart, it is merely religious duty.

We must be willing to change life habits – "If anyone desire to come after Me, let him deny himself"(Matt. 16:24). This may mean changing friends, activities and commitments.

We must be willing to suffer – "Yet if anyone suffers as a Christians, let him not be ashamed" (I Pet. 4:16). Obedience to God's will can mean difficulties, ridicule or even persecution. Jesus faced Calvary with the declaration, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matt.26:39).

HIS REWARD OF OBEDIENCE

"And behold, I am coming quickly, and MY REWARD IS WITH ME, TO GIVE TO EVERYONE ACCORING TO HIS WORK" (Rev. 22:12).

Obedience to the will of God requires that we resist living according to the course of this world. We must conduct our lives in a way that please God! Living a life of righteousness and obedience calls for both discipline and sacrifice. Every effort and commitment, though, will be rewarded. The Lord blesses those that live in covenant relationship with Him. God is constantly aware of our behavior and choices. There is even a greater award awaiting the faithful and obedient when the Lord shall return and give to every person "according to his work".

HOW TO KNOW HIS WILL – TWELVE WAYS:

Even after determining to live our life according to the will of God, we can still be confused about the right choice in a decision we have to make.

Should I take this job? Should I teach Sunday School? Is the Lord wanting me to move? These are just a few of the many kinds of choices we must face.

Here we will look at the different indicators to consider when searching for God's direction. Finding His will is not always easy. He may use any one of these following indicators to reveal His will to us. As a rule, He will use more than one. Remember, searching for the will of God must be preceded by prayer. We do not arrive at God's mind through mere thought. Instead, we must cultivate His presence through prayer.

A STRONG SPIRITUAL LIFE

"And 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).

A strong spiritual life is the best qualification for being able to hear from God. We must reject being conformed to this world, and allow our minds to be renewed daily by the Spirit and the Word of God. In I Corinthians 2:14, we learn that the things of God are "spiritually discerned." We must develop our spiritual life if we want to be sensitive to the leading of God. A life of obedience, commitment, prayer and Bible study will allow for this development.

II GODLY MOTIVES

“KEEP YOUR HEART with all diligence, for out of it spring the issue of life” (Prov. 4:23).

The first thing we must do when seeking for the will of God is to check our motives. What motivation is prevailing in my heart? Am I really wanting to please God, or am I acting selfishly? Is my heart free from bad attitudes? Will I be acting in love? A choice made from a wrong motive will not be God’s choice. Our decisions should always be made from a dedication to please the Lord. We are told to live “not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts” (I Thess. 2:4). If our hearts are free from bad motives, we are in the right condition to hear from God.

THE WRITTEN WORD

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (II Tim. 3:16).

The Bible is the clear declaration of the mind and will of God. Many of our decisions can be answered through the clear statements of Scripture. For example, Proverbs 29:15 can answer our questions about the value of spanking as a form of child training and discipline. It states, “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” The Scriptures are filled with precepts and principles that give us wisdom in our decisions. God will never contradict what He has already spoken in the Bible. Failure to obey Scripture is failure to do the will of God (James 1:22).

IV. THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16).

The Holy Spirit has been given to the believer to guide us into all truth. It is His purpose to receive from the Lord and to show it to us (John 16:14-15). One of His functions is to provide for us an inner witness or indication of the mind and will of God.

As we mature in our relationship to God, we develop a greater capacity to sense the leading of the Holy Spirit. This spiritual witness is an inner sense of peace and affirmation when our decision is aligned with the will of God. This witness is lacking when we are moving against God’s will. Again, we must be careful that the peace we sense is not a result of getting to do what we want. To properly receive this witness, we must be totally committed to doing whatever God’s will may be, even if it requires sacrifice.

THE RHEMA

“The word is near you, even in your mouth and your heart (“that is, the word of faith which we preach)” (Rom.10:8).

The Greek word “*rhema*” for “word” means: a “specific utterance or saying.” It is used to describe the way God may speak to a person in a separate and distinct way. In other words, a “quicken” word of Scripture. In Mark 1:11 we have such an example when the Father spoke to Christ saying, “You are My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.”

Few people ever hear the audible voice of God. Instead, we may feel we have heard a “rhema” from God by sensing an inner impression of faith around a thought we are having. We may also get this “rhema” from a sense of faith in the application of a certain Scripture to our situation. There are certain cautions we must exercise in regards to hearing a “rhema” from God:

God will never contradict what is already in His Word – Whatever we hear from God must be in agreement with the Scriptures. It must also be in keeping with the nature of God. Revelation 22:18 gives a severe warning to those who “add to” His words.

We must look for other confirmations – There is much potential for personal feelings and desires to creep in to what we hear from God. Because of this, a “rhema” must be confirmed through other indicators.

We must watch for pride – When we think we have heard from God, there is a tendency for pride to sneak in “Pride goes before destruction” (Prov. 16:18). Be watchful for this tendency!

VI. GODLY COUNSEL

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but HE WHO HEEDS COUNSEL IS WISE” (Prov. 12:15).

One of the most important steps in knowing the will of God is to seek counsel from others. The above Scripture reveals that is the foolish person who ignores the valuable input of good counsel. By ourselves, we may see only a part of the total picture. Others can help enlarge our understanding. Our personal feelings and biases alone may discolor our judgement. Others can offer objective advice from a neutral position. This is why we are told that “in the multitude of counselors there is safety” (Prov.11:14).

We should choose godly counselors that have a reputation for wisdom. We must avoid seeking counsel from those who will only tell us what we want to hear. Spiritual leaders have been set in the Church to help instruct and guide the people of God. They should have a special counseling role in a major decision which we face.

The following are some Scriptures that show the place of godly overseers in our lives:

“Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you”. (Heb. 13:17)

“And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake” (I Thess. 5:12- 13).

Church leaders are usually wise and gifted counselors that we should consult for help in important decisions.

VII. CIRCUMSTANCES

“But I will tarry in Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (I Cor. 16:8- 9).

We see from the above Scriptures that Paul made a decision to remain at Ephesus because existing circumstance indicated that “a great...door” was opened for the gospel. Circumstances can often be a strong indication of God’s direction for us. A new job offer, an opportunity for advancement, a lack of finances, or other circumstances may indicate the choice we are to make.

However, we must be careful when making circumstances the only indication of God’s will. Other indicators such as godly counsel or an “inner witness” should also be present. There are occasions when circumstances may warrant us testing the will of God by stepping forward. In so doing, we hope to get a clearer witness concerning the direction that God would have us take. We have an example of this with Paul in acts 16:7, “After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.”

Before we test the Lord’s will by stepping forward, we must be careful to have right motives, good counsel and a sufficient inner witness to do so. After stepping forward, we must analyze the circumstances and “inner witness” we receive, and again seek godly counsel for further direction.

VII PROPHECY

“As they 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).

The will of God can be revealed through a personal, directive prophecy. There are a number of occasions in the New Testament where this is the case.

There are, however, some cautions to consider regarding personal prophecy. First, prophecies are to be judged (I Cor. 14:29). Personal prophecies should be spoken in the presence of mature leadership ministries so they can be considered and confirmed. Secondly, personal prophecy should be received only from those with proven prophetic or leadership ministries. Thirdly, the person receiving the prophecy is judged and confirmed, it can then be a valid indication of the will of God.

XI. VISIONS AND DREAMS

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, Come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). God may speak to us through visions or dreams (see also II Corinthians 12:4; Acts 9:10; 10:10; 22:17).

However, it is important to realize some facts about visions and dreams:

They are rare – Their lack of frequency in Scripture, when considering the time periods involved, proves that they are rare.

They were very clear – Those seen in Scripture were both vivid and extraordinary. They could not be a product of imagination or ordinary dreaming.

Their message was obvious and precise – God always clearly revealed their meaning to the person they affected.

Visions and dreams should not be sought after. If God chooses to communicate to you in this fashion, it will be obvious.

THE FLEECE

“Then Gideon said to God.... Look, I shall PUT A FLEECE of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece only... then I shall know that You will save Israel by my hand, as You have said” (Judges 6:36- 37).

This incident recorded in Judges 6 has given rise to a technique of determining God’s will called “fleecing the Lord.” It involves setting up a condition that God must meet to prove that He is guiding some one in a particular direction. The Lord met Gideon in his request, yet there are some definite cautions regarding the idea of “fleecing the Lord.” First, Gideon’s circumstance was unique and extraordinary. Secondly it appears to be a rare technique of determining God’s will in Scripture. Finally, fleecing can be presumptuous. It presumes that we can dictate how God will speak to us. Because of these reasons, “fleecing” can lead to error. Therefore, we must also require other indicators.

XI. NO WITNESS IS GOD’S WITNESS

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Prov.3:5- 6).

It is common when seeking God’s will in a decision to not receive any witness at all. In such instances, we may actually be getting a very clear witness. No witness is often God’s way of telling us to continue on in our present direction. His apparent silence can leave us frustrated and believing that He is not answering our prayer for guidance. Actually, His silence is His way of indicating that there should be no change.

However, we should be careful in accepting a “no witness” as His will too quickly. Further prayer may be required, or it may indicate improper timing. Such situations should be submitted to church leadership for counsel.

XII. TWO OR MORE WITNESSES

“...by mouth of two or three witness the matter shall be established” (Deut. 19:15).

The Scriptures give us an important principle in determining the will of God. It is the principle of two or three witnesses. In the Old Testament it was forbidden to convict a person for a crime on the testimony of only one witness (Deut. 17:6; 19:15). The same principle is found in the New Testament, and requires that an accusation against another be verified by two or three witnesses (see Matt. 18:16; II Cor. 13:1).

This principle can also be applied to establishing the will of God in a matter. When God is leading you, He will confirm it by two or more witnesses. For example, a personal prophecy can be confirmed by the witness of leadership. Requiring two or three witnesses in seeking the will of God can prevent us from making a wrong decision.

CONCLUSION

God desires that we both know and walk in His will. We have briefly examined the different ways that He can reveal His will to us. Still, finding the will of God may not always be easy. Often, He first has to deal with wrong motives or attitudes in our lives, or it may take Him time to arrange the people or circumstances that will eventually bring us the understanding of His will.

However, we do have a promise from God that He will answer. In Jeremiah 29:13 He declares, “And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.” If we are conscientious and careful, in due time He will reveal His will to us.

EVANGELISM STARTERS

Writers sit staring at their blank computer screens: writer's block. Drivers sit staring at miles of bumpers ahead of them: road block. People with a heart for the lost sit staring at an empty chair: evangelistic block. There are such people in your church...and it might even be you.

Here are some ideas to help you restart evangelistic efforts in your church. May these be helpful to you and encouraging to your congregation in their outreach efforts.

Ask God to guide you into new relationships with un-churched people and to help you deepen the ones you already have.

Pray for these friends by name, asking God to open them up to His love and truth, and to empower and use you in the process.

Ask a non-Christian friend to join you for lunch, or invite them to come to your home for a dinner or dessert.

Write a letter of encouragement to someone in your life who is going through a difficult time and doesn't yet know Christ.

Make a call to an old friend you haven't seen for a long time – even if they now live in a different part of the country – and catch up with what's new in your lives.

Go out of your way this week to meet someone in the office, school, or neighborhood with whom you've not yet had the chance to talk.

Write down the names of three people you are going to pray for and reach out to.

Take a look at Jesus example of starting a spiritual conversation in John chapter 4, and then follow His lead by raising a spiritual topic with someone you know. Ask them what their perspective is on the matter and then really listen to them.

Follow-up with someone with whom you talked about Christianity some time ago. See where they are at in their spiritual journey and how you might be able to help them take next steps.

Ask God to show you what spiritual risk He wants you take today.

Study up on the faith-related issues you think your friend is most concerned about and then look for opportunities to talk about them.

Pass along a Christian book or tape that has been especially helpful to you and that you think would relate well to your friend.

Read Luke 15, and spend some time reflecting on how God views those outside of His family. Ask God to give His heart toward them as well.

Read a chapter or two out of a book that will encourage you in your outreach efforts. You might also want to read and discuss one of these books in your Sunday School class or small group.

Meet with a couple of Christian friends and pray together for the people you are each trying to reach.

Deepen the conversation with someone you've already had a spiritual conversation with, and tell them the story of how you came to know Christ personally.

Bring an unbeliever friend to an appropriate outreach service or event at your church or in your community.

EVANGELISM

What is Evangelism?

The Greek word “evangelism” (Gospel), actually means: "good news". It is the good news from a loving God to the lost world (John 3:16-17; Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20).

Types of Evangelism

There are mainly two types of evangelism in the New Testament. These are Personal and Mass Evangelism-Acts 20:20.

Mass Evangelism (Matt. 4:23, 25; 9:35; 11:1; Mark 1:36-39; Luke 10-1; Acts 8:4-8)
Mass Evangelism involves many people and much money. It is a type of evangelism whereby the preacher deals with the masses at lawns, streets, market places, buses, outdoor and indoor gathering etc. It therefore requires public address systems, lights and helping hands.

Personal Evangelism (John 1:40-42, 45-47; Acts 8:26-37; John 4:1-30)

This type of evangelism is the sharing of the gospel with one person at a time. It is characterised by wisdom and patience. At times you have to make an appointment with the one you want to minister to. Before making such an appointment you need to establish a good relationship. This will create an opportunity for the message to be well taken. Personal evangelism yields a great result when it is properly done. It has the following philosophy:

Going to the sinner personally.

Showing concern and interest for the sinner.

Making sure to win them to the Lord at all costs.

In conclusion, evangelism is not to be left in the hands of those in full-time service only. It is the supreme task for all the Christians in the Kingdom of God – John 15:16.

This great commission has no geographical barriers. It is to be exercised into all the world without any racial restrictions, and also there should be no class distinction. (Act 1:8; Mark 16:15).

C. The urgency of the gospel

The harvest is truly plentiful. Any delay will result in rotting or destruction (Matt. 9:36-37; Jn. 4:35)

The shortness of time and the endlessness of eternity (John 9:4; 1 Cor. 7:29-31)

Jesus was a soul-winner, Christian means Christ-like. To this effect, every Christian is supposed to be a soul-winner.

The sinner’s blood will be required at your hands (Ezek. 33: 6-8).

You were lost and were saved by the sacrificial death of Christ. You must therefore sacrifice yourself for the salvation others.

Because of the unfulfilled prophecies of the coming of Christ – Matt. 24:14.

The fact of the reality of hell.

Hell awaits all who fail to repent and you need to love them and share the good news with them (Rev. 21:8; Rev 20:15; Gal. 5:19-21; Luke 16:19-31)

D. Qualification of a soul-winner

The soul-winner must first experience the new birth in Christ, and must show forth the true fruit of his salvation (Is 52:11; II Tim 2:19-21).

He must be zealous and knowledgeable (Prov. 19:2; Luke 10:38-42).

You must be baptized, filled with the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8; Luke 24:46-49).

You must bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:20-22; Matt. 12:33; Matt. 7:15-20).

A soul-winner must have a strong unshakable conviction for the great task of soul-winning (John 5:9-11; Acts 21:8-14; 26:22-24; I Cor. 9:16)

Approach in soul-winning

Your effort to win people to Christ is based on establishing good relationship and also having knowledge about the person's state of life in a simple dialogue. The following are recommended for your successful approach:

You must be very sensitive to the Holy Spirit so as to be able to discern whether the person is saved, back-slidden or unsaved. Jesus said that at that very hour the Spirit of your father will speak to you.

The Scripture says that by their fruit you shall know them (Matt. 7:18-20). You can therefore take notice of their appearances and their deeds to determine their state in the Lord.

The third thing you must do is put across certain thoughtful questions to the person. If he is able to answer them, it means that he has a witness in himself.

Question One:

If someone would to ask you, Are you a Christian or a child of God, what would you say?

Naturally, the person would answer yes. You must not put him off. Rather, continue with the question.

Question Two:

So if the person were to ask you, how did you become saved or a Christian, what would you reply?

His answer to the second question must have the following contents:

His personal realisation that was born a sinner and was heading towards eternal punishment in hell. (Rom. 5:12-14; 3:23)

His absolute turn to God in true repentance after hearing the good news and believing in his heart and confessing Christ Jesus as his personal Saviour, inviting Him to be Lord completely over his life (Rom. 10:9-10).

F. The message of the soul-winner

After the above process you may realise that there is the need to share with the person the message of the gospel as follows:

God's original plan for mankind: -In their perfect state, man was enjoying God's life, glory, honour and authority (Gen. 1:26-31; Ps. 8: 4-8).

Man's fall as a result of sin: -When the first man and woman were deceived by Satan through the serpent, they fell from the position God placed them in (Rom. 3:12-14; 3:23; Gen. 3:16).

Effect of sin: -Sin brought separation between God and man. Man was exposed to various curses like sickness, poverty, failures in life as being enslaved by the devil (Rom. 3:23b; 6:23; Is. 59:1-2; 1 John 3:8).

Further effect of sin: -Sinners will suffer eternal punishment in hell fire (Rev. 20:11-15; 21:7-8)

God's remedy: -John 3:16 must be the central focus in the message of salvation to every sinner. God loves man and He has therefore provided a way of escape through Jesus Christ, His Son (Rom. 5:8; John 3:17; Luke 19:10)

HOW TO BE SAVED / HOW TO RECEIVE THE REMEDY OF GOD?

Repent – Jesus said in Luke 13:2-5 that, “except you repent you will surely perish.” This is a call to an absolute turn from one's life which does not bring glory to the Lord and decide to follow Jesus (Luke 15:17-19; 19:8-9)

Confess - You should be willing to allow Jesus to be your master in all things. With this willingness, you have to confess with your mouth that Jesus should be your Lord. You have already believed that there is no other Saviour besides Him. You are therefore allowing Him to rule over your life. (Rom. 10:9 – 10; Ps. 23:1-3; 1 John 5:1).

After presenting this message, with the readiness of the person to receive Jesus, you can assist by leading him in a sinner's prayer as follows:

"Heavenly Father, I thank you for such an opportunity to hear your Word. Thank you for sending Jesus to die for my sins. I accept that I am a sinner and I can not save myself. Dear Jesus, I have decided therefore to receive You as my personal Saviour and Lord of my life!"

After leading him to receive Jesus through the prayer, let him keep silent and pray to destroy every plan of the Devil in his life. You must ask God to fill him with His peace, joy and strong desire to follow Him. Additionally, open to John 1:11-12 and ask the following questions:

According to this Scripture, who could become a child of God?

Have you now believed and received Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour?

What have you become since you have just prayed to receive Jesus?

FOLLOW-UP

INTRODUCTION

Among the greatest tasks in evangelism is the act of follow-up activities on those who receive the good news when it is preached. Without an effective follow-up, the work done is in vain.

IT'S IMPORTANCE

Every soul won for Christ naturally desires some attention and good care from the Christian community, and without it, they soon forget all about it. Follow-up gives birth to multiplication of evangelism, ensuring church growth. That is, good follow-up done brings more people to be disciples. They in turn multiply the fruit of evangelism. Let's read Mathew 13:1-23.

Jesus said that there are four types of soils representing four different types of hearts of men that receive the word of God. Which are they?

Q-1. Path represents which part?

Q-2. Which heart represents the rocky soil?

Q-3. Some fell on thorns. What is this soil about?

Q-4. Finally, some on good soil. Which are they?

Now, let's face facts. What caused these soils to be unfruitful? Relating these to life of people as we come across in the proclaimed of the gospel, it could be realised that naturally people don't want to fully surrender their lives to God unless they are really touched by the Spirit of God. An example of this is Nathaniel (John 1:45-46). Some also act blindly (Acts 26-20; II Cor 4:3-6). Others too are spiritually poor - bound or imprisoned by the devil. (Is. 61:1-2).

This situation tells you that a newly born-again person really needs to be visited several times until he stands very well on his feet in the Lord. (Matt. 25:31-46; 5:43-48; Luke 13:6-9).

PRACTICAL STEPS TO FOLLOW-UP ON A BELIEVER

Have an estimated number of people living in a community who have become saved and are not being followed-up.

Begin to pray seriously, interceding for them. (Col. 1:3-13; Zech 4:6-7; James 5:16-17).

Apply two by two method in Luke 10:1-7 (Two people visiting a place together at a time).

Show a real concern by identifying their spiritual and physical problems and by helping them a best as you can.

At those on whom you are following-up may come up with varied excuses to prevent you from the following-up. You must therefore exercise patience with them (John 13:14; Luke 10:31-37).

Build up lifestyle in which people can easily approach you and you can also approach people of all classes.

Study to show yourself approved and be a prayer warrior in the course of your follow-up.

Finally be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit always as you share with them.

TEN GUIDELINES FOR SOUL-WINNERS:

These guidelines must be kept in mind:

I MUST LIVE IT. I can't say to others. "Do as I say, but don't do as I do." They must see Christ in me (1 Cor. 4:9). My Strongest testimony is my daily life.

I MUST LOVE PEOPLE. I cannot pretend. The other person knows my motive immediately. The power of evangelism is described in Revelation 22:17, "And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come". When my concern for others is in keeping with the concern of the Holy Spirit toward mankind, there is a community of interest in the individual that results in compulsion.

I MUST MEET THE PUBLIC. Jesus was heaven's artist as this. He never met a stranger. Paul testified, "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22). Kindness will open doors (Eph. 4:32). It will bring an affirmative response.

I MUST LOOK FOR NEED. Jesus said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Mark 2:17).

You will be surprised how many people are ready to talk. They simply need someone in whom they can have confidence. Zacchaeus was in trouble. Uninvited, Jesus talked about his sin. That is the point of contact human need.

I MUST COMMUNICATE. Refuse to become involved in debate. The Samaritan woman quibbled: "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship" (John 4:20). It wasn't her head that was troubling her. It was her heart. She needed Christ before she needed a church; a Redeemer before she needed a ritual. "I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He" (John 4:25-26).

I MUST CONCENTRATE ON CHRIST. I can get so much "I" into my testimony that spiritual pride will offend the person to whom I am witnessing. The rule of John the Baptist still holds, "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30). My business is to present Jesus (John 12:32). Christ is the attraction.

I MUST USE TACT. This suggests a sensitivity to the other man's feelings. It is a spirit of discernment. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). Be natural. Be a good listener. Ask wise questions

I MUST BRING A PERSON TO A DECISION. This can only be accomplished through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). The chance may never come again. Opportunity is God-given. Don't gamble with it. Press for a decision. "Yet you do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2). Don't let people say of you at Judgement Day, "He never asked me to be a Christian."

I MUST TEACH THEM TO LISTEN TO GOD'S VOICE. It is my business to introduce them to the Savior. So often the worker only introduces himself. "Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace: Thereby good will come to you" (Job 22:21). Let the person with whom you are dealing hear for the first time the voice of God speaking to him or her in reassurance and comfort, and you have built strength.

This is done by teaching the person two or three primary verses of Scripture. Tie the seeker to God's Word. Let your friend know before you leave him that God has spoken these words to him. These words carry a guarantee.

Here is an example.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My Word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life “(John 5:24). These are the words of the Son of God. They are spoken to you. They are spoken with finality and authority.

I MUST MAKE IT CRYSTAL CLEAR THAT THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KNOWING GOD AND KNOWING ABOUT GOD. Hearsay is not enough. Birth is not something that is second-hand. “And when the brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” (John 10:4-5).

I know God when I get down to business with Him. “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you” (James 4:8). God has expressed His willingness in a covenant, contract or testament. It bears His signature in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The moment I exercise faith toward this written Word and become personally involved in agreement, that very moment the entire contract, or covenant, is in force toward me.

If I do not associate the seeker with the Word of God, that person will miss his way. The devil will deceive the inquirer before breakfast. He will lie so cleverly that the inquirer will apologize to worldly associates before the day is over.

Remember: the authority is in the Word of God!

REACH OUT TO THE LOST AND YOU TOO CAN BE A SOUL WINNER!

(Basic lessons in soul winning)

CHAPTER ONE – The Wisdom of Soul Winning.

Christians are the most blessed and privileged people on earth. Blessed to be reconciled to God through Christ. Privileged to be able to bring others into that same relationship.

Many of us are also amongst the wisest people on earth too, although this may not always be obvious. Particularly to our unsaved colleagues and peers, for it is true that we are frequently lacking in some areas of wisdom. Jesus Himself said that “The children of this world are wiser in their generation, than the children of light.” (Luke 16:8). He was emphasising the obvious fact that many people in the world are a great deal wiser in some things than are many Christians. However, their greater wisdom has a serious flaw. It is wisdom limited to this life, i.e., they are wiser, in their generation, than are many children of light.

We Christians may not always be a shrewd as we ought to be, but we will ultimately be proven to be wiser than our unsaved peers, for eternity will declare that our wisdom was not limited to time or to this present life. It will be seen to be a wisdom which took account of eternity. It will be obvious that we have made some quality decisions which impacted favourably on our eternal future.

The first and greatest of these decisions was to surrender to the Lordship of Christ. This is what the Bible calls “being made wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Jesus”. (2 Tim. 3:15.)

The second great decision we may make is to become an ambassador for Christ and determine to faithfully represent Him wherever we may be, to whomever we may meet. This involves our Christian character and lifestyle as we faithfully live out the principles of our commitment. It also involves speaking about Christ, confessing our allegiance to Him, and giving witness about Him to others. Telling them why Christ came into the world and what He has accomplished on their behalf. In this manner we become His witnesses. We are numbered amongst those who make Christ known to their fellow men, and endeavor with God’s help, to bring them to a saving knowledge of Him.

All who make this decision and follow it through with determination are among those of whom the Bible says, “He that wins souls is wise.” (Prov. 11:30-KJV). Witnessing to others and bringing them to knowledge of God’s saving grace is one of the greatest thrills that this life can afford. Seeing people’s lives changed and transformed is both exciting and rewarding beyond description. It is calling and ministry which is open to every believer. None need be denied the joyous privilege. Certainly you can be counted amongst this special company. The very fact that you are reading this study indicates your interest in this ministry and I am confident that as you read and study along your desire and ability to serve God in this way will be increased and enhanced.

It is now more than thirty-five years since I personally first came to a saving knowledge of Christ. It was immediately after this that I began to tell others of my own experience and I can still vividly remember the excitement and thrill of seeing many people accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord. How rewarding it was to see them begin to grow in their new found faith. How fulfilling to see them also begin to bring others to Christ, and to witness the impact of the Gospel touching and changing lives. After all these years the thrill remains. It is still amongst the greatest experience one can have. To see lives impacted and transformed through God’s Grace, and to witness the ongoing triumph of the greatest story every told. Let us consider together the wisdom of Soul winning.

TAKE THE POSITIVE APPROACH:

As we consider the implications of this exciting ministry I want to encourage you to approach this in a very positive manner. Believe that everything that the Scriptures say on this subject apply to you personally. There is no legitimate reason why YOU may not be successful and effective in this

ministry. Every possible objection you may raise has an answer and a solution in God. There is no hindrance that He cannot overcome. If you are willing, God will help you overcome every obstacle which may threaten to hinder you. He will take your willingness and determination and transform it into Soul Winning success. Through your life and witness many will be turned to salvation and the kingdom of God will be greatly enlarged.

In the natural, the single most powerful factor required for accomplishment and success is the faith factor. Quiet confidence and positive expectation are vital and indispensable keys to accomplishment and success. If you do not believe that you can do a certain thing, the indications are that you never will. Success never comes to the unwary. People almost invariably get what they expect from life. This is as true in Soul Winning as in any other area of life, for it is an unchanging law of life that “You reap whatever you sow.” (Gal. 6: 7-8). If you sow whilst harbouring negative thoughts of doubt and pessimism in your mind, you will never reap a positive, effective, and fruitful harvest. So, as you study these chapters, be positive and confident that God is going to use you in a remarkable way to win other persons into His kingdom. Remember that God is with you! He has commissioned you! He wants you to succeed!

God is going to accomplish His purposes, and if you are willing. He will accomplish them through YOU.

The Holy Spirit of God is working within you now. He will guide you to the very people to whom God wants you to speak. He will put the right words into your mouth. He will empower those words with authority and make them powerfully effective. The Holy Spirit will bring all things to your remembrance at the right time and for the right occasion. He will give you insight into the needs of the people to whom you witness. You will find yourself speaking words of wisdom which you did not prepare or pre-meditate. It is the work of God in which you will be involved and if you are a willing channel He will flow through you to accomplish His purpose.

A WORD TO THE WISE.

To some degree wisdom is a matter of choice. If you have a little wisdom, you can choose to become wiser because of the process of growing in wisdom involves making the right choices. Solomon was aware of this when God appeared to him one night in a dream and said, “ask what I shall give you.” (1 Kings 3:3-15). What an opportunity! Solomon could have asked for whatever his heart desired but he used the little wisdom he possessed to acquire more. He humbly requested “an understanding heart” in order to rightly judge the affairs of his people and to properly discern between right and wrong as he sought to rule over them.

In this study you will discover opportunities to make some right decisions which will prove to be extremely wise. Decisions to serve God with a new zeal and determination.. Decisions to redeem the time by using every opportunity to share your Faith and thus influence others towards God. As you commence this new walk God will continually add to your wisdom. You will learn so much more about God and your fellow man than you ever knew before. You will acquire more and more wisdom and you will take your place in the ranks of those whom God considers to be wise. For in His estimation, “he that wins souls is wise.”

WISDOM AND SOUL WINNING:

“The fruit of righteousness is a tree of life; and he that wins soul is wise.” (Prov. 11:30)

Wisdom and Soul winning go together because: The Wisdom of God is indispensable in the winning of souls. We could never hope to win people to Christ using our own natural wisdom. “The natural man (mind) receives not (does not understand) the things of the Spirit, they are foolishness to him. Neither can he know them for they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:14). So, whenever one brings some one to Christ, they are doing it by the wisdom of God – the wisdom of God is operating through them.

Why is the Soul Winner said to be wise?

Because he is obeying the commandment of the Lord. The final command which Jesus gave before ascending into heaven has been called the “Great commission.” It constitutes the

Church's marching orders, sending believers into all the world to share the Gospel with every person.

The Wisdom of God is manifestly working in those who successfully bring people to God for such a task could never be accomplished through human wisdom.

The Soul Winner is becoming more Christ-like in the process because Jesus Himself was the greatest of all Soul Winners.

The power of Christ is at work in the Soul Winner. Jesus told Peter, and his companions "Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." (Matt. 4:19). In every Christian who is consistently witnessing and winning souls, the power of Christ is manifest. Jesus is working within them, doing what He said He would do, - making them fishers of men!

The Soul Winner is wise because he is working, not only for time, but for eternity. He is "laying up treasure in heaven". The results of his labours will not only benefit him to the end of his days, they will follow him into eternity.

He is performing a task which the wisest (non-believer) in the world could never accomplish. This makes him wiser than any non-believer in the world.

The Soul Winner is earning the undying appreciation of every person he reaches with the Gospel for that person has been rescued from the power of Satan, Sin and Eternal Death. They have been brought into eternal fellowship with God.

Soul winners are wise because they have won the eternal commendation of the Heavenly Father and brought everlasting delight to His heart.

The Scriptures make it abundantly clear that God holds Soul Winners in a special esteem. This alone should fill us with a powerful desire to be a Soul Winner, but there are many other reasons also and we shall discover them as we continue our study.

Remember : "He that wins Souls is WISE."

CHAPTER TWO - What is a Soul - Winner?

The Bible clearly shows that it is God's desire and intention that every Christian should give witness to their faith and win others to Christ as a result. Sadly we must admit that this is not the case and that there are millions of Christians who do not win others. If this were not so the whole world may well have been won to God by now. At a later point in this study we shall look at some the reasons why many do not share their faith and how these objections or fears may be overcome.

Meanwhile let's ask ourselves, "**What is a Soul Winner?**"

A Soul Winner is a Christian, with a genuine experience of salvation through faith in Christ, and a solid assurance of having been "Born Again", by the Spirit of God. Unless this is true, the would-be witness has nothing to share. Until we have personally experienced the living reality of salvation ourselves, we have nothing to offer to others that is of any value. However, once we have believed and received Christ, God expects us to begin immediately to confess our faith to others and to make every endeavour to lead them into a like experience.

This is beautifully illustrated in the story of the GarderenCe in Luke 8:26-40. This dramatic narrative tells of a man "filled with devils", who came into a powerful confrontation with Jesus. He was dramatically delivered from his tormentors and in verse 35 we see him "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind." He eagerly requested that he might remain with Jesus, perhaps hoping that he might be allowed to travel around with Him, but Jesus replied, "Return to your home, and tell what great things God has done for you."

The "Woman of Samaria", is also a classic case of a person becoming an effective witness immediately after her own meeting with Jesus. (John 4:1-42.) Right after He ministered into her life she immediately returned to her village and began to urge her peers to, "Come, see a man who told

me all the things I ever did, is not this the Messiah?" The immediate result of her witness and testimony was that "many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him because of the testimony of the woman." (V.39). They in turn urged Jesus to remain in their village for a further two days and "many more believed because of His own Word." (Verse 40- 41).

A Soul winner "feels" the "Burden of the Lord" for lost humanity and shares with Him His desire to see all men come to a knowledge of the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. (1 Tim. 2:4). As we begin to grow in our relationship with God, He begins to share with us His heart and we start to become burdened with those things that burden Him. Through the intimacy of prayer, communication, and fellowship with God, we begin to develop a new sensitivity to life and people. Our old ideas and outlooks are discarded and we begin to "see things as God sees them, and feel things as He feels them." The fact is that God's nature and character are becoming intertwined with ours. We are beginning to grow up into His image and likeness.

One of the many results of this new spiritual growth is that we now see people in a different light. We have a new perspective, a new view of them. Whereas previously we may have scarcely spared a concerned thought for some person, now we see that same person as Jesus sees them. We feel for them as He feels for them. We have compassion on them, as He has compassion on them. And we begin to reach out to them in order to share with them the Good News of Redemption through faith in Christ.

We also begin to pray and intercede for lost mankind. Not out of a sense of legal or religious obligation, but because the life and nature of Christ is now inside our minds and hearts. We ache when we see people separated from God through their sins and iniquities. We yearn over them, longing to see them come to a knowledge of the Truth. We earnestly desire to see them brought "out of darkness, into the glorious light of the Gospel."

A Soul Winner purposefully looks for opportunities to tell others of Jesus and the wonderful salvation available to all who trust in Him. A true Soul Winner not only makes the most of every opportunity to tell others of Christ, he actually makes opportunities to do so. His main purpose in life is to share the Gospel and lead men and women to the saving knowledge of Christ. Consequently he organises his life around this main premise. He may be a successful businessman, but his real business in life is to make Christ known. His business is a means of supporting him and his family, but his real purpose in life and the consuming passion of his heart, is to actively engage in the greatest business on earth, leading to Christ.

Eager as this person is to share his faith, he does not rush around madly, confronting every person he meets with the claims of Christ. He prays each day that the Holy Spirit will bring men and women into his path who need to hear about Jesus. Then he stays alert and watchful for the opportunities which the Spirit will engineer. The Soul Winner listens to the Holy Spirit quietly whispering into his heart, "here is a person who needs to hear the Good News." As we quietly and patiently listen to the voice of the Spirit in our heart, He will inspire us with the very words we should speak. He knows the heart and circumstances of all men and shares with us the appropriate manner in which to open up the conversation to the things of eternity.

A Soul Winner deliberately testifies to others, sharing with them his experience and endeavouring to bring them into that same wonderful relationship with Christ. Many sincere Christians never undertake the task of Soul Winning because they mistakenly feel that they need to have an extremely wide and comprehensive knowledge of the Bible and associated subjects. They mistakenly believe that one needs a seminary education in order to bring others to Christ. However this is not the case. The most effective tool that any Soul Winner possesses is their own testimony. Sharing the story of what happened to their life when Jesus came into it, is an extremely powerful and effective means of convincing others of the reality of the Gospel. We have seen that this is what Jesus told the Garderene demoniac to do- "Go home and show, tell, share, with everyone what great things God has done for you."

The great Apostle Paul obviously understood the effectiveness of personal testimony. As we follow his journeys in the New Testament narrative, we frequently hear him sharing his personal testimony. He did so before Felix, (Acts 24:1-23), Festus (Acts 25:1-9), and Agrippa, (Acts 25: 13-27).

Paul was an extremely eloquent person, well educated, schooled and skilled in the principles of oratory, and a great preacher, yet he constantly used the plain narrative of personal testimony, telling exactly what happened to him during that life changing journeys to Damascus. (Acts 9:1-19) There is something basically and powerfully persuasive in the telling of one's personal experience. We will look at this in some detail later in this study.

Billy Graham's inspiring example.

I still vividly remember a great privilege I once enjoyed many years ago while going overseas. I was preaching to several hundred young people at an Easter Camp. It so happened that Dr. Billy Graham, who was conducting huge Evangelistic Crusades, had come there with his team for a brief holiday. One of his top executives came along to the camp where I was speaking and as a result I was invited to the hotel to share a meal with Dr. Graham and the team. The thing that impressed me more deeply than anything else was a "pep talk" which Dr. Graham gave to the team in which he strongly exhorted them to be sensitive to every opportunity to witness for Christ on a personal basis. He said the fact that they were on a few days' holiday did not mean that they should not continue to be spiritually alert to opportunities to make Jesus known. He also added that although they were seeing record crowds attending the great Evangelistic Rallies this did not mean that they should neglect the commission to pursue their calling to the ministry of personal evangelism.

The following week Dr. Graham was preaching each night to record crowds. He had invited me to join him on the platform, which I gladly did. I vividly remember sitting just behind him as he preached his great sermon on "The Home". Many hundreds came forward that night as he gave the appeal. It was an occasion and a non-erasable experience impressed itself on my mind. When I spoke to him later and mentioned how deeply impressed I was with all that was happening in the Crusade, he humbly replied that it was not his doing, but the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit. He modestly refused to accept any credit or any glory, attributing everyone to God and His gracious Spirit.

A Soul Winner not only testifies to others of their own personal experience of Salvation, they also actively endeavour to lead the person to Christ, seeking to pray with them and having them verbally confess Christ as their Saviour and Lord. One of the main things which inhibits and hinders prospective Soul Winners, is not knowing how to go about this task. This is something which can be rectified with some basic training in the art of bringing people to Christ, and the lessons here can certainly assist to that end. There is little purpose in demanding that Christians should bring others to Christ, unless we are prepared to offer the guidance and training which will enable them to do so.

If a person is genuinely ignorant about how to perform a particular function, this will undoubtedly restrict them from trying to do so. However, the reverse is also true. Once they discover how to do something and are successful in performing that particular task, an enthusiasm develops and they become eager to do it again. Sometimes their enthusiasm becomes almost insatiable. They want to be doing that task all the time. May God grant that these brief studies may have that effect. May the Holy Spirit raise up an army of trained, skilled, enthusiastic witnesses who will make Christ known and lead multitudes to Him.

SEVEN REASONS WHY WE OUGHT TO WIN SOULS.

Jesus has commissioned us to this vital ministry. (Acts 1:8.)

He is our example and role model.

He has filled us with the Holy Spirit for this purpose. (Acts 1:8.)

Soul winning was the secret of the early church's astonishing growth.

We are debtors to the unsaved. (Rom. 1:14.)

The day of opportunity will soon be over.
We will give account of our stewardship before Christ.

CHAPTER THREE - Fishers of Men!

One of the analogies which Jesus frequently employed to illustrate the work of Soul Winning was that of fishing. He told Peter and his companions “Follow me and I will make you Fishers of men.” (Matt. 4:19). The graphic word which Jesus used was “*zograo*”, meaning: “to take alive!” Thus He called Peter, and He calls us, to “take men alive” for the Kingdom of God!

Obviously the method of fishing in Bible days and in that culture involved the use of nets. Nevertheless there are also many lessons we can learn if we compare Soul Winning to fishing with a line and bait. Let’s look at some of these comparisons.

Go where the fish are biting

This observation should seem to be so obvious that it would be unnecessary to mention it. No fisherman would ever waste his time and effort endeavouring to catch fish if he knew were none to be caught. It would be like casting a line into the bath tub. You could stay there for months and catch nothing, for the simple reason that there are no fish in the tub, nor are there ever likely to be any.

However, obvious as this simple fact may be, there are literally thousands of sincere pastors who go fishing every week in a tub in which there are no fish. I refer to the evangelistic meetings or gospel services which are conducted regularly in churches in which no unbelievers are present. Week after week the Gospel is faithfully presented in the best possible manner. Items in song, excellent Gospel sermons, personal testimonies, all of which should be excellent bait, but to no avail. The sinners are just not there to hear. Yet the process goes on. No fisherman would keep trying in a place where it was obvious that there were no fish to be caught there. He would change his venue, or changes his method.

I have never been a keen fisherman but I do remember some occasions when as a young boy I went fishing in the local river. My slightly older, more experienced companion had learned one or two things from which I benefited. One of the things he learned was the necessary to bring some fish into the area in which we planned to do some fishing. So, we would go early in the morning, before any other fishermen arrived, and we would lay a “bread bait”. By the time other intending fishermen were arriving we usually had some healthy activity in the area which we had prepared. We would soon begin to catch some fish to the envy and frustration of others who were not catching anything. Some of them would wonder how we knew to fish in such a spot, ensure that some fish were attracted to our particular spot. Some pastors should think about this and ask themselves, “What might we do to get some unsaved people into our “pond”? Or, alternatively, they might consider moving their gospel meetings to another more accessible, more neutral, and less threatening venue. Many churches and church buildings have no attraction whatsoever for non-Christians. The events and activities conducted there have little relevance and hold no appeal for the uninitiated.

Use the right kind of bait.

Following the same line of reasoning, we need to consider from time to time if we are using the right kind of bait. I frequently ask pastors, “If you were going fishing, would you take the bait that you like, or the bait which the fish like?” Again the answer is so simple that the question appears naïve. Yet the fact is that in most cases, when we Christians go fishing, we use the bait which we like and seem to give little thought to what may appeal to the fish.

This is true whether we are fishing in the local church “pond”, or whether we are engaged in some evangelistic outreach into the community. We must use the kind of bait that will at least attract the attention of the fish. This is true whether we are considering the format of gospel meeting,

evangelistic outreaches, using Christian literature, music, dramas, or whatever other “attraction” we may try.

Most churches and Christians are extremely conservative and unimaginative or uncreative when it comes to the right kind of bait to use. They are afraid that if we use something to which the unsaved are attracted, then it must be “worldly” or “fleshly”. They are convinced that they want to use more “spiritual” methods, but the sad thing is that their “spiritual” methods are frequently just not working. No fish are being caught. So we should ask ourselves if a particular type of bait is effective. If people are being attracted, convicted and subsequently saved, then somebody is doing the right thing!

One of the problems is that once a person has come to Christ, their new Christian activities absorb them so completely that they have no time or desire to maintain contact with their former friends and companions. They become so separated from them that they lose contact with where people are and what interests them. Many Christians become so “spiritual”, that they no longer have any meaningful contact with non-Christians. Now I realise that separating oneself from the world is a necessary aspect of the process of sanctification and spiritual development, but sometimes we need to consider how Jesus managed to be in right relationship with His Father and yet be the “friend of sinners.” How did He manage to keep Himself spotless from the world and yet have such a life style that the “common people heard Him gladly.” Wherever He went the crowds would gather and whenever He ministered to them His ministry was eagerly received.

Don't frighten away the fish.

Another simple lesson I learned in those boyhood days was “Don't make a noise; Don't frighten away the fish!” I can hear the whispered voice of urgency now in my imagination. It was all too easy to alarm the fish and frighten them away if one was not careful. The principle holds true with non-Christian. It is so easy to alarm them and frighten them away.

I recently witnessed an “open air service” in an Asian city. The earnest and sincere Christians had gained permission to use an amplifying system and their voices were reaching far and wide, but their tone was so harsh and condemnatory. The implication of their message was so “holier than you”. They seemed to have almost a sense of delight in telling the people that they were heading for hell. But nobody stopped to listen. Nobody went over and engaged them in conversation seeking help or counsel or asking for prayer. The whole exercise appeared futile. It seemed to be a lot of noise that served only to frighten the fish away.

How much more effective it might have proved had there been tones of grace and mercy and the idea conveyed that here was a group of compassionate people who wanted to offer help and solace to their listeners. The people to whom they were speaking in that town locality were mostly poor and depressed. The kind of people who need some joy and brightness added to their dismal existence. But the Christians were not offering that. Only a message of condemnation and the harsh tones of judgement. No wonder they caught no fish that night.

There are lessons here also for the manner in which many "gospel services" are conducted and of the messages conveyed there. Jesus declared that He had "not come to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved." (John 3:17). How sad it is that so many of His followers do not take the same line. The people of our world need a message of hope. They need to be offered God's love, mercy and grace, rather than His judgements. A local church ought to be the brightest, happiest, most positive and affirmative place in the whole town. It should be a place towards which the average person is attracted, to which they would gravitate when needing love, understanding and compassion. The whole idea is to attract the fish, not to frighten them away.

Have patience and don't be in a hurry.

The successful fisherman is not in a hurry. Patience is a vital requirement, without which no fish will ever be caught. He knows that he cannot expect to race up to a spot, cast in his line, and immediately land a fish. He must be prepared to exercise patience in order to accomplish his goal. He sits quietly on the shore or in the boat with his line in the water, waiting for a gentle indication that a fish is around. Even when he feels a quiet nibble at the bait, he does not immediately reel in

the line. He continues to exercise quiet patience until he feels the insistent tug that tells him that he has a bite. Even then he must continue to exercise patience and discretion. He must not make any sudden move or he may lose that fish more easily than he ever hooked it.

Likewise, we must never see people as a quarry or a “scalp”, which we can quickly take. People are complex beings. They have complicated lives. They require careful, skillful, patient handling. Each one is a separate and different challenge. No two are exactly alike. Just as we need different bait for different fish, so we need different techniques in order to catch and land them safely. Possibly the thing we need more than anything is patience.

Exercise special care as you endeavour to land your fish.

Landing a fish is like making an altar call. It is equally as important as the sermon which preceded it, if not more so. Everything is wasted if we do not land the fish safely. The bait is wasted, our time is wasted, every effort has been in vain if we do not safely land the fish. The fish is more cautious next time. The same is true in the more personal, - “one on one” encounters. We must be prepared to follow through until the exercise is completed. Every fisherman has had the experience of losing a fish somewhere between the hook and the boat. (traditionally the ‘one that gets away’ is the biggest and best of all!)

Don’t allow the fish to get away again.

A good follow-up program is like a “keep net”, in which the fish is safely held after being landed. Usually this includes introducing the newly saved person into a suitable church fellowship. Essentially a good, live, evangelistic one and preferably one which also has a good new believers class and a system of Home Fellowships into which the newly born child of God may be introduced. The new believer needs to be taught how to establish an effective prayer and devotional life. They need to be grounded in the Word of God so that their experience in Christ is not merely emotional or sentimental.

Every new believer really needs a mentor who can disciple them in the ways of the Lord and of the Kingdom. If the one who led them to Christ is able to perform this function, this is the ideal. Otherwise they should be placed in the care of a shepherd or under-shepherd or house group leader. They need to be introduced to other fellow believers who live in their locality so that new relationships may be established. Should there be specific problems such as drug dependency, sexually deviate life style, alcoholism etc., then the new believer needs to be placed under the covering of a mature believer who has specific knowledge of such problems and ideally has some training and experience in dealing with them.

Keep on fishing.

Having successfully brought someone to Christ, don’t rest on your laurels or be so busy congratulating yourself, or caring for that person that you do not have time to reach out to other souls. Once you get into the rhythm of witnessing and winning people, keep right on going. The more people you win, the more you will want to win. The task will become increasingly easier for you. You will develop in confidence and ability. Experience will teach you many things and you will become more adept and skillful in this exciting ministry. It will be great if when the Lord returns, He finds you fishing.

CHAPTER FOUR - Taking Men Alive

In Luke 5:10 we have this exciting statement of Jesus, “Fear not, from now on you will catch men.” In the Greek the word ‘*zograeo*’ is used. It literally means: “To take alive.” There is only one other place in the New Testament where this word is found and that is in 2 Tim 2:26. Where we read, “And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him (*Zograeo*) at his will.”

The implication of these two scriptures is that either we take men alive for Christ, or the devil takes them captive at his will. What an awesome responsibility this places on us, but what a tremendous privilege too, that we may lead men and women out of Satan's captivity and the appalling darkness of his kingdom, into the glorious light of God's eternal kingdom.

Jesus Himself, the greatest Soul Winner who ever lived, has promised that if we faithfully follow Him, He will make us rescuers of men, plucking them as brands from the burning. Rescuing them from everlasting damnation and leading them into the wonderful liberty that is in Christ. How may we begin in this school of discipleship in which the Master Teacher will impart His knowledge and skills to us enabling us to accomplish this wonderful ministry? I believe that firstly we should seriously and prayerfully consider.

THE AWESOME VALUE OF ONE SOUL.

1. The nature of its origin. Created in the image and likeness of God.

Each human soul is of inestimable value because it was fashioned in the image, and after the likeness of God Himself. The imprint of God's creative genius is upon every human being. No matter how low sin may bring that soul, it is still fashioned in God's image and He places a tremendous value upon it. A value which cannot be estimated in human, material, or monetary terms. Jesus said, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" (mark 8: 36-37). The clear implication of this statement is that one soul is worth more to God than the whole world. How it must rejoice His heart when we bring people back to Him through the ministry of reconciliation. They are likened to His Crown Jewels. "And they shall be mine says the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." (Malachi 3:17).

The duration of its existence.

Every soul has an eternal, everlasting, never ending existence and will spend that eternity either in God's presence and under His benevolent rule, or cast away from His presence with all Christ rejectors in hell. Since Jesus was the most remarkable being ever to walk this earth, the absolute example of righteousness, mercy and truth, imagine what it will be like to spend eternity in the company of people who have rejected such a person. Irrespective of what hell may be like, that will be sufficient hell, to be in the company of such people forever.

Whenever you look at a fellow human being, regardless of his condition, remember that he is an eternal being and that he will spend that awesome eternity either in God's presence, or having been banished from that presence forever. This thought alone should make us want to warn every person we ever meet to receive Christ while they can.

The tremendous cost of a soul's redemption.

The true purpose of Christ's coming to earth was not to be a teacher or an example which men might imitate, it was to die as the Lamb of God, on behalf of, and in the place of lost and fallen man. The price, which He paid in His suffering and death, is indescribable, (beyond description) and inestimable, (beyond human value).

The height, breadth and depth of God's love for fallen man were on view at Calvary, where Christ suffered and died. God wants us to look at, and meditate upon the price which He and His Beloved Son paid at Calvary and understand that through this indescribable scene God is saying, "THIS IS HOW MUCH I LOVE MANKIND. THIS IS THE VALUE I PLACE ON EVERY HUMAN SOUL." If God could pay so great a price in order to redeem a soul, how can we refuse the meagre sacrifice required in order to tell the story of so great a love.

4. The immense battle which is waged for the souls of men.

Many fearsome battles have been fought on this planet throughout human history but none greater than the battles that are waged continually by Satan, for the souls of men. Christ gave His life and His all at Calvary, in order to defeat Satan, to smash his mastery, and make a way of deliverance for all who would accept it. There is nothing more that He can do, nor does He need to do more. The work of redemption was completed at the Cross. He has broken Satan's grip and provided emancipation and freedom for every soul of man. This is the Good News He has entrusted to us.

The initiative is now over to us. We have the delegated authority to lead men out of the dark bondage of Satan’s dominion, into the freedom of Christ’s deliverance.

HOW MAY WE ACQUIRE A CONCERN FOR THE LOST?

By meditating on Christ’s command.

The final words which Jesus spoke, prior to His ascension to Heaven, constitute what we call “The Great Commission”, in which He commanded His followers everywhere to GO into ALL the world, and proclaim the Gospel to EVERY CREATURE. This command has never been cancelled. Every Christian is under Divine orders. We may not all be Ministers, Pastors, Evangelists, or full time Christian workers, but we are all under the Divine Commission to spread the Gospel everywhere.

By living close to Christ and imbibing His heart.

If we live close to Christ, spending time with Him everyday, seeking His mind on every subject, we will feel His heartbeat and share His concerns. Whenever we are confronted by a fellow human being in need, we need to ask ourselves, “What would Jesus do in this situation?” As soon as the response comes to our mind we should go ahead and do whatever we know He would do, for we are His feet , and His servants, in this world.

Remember that people are dying without Christ and without hope.

Each day people in our community are dying without the knowledge of Christ and His redeeming love. Try to live with this in mind when you move amongst people each day. Whenever God prompts you to speak a word to someone, try to make sure that you do not fail Him. One of the saddest experience I ever had happened many years ago. I felt on one occasion that God wanted me to speak to a certain man about his soul’s welfare and where he would spend eternity. However, I was busy and felt I did not have the time to visit him. I put it off, thinking that I would go tomorrow when I had more time available. I went to his house the following day and discovered that he had died during the night. I have never forgotten the sense of disappointment, which was mine that day.

Remember that we shall all give account to Christ one day.

It is a sobering thing to realise that one day we shall give account to Christ of our stewardship in those things which He has entrusted to us. I do not say this in a heavy legal sense, endeavouring to frighten anyone or force them into otherwise unwilling service. Rather do I think of it in terms of meeting Jesus one day and in the blazing light of eternity. Then we shall understand so much more clearly than before, just how great a price He paid to redeem man and how unwilling we have frequently been to even share the message of that love. How disappointed we would feel. Possibly a disappointment we may carry for eternity!

5. Think of the joy we will experience for faithful service to Christ.

What joy and sublime satisfaction will be ours when we stand before Christ and in His presence recognise others whom we have had the joy of leading to Him. How greatly our joy will be multiplied by those who may approach us and say, “You told me of Christ’s love, had you not done so, I might not be here.” Our eternal reward will be at least four-fold:

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| the joy of being with Christ forever. | | | | |
| the blessing of hearing Him say, “Well done, faithful servant”. (Matt. 25: 23). | | | | |
| the thrill of seeing souls whom we have won to Christ. | | | | |
| receiving the Soul Winners crown of joy. (1 Thess. 2:19). | | | | |

CHAPTER FIVE - The Classic Case Study – Let’s begin!

In the glorious adventure of Soul Winning Jesus Himself is our finest example and role model. In John’s Gospel, 4:1-42, we have the classic case study of a Soul Winning encounter between Jesus

and the “Woman of Samaria.” There are many helpful principles involved in His fruitful encounter with this unlikely prospect. Please read through the story in your Bible and then let’s consider together some of the highlights.

PRIORITISING DIVINE PROMPTINGS.

When John tells us that “Jesus needed to go through Samaria.” (John 4:4) he is referring to the influence of a Divine prompting which urged Him to do so. His desired destination was Galilee and there were actually two main routes which would take Him there. One was through Samaria and the other by way of the Jordan Valley. Although the route through Samaria was somewhat more direct, it was not one which Jews normally used because of the friction which existed between Jews and the Samaritans. Yet Jesus chose this road not because it was shorter, quicker or more convenient but because of an inner prompting from His Heavenly Father. God had a mission there for Jesus to fulfill. God knew there was a hungry heart and many other lives which would also be influenced. He placed a prompting into the heart of Jesus which took Him in that particular direction and to the very place where a meeting could take place.

We also need to develop such a sensitivity and an ability to discern and interpret the promptings of God within our spirit. There are many occasions when God wants to use our witness in a specific manner but He needs to have confidence that we will not only hear, but also obey His prompting. To ensure that we have this credibility with God, we need to prioritise His will, giving it precedence and priority above our natural commitments.

We can see this attitude in the life of Jesus even during His teen-age years. He asked Mary and Joseph, “Don’t you realise that I must be doing my Father’s will?” (Luke 2:49). It is obvious that although He esteemed His earthly parents and was in subjection to them, He gave the will of His heavenly Father an even higher priority. On another occasion He said, “I delight to do the will of my Father who sent me.” We must also make it a source of delight to be obedient to our Father ‘s will.

SOME OF THE REASONS WE SHOULD PRIORITISE GOD’S WILL.

BECAUSE WE ARE NO LONGER OUR OWN.

“Do you not realise that you are no longer your own, you are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body.” We have been bought at great price and our life is not longer our own to do with as we wish. God has redeemed us. We are now His and our first priority and highest pleasure should be to do His Will.

GOD LOVES ALL MANKIND AND WANTS TO EXPRESS THAT LOVE THROUGH US.

God loves every person we meet and He wants us to tell them about that love. More than that, He wants to channel His love through us, making our lives the instruments through which His love is revealed and demonstrated. We need to spend quality time with God, imbibing His love. Paul says, “The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost” (Rom 5:5). We are not only receptacles of that love, we are channels so that it can flow on from us into other lives too.

WE ARE IN DEBT TO EVERY PERSON

Since we have received the Good News and the Grace of God into our lives we are indebted to every person we meet to share this Good News with them. (Rom 1:14).

SOME OF THE BARRIERS THAT JESUS OVERCAME.

It was not an easy thing for Jesus to fulfill this Divine mission. There were numerous barriers He needed to overcome in order to accomplish it. This is also true for us. Nothing worthwhile is accomplished without effort and sacrifice. We must be dedicated and prepared to overcome every potential obstacle in order to complete God’s mission. Let’s look at some of the obstacles which Jesus overcame.

THE VOICE OF LOGIC

Because of the strong animosity (enmity) which existed between Samaritans and Jews, few Jews ever thought to travel through Samaria. It was thought to be rather dangerous and ill

advised. Since Jesus was already escaping from the vindictive attitude of the Pharisees (John 1:1-3), it would have seemed logical that He should travel by the safer route, i.e. via the Jordan Valley. But sometime God's way supersedes logic and natural thought. Sometimes He sets out for us a mission that requires us to ignore the logical outcome, trust God completely and obey Him irrespective of what the outcome may appear to be.

THE TYRANNY OF TIME.

We are sometimes so conscious of time that it seems to be of more importance than doing the will of God. Some cultures are more guilty of this than others. Jesus had been travelling for some time from Jerusalem, yet He did not allow this fact to intrude upon the mission which God had entrusted to Him.

THE INERTIA (MAKING INACTIVE) OF TIREDNESS.

John tells us quite clearly that, "Jesus was tired from his journey." He actually sat by the well because He was weary and tired. Yet this did not deter Him from engaging the woman in conversation. Despite His weariness He obviously spent some considerable time talking with her. The amazing thing was that when His disciples returned they found Him refreshed and reinvigorated. He explained to them that He had "meat to eat which they knew not of." That "food" was to do the will of His Father who had sent Him. There will obviously be occasions when we also are tired and may not feel like engaging in spiritual ministry. Yet as we arouse ourselves and get involved we are actually renewed by the very performance of the task.

BRIDGING THE CULTURE GAP.

As we study the ministry of Jesus we soon recognize that He was what we would call a "Master in the art of crosscultural communications". This is something at which we too must become adept. A cultural gap can easily separate us from people if we allow it to do so. Jesus crossed this potential gap very successfully. I think there are at least two reasons why He was able to do so. First of all, He recognised and respected the culture of another. And secondly, He modeled the culture of God's kingdom. True Kingdom people have a distinct advantage in bridging cultural gaps. The Kingdom character has a loving esteem for people which helps us to respect them irrespective of what their culture may be.

OVERCAME DIFFERENCES IN CUSTOM.

Both Jews and Samaritans had historically strong traditional customs to which they were committed. It is very easy to become biased and confrontational about one's customs and traditions. Many people have an inborn pride about their national or cultural tradition and customs. But Jesus did not allow this to become a divisive factor. He gently and skillfully avoided the possibility of confrontation and won the respect and esteem of the woman, gaining for Himself credibility which enabled Him to minister into her life.

BRIDGING DIFFERENCES OF RELIGION.

Early in the conversation the woman sought to avoid the challenge of Christ's words by taking refuge in her religious tradition. She mentioned that her ancestors believed that worship must be centred in Mount Gerizim, whereas the Jews insisted that Jerusalem was the true centre for worship. Jesus did not allow Himself to get into a controversy about this. He began to steer the conversation along another route, pointing out that God is a Spirit and those who truly worship Him must do so in spirit and in truth. His clear implication was that neither Gerizim or Jerusalem were the real issues but rather that one should worship God from their spirit wherever they were. It is so easy for us to become controversial and confrontative about religious issues. We can easily feel that we are compromising our faith if we do not vigorously promote our religious view point. But arguments and confrontations, especially about religion, seldom if ever accomplish anything. One can win an argument(mind) and lose a soul(heart). Jesus did not allow this to happen and we should learn something about this from Him.

FROM THE NATURAL TO THE SPIRITUAL

Jesus had a wonderful ability to take a conversation from a natural subject to a spiritual one. He asked the woman for a drink of water and then proceeded to tell her that if she drank of the water that He could give, she need never thirst again. He used this kind of technique consistently. He frequently spoke in parables - natural stories with spiritual implications. We can see how successfully this worked. Not only did she come to faith, but many of her neighbours did too, and later (Acts 8) a great revival broke out. In summary:

- He established a point of mutual interest
- He aroused her curiosity.
- He skillfully switched from the natural to the spiritual.
- He clearly presented the Gospel.
- The Holy Spirit completed the work.

SOME FURTHER FEATURES OF HIS EXAMPLE:

HIS GENUINE LOVE FOR “SINNERS”.

In verse 4 we are told that Jesus “must needs go through Samaria.” Whether this requirement was purely geographical or not has been a point of controversy with many. But the clear indication is that whether the requirement was geographical or not, Jesus was constrained to pass through the Samaritan town of Sychar because He intended to present the Good News to this woman and her neighbours. It was His concern for her that persuaded or impelled Him to go that way. Sinners instinctively recognised the sincerity of His love for them, and it drew them like a magnet. He earned a reputation as, "The Friend of sinners." It was a name He wore with pride.

The despised people of His day sought Him out. They were not intimidated by Him. His manner did not judge or condemn them. The overwhelming impression they gained was of His deep, sincere, abiding love for them and His consistent desire and intention to help them. He never in any way conveyed the idea that He approved of or condoned their sinful life style, but neither did He ever give any impression that He held anything but love for them.

The only way that we can share that same attitude is by endeavouring to “see people through His eyes.” Our humanity is often so prone to judge people. As Christians we need to be especially careful that we do not adopt a self righteous, religious attitude in which we feel superior to those without Christ. We need to remember that, “there but for the Grace of God, go I.” Somehow we need to imbibe His spirit and succeed in “loving the sinner, but loathing his sin.”

HE WAS GENUINELY INTERESTED IN PEOPLE.

Jesus was undoubtedly what we would call today, a “people person.” Wherever He went, people eagerly followed Him. He was an immensely popular figure and was continually surrounded by crowds of people who enjoyed being in His presence, and hearing His words.

We also need to actively cultivate a genuine interest in people. Never allow your Christian outlook or activities to isolate you from the company of people. I have frequently told young pastors, “the ministry is about two things. It is about God, and it is about people.” Therefore, a requirement of successful ministry is to develop a good understanding of both. We should major in these two areas. Growing in the intimate knowledge of God and in our relationship with Him. Getting to know and understand people.

Certainly this is a success factor in effective Soul Winning. Jesus demonstrated this important art. Luke 2:52 tells us something very interesting about His growth pattern during His adolescent years. We are told that “He grew in wisdom(intellectually), stature(physically), favour with God, (spiritually) and favour with man (socially) ”.

So many Christians today have the idea that concentration on spiritual growth requires that we neglect other areas of interest and development. This was certainly not so with Jesus. His growth featured a healthy balance in those four areas mentioned, and He is our example and role model. Successful ministry requires growth and maturity in all these areas.

GET OUT AND SOCIALISE.

If we never meet and converse with people, we will never win them to Christ. If we are ever going to catch fish, we must go where the fish are. Many of the accounts of Christ's life consist of conversations He held with various people. Some of His greatest sermons were preached to an audience of one person. (e.g. Nicodemus, John 3). We should intentionally endeavour to make new social contacts every day. Become a real people person. Use your faith to overcome natural shyness and being social reserved. Climb out of your box. Talk to your neighbours. Pass the time of day with people you meet in the course of your employment. Make friends with the local storekeeper, cab driver, policeman. If Jesus was a "Friend of sinners", we can be a friend to our neighbours! Don't try immediately to win them to Christ. Endeavour to win their friendship and confidence first. Take time to establish credibility with them. Be genuinely interested in them.

ESTABLISH COMMON INTEREST FACTORS.

When Jesus found the woman of Samaria, she was in the process of drawing water. He immediately established a rapport with her by indicating that He was thirsty and would be grateful if she would give Him a drink. In this manner He socialised with her in a discreet and proper manner, seeking her help and assistance. He clearly indicated His appreciation for her assistance. His manner was disarming, friendly and irresistible. His attitude was particularly appealing in the light of the tremendous animosity which existed between Jews and Samaritans. Jesus successfully crossed the culture barrier, the race barrier and the religious barrier. People are often impressed and disarmed when we express interest in what they are doing or in those things in which they are interested. They open up to converse with someone who expresses interest and enthusiasm for something in which they themselves have a warm interest. Common interests draws people together and establish rapport and relationship. They establish a bonding and credibility which paves the way for serious dialogue.

JESUS NEVER JUDGED OR CONDEMNED PEOPLE.

The woman of Samaria appears to be somewhat notable or notorious sinner. Several factors in the story could seem to support this idea. But Jesus did not adopt a superior or judgement attitude towards her. He did not begin to lecture or censure her, condemning her for her multiple marriages and the fact that she was presently in an adulterous relationship. This in no way implied that He approved of or condoned her life style. But it did clearly indicate that He had not come to condemn her. I personally think that Jesus often took delight in the consternation of many of His religious critics when they saw the posture He adopted towards some people whom they would readily condemn. This certainly seems to be the case in John 8:1-11. When Jesus scribbled on the ground as the angry Pharisees virtually demanded that He condemn the woman found in the fact of adultery. He bravely took sides with her against the angry religious mob, assuring her that He did not condemn her, but encouraging her to "go and sin no more." If Jesus assumed a non-condemnatory posture with sinners, what right would you and I ever have to do differently? He came to save them, not to condemn them and we need to have the same attitude.

HE FREQUENTLY COMMENDED PEOPLE.

When the woman confessed that she "had no husband", Jesus commended her saying, "you have spoken the truth." He also revealed that He knew all about her dubious past, but even then He did not condemn her but actively commended her for telling the truth. Commendation is often a wonderful key to open the hardest of hearts. So many sinners have been exposed to barrage of condemnation and it comes as a pleasant surprise and a shock when someone actually commends them for something. It diminishes the animosity and paves a way for dialogue and productive discussion. When you want to open a conversation with someone, try to find something about that person or their circumstances which you can sincerely commend. There may be many things about them which make this difficult but most people have something which one can commend. Do it, then watch the bitterness dissolve and the door open.

HE WAS PERFECTLY NATURAL.

Jesus did not clothe Himself in a religious outward appearance. He was perfectly natural. There was no evidence of pretense with him. He presented Himself as a friend, an interested party. In our approach to people we should actively avoid any religious pretense. Try to be one with them. Get down to their level. Be yourself, and don't try to play some role which makes you appear unnatural or unreal. We need to be "natural spiritual and spiritually natural!"

HE USED ORDINARY LANGUAGE.

As Jesus began to talk with her, He used ordinary, every day language which she could readily and easily understand. As she gave Him water to quench His thirst, He began to speak about the water of life. The conversation was one of profound spiritual significance, yet it was couched in every day language without any religious overtones. The difference between Jesus and most modern preachers is that Jesus had the wonderful ability to speak on the most profound subject and make it delightfully simple, whereas modern preachers take the simplest of subjects and make them profoundly complicated. Within modern Christian circles we have developed a new language. It is the "Evangelicos" language, - the speech of modern Christendom! We have coined a great array of religious phrases which the uninitiated knows nothing about. When non-Christians visit some churches they must frequently wonder what we are talking about. Please make a conscious effort to avoid using religious code language. Use plain language as Jesus did, and the "common people will hear you gladly."

HE ALWAYS USED A POSITIVE APPROACH.

The words of Jesus were always edifying and uplifting. His advice and counsel was always constructive. He frequently encountered people who were at the bottom of life's ladder but He never attempted to push them down further. Instead He identified Himself with them. He sat where they sat. He indicted to them He knew and understood "where they were coming from." When Mary Magdalene sought Him out whilst He was in the company of religious dignitaries. He dealt gently with her, refusing to conform to the religious traditions of men.

HIS APPROACH WAS FIRM, BUT ALWAYS GENTLE.

As we pursue our objective of influencing people towards God, we must learn to "speak the truth, in love." Sometimes Jesus had to correct or reprimand people but He never did this in a hurtful or objectionable manner. He did not shy back from speaking the truth into their lives but did it in such a way that He won their appreciation rather than their rejection. Such was the case with the Woman of Samaria. He said, "You have had five husbands. And the man you are presently living with is not your husband." Yet He said it in such a compassionate and understanding way that rather than resenting Him, she ran to the village and told her neighbours, "Come, see a man that told me all I have ever done." She subsequently brought the whole population to meet and hear the man who had "spoken the truth in love."

HE NEVER REGARDED ANY CASE AS HOPELESS.

In the course of His earthly ministry, Jesus dealt with all kinds of sinners. There was never any indication that He refused or rejected anyone, especially on the grounds that they were a hopeless case, or might be "too far gone." In fact He specifically said, "All that the Father gives to me shall come to me; and him that comes to me, I will in no wise cast out." (John. 6:37). Sometimes we may look at a person and feel that they are too hopeless a sinner, that it would be a waste of time witnessing to them. Sometimes we mentally "write them off", feeling that such a person would just not be interested in the things of God. Never do that!

"Try to see people through the eyes of the Lord."

His love and compassion extends to the deepest depths. He is not called the "Friend of sinners" for nothing. He came into this world, "not to all the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matt 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32).

HE RESPECTED EVERY MAN'S PERSON.

Every human being has been created in the image and likeness of God and for this fact alone they deserve our respect and esteem. Satan has tried to eradicate the God-factor in man, but Jesus came to restore and renew it. As we go out to witness and to win men and women to Christ, always try to avoid pre-judging a person or hastily consigning them to the "too hard tray." In the concluding verses of this exciting story, (vs.39-42) we find that a whole community was powerfully impacted by the witness of this one woman. Initially she appeared to be a most unlikely "unbeliever". There were too many factors that made it difficult to conceive that she would so warmly welcome His message and become a channel through which to reach this whole Samaritan community. This is one of the exciting things about witnessing for Christ. One never knows to where it may lead. All kinds of exciting situations may develop from a most unlikely contact. Whole communities may be brought to Christ and otherwise un-reached peoples brought into the kingdom of God.

Let's Begin!

In the preceding chapters we have spoken of a number of issues that are pertinent to the matter of Soul Winning. Now let's endeavour to get right down to the all important skills of this ministry.

ESSENTIAL PREPARATIONS

The main reason why so many Christians avoid attempting to lead people to Christ is that they have never been adequately trained or properly prepared. It is essential that training receives the highest priority. How can we go into battle effectively without the appropriate training and preparation? How can we expect to be effective and fruitful in this high and holy calling of Soul Winning if we are inadequately prepared? There are several areas in which preparation is essential:

SPIRITUALLY.

- As Soul Winners, we must be a Born Again Christians.
- We should have positive Bible based assurance of our own salvation.
- Should regularly read and study the Bible.
- Should "know the plan of salvation" in the Scriptures.
- Should have a consistent and effective prayer life.
- Should be trained in the art of "leading a Soul to Christ."
- Should be dedicated to the task of sharing our faith whenever possible
- Should be prepared to invest time caring for new believers.

MENTALLY.

- The mind should be "renewed" by God's Word. (Rom.12:2).
- The mind must be disciplined to the task in hand.
- The mental attitude should be positive and optimistic.
- The mind should anticipate success and effectiveness.

EMOTIONALLY.

- Our emotions should be controlled and positive
- Our spirit should be in an attitude of quiet praise to God.
- The joy of the Lord should be uppermost and dominant.
- Our positive mental attitude should be calming our emotions.

PHYSICALLY.

- Appearance should be neat and tidy.
- Facial expression should reflect quiet calm and inner joy of the Lord.
- Manner should be humble, courteous, and confident.
- Voice should be controlled and varied in tone.
- We need the love of God in our hearts.
- We need courage.

G. We should always employ tact and wisdom.

CHAPTER SIX - Some of the ways to approach a Prospect

Here are **some basic principles which we need to observe** when we have a desire to bring people to Christ:

Be alert, and motivated for souls.

True soul winners develop a passion for souls. The need to witness, and bring people to Christ becomes a driving and motivating force. The effective Soul Winner becomes soul conscious. Wherever they are, they are looking for opportunities to share their faith. Whatever company they may be in they are always alert to any opportunity which may arise which may give them a chance to share the Gospel. This is the power of the Holy Spirit, gently but firmly prodding them in the direction of soul who need a Saviour. But there is also a psychological principle at work. It is a principle which suggests that “whatever your mind becomes intrigued with and excited about, you will then tend to see that things everywhere you look.”

For example, if you buy a particular model of car with which you are really happy, it then seems as though every other car that you see is the same model as the one in which you are interested. This principle can work positively for you if you allow it to. For example, the more you become stimulated and excited about the possibilities of sharing your faith and leading people to Christ, the more aware you will become the many opportunities which occur day in your normal routines of life. Soon you will see opportunities everywhere. The more people you are able to effectively lead to Christ, the more confidence you will have that you can do it again. The more success you have, the more you desire. It is genuinely possible to have a “hunger for souls.” A passion which keeps you motivated wherever you may be.

Actively pray for souls.

At the commencement of each day, as you commit your day to God in prayer, include a definite prayer that God will make it possible for you to witness to someone that day. Then go into your day with a positive anticipation that God is going to answer that prayer. Be constantly alert and watchful, looking for any indication that God may be opening an effectual door of witness to you. Listen to every conversation around you for some word to be dropped into your ear which may indicate that a person may have a spiritual need or be seeking for some spiritual guidance. You should also have a list of people whom you would love to lead to Christ. Pray over that list every day, mentioning each one by name and praying a positive prayer for their salvation.

Release Positive faith that God will give you success.

Don't simply pray for souls in some abstract manner, hoping that somehow God will perhaps get around to answering prayer. Pray positively and then begin to thank God in anticipation of speedy results. Begin to positively and optimistically anticipate fruit in your life. As the life of God flows through you each day, there should be fruit in your life. One aspect of that fruit will be the people whom He enables you to bring to Him.

Begin to talk faith talk in respect of winning souls.

Your words have tremendous latent creative energy stored within them. (Prov. 18: 21). Various people use word power every day to accomplish their task. Successful salesmen are constantly using the positive power of their words to sell their product. Firstly they use the immense power of “self talk”, speaking to themselves either audibly or inaudibly, constantly making positive assertions about their product and their ability to sell that product. This gets them into the right attitude and frame of mind to persuade their clients of the wisdom and necessity to purchase the product. If salesmen and business people can use these energies to advance the cause of their natural business. We ought to employ every asset to bring people into the knowledge of God's grace and power.

Look for evidences of people's needs.

Every person in this world is incomplete without Christ, for the Bible says, "And you are complete in Him." (Col. 2:10). The Bible teaches that mankind is "depraved" which literally means, "likely to break down at the weakest point." So every human being has their "breaking point", their area of vulnerability and potential weakness. We need to look for signs of these.

Not to criticize them but in order to compassionately try to assist them to find their answer to that need. The only lasting answer to every human need is in Christ, for we have seen that it is only in Him that we are truly complete. As you become aware of some person's need, approach them with great sensitivity and compassion. Remember that this person may have been deeply hurt at some time and the awareness of their need is potentially extremely painful. Don't intrude into their innermost secrets indiscreetly. Treat this person with extreme care and loving concern. People are extremely fragile in the vulnerable areas of their inner life. Probe very gently and cautiously. Take care not to make their pain even more unbearable. Jesus was the expert at this type of compassionate approach. He dealt very gently and compassionately with even the worst of sinners, ensuring that He did not add to their feelings of worthlessness and condemnation.

Learn to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's promptings.

The Holy Spirit is frequently portrayed as a dove because of the gentleness of His nature. He usually speaks in a quiet, gentle voice, which we must be extremely sensitive to discern and interpret. Sometimes, while you listen to someone's words pouring into your ears, you are also aware of gentle words pouring into your spirit. The person is speaking to your natural man, the Spirit is speaking to your inner, or spiritual man. We need to develop the ability to hear both. It is important to hear what the person is saying. It is even more important to hear what the Spirit is saying. Frequently He will tell you the secrets of their heart. Often He will reveal to you the deep needs of their life. Many times He will speak words into your spirit that He wants you to share with the person. Just the very words for which their spirit craves, and desperately needs to hear. It is an exciting and extremely rewarding experience to convey the words of God's comfort to a soul in need. It is exciting at times to see the face of a person suddenly light up because the Spirit has spoken light in to their darkness. Discerning the voice of the Spirit is a spiritual skill which one can cultivate through experience and usage.

Seize every opportunity that God gives.

One way to get guidance from God, is to use the guidance He has already given you. I have frequently experienced this. I may be seeking God for some aspect of guidance and He has asked me, "What did you do with the last piece of guidance I gave you?" I have often had to admit that I had not yet obeyed that word and it is only when one does not more guidance comes. Likewisie, if we do not seize opportunities which God brings our way, we should not be surprised if He does not entrust us with more opportunities. Conversely, if we develop a habit of obedience and make the most of every opportunity God sends our way, we become candidates for even more opportunities. The Holy Spirit is far more interested in people coming to salvation that we will ever be. Realise that He has gone before you and is working in so many of the lives and circumstances that you come across every day. Be sensitive. Be yielded. Be obedient. Make the most of every opportunity that God brings your way, for as you do, He will open up more opportunities. He will entrust you with greater opportunities. Your life will begin to overflow with fruitfulness that will bring great satisfaction to God's heart, and to yours!

Go where the people are.

Too many Christians are isolated and insulated from contact with the people for whom Christ died. Religious taboos, and being busily engaged in numerous Christian activities rob many Christians of time and opportunity to reach the non-Christian public. It is essential that remedies be found for this so that the Christians can find quality time to reach out to a lost and dying world.

Here are some ways we may reach out to touch the lost:

INTRODUCING A WONDERFUL FRIEND.

The simplest way to approach the subject of receiving Christ is to see the exercise as an opportunity to introduce a wonderful friend. There is not one person who would not benefit from knowing so marvelous a friend as Jesus. For a huge variety of different reasons, most people would love to know such a wonderful person as Jesus in a relationship of friendship.

Everyone is accustomed to the procedure of introducing a friend. Some may perform introductions more frequently than others and be more experienced at the art, but all of us have done this many times in one setting or another. The first requirement is to recognise or discern the need in a particular person's life that may clearly indicate their basic need of a good friend.

The first indication would obviously be loneliness. Circumstances of life have thrust the experience of isolation and loneliness upon this person. For example, let's consider a single parent. A young woman, unmarried, deserted, or widowed, with the big responsibility of caring for her child alone. The need to earn a living to support herself and the child. So many urgent responsibilities that she has little opportunity for social contact with anyone who might be a source of encouragement and comfort to her. The personal relationship and friendship of Jesus can make such a difference to this person. There are many other lonely figures in our societies. Even in the midst of populous cities there are tragic figures of loneliness and despair. Each day people commit suicide because they are lonely and friendless. How wonderful to be able to prevent such a tragedy by introducing them to your wonderful friend Jesus.

Other people may have problems which they need to share with someone who is caring and sympathetic. In the first instance YOU could be the appropriate one with whom to share, but your friend Jesus would be an even better person with whom to share those intimate and hurtful problems. There are many other reasons why people whom you meet every day. There are many other reasons why people whom you meet every day, would greatly benefit from a proper introduction to a wonderful friend.

Jesus is a "Friend who sticks closer than a brother." (Prov 18:24). He has all the wonderful traits of character which constitute a wonderful friend. He is our Wonderful Saviour, Friend, Constant Companion, Confidential Confidant, Counselor, Burden Bearer, Healer of Broken Hearts. He is an Advocate, Advisor, Lover, and all of these things and much much more.

WHAT A WONDERFUL FRIEND!

Realise that this wonderful friend is with you everywhere you go at all times and in every situation. Not only to bless your life with His amazing characteristics, but to be introduced to anyone you meet in whom you perceive a need for such a friend as Jesus. You may introduce people to Jesus in a manner similar to that which you might use to introduce an earthly friend. Once the conversation has indicated some problem area which would benefit from vital contact with Jesus, you might say. "I know someone who can help you. Someone who could help you enormously with your problems if you would allow Him to do so. His Name is Jesus and He is always ready to help all who will call on Him."

I have had the joy of introducing many people to Jesus in this manner. All kinds of people, with all kinds of problems. I have seen prostitutes, gamblers, drug addicts, successful business people, wealthy people, the whole range of social strata, find Jesus in a simple but effective manner. If this whole approach appears to be just too simple and too easy to be true, the factor which you are failing to see in the situation is the Holy Spirit factor. His presence in the situation is the invisible, positive, miracle working factor which makes the difference. You may frequently find a mystical dimension in soul winning situations. You can hardly believe what is going on. The way things are moving, the manner in which people are reacting. The amazing developments which are transpiring. It sometimes seems unreal. But the secret is the Holy Spirit factor. Beneath the surface, and behind the scenes, the wonderful, mystical, dependable Holy Spirit is at work. Without Him you could not do a thing that would have any eternal value. But with Him anything is possible. This is the reason why life becomes so exciting when you embark on Soul Winning adventures. Life takes on a new, exciting, and

thrilling dimension. You never know what is going to happen next. It's glorious. Of course this whole exercise needs something much more than a mere introduction of friends. There is a need for many other factors too. Repentance, faith, commitment etc. these are all necessary components that we will take about soon.

THE CONVERSATIONAL APPROACH.

Conversations are a normal part of almost everyone's life. They usually happen continually on a daily basis. Wherever we may go, whoever we may meet, conversations are initiated simply and easily in most situations. They happen on the bus, the train, at the service station, in the office, the restaurant, and the corner shop. In initiating conversations people are frequently reaching out for something. They are looking for personal contact, information, reassurance. In many cases it may be a lonely person endeavoring to touch the warmth of another human being. An insecure person, looking for reassurance and confirmation.

As Christians we should endeavour to be available to such people. We should try to be outgoing, friendly and approachable. We should aim to be a "people person" to the best of our ability. I know that outgoing behaviour is much easier for some than for others. However, with the Holy Spirit inside us, making contacts and offering friendship and a listening ear should be much easier for us than for non-Christian people who do not have the reassuring presence of the Spirit within them.

Endeavour to be more outgoing and open to people. It is amazing how simply so many conversations can be turned to spiritual topics. When people speak about the sad condition of the world, you may say, "You know, the Bible predicts that these things will be happening in the last days." Immediately the conversation can turn to the "Signs of the Times", and other biblical subjects.

A PERSONAL EXPERIENCE.

Soon after I became a Christian I had my first adventure in soul winning through a simple conversation. I was walking through the city late at night. Coming from the opposite direction was a young man whom I had never seen before. He was a rather nondescript person, dressed rather poorly and with a downcast look on his face. As I drew near to him, I felt something inside me say "Speak to this young man." I immediately wondered. "What can I say to him?" Quick as flash the answer came. "Tell him that God loves him." By this time I was level with him and I stood before him on the side walk. "Excuse me", I said, "Do you know that God loves you? He immediately stopped and said, "If that is true, He must be the only one in the universe who does." I immediately recognised that there was an enormous amount of hurt inside this young man and drawing him to one side I began to share with him some of the hurts that I had experienced in life and how that coming to Christ had provided a tremendous amount of healing for my inner anger and frustrations. We stood for an hour in the doorway of a store and shared our common hearts and as the mid-night hour struck, he prayed to receive Christ as his Saviour and Lord. In the following months I was privileged to see enormous positive changes taking place in his life. His parents were chronic alcoholics, several of his sisters were prostitutes. In a family which consisted of nine persons, no love existed between any of them. His life had been grossly deprived. He had grown up with an enormous inner resentment. He was filled with all kinds of hurts, inhibitions, and complexes, but things soon began to change. His life took on new qualities and was enormously enriched. He made new friends within the local church fellowship. His personality began to blossom and assume a radiance of which there had been no previous indication. Many people began to notice these remarkable changes, including his parents, brothers and sisters. Within two years of his finding Christ, his entire family had committed themselves to Jesus too and the whole family environment was transformed. What a wonderful harvest as a result of one simple conversation! Please remember that conversations can lead to salvations!

THE CONFRONTATIONAL APPROACH.

Jesus frequently used this approach, though it often resulted from a conversation in the first place. Confrontation suggests that you stand in front of the person to "confront" them with an

important issue. In Mark 10:17-27, we have the confrontation between Jesus and the so-called, “Rich young Ruler.” It began with the young man seeking out Jesus and asking Him about how he might gain eternal life. Jesus was enormously impressed with this young man who had faithfully observed all the commandments throughout his life. However, Jesus recognised that the man’s riches were a stumbling block. He valued his possessions more than he did eternal life or the will of God, and Jesus knew that He was going to have to confront him on this issue.

There will be times when you too will need to confront someone, to tell them the truth without compromise. But to do it in such a way that they will face-up to it. They maybe unwilling to surrender as was this young man, but you have done your part. You have brought them face to face with reality. You have confronted them with the way things really are from God’s perspective. Be assured that there will also be times and occasions when this method will prove fruitful too. You must always do to in love. Jesus confronted the two thieves who hung on the crosses with Him. For one of them it brought about his condemnation. For the other it opened the door to Paradise. Thus we become a saviour of “life unto life, and death unto death.” (2 Cor 2:16).

THE PERSONAL PRAYER APPROACH.

It frequently transpires, in a personal conversation, that felt-needs are indicated by the person. Most people have something in their life, family, or circumstances about which they would secretly appreciate prayer. Of all the people to whom I have ever witnessed, I have met very few who have actually declined or refused to receive prayer when it was offered with sincerity. Simplicity and without pressure. If you say, “You know, God can help you with that situation, would you mind if I prayed with you about it now? “Yes, I would like that please.”

It often helps if you are discreetly able to make some personal “contact” with them, holding their hand on their shoulder, etc. (Obviously you should be very sensitive and careful about this if the person is of the opposite sex, or belonging to a religion or culture which prohibits physical contact. If there is any doubt about this, then refrain from touching them.) When we do make such contact it is an indication of concern, sympathy and compassion. But it is also a discreet, non-religious way of actually “laying hands on a person”, as Jesus encourages us to do (Mark 16:15). It thus becomes a tangible bridge through which the power of God may flow from you to the person in need.

This “Prayer Contact”, accomplishes several things:

- Introduces a “Spiritual” dimension into the dialogue.
- It brings a personal awareness of God to the person.
- It introduces them to prayer, giving them an example of how to pray.
- It exposes them to the exercise of faith.
- Opens their life to an intervention of God.

It is often quite amazing what can happen through this powerful kind of contact, for the Holy Spirit now has direct access into the person’s life and situation. I have frequently prayed with a person who has initially endeavoured to give a somewhat indifferent reaction. As though saying, “I don’t really believe in this, and I don’t actually expect anything to happen, but go ahead anyhow!” Yet, as we have prayed, a melting has occurred and I have often seen tears begin to course down the face which moments ago was endeavoring to appear passive and uninvolved.

***Once the “God factor” is introduced through prayer,
anything can, and frequently does happen.***

Not always immediately. Sometimes days or weeks later the person will report, “Hey, ever since you prayed that day things have begun to improve!” This greatly improves the climate for speaking directly to that person about their relationship with God.

THE PERSONAL TESTIMONY APPROACH.

I have mentioned earlier in this study that the personal testimony, given in the right manner, at the right time, can be immensely persuasive and effective. Perhaps the person begins to relate something of their earlier life and things which happened to them. Things which perhaps make it hard for them to believe in a God of love, or in His Providence. Things may be mentioned which also transpired in your pre-Christian life and which closely parallel His experience. This usually gives you an open door to say, "Do you mind if I relate my own personal experience about how God helped me with that?"

Every Christian should always be prepared to "give a reason for the hope which is within them." (1 Pet. 3:15). Whether it be a public testimony before a group of people, or privately shared with an individual, we should be prepared at all times.

To be effective a testimony usually needs to be comprised of three parts.

1: The circumstances of your life before you came to Christ.

2: How you came to trust in Christ.

3: What has happened in your life since you committed yourself to Jesus.

Let's look at these separately for a moment:

- Your pre-Christian life..

You do not need to go into meticulous, intimate details of every aspect of your life. Generally those things which appear to parallel the experience of your contact are the things which need emphasis. If you are sincerely able to say, "you know, I felt just as you do until I realised that" As you point out details of common experience the person realises that you understand something of what they are going through. They realise that you are not talking theoretically, you are talking from real life and you are speaking out of experience. A person with an experience has something much more powerful than he who has theory.

- How you came to trust in Christ..

Again you should try to draw attention to parallel circumstances in your experience. The thing that you eventually want to emphasise is that "what has happened to me is wonderful, and IT CAN HAPPEN TO YOU TOO." The whole purpose of this exercise is not simply to relate your personal experience but to help the other person to receive Christ and experience His grace and power in their life.

If you are able to adequately describe your personal experience in trusting Christ, you will make it all the easier for the person to trust Him too. Explain the steps you took, the manner in which you prayed, the thoughts and feeling you experienced. Make it as clear and simple as possible. Tell the story in every day language. Avoid using religious phrases and terminology. Get right down to the level of the other person's understanding. Take them step by step through your experience so that the way of salvation becomes very clear to them.

- What has happened since you came to Christ..

A witness is something who tells exactly what they saw, heard, and experienced relevant to a particular event. When a witness gives testimony in court he is not expected to express his ideas or opinions. He is required to tell in detail what happened to him. The same is true in bearing witness and giving evidence of the reality of Christ. What you are saying is, "I know the Jesus is real, I have experienced His presence and power in my life. I was lonely, afraid, insecure and miserable until I came to know Him and now He has banished my loneliness and fears and He is transforming my life."

You may also speak of some of the transformational factors such as Prayer, the Bible, Christian counsel and fellowship etc. This is a means of suggesting to the person that there is an ongoing factor in this equation of finding Christ, and that to fully know and appreciate Him, one must "follow on to know Him."

Having shared your personal experience you should always make the application that "What Christ has done for me, He will undoubtedly do for you if you commit your life to Him." You might also sense that the time is ripe to lead the person to Christ right then. You may

then introduce them to Jesus, help them pray a prayer of repentance and commitment, and receive Christ into their life by faith.

Remember that your personal testimony is the best means an individual had of sharing spiritual truth. You are on “familiar territory” – you know your own experience better than you know anything. You can control the conversation better.

Remember to that the person with an experience is better equipped than one with a theory or an argument. No one can contest what you have experienced. Whatever they may say, you know what has happened to you and the effect which it has had.

(Why not stop right now, and carefully write out your own personal testimony.

Do it in the manner that has been suggested, using the three parts. Write it and re-write it. Edit it and refine it. Memorise it and be prepared to share it at any time, anywhere. It may be your greatest and most effective tool for evangelism.)

THE DIRECT LEADING APPROACH.

The last method I shall mention is the direct leading approach. Probably the clearest example of this in the Bible is that of Philip in Acts 8:26-40. He had been powerfully preaching the Gospel in Samaria and had a revival on his hands, when the Holy Spirit spoke directly to him (verse 26) and told him to, “Arise and go south to the road which goes through the desert from Jerusalem to Gaza.” Philip obeyed the Spirit’s guidance and discovered an influential Ethiopian riding in a chariot and reading the book of Isaiah. The result of this encounter was not only the conversion and water baptism of this individual, but possibly the wide spread revival which later occurred in Ethiopia, the results of which are still powerfully obvious in that ancient nation today.

This is a method of Soul Winning, the results of which are frequently the most effective and far reaching. This is because the whole exercise is “custom made” by the Holy Spirit. So it is very important that we become experienced at hearing the quiet, inner voice of the Spirit within us.

Learning to recognise and obey His voice is essential if we are to be good disciples and particularly if we are to be as fruitful as God wants us to be

CHAPTER SEVEN - Leading a Person to Christ

There are numerous factors of which we must be conscious as we seek to bring people to Christ. I am not suggesting a technique or method which must be strictly adhered to, but some principles of which we must be mindful if the persons are to have a genuine experience of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. To compromise on any of these issues, or fail to ensure that the person clearly understands the implications of them, may mean that he or she does not have a genuine experience of the New Birth.

1. SIN.

Sin is not a popular subject these days and mention of it often evokes scorn and derision in many liberal circles (including certain church circles.) Modern man prefers to refer to sin as social indiscretion, personal preference, genetic traits, or personality defects. Many other people refuse to agree that there is any such thing as sin at all. Their philosophy is frequently, “if it feels good, do it.” For them nothing is barred. All deviations are acceptable. What a person does with their life is their own business and nobody has the right to interfere. This kind of notion must be attacked and defeated with the Word of God. The Bible clearly teaches, from its earliest chapters, the reality and penalty of sin. Unless one is ready to agree with the Bible on this basic subject then the whole matter of salvation is out of the question.

**If there were no such thing as sin,
then there is no need for salvation or
a Saviour, and the whole plan of redemption is irrelevant and unnecessary.**

We must understand that sin is what separates man from God. Initially, in the Biblical picture, it was Adam and Eve's disobedience which constituted the first sin. Their disobedience caused the whole human race to become separated from God. So, in the first instance, men and women are sinners, not because of anything they do or don't do, but because of Adam and Eve's transgression. We inherit our sinful status from our original forbears. We are therefore sinners by inheritance. A person is not just a sinner because they commit sin. They commit sin because they are sinners. Romans 3:23 puts it as simple and plain as possible, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory (standard) of God." This teaches the universality of sin. All men, everywhere are sinners. It teaches the nature of sin, i.e. to fall short of the glory (standard) of God.

When we endeavour to show someone that they are a sinner in the sight of Almighty God, we are not singling them out for criticism, or suggesting that we think that their personal behaviour or standards are worse than the average person. We are simply stating that they, together with all of mankind, come short of God's required standards.

2. THE PENALTY OF SIN.

Romans 6:23 says, "The wages of sin is death." Not just physical death, when the human spirit leaves the physical body, but spiritual death which means continuing and everlasting separation from God. This is the penalty about which God warned Adam and Eve. He told that if they disobeyed Him, "in dying, they would die." Through their transgression, physical death began to work in them. They became mortal (death doomed) beings. Physical death and its symptoms began immediately to work in their lives, the consequence of which was that one day they would die. But the greater tragedy was that dying in sin means that one will be separated from God eternally, and send to a place which the Bible calls hell!

3. SALVATION.

The latter part of Romans 6:23 introduces a positive aspect too in stating, "But the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It emphasises that salvation is not through works, self-effort, good living or kind deeds, but it is through Jesus Christ our Lord. We must show the person their implicit need of a Saviour. If one is not aware of need, then there is no motivation to look for a Saviour. We must further show them that Jesus Christ is the only Saviour, "For unto you is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:11).

He is the only Saviour! Act 4:12, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name, under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved.

He is a complete Saviour. Hebrews 7:25, "Wherefore He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him."

He is a Powerful Saviour. Hebrews 2:14b- 15, "That through His death, He might destroy him that has the power of death, that is the Devil, and deliver those who through fear were all their life time subject to bondage."

He is a Universal Saviour. 1 Timothy 4:10b, "Who is the Saviour of ALL men who believe."

4. SALVATION IS THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST.

"Believe on, (into) the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved." Acts 16:31. These powerful words were spoken to the Philippian jailer in response to his pointed question. "What must I do to be saved?", are applicable to all men everywhere and constitute the only way of Salvation available. Romans 10:9 says, "That if you will confess with your mouth, the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, YOU WILL BE SAVED."

MEMORISING SCRIPTURES

As you endeavour to lead people to Christ it is helpful to have a 'planned route' in mind. Even if you do not keep to it in every point it helps you to keep moving forward in the right direction. It gives you extra confidence and helps you to stay in command of the situation.

There are several simple routes which you can easily memorise. Here are a few of the simple ones. Each outlines a progressional route towards a commitment to Christ. The relevant Scriptures can easily be memorised and will give the soul winner a way forward in the conversation that may lead to salvation.

FIVE STEPS TO SALVATION:

ALL MANKIND ARE SINNERS.

“For everyone has sinned and comes short of God’s standard.” Rom. 3:23.

THE PENALTY OF SIN IS ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM GOD.

“The wages of sin is death” (separation from God). Rom. 6: 23.

GOD IS NOT WILLING THAT ANYONE SHOULD PERISH.

He wants everyone to come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Pet 3: 9; I Tim. 2: 4

JESUS CHRIST HAS PAID THE PRICE

“Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.” 1 Cor 15:3.

WE MUST BELIEVE AND CONFESS THIS TRUTH.

“If you confess with your mouth, and believe in your heart that God has raised Christ from the dead, you will be saved.” Rom 10:9

THE ROMAN ROAD.

A simple plan of action requiring three Scriptures Romans 3:23, “All have sinned and come short of God’s standard.” Romans 6:23, “The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 10:9- 10, “Believe in your heart, and confess with your mouth, and you will be saved.”

THE “ABCD” OF SALVATION.

- ACKNOWLEDGE THAT YOU ARE A SINNER.** “For ALL have sinner and come short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3: 23)
- BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST AND YOU WILL BE SAVED.** (Acts.16:31).
- CONFESS WITH YOUR MOUTH WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN YOUR HEART** (Rom. 10:9-10).
- DENY YOURSELF AND FOLLOW JESUS.** Matt 16:24, “Let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me.”

What is it that we need to believe about Christ in order to be saved?

That He is God, manifest as a man. John 1:14.

That He walked this earth as Son of God, and Son of man.

That He died for our sins, the Just for the unjust. 1 Cor. 15:3.

That God raised Him from the dead, indicating His acceptance of Christ's sacrifice.

That Christ ascended up into heaven and is now with God the Father.

That He is the Lord, to whom we must surrender our lives.

WE MUST "RECEIVE CHRIST" INTO OUR LIFE.

John 1:12 says, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the authority to become the sons of God, even to them which believe on His Name." What does it mean, to "Receive Christ", and how do we accomplish this? There are various ways in which we may receive things, e.g. into our spirit (spiritually), into our mind (mentally), and into our heart (emotionally).

The spirit is the deepest part of your being. It is the real YOU. Deeper than the mind or the emotions. More profound and mysterious than any other aspect of your being. It is the part of your person through which you can be conscious of God and know Him, and the whole realm of spiritual reality. You must understand that the spirit operates by faith. Faith is the decision to believe what God says. It is activated by "Hearing the Word of God." Rom 10:17. Something deep within you tells you that God is speaking to you. You decide and determine to believe and accept what God says. You agree with God. That is faith. Your faith may often move ahead of your mind. You do things by faith which your mind can not yet understand or accept. You often accept things by faith before your emotions have time to respond. Your spirit can operate independently of your intellect or emotions and frequently does.

So, when you receive Christ, you receive Him into your spirit. You receive Him by faith. Irrespective of natural thoughts or feelings He enters your life through your spirit, but He wants to function through your thoughts and feelings too. He wants your whole person to surrender to His kind rule and enjoy the blessings and benefits of His presence in every area of your life.

WE MUST CONFESS HIM BEFORE MEN.

Paul said, "Believe in your heart and confess with your mouth." Romans 10:9. "For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Romans 10:10. Jesus Himself said, "Whoever shall confess me before men, Him shall I confess before my Father in heaven. But whoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father in heaven." (Matt. 10:32-33).

Having believed in Jesus as Saviour and Lord, it is obvious that the need to openly acknowledge and confess Christ before men is vital and indispensable to the process of being saved. I have frequently noticed, having led someone to faith in Christ, that their confession of this fact has been a definite factor in them receiving a personal assurance of salvation. On occasions I have had someone say, "I have believed on Jesus but I do not seem to have any assurance." So I have enquired, "Have you confessed your belief to anyone yet?" The answer has invariably been "No." To which my response has been, "Go and tell someone what you have done and confess that you have received salvation through trusting in Christ." The result has always been that having done this, the inner assurance has come.

Jesus told the Gadarene, "Go to your house, and show (tell, make known, publish) what great things God has done for you." Part of the reason why Jesus told him to do this was to continue and conclude the contract of salvation, that He might confess this man's name before His heavenly Father.

BEGIN TO WIN OTHERS TO CHRIST.

Everything in life is meant to reproduce after its kind. This is an unchanging law that God has built into the universe. So, when we become children of God through faith in Christ, God wants us to begin to reproduce after our kind. It is never too soon to begin. As soon as we begin to confess Christ as Saviour and Lord, the Holy Spirit will begin to use our witness to attract and win others.

Our changed lifestyle will intrigue our friends and associates. People will wonder what is that has so changed our life and activities. They will be curious to discover just what has brought such a radical and dramatic transformation into our life. This was true of the “Woman of Samaria”, who immediately after Christ entered her life, began to share the news with all her neighbours. The glorious result being that a great number of them came to believe in Christ too.

In the early days of your Christian experience, while you still have vital contact with the associates of your former life, the process of winning them for Christ should begin. Far too many people, after coming to Christ, immediately begin to disassociate from their former friends. I know that we must forsake our former sinful life style and begin to live our new life in Christ. However, I also think that it is necessary to retain contact with our old associates. Not to continue in sin with them. God forbid! But to start influencing them to the best of our ability towards Christ. Too many Christians become isolated and insulated from the world of non-Christians. Friends, they are our harvest field. They are the very people to whom God wants us to witness and to win them to Jesus.

*Whenever we have the privilege of winning someone to the Lord,
we should immediately begin to encourage them to try to win their friends to Christ as well.*

Although the new believer may not be well versed in the Scriptures or know very much about theology, one thing they do know is that they have received Christ and begun to experience some of the wonderful blessings of His life in them. When one is a new believer there is a joyful enthusiasm which is somewhat unique. The Bible calls it our “FIRST LOVE”. It is like the joyful enthusiasm of a young couple newly in love. They want everyone to know and to rejoice with them in the wonderful joy they have discovered in their new beloved. Their joy becomes so obvious. It radiates in their faces, it shines through their eyes. It comes through again and again in their conversation. They are happy in love. So it should be with every new believer. Everyone should recognise that something wonderful and exciting has happened. These early days of one’s experience can be extremely fruitful, and can be the beginning of a life of witnessing and effective Soul Winning.

CHAPTER EIGHT - Getting to the heart of the matter

We have been considering together some of the preliminary issues of Soul Winning. Now, let’s get to the critical factors. As we do, let me emphasise a very important point. In all that we are discussing, never lose sight of the fact that Soul Winning is not the result of employing a methodology. It is not a technique which can be learned by memory and then simply put into practice. Many sales organisations have a selling program which is carefully structured. It employs psychological principles aimed at bringing the prospective client to sign a contract. Sales persons are required to go through the whole presentation point by point and are assured of a certain success rate.

Winning a person to Christ is much more than a psychological manipulation. It is more than emotional coercion (exercising influence). It is a transaction which only the Holy Spirit can accomplish. You are a channel through whom He can flow. Yours is a voice which He can use. Your testimony is an instrument which He can employ, but ultimately He is the only one who can accomplish the spiritual New Birth. So you must leave plenty of room and scope for Him. Always rely on Him. Depend on Him. Talk to Him and listen to Him whenever you approach a Soul Winning opportunity and always rely on His presence in the situation.

Soul winning goes far beyond simply witnessing. It is a process which, with the Holy Spirit’s help, ultimately brings about a New Birth and brings the life and presence of Christ into a human being. It is a very serious responsibility as well as an enormous privilege. Every prospective Soul Winner has their own style and approach to winning souls. Indeed every situation may require a different approach. No two persons are the same. We need to be flexible and open to whatever the Spirit may suggest. However, there are certain basic principles which remain the same. There are certain

factors which must be observed in every situation and whatever our particular method or approach is in a given situation. Truths which must be presented to the interested person with whom we share.

We must help that person to recognise the following truths:

THAT HE IS A SINNER.

Once you begin to share this truth the Holy Spirit begins to work upon the person to cause what the Bible calls “conviction” in which the person is brought to realise that they are indeed a sinner before God. When the Spirit’s presence begins to affect them in this way, it will invariably cause one of two responses.

- They may become mad with you, protesting their “innocent” and parading the reasons why they are not a sinner, and that they are as good or better than the next person.
- They will begin to acknowledge the truth and their previous resistance will melt. Once this happens, follow through, because you know that the Spirit is at work to bring them to Christ.

JESUS IS THE ONLY SAVIOUR.

Jesus is THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIFE. John 14:6. “There is no other Name by which we may be saved, but the Name of Jesus.” Acts 4:10. “Whoever calls on the Name of the Lord shall be saved.” Roman 10:13.

SHOW THEM HOW TO REPENT.

Repentance is the first word of the Gospel. “Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom...and saying the Kingdom of God is here, REPENT and believe the Gospel.” Mark 1:14-

However, “repent” is a word which is no longer readily understood by most people. So it is often necessary to use other words which convey the same meaning. For example, repentance means: to confess one’s guilt, to be sorry. To express sorrow and regret. So we need to help the person to tell God, “I am sorry, please forgive me.”

However, it also means to “turn around”, to “change one’s mind.” To walk away from our sin and walk towards God and His righteousness. Some of you will understand if I use a familiar military term and say “about turn!” Turn right around and begin to march in the opposite direction to where you were previously going, which means doing the good and right things which God desires! These are some of the basic meanings of repentance. Help the person understand the significance of these ideas, so that when they “pray a prayer of repentance”, they really know what they are doing.

SHOW THEM HOW TO TURN THEIR LIFE OVER TO GOD.

This is a most critical and important part of the process to which great care and attention should be given. It is the “moment of truth”, which may decide the issue and its impact. Somehow the candidate must be shown how to open up their life to Christ, and allow Him entrance.

A Scripture that I have used many times for this purpose is Rev. 3:20, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with Me.” I shall share with you the approach I have used and it may be useful to you also. The Scripture shows that:-

- God is knocking at the door of your life.
- If ANYONE will open the door (no one is excluded)
- Christ WILL ENTER that life

I have frequently told the person:-

Let me bring to your attention to some wonderful words in Rev. 3:20. Would you please read it to me. (Open your Bible to the Scripture and have them read it to you). Now, here Jesus indicates that He is standing at a door that has no handle on the outside with which to open the door. He stands outside patiently knocking and declaring. “if ANY MAN hears My voice and will open the door I WILL come in and eat with him.” Now friend, I believe that Jesus is knocking at the door of your

heart now, and I am sure that you realise this too. Our meeting today and the things we have shared in our discussion, all indicate that the Lord is reaching out to you. Now, if I were to visit your home. When I knocked at the door and you came to open it, you would realise immediately that I wanted to come in to see you. If I stood in a friendly posture that indicated that I wanted to come in and do you good, that I wanted to assist you and enrich you. Would you not invite me in? Wouldn't you extend a welcome to me and say, "it is good of you to call on me. I sincerely appreciate your interest and concern. Won't you please come right in?"

Having invited me in, wouldn't you then think it strange if I turned on my heels and disappeared down the street. Wouldn't you be amazed if that should happen? Of course you would, and with good reason. If I took the trouble to come and visit you – knocking on your door and patiently waiting until you open it and invited me in – wouldn't it be the most natural and expected thing that I should accept your invitation and come in?

Well now, Jesus is knocking at the door of your life. He wants to come into your life but He will not force Himself upon you. He knocks patiently, but YOU must open the door. If you do He will definitely respond to your invitation and enter. Will not you invite Him in right now? Then please repeat these simple words after me:

"Dear Jesus, I recognise that You are knocking at the door of my life. I understand that You are requesting entrance into my life because You want to save me from my sins, forgive me, cleanse me, renew my life, and live within me. Jesus, I use my will to open the door now by faith. I want You to come in and be my Saviour. I ask you to forgive my many sins, and particularly the sin of my resistance to You.

I open the door wide right now, and by faith I invite You to enter. My life is now yours. I surrender it to You. I want to become a child of God. I want to enter your Kingdom. I receive You now as my Saviour and Lord. From this time forward I will love and serve You. I will obey your holy Word, the Bible. I will confess your name to others and tell them that You are my Saviour and Lord. Come Lord and fill me with your Holy Spirit helping me to live for You and do Your will! Thank you Lord Jesus. Amen."

HAVE THEM PRAY A PRAYER OF AFFIRMATION.

Once they have asked Jesus into their life, encourage them to make some statements of faith and some positive affirmations. Encourage them to speak to the Lord in their own words and thank Him because He is faithful and always keeps His word. Have them say to Him, "Jesus, I thank you because You are faithful to your Word. You said if I invited You into my life, You would come in. I asked You, and now I thank You by faith that You have kept Your word and You are now in my life. I am grateful to know that You will be in me and with me forever. Wherever I go, You will be with me. In good times or perhaps in bad times. You will never fail me. Thank you Lord. Amen."

ENCOURAGE THEM TO TELL SOMEBODY.

Once the person has prayed his prayer along with you, encourage them immediately to tell someone what they have done. If there is a third party present, say, "Why don't you tell your friend what you have just done and what has happened to you? Tell him that you have committed your life to Jesus and acknowledge Him as your Saviour and Lord.

Something will happen as they make this confession. The Holy Spirit will seal the act of their salvation and the realisation of what they have done will begin to seep into their awareness.

ENCOURAGE THEM TO FIND BIBLE-BASED CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

Now that they have confessed Christ, this person needs to attend to their spiritual growth. They must learn how to read the Word of God and how to establish an effective prayer life. They also need to avail themselves of the company of other Christians who can help and encourage them in their Christian walk and growth. The best way to do this is usually to find a church where the true Gospel is faithfully preached. Try to find one where other people are finding Jesus and learning to walk in Him.

If you are associated with a church in the same geographical area in which this person lives, then be available to meet and encourage this person to attend your church. Go out of your way to help them if necessary arrange to take them to Church. Make sure that they meet some other believers who are capable of helping and encouraging them. Introduce them to the local minister and encourage your new friend to make a confession of their faith to him.

Become a true friend to this new believer.

To lead someone to Christ and then neglect their welfare is almost like
bearing a child and then abandoning it.

This is unthinkable. Only a person who is not in their right mind would do that. It is criminal to act like that. So be ready to make some sacrifices in order to help the new believer. Introduce them to your circle of friends. Make them feel wanted and welcome. Encourage them to attend some of the functions of the church which might be most applicable to their situation. For example, if your new found friend is a single person, encourage them to attend a Singles Meeting. Encourage a man to join the Men's Fellowship, or a lady to attend the Ladies Fellowship. Actively encourage them to become involved in as many activities as possible and urge them to try to bring together old friends. Try to make sure that they do not cut legitimate ties with their old acquaintances but endeavour with all enthusiasm to bring their friends to Christ.

Their former friends become a mission field which perhaps few others can reach.

Appropriate literature is also a real asset in helping this person become properly established in their new found faith. There are various courses for new believers which use the Scriptures to help the believer become firmly grounded in their new faith. This helps to ground the person's faith in the solidity of the Scriptures rather than sentiment or emotion. The more of the Bible they study, with the help of some study guide which will give direction to their studies, the more assurance they will gain of the legal reality of their salvation.

CHAPTER NINE - Gaining a Biblically based Assurance

It is essential that the New Born Christian has a Biblically based assurance of their salvation. If one's confidence is based on feelings or sentiment then it will not stand the test of trials and temptations which may confront the believer from time to time. If our confidence and assurance is based on the Word of God, then it will be as solid and immovable as that Word, of which Jesus said, "Heaven and earth may pass away, but the Word of the Lord endures forever."

So we need to make sure that the new believer's trust is based on God's Word and not on the word of man. We achieve this by emphasising from the beginning that the truth and credibility of our salvation is firmly based upon what Almighty God has declared in His eternal Word. We ourselves need to be very familiar with what the Bible teaches on salvation and assurance, so that we can confidently point out exactly what God declares about these vital issues.

There are two clear aspects to salvation. There is God's side, and there is man's side.

From God's perspective He has done all that is necessary to provide eternal salvation for every person who believes and who through faith receives the gift of salvation. God so loved mankind that He gave His only Son as a ransom. Jesus, God's Son, gave Himself on the cross, to pay the price for our sins. Jesus died, and was resurrected, to accomplish our full salvation. He is presently with the Father, making intercession on our behalf. He will one day return to earth and we shall reign with Him forever. From God's perspective salvation is complete. Everything necessary has been accomplished, and the whole plan of salvation is written in His Word.

There is also man's perspective, and here there are also two aspects.

1:- There is the legal aspect.

2:- There is the experiential, participatory aspect.

The Bible spells out the legal aspects of salvation. Everything which Christ did for us is legally valid. Christ did nothing which was illegal in His work of redemption. No one, not even Satan,

can contest the validity of what Christ accomplished redemptively on our behalf. The Bible is the legal record of our redemption. It is the book in which is recorded the legal process by which God procured our redemption from Satan's bondage and power. It is also, in a sense, the legal Last Will and Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ which sets forth every privilege and blessing which we inherit through the death of God's Son. Someone has said that Jesus is the only person who left an inheritance, and then rose from the dead to make sure that the inheritees received all that He had left for them.

Having done this we must then claim our inheritance through faith. The Scripture teaches that, "By grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." (Eph.2:8). God's grace provides salvation. Our faith receives, accepts, and lays hold on every blessing and benefit of that salvation. So the two main factors are:

GOD'S WORD.

OUR FAITH. (A gift from God.)

We therefore need to read, study and accept by faith, everything which God's Word states about our salvation in Christ. We should apply every detail to ourselves and thank God by faith that every salvation-related promise in His book is relevant to us. Let us briefly consider some of the Scriptures through which God speaks assurance:

John 5:24, "Truly, truly I say to you that whoever hears my word and believes on Him who sent me, has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

It is Jesus who makes this promise. The one upon whose words we can utterly rely. Whose credibility is intrinsically bound to His Word. The one for whom it is impossible to lie.

As if to irrevocably underline His faithfulness. He begins His statement with, "Truly, truly." He only ever uses this double positive when He wants to guarantee something beyond any possibility of dispute.

The promise is to "whoever hears His Word and believes" in God His Father. This clause clearly indicates how wide open this promise is. It is irrespective of colour, class, or culture. The promise is to the whatsoever.

"Has everlasting Life". This is in the present tense. Beyond doubt or dispute. Whoever fulfils the requirement of the first part of the verse, actually has, right now, the everlasting life of God within them.

"Shall NOT come into condemnation." (Judgement) This statement is as clear and positive as it can possibly be. The Word of God which is undeniable and irrevocable, says that the person to whom these words apply, who accepts them by faith at face value, shall NOT, NOT, NOT ever come under God's condemnation.

"But is passed from death unto life." This is not something about which we must wait until death to really know. The Scripture says that already, in Christ, the believer has passed from the realm of spiritual death into the life of God. Death has lost its dominion over us. We are no longer death doomed. We have received the life of God into our beings and that life is eternal.

Have the new believer read this Scripture aloud with boldness and confidence.

Have them make the following statements loudly and boldly:

"I have heard the words of Jesus and I believe in Him and the Father who sent Him.

Jesus says that I have everlasting life right now.

Jesus says that I have passed already from death to life.

Jesus says that I shall never, ever come into condemnation. These are the very words of God.

I choose to believe that every word of God is true.

I believe that God cannot lie."

Romans:10:9, 10, 13, "That if you will confess with your mouth, the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. For with the heart

man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation, for whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. This Scripture clearly states the conditions for salvation:

We must believe in our heart that Jesus is Lord.

We must call on the name of the Lord.

We must confess publicly that Jesus is our Lord.

We SHAL be saved.

If you have done this, then the Scripture is true, for God cannot lie, YOU ARE SAVED.

John 6:47, “Truly, truly I say you, he that believes on Me has everlasting life.”

Ask the person to read this aloud. Now ask them such question as these:-

Who made this statement? Answer: Jesus did.

What exactly did He promise? Answer: He promised eternal life.

What were the conditions? Answer: That we would believe on Him.

When would one have this life? Answer Now, in this present moment.

Have the New Believer read aloud the following Scriptures, and make the following confessions:

Mark.1: 14b, “Repent and believe the Gospel.” I have repented and I do believe the Gospel.

Acts.2: 21, “Whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord, shall be saved.” I have called on the Name of Jesus, and thank God I am now saved.

Romans 10: 9- 10, “Who ever believes in their heart and confesses with their mouth, the Lord Jesus Christ, shall be saved.” I do believe this is my heart and I confess it with my mouth, therefore God declares that I AM SAVED.

AM SAVED FROM:-

Sin. Matt. 1:21.

Satan’s dominion. Heb 2:14- 15.

The wrath to come. Rom. 5:9.

Everlasting Death. John 3:16- 17.

I WAS CHOSEN “from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth.” (2 Thess. 2: 13b).

I WAS APPOINTED “not unto wrath, but to OBTAIN SALVATION THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.” (1 Thess. 5:9).

I NOW HAVE REDEMPTION THROUGH CHRIST’S BLOOD, “even the forgiveness of sins, according to His grace.” (Eph. 1:7).

I AM BEING KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD “through faith into salvation to be revealed in the last time.” (1 Pet. 1:5).

CHAPTER TEN - There are more ways than one!

There are many ways by which we can witness and lead people to Christ. I will mention a few of them but I am sure that the Holy Spirit will show you many more. Methods may differ from place to place, depending on the culture and background of the people. The Holy Spirit is very flexible and adaptable. He is comfortable and adept in every culture and can give us wisdom to approach in the most effective and productive way. Here are a few suggestions which can work in any culture.

FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM

This is a method that can become extremely fruitful and productive. It can be effectively applied in any culture and any situation. Jesus used this method many times. In fact He became known as a “Friend of Sinners.” This was because of the fact that He inevitably extended friendship to the many people He met including those who were noted sinners.

The Bible tells us that, “He would have friends, must show himself friendly.” Proverbs 18:24. If we desire to make friends, we must show ourselves to be friendly. A friendly act can open the heart of the hardest or most indifferent sinner.

One of the problems with Christians is that Christian relationships and activities can consume so much of our time that we have little time or opportunity to cultivate friendships with people outside the church. Consequently we become isolated from the very people who are our personal mission field. This is a problem which must be overcome. We need to find some solutions to it.

BE FRIENDLY.

An atmosphere of friendship makes it much easier to effectively witness to a person. We should therefore reach out in friendly gestures to as many people as we can. This is a method of “pre-Evangelism”, which can make our ministry extremely effective and fruitful. Extending friendly gestures can also make your life much more enjoyable. It is amazing how many positive responses you can receive to small gestures of friendship. So many lives are gladdened and enriched simply through someone reaching out to them in a friendly manner.

BE YOURSELF.

In Christian circles, too many people wear religious “masks”. They do not feel free to be themselves. They are constantly endeavouring to project an image of Christian conservatism. I have always been grateful that shortly after becoming a believer I felt that God spoke something into my inner consciousness. I felt Him say, “I want to set you free to be yourself in Jesus.” This was a tremendous sense of relief to me because I had felt that I must become just like the many Christian associates I had gained from beginning to mix in Christian circles. Some of them were so different to myself. I some times felt that I could never become like them. In addition, many of them were so “stifled”, that I secretly despaired that I might have to become like them. It came as a great relief and release when God spoke these words quietly into my spirit. They have been blessing to me ever since. God does not want us all to be stereo types. He does not require us all to become the same. He created us as individuals and wants us to remain unique individuals, yet at the same time bearing His image and likeness. Many sincere Christians deliberately suppress their natural outgoing personality in an endeavour to appear religious and respectable. All they become is boring and predictable. They must appear like this too in the eyes of their non-Christian friends, many of whom think, “If that is what is involved in being a Christian, I can do without it.”

DON'T PROJECT A RELIGIOUS IMAGE.

True Christianity is not a religion, it is a Person- Jesus, and the spirit of this wonderful Person is residing within us. He is the most wonderful and most attractive person who ever walked this earth. His character and personality supersede every earthly being. We must never be ashamed or embarrassed to let His life show through us. For as we allow His life to flow and show through us, people will be attracted to us as they were to Jesus when He walked this earth.

Jesus did not come to found a religion, nor does He want you to promote a religion. He came that we might have LIFE, AND THAT MORE ABUNDANTLY. (John 10: 10). Remember that religion represses, but redemption releases. Our task in Soul Winning, is not to make people religious, but to introduce them to that wonderful Person Jesus.

SPEAK NATURALLY.

Far too many Christians have adopted the language of Evangelicalism and talk in a kind of “code language”, when speaking about the things of God. Unfortunately this is almost like a foreign language to most uninitiated people. It is frequently meaningless and bewildering. We must learn to translate the issues of our faith into the every day language of the people around us. Rather than using religious phrases we must express our faith in the contemporary languages of the people.

Christianity appears to be detached from reality to many of our peers and we add to this wrong concept by the terminology we use to transmit our beliefs. We should speak of the

things of God in the same contemporary speech that we use every day in the social and business context of our life.

LEARN TO ACCEPT PEOPLE AS THEY ARE.

Christians tend to be repelled by sinners because of the connotations of their “worldly life styles.” However, Jesus was not repelled by them. He loathed their sin, but He loved the sinner, and because of His love for that person He was able to relate to them in a compassionate manner despite the anti-God features of their life style.

A statement I heard somewhere many years ago has been extremely helpful to me in relating to people “as they are.” The statement, which was in two parts went like this. “GOD LOVES ME SO MUCH, THAT HE LOVES ME JUST AS I AM!”

Yet the second part went on to say:

“BUT HE LOVES ME TOO MUCH TO LEAVE ME AS I AM!”

This simple yet profound statement helped me personally in my growth towards spiritual maturity. But it is also helps me enormously in my attitude towards non-Christians too. I realise that the love of God of sinners is so great that He loves them despite every unlovable feature in their life. He loves them for themselves. He loves the person who is deep beneath the surface of those ugly outside trappings. But He also loves them too much to leave them like that. So, He accepts them – loving them just as they are, and keeps doing so, but at the same time He is working in their lives to deliver them into a higher and better life style. The life style of the Kingdom.

ENDEAVOR TO LOVE THEM UNCONDITIONALLY.

Christians are frequently so eager to see people come to Christ that they sub-consciously set this as the criteria for their “friendship.” But if the candidate does not respond positively within a short time frame, they tend to abandon the “friendship.” But Jesus was not like this. His love was too genuine to abandon people because they did not immediately respond to Him. He continued to love them, despite their indifference, and their rebellion. He loves them with a love that will not let them go. Jesus loved people unconditionally and so must we. If we do not, then our love is not genuine in the first place.

LEARN TO APPRECIATE PEOPLE FOR WHO THEY ARE.

My personal experience has been that there are likable and commendable features in most people if you look hard enough. Too often we are conditioned to reject people after our first impression, particularly if the person is obviously a non-Christian. It has been my joy on numerous occasions to get beyond an initially indifferent or hostile appearance through discovering some feature about a person that I could genuinely appreciate and commend. We should try to see people as Jesus sees them. Or, in the words of a beautiful Christian song, “Look beyond their faults and see their need.”

Try to look at people in a positive way. If there are no the features which enable you to do this, always try to see within them the eternal soul for which Jesus dies.

ENDEAVOR TO HELP PEOPLE.

Everyone has needs of one kind or another. Someone has said, in regard to building a congregation. “Try to find a need and then fill it.” This principle can be true of bringing someone to Christ. Discover some need which your neighbour has, and endeavour to meet that need. Offering to help and assist a person will usually evoke a positive response from them. Even if they do not allow you to do so, they will appreciate the offer. Expressions willingness to perform some task around the home will often get you into that home and into the person’s heart. There are so many ways in which we can help people and each of them helps to build a bridge of friendship that we can cross in order to be a blessing to that life. Always remembering that ultimately the finest thing we can do for anyone is to bring them to knowledge of Jesus.

BE AVAILABLE.

Proverbs 27:10 says, “Better is a neighbour that is near than a brother that is a far off.”

Often an initial offer of friendship may be ignored but do not withdraw that offer. Let the person know that, “If ever you need me, or I can be a help in any way, please do not hesitate

to contact me.” Remain available to that person. There may be reasons, at the time of the initial contact, that the person is unable to accept the offer of help. It might be pride, or independence or some other reason. However, if you remain in a friendly disposition towards the person, circumstances may change and the time arrive when they are grateful for your offer and pleased to accept it. It frequently happens in such circumstances that the person is then much more open and responsive too.

SHARING THE GOSPEL.

Always remember that our calling in life is to “Know Christ, and to Make Him

Known.” So, in the intriguing exercise of extending friendship remember that the best thing you can do for that person is to introduce them to a “Friend who sticks closer than a brother.” Once you have established some degree of friendship and relationship with a person, do not allow that relationship to cause you to take them for granted. When the time is ripe to introduce them to Jesus always endeavour to do so

with:-- Sensitivity

Be sensitively aware of the person’s private and tender feelings. Realise that beneath an apparently hard exterior there are frequently deep hurts and painful wounds which require gentle and sensitive handling.

- Discretion

In sharing Christ, you are like a “Doctor of the Soul.” You are frequently made aware of deep and intimate secrets which the person has rarely if ever shared with another. So you should always offer and maintain strict confidentiality if the circumstances require that.

Never probe too forcefully. Let the candidate set the pace. Use wisdom and discretion in all your dealings with a soul that is opening up to salvation. This is a very critical and delicate moment. It is sacred experience. Handle it with great discretion. - Compassion

Jesus was “moved with compassion towards the people.” (Matt. 9: 36). We need the same attitude if we hope to achieve even similar results. Hurting people can quickly recognise genuine compassion, and they can just as quickly recognise the lack of it. The compassion of Jesus was probably the greatest single reason why the common people heard him gladly. They recognised that He was genuinely and sincerely interested and concerned for them. So it will be with us.

HOSPITALITY EVANGELISM.

This is possibly one step further than Friendship Evangelism. It involves the extending of hospitality to people in order to cultivate their acquaintance and share with them the Good News. The obvious persons to whom this would apply would be firstly to relatives. It frequently transpires that a newly committed Christian has many relatives who have not yet found Christ. Inviting them to your home for a meal is often the best way in which to share your faith. Sitting around a meal table often provides the kind of friendly and informal setting for conversation that is conducive to speaking of the things Christ. Jesus often used such occasions to speak deeply into the lives of His prospects. Hospitality holds a very special role in the culture of the Kingdom. It has deep spiritual connotations which are even sub-consciously recognised by one’s guests.

Neighbours are also a category of people whom one can extend the offer of hospitality. Once accepted, the invitation to share a family meal often conveys a sense of mild indebtedness in which the guest wants to respond favourably to the host. This often puts the guest in the right frame of mind to listen and usually to agree with his host. This method is particularly applicable when new neighbours have moved into the locality. Extending to them a welcome to the neighbourhood together with an invitation to a meal, or perhaps actually taking a meal around to them whilst they are in the process of moving in, can be the means of building a meaningful link with them.

Business associates, and fellow employees are another category who might be effectively reached through the medium of hospitality. There is a completely different atmosphere in the setting of a family meal than is preset in the business arena or in the office or other places of employment. There is usually a relaxed and cozy atmosphere that is warmly conducive to friendly discussion. It

is also an excellent setting in which to get to know people better and to build better relationships with them.

Hospitality shows open-heartedness which is difficult to resist. You realise that your host and hostess are putting themselves out for you. Opening their home, preparing a meal, entertaining you etc. It all serves to convey a loving interest and concern for someone. This ministry also gives a wife the opportunity to participate in the Soul Winning process. Even the meal she prepares can convey the concept of loving concern. In addition she is able to take part in discussion, share her testimony. Perhaps talk with the wife after the meal whilst her husband talks with the man.

TRACT, OR GOSPEL LEAFLET DISTRIBUTION.

The wise use of Christian literature can be a powerful means of spreading the Gospel. It usually helps people in their witnessing because offering it to a person becomes a point of contact with that person. It is a simple matter to discreetly offer a piece of literature. "Excuse me, would you please accept this leaflet? I think that you would find it helpful and enlightening."

Make sure that you use attractive and appropriate material. Try not to use material which is too heavily religious. Get some tracts that feature subjects in which the average person would be keenly interested. Something which will reach out and grab their attention. If the material is absorbing and the person read it through there is a real possibility that some seed will be sown which may produce a spiritual harvest.

Tract and literature distribution can be the means of spreading the Gospel with powerful effect. These "paper preachers" make excellent ministers. They can:-

- Travel great distances very cheaply.

- Speak many different languages.

- Fit appropriately into various cultural settings.

- Preach and teach the great truths of the Bible.

- They never become tired or homesick.

- They will stay indefinitely without needing a furlough.

Literature ministry is probably the most cost effective means of spreading the gospel today. You can use Gospel tracts to bring someone to a saving knowledge of Christ. You can use Bible Correspondence Courses to establish that person in the faith. There are many different functions for Gospel literature.

DOOR TO DOOR WITNESSING.

It is said the early Church disciples that they went from house to house. (Acts 2:46). This may not imply door to door witnessing, though it is certainly somewhat alike to it. They made the Gospel mobile. They got out where the people were. They did not lock themselves away in some obscure chapel, hidden from the public awareness. They took the Good News to the people.

It is sad that the true Church has largely gotten away from this means of outreach and have virtually abandoned it to many of the cults like the Mormon's and Jehovah Witnesses. Door to door witnessing has now become so closely associated with these and other similar groups that these become necessary to clearly announce that you are not representing any of these organisations. However, this is not a reason why we should not use this method. We simply need to clarify that we are not in any way identified with those groups who are frequently so aggressive and persistent that people are loathe to show any interest or give any encouragement to them.

In canvassing from door to door, you may need to use some different tactics. Some have conducted "Religious Surveys." This involves asking the resident some leading questions about their religious affiliation or preference. You may also ask such questions:

- Why do you not go to church?

- What kind of church might you be interested to attend?

- What do you feel the churches should be doing?

- Do you believe in God and eternal life?

- Do you know what might happen to you if you unexpectedly died?

You may find yourself faced with some difficult to answer, but you will get the person talking about Christian related subjects. If you prepare yourself properly beforehand you can handle most of these questions and at least you discover whether or not this household has any spiritual inclinations.

MARKET PLACE EVANGELISM.

This involves a style of witnessing which is being used effectively in many parts of Asia today. I refer to the penetration of the Christian message into the business communities, in which thousands of Christian business persons have taken Christ into their “market place”. In addition to running very successful business enterprises many have become extremely successful in bringing business associates to Christ as well. It is not unusual to find evangelistic meetings, prayer meetings and Bible study classes being conducted in corporate offices with chief executives and sales persons in attendance together.

I personally believe that this is a direction in which the Church has to go in the future. The Church is presently too isolated in the ivory towers of its “places of worship.” Far too many of these “Churches”, have become irrelevant to the realities of modern life. Their style has long been outdated and has become obsolete. They are busy with their activities and routines, isolated and separated from the real life of the average persons.

In the great harvest of the near future, the Church must come out from itself imposed isolation and break into the main stream of people. I further believe that the harvest of these critical days will not be gathered by professional preachers, but by an army of ordinary believers who God is raising up. May you and I be vitally involved in raising up and training this great end-time army.

CHAPTER ELEVEN - “You are a Christian! What now?”

You have received the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour and have committed your life to Him. “As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His Name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” John 1: 12-13.

By an act of your will, a definite choice, you have received Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and the Spirit of God has given you new life, spiritual life; you are a member of God’s family, “When you pray say, ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.’” Matt.6:9 -10.

So a Christian is more than a religious person, who attends Church, says prayers, reads the Bible or religious books, does his best....It is not religion that makes a Christian, it is a relationship.

Sin separated the parents of the human race from God. Repentance, which is a change of mind about ourselves and God leads to a change of conduct. Confession to God of our sinfulness, and faith in Jesus Christ who died on the Cross of Calvary as our substitute and Sin-bearer, in order to become our Saviour, bring God’s forgiveness. Through God’s love and mercy we are pardoned, brought near to God: having become the subject of His care, protection and blessing. Note these Bible verses:-

Isaiah 59:2, “Your iniquities have separated you from God.”

Rom 3:23, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Rom 6:23, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Isaiah 53:6, “All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; but the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

John 3: 16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Act 17:30, “God now commands all men everywhere to repent.”

Act 20:21, “Repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Eph. 2:19, "You are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God."

Your natural birth by a father and mother gave you physical and soulish life. Your spiritual birth by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, through your confession, repentance, and faith has brought the life of God into your being – your personality, your spirit, and you are a new creation.

Ephesians 2:1, "And you He made alive who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new."

So you have received a brand new life from God, and with life comes appetite. When Jesus raised a young girl from the dead. He commanded to give her food. (Luke 8:49-56). Food sustains life, promotes growth, gives energy. How then can one grow strong and vigorous in his spiritual life?

BE A BIBLE EATING CHRISTIAN.

Jeremiah (Jer. 15:16) speaking of the Bible said, "Your words were found, and I ate them, and your Word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart." How do you eat the Word of God? By reading and thinking or mediating on it. David (Psalm 1:2) wrote about mediating in God's Word day and night. And God said to Joshua (Joshua 1:8) "This book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night..." God went on to say that His way, or life, would be made prosperous and he would have good success. Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God."

Normal people want to be healthy. God's Word is health also to our whole body. Read Proverbs 4:20-22. In Psalm 107:20 God declares, "He sent His word and healed them." There are thousands of promises in the Bible. Second Corinthians 1:20 reads, "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us." Claim God's promises for your needs, including Jeremiah 1:12, "I will watch over my word to perform it." How often should I read the Bible? Daily. A wise man said, "No Bible, no breakfast not as a law to blind me, but as a motto to remind me."

BE A PERSON OF PRAYER.

After the apostle Paul was saved on his way to the city of Damascus, we read in Acts 9:22, "he is praying." It is natural for a Christian to pray, to talk to his heavenly Father, to bring his thanks, his praise, his love; and also to make his needs known, his problems, and to seek guidance and direction. The humble dependence on prayer keeps us in a right relationship with God.

The Bible is filled with exhortations and encouragements to pray and examples of prayer. Matthew 7:7 promises, "Ask and it will be given to you: seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Jesus said, "Men always ought to pray and not lose heart," Luke 18:1. He was Himself, while on earth, the greatest example of prayer. "Now in the morning, having risen a great while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place: and there He prayed." Mark 1:35. See also Mark 6:46; Luke 5:16 and 6:12.

How often should I pray? Prayer is an attitude of the heart and soul, so that whenever the mind is free, it turns – like the compass needle turns to magnetic north – to communication with God. Have special times, and a special place for prayer, wherever possible. Especially, begin the day with prayer and Bible reading.

BE A REGULAR WORSHIPPER WITH OTHERS.

Acts chapter two is the story of the beginning of the Christian Church. Verse 42 speaks about the first Christians, "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers." This is an inspiring example. They were keen Bible students; they enjoyed meeting together for fellowship; they observed the Lord's Supper or breaking of bread together;(See I Cor. 11:23-26) and they prayed together. Hebrews 10:25 reads, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." "God sets the solitary in families." Psalm 68:6. A Bible-believing, gospel-preaching church is a family of believers in Church, growing together, serving together, sharing, worshipping, giving, helping and encouraging each other to grow in Christ – likeness. Besides sharing our joys and victories, it is a wonderful blessing and encouragement, in

times of discouragement, defeat, heartache and problems, to have a caring, praying company of believers with whom to share our burdens. How often should I go to church meetings? As often as possible, remembering I go to give as well as to receive.(I Cor. 14: 26).

BE A WATER-BAPTISED BELIEVER.

Baptism in the New Testament is always of those who have believed (Mark 16:16), repented (Acts 2:38), received the Word of God (Acts 2:41), and are obedient to the command of Jesus (Matthew 28:19), “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” It is therefore an intelligent decision by one who has fulfilled the above Scriptures.

How were they baptised in the New Testament Churches or Assemblies? By single total immersion in water, in the name of the God of the Bible – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the three Persons of the Godhead clearly revealed in the Word of God. Romans 6:3-5 shows that baptism in water is an outward figure or picture of what takes place in the spiritual experience of salvation. When should a believer be baptised? As soon as possible after you have received the Lord Jesus Christ and understand the basic truths of Scripture. (Acts 2:41; 10:47-48).

BE A SPIRIT-FILLED BELIEVER.

No one can live the Christian life in his own strength, because God never intended it this way. This would be attempting the impossible. God has made provision for the believer to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to enable him to live the Christian life to the full and be empowered for fruitful, effective service for Christ. Before Jesus left the earth and returned to heaven, He promised another Helper to take the place of His physical presence. The Holy Spirit would come and make the physical body of the believer His temple. (I Cor. 6:19). “Be filled with the Spirit”, (Eph.5:18), is as much a command as to be baptised in water.

The Lord Jesus commanded the disciples to be baptised or filled with the Spirit before they began to minister (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8). This was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, Acts chapter 2, when the Holy Spirit came from heaven and filled all the thirsty souls, so that they began to speak in other tongues – languages they had never learned, under the power of the Holy Spirit. See also Acts 10:44-48; Acts 19:5-6. Who baptises with the Holy Spirit? The Lord Jesus is the Baptiser. A pastor or another believer baptises you in water, but only the Lord Jesus can fill you with the Holy Spirit (Mathew 3:11; Luke 3:16).

Jesus invited us to come to Him and by faith drink of the Holy Spirit, John 7:37-39. Every believer can receive the initial infilling or baptism (Acts 2:38-39) and a continuous infilling. (Ephesians 5:18), where the verb “filled” is present tense, indicating a continuous action taking place; implying an inflow to sustain the outflow, a picture of replenishment.

BE A GIVER – NOT A TAKER.

It takes money to carry out all the various aspects and activities of the Lord’s work through the Church. God blesses and uses His people to meet the financial needs of His work. Giving is a vital part of our worship and service and is a means of receiving His blessing. That is why the Bible has so much to say, not only about giving ourselves, but giving of our substance for the work of Christ’s Kingdom. “The Lord loves a cheerful giver.” (II Cor. 9:7).

How much should we give?

In the Old Testament, Israelites gave a tenth, which God’s law required. Malachi 3:8-10.

1 Cor. 16:2 reads, “On the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store as God has prospered him.” The first day of the week, Sunday, was the day on which the Christians met to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, hear the Word of God expounded, and enjoy public worship(Acts 20:7), and here they brought their offering to the Lord’s work.

For many, it is an act of faith to give liberally to God; but note His promise in Luke 6:38, "Give and it will be given unto you good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

BE OPEN WITH GOD.

Don't try to hide wrong doing. Every believer fails from time to time. The Lord wants us to be open and honest. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." This 1 John 1:9 is written to Christians. Keep short accounts with God. Sin is like a cloud passing over the sun which prevents it shining upon us. Instant confession and asking God's forgiveness will bring His pardon and remove the cloud.

BE A WITNESSING BELIEVER, Acts 1:8

The Christian witnesses by lip and by life, by what we are and by what we do and say. Many have been won to faith in Christ by the personal testimony and ministry of another believer. Again, the first Christians when scattered from Jerusalem by persecution, "went everywhere preaching the Word." (Acts 8:4). By this means the Gospel spread and Christians were multiplied. Let us ask and expect God to use us in this way.

BE A FAITH-FILLED BELIEVER, Acts 6:8

The Old Testament word for faith or belief is 'trust', occurring over one hundred and fifty times. Hebrews, chapter eleven, records the faith exploits of men and women of God. The Christian life is a life of faith, of trust in God. Jesus always drew attention to and responded to faith. "According to your faith be it unto you", He said (Mathew 9:29). One believer said, "I prayed for faith, and I opened my Bible and read, 'faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Rom.10:17),' so I began to read and my faith has been growing ever since."

BE A HOPE – FILLED BELIEVER.

The blessed hope which God has set before all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, is the return of the Lord Jesus to his earth to receive His people to Himself. At His first coming, by the grace and mercy of God, Jesus Christ dealt with man's sin. At His Second Coming He will receive all who have been saved by repentance and faith in Him, who are called His bride, His Church. "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many who eagerly wait for Him, He will appear a second time apart from sin, for salvation" Hebrews 9:28. This promise was mentioned by angels, "This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" Acts 1:10- 11. And by the Lord Himself, "I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there you may be also." John 14:3.

This wonderful hope set before His waiting and often persecuted Church, is mentioned over three hundred times in New Testament. "And thus we shall always be with the Lord." I Thess. 4:17.

BE SURE OF A REWARD.

While, like the Apostle Paul, we do not serve the Lord for rewards, but out of love for Him and for the men and women for whom He died. Yet the Bible makes a clear that God will reward all faithful service. "The love of Christ impels us, because we judge this, if one died for all, then all died", II Corinthians 5:14.

Salvation is a gift, John 10:28, Ephesians 2:8. Rewards are earned, I Corinthians 3:11-15; II Corinthians 5:10. In the last chapter of the Bible (Revelation 22:12) we read, "And behold I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me to give to everyone according to His work." May we be challenged and inspired to diligent sacrificial service for the Lord and His Church in these last days.

WORD OF ENCOURAGEMENT.

God's goal for the Christian is conformity to Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). For this the apostle Paul worked and prayed with all his might. (Colossians 1:28- 29).

God, in infinite patience and love, works in us to restore His image, marred by sin. The Holy Spirit has many ministries, one of which is teaching: John 14:26. He is the greatest of all teachers. While recognising and receiving the various ministers and ministries God has placed in the Church (see Ephesians 4:11; Romans 12:6-8; I Corinthians 12:28-31); depend upon the Holy Spirit also to teach and lead you.

Do not be dismayed by temptation to sin, to which all Christians are subject. Depend upon God's word and promise: "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation

will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” (I Corinthians 10:13. See also James 1:12-15).

Love is the greatest power in the world. So seek to be filled daily with God’s love. The secret is to keep filled with the Holy Spirit. “The love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” (Romans 5:5). “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” (II Timothy 1:7). “Now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” (I Corinthians 13:13). For the qualities of God’s love, read I Corinthians 13:4 – 8.

Remember, God has given us power, authority and victory over the devil and demons, in the Name of Jesus Christ. “Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall be any means hurt you.” (Luke 10:19). “Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7).

“In my name they will cast our demons.” (Mark 16:17).

“Greater is He that is in you than he who is in the world.” (1John 4:4).

Discouragement is the devil’s favorite weapon against the Christian. Don’t give in to this spirit.

“If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

As you faithfully put into practice what you have read, you will grow in strength and be a radiant, fruitful Christian to the glory of God.

HOW TO BECOME A CHILD OF GOD?

This means:-

To come into a right relationship with God (II Cor. 5:20).

To have your sins forgiven (Acts 2:38).

To be born again – to receive new life, spiritual life (lost through sin) from God.

God, who is the source of all life, is the only one able to create spiritual life within us (John 3:3-8).

To be a member of God’s family, knowing God as our Heavenly Father (Matt. 6:6-13).

To become a servant of God, a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, with the assurance that you have everlasting life. (Matt. 4:10; 28:19-20; John 3:36).

God who loves you and wants you to know Him, is the Creator of the world and the universe. Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

Sin is disobedience to God, and it shows itself in so many ways in human conduct, which produce misery and suffering. Roman 3:23 says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

In His love for man, to rescue us from perishing, God Himself bore the punishment for man’s sin. Fallen man cannot save himself. The Lord Jesus Christ, who has many names, was God in human form, Matthew 1:23, “Behold a virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His Name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us.” The Lord Jesus was born, lived, died and rose again, in the land of Israel. (Matthew 2:1). At the cross of Calvary in Jerusalem where Jesus was put to death, He bore sin and its punishment for every human being. Isaiah 53:5-6 says, “But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.”

WHAT YOU MUST DO:

CONFESS your sin, repent, turn from it and ask God’s forgiveness. First John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” First John 1:7, “...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. RECEIVE Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord. John 1:12, “As many as received Him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe on His Name.”

Pray this prayer from your heart: “Dear Lord Jesus Christ, I come to You now to give myself to You. I confess that I am a sinner, and I repent of all my sins and forsake them. I come to ask your forgiveness and cleansing. I believe that you died for my sins on the cross, and I receive You now as my personal Saviour and Master. Thank you for accepting me and making me your own. Help me to be faithful and live for You every day of my life. In your Name I pray, Amen.”

What Should our Attitude be to One Another in the Body of Christ?

We should:

- Love one another (John 13:34 – 35; John 15:12,17; I Thessalonians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:18; 1 John 4:7, 11 12).
- Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 4:18; Hebrews 3:13; Hebrews 10:25).
- Purify one another on towards love and good deeds (Hebrews 10:24).
- Build one another up (1 Thessalonians 5:11).
- Edify one another (Romans 14:19).
- admonish one another (Colossians 3:16).
- Instruct one another (Romans 15:14).
- Serve one another (Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 4:10).
- Bear with another (Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 3:13).
- Forgive one another (Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13).
- Be kind to one another (Ephesians 4:32).
- Be compassionate to one another (Ephesians 4:32; 1 Peter 3:8).
- Be devoted to one another (Romans 12:10).
- Honour one another (Romans 12:10).
- Live in harmony with one another (Romans 12:16; 1 Peter 3:8).
- Be sympathetic with one another (1 Peter 3:8).

- \bar{A} \bar{A} \bar{A}
be gentle with one another (Ephesians 4:2; 1 Peter 3:8).
- \bar{A} \bar{A} \bar{A}
be patient with one another (Ephesians 4:2).
- \bar{A} \bar{A} \bar{A}
accept one another (Romans 15:7).
- \bar{A} \bar{A} \bar{A}
submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21).
- \bar{A} \bar{A} \bar{A}
lothe yourselves with humility towards one another (Ephesians 4:2; 1 Peter 5:5)
- \bar{A} \bar{A} \bar{A}
love each one another (Colossians 3:16).
- \bar{A} \bar{A} \bar{A}
live at peace with one another (Mark 9:50; Romans 12:18).
- \bar{A} \bar{A} \bar{A}
confess your sins to one another (James 5:16).

pray for one another (James 5:16).

offer hospitality to one another (1 Peter 4:9).

greet one another (Romans 16:16; 1 Peter 5:14).

have fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7).

greet with one another (1 Corinthians 1:10).

have fellowship with one another (1 John 1:7).

agree with one another (1 Corinthians 1:10).

carry one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2).

Things NOT to do to one Another in the Body of Christ:

do not bite or devour one another (Galatians 5:15).

do not provoke or envy one another (Galatians 5:26).

do not hate one another (Titus 3:3).

do not judge one another (Romans 14:13).

do not lie to one another (Colossians 3:9).

do not slander or speak evil about one another (James 4:11).

do not grumble against one another (James 5:9).

do not go to the law against one another (1 Corinthians 6:1-8).

The Importance of Finding Your Place in the Body and Be Active

INTRODUCTION

“Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus ascended bodily to be with the Father-but He did not leave! His life and ministry is deposited in all those who join themselves to Him through faith. He continues to orchestrate and administrate His plan of redemption for the human race through the Church which is also called His Body.” (Eph. 1:22- 23).

Every believer, at the time of salvation, becomes a member of the Body of Christ. Each one of us is a vital member of this divinely structured group of people. We all have a place in the Body of Christ and are called to contribute to its growth and ministry. When we discover and accept our place, we receive a fulfillment and peace. This study examines the purpose and ministries of the Body of Christ and concludes by giving some helpful tips to finding your place within it.

WHAT IS THE BODY OF CHRIST?

“And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be Head over all things to the church, which is His Body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all” (Eph. 1:22- 23). The Body of Christ and the Church are one and the same. Both terms represent those individuals who have been saved by receiving Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The term “church” is the Greek word “*ekklesia*” meaning “called out.” It refers to those who have been called out of the world into citizenship in the kingdom of God (Col. 1:13). The term “Body of Christ” has reference to the organic union between the Lord Jesus and the total company of believers that are joined to Him.

At salvation, every believer is born again by the Holy Spirit Who enters our hearts and makes our body the temple of God (Gal. 4:6; I Cor. 6:19). Simultaneously, by the same spirit we are all baptized into the Body of Christ (I Cor. 12:13). Each of us is included as an individual part of the many membered Body of Christ of which Jesus is the Head.

By describing the Body of Christ as the “fulness of Him” in Ephesians 1:23, the Lord is communicating the inseparable union and complete identification He has with His people. Through the incarnation, Jesus shared in our humanity as the second Adam and forever linked Himself to us in what we might term a spiritually organic relationship (I Cor. 15:45).

Just as Christ shared in our humanity through actual experience, we, likewise, must commit ourselves to a tangible participation in His Body. We are members of the universal Body of Christ, consisting of every believer who has ever lived, but we must also become faithful, contributing members of a local expression of His Body through involvement in a local church. It is through the practical commitment of each member to one another, in the will of God, that Christ’s purposes with His Body will be fulfilled.

EVERYONE HAS A PLACE

“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one Body in Christ” (Rom. 12:4- 5).

Our physical body consists of many parts, from kidneys to fingers and from bone marrow to eyeballs. Every part is absolutely essential in order for our body to function properly. So also is the Body of Christ. There are many members, each with his own place and contribution, yet only one Body. We each differ in respective talents, abilities and areas of ministry, but we are all necessary and important. Every Christian has been specifically created, gifted and graced for a unique place of contribution and service. I Corinthians 12:18 tells us that, “God has set the members, each one of them, in the Body just as He pleased.” Finding our place in the Body requires that we acknowledge the fact that we each have a special place and that we should be willing to accept the unique position which God has given us.

There are two reactions described in I Corinthians 12 that interfere with the unity and function of the Body of Christ:

ONE - Insecurity- In I Corinthians 12:15 Paul humorously describes the foot, in insecurity, denying its place in the body because it is not the hand. The lesson is obvious: a foot lacks the visibility,

creativity and dignity of the hand and would therefore be the one that tended to insecurity. Many saints who lack distinct gifts or public ministry tend toward the same reaction. We must not allow insecurity or jealous comparison to cause us to depreciate our function or keep us from accepting our place in the Body.

TWO-Pride – In I Corinthians 12:21 Paul pictures the eye proudly rejecting the hand by saying, “I have no need of you.” We are, “Individually members of one another” (Rom. 12:5), and must acknowledge the value of every person’s place. This is especially important for those with a more obvious gift ministry.

EVERYONE HAS A GIFT

“And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability” (Matt. 25:15).

Jesus related the parable of the talents to convince each of us that we have gifts, talents and abilities that are to be invested in His work. This parable also includes these essential points:

We all have natural abilities – God created each one of us as a unique person. We were born with certain natural interests and aptitudes. Some persons are musically inclined, some are mathematically gifted. Some love working with children, while others have carpentry or mechanical skills. Your natural abilities and inclinations are not a coincidence. You were specifically designed for God’s purpose, “We are His workmanship” (Eph. 2:10). The Lord equips us for our service and calling according to our “own ability” (Matt. 25:15).

God graces our natural ability – In this parable, the talents given by Christ represent God’s grace (special endowment for service) being poured upon our natural abilities. These natural abilities, energized by the Spirit of God, then become gifts to the Body of Christ. We are told in Romans 12:6, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them.” Without the special endowment of God’s grace on our natural abilities, we will not profit His purposes. Jesus describe this relationship in John 15:5, “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

We must be faithful – The major point of the talents is that God requires us to be faithful with our gifts and callings, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (I Cor. 4:2). Those that wisely invested their talents were commended with “Well done, good and faithful servant”(Matt.25:21). The one who hid his talents was rebuked and his talent was given to another. God desires our fruitfulness through faithfulness.

OUR GIFTS ARE MEASURED

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift” (Eph. 4:7).

The Holy Spirit was given without measure to Jesus, “For in Him dwells all the fulness of the God head bodily”(Col. 2:9). He is the Head of the Body and “of His fulness we have all received” (John 1:16). The Body of Christ consists of many members, each with gifts and talents that have been measured to them. As we find our place, invest our gifts, and receive each other’s ministry, we grow to “a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph.4:13).

Relate to your gift realistically – We need a realistic appraisal of our gift and abilities. Romans 12:3 teaches a man, “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

The measure of your gift can increase – The present measure of our gift can increase in quality, scope and effectiveness in time. God rewards faithfulness and diligence. In the parable of the pounds, those who invested theirs received more in proportion to their initiative even though each was initially given only one pound (Luke 19:1-26).

Don’t step beyond your measure – Paul said, “We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us” (II Cor. 10:13). Our participation and service should always be aligned with God’s grace and calling. Do not step into areas of ministry where the gift is either lacking, insufficient or non-existent.

Do not measure yourself by yourself - Those using only themselves or a select group of close peers for their standard of measurement are not wise (II Cor.10:12). A more valid estimation of our gifts and abilities can be derived through a broader comparison of other ministries and function in the large Body of Christ. A healthy contact, interaction and exposure to other ministries helps give us balance and definition. It also positively provokes us and stimulates refinement in our progress and development in ministry.

OUR GIFTS ARE FOR SERVING

“For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is not he who sits at the table? Yes I am among you as the One Who serves” (Luke 22:27).

Jesus was nearing the time of His crucifixion. He had demonstrated the power and character of the kingdom of God to His disciples for over three years. Yet at the Last Supper a dispute arose among them as to who would be the greatest after He left. The above words spoken by Jesus were meant as both a rebuke and a teaching. It was essential that the disciples recognise that those who represent Jesus to do so with the motive to serve. Jesus is among His Body as One Who serves. Our gifts and calling are for the purpose of serving others and building up the Body of Christ. We naturally receive a sense of usefulness and fulfillment whenever our gifts provide a contribution to others. The Scriptures remind us of the source of our abilities: “What do you have that you did not receive?” (I Cor. 4:7). We must become servants and do what we do for the glory of God.

INTRODUCING THE GIFTS

There are many functions and ministries necessary for the proper growth and expression of the Body of Christ. The New Testament provides a listing of twenty-one of these. We will briefly describe each of them since they provide a foundation for the majority of Body ministry. Other vital ministries that are not included here are singing, worship leading, intercession, the playing of instrument, etc.

The gifts we will define are a part of the following three categories:

The Gifts of Function (Romans 12:6-8) – These seven gifts provide the motivation and out working for most of the Body ministries.

The Gifts of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:8-10) – These nine gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit and provide a supernatural dimension to the Body of Christ.

The Five-Fold Ministry (Eph. 4:11) – These five gifts are offices given to equip and edify the Body of Christ.

THE GIFTS OF FUNCTION

The Gift of Prophecy – The gift of prophecy involves speaking under the direct function of the Holy Spirit. It is primarily “forthtelling” under the influence of the Holy Spirit to declare the mind of God with a heightened sense of inspiration and quickening. It can include foretelling as well, though this predictive element functions more fully in the office of the prophet. The forthtelling aspect of this gift includes speaking unto “edification and exhortation and comfort” (I Cor. 14:3). It differs from the prophecy gift of I Corinthians 12 only by degree.

The prophecy of I Corinthians 12 is a manifestation of the Spirit and may not necessarily imply a consistent, abiding, personal gift as does that of Romans 12 (Example: read Acts 21:9).

The gift of Ministry (Service) – The gift of service involves the motivation to serve in practical, necessary ways in order to meet a current need. Individuals with this ministry are usually responsible, willing helpers that experience a great sense of fulfillment in getting the job done. They can be a special blessing to the leadership by their responsive volunteer labour.

This gift is the incentive for the ministry of helps as seen in I Corinthians 12:28, and should be resident in those functioning as deacons (Example: read Acts 6:2-3).

The Gift of Teaching – The gift of teaching involves the motivation and ability search out and expound to others the truths contained within the Word of God. The Greek word for teaching found in Romans 12 is the word “didaskalia” and means “instruction.” Many can teach the Word of God, but the gift of teaching is apparent in an individual’s drive for truth and in his motivation and ability to convey it. Those with this gift can be a valuable asset in Sunday School catechism courses, home meetings, etc. Depending upon the degree of gift, with proper training and supervision some of these individuals may develop into the five-fold office ministry of a teacher (Example: read Acts 18:24- 25).

The Gift of Exhortation- In the New Testament, exhortation means an appeal, an entreaty, encouragement, consolation and comfort. To exhort is to admonish or urge someone to follow some course of action. We are all called to “exhort one another daily” (Heb. 3:13). However, a person with the gift of exhortation will be a concerned individual with an eye to see the area of need and the ability to communicate the proper advice, encouragement, warning or direction to others. If the gift is there, the burden to assist others in this way will be consistent and bear fruit (Example: read Acts 2:40).

The Gift of Giving – A person with a gift of giving is one who enjoys giving financially to contribute to the advancement of the kingdom of God. This person usually has the ability to make money, and in turn gives it generously. The gift of giving is seen in its consistency and in the increase and blessing of God on the one with the gift (Example: read Acts 4:36- 37).

The Gift of Leadership – The person with this gift has the ability and motivation to lead others in accomplishing God’s purposes. These individuals clearly grasp the vision of the kingdom of God and have the capacity to both inspire and guide others in establishing different areas of ministry. The gift of leadership is necessary for the function of “administrations” spoken of in I Corinthians 12:28. It must be present in the eldership of a local church. It is important for the pastoral ministry, and is essential for the office of an apostle (Example: read Acts 2:14).

The Gift of Mercy – Those with the gift of mercy naturally identify with and feel strong empathy for those who suffer misfortune or are experiencing some type of hurt. Their sympathy leads them to acts of kindness, help and comfort towards those in need. God is the source of all mercy (Psalm 103:8), and He requires all of His children to be merciful (Luke 6:36). However, this attributes is especially manifest in those with a gift of mercy. (Example: read Acts 9:36).

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

The Word of Wisdom- This involves the quickening, illumination or impartation of divine inspiration to see, understand and respond to life situations from God’s frame of reference.

It is a specific impartation given by the Spirit of God granting divine insight and understanding as to how to proceed in a given circumstance or situation (Example: read Matthew 22:17-22).

Word of Knowledge – This is the supernatural revelation to men of some detail of the knowledge of God. It is the impartation of facts, information and details which are humanly impossible to know. The manifestation of the word of knowledge is a direct impartation or quickening to the recipient mind of a portion of the all-knowing mind of God (Example: read John 4:18).

Faith – This gift is the God-given ability to believe Him for the impossible in a situation beyond the normal faith potential. It is the faith to accomplish specific tasks, face potentially overwhelming circumstances, or to persevere in the face of dangerous situations (Example: read Acts 27:21-25).

Gifts of Healing –The gifts of healings is the supernatural ability to minister physical healing to those who are sick or infirm. The plural “healings” in I Corinthians 12:9 may

imply the idea of spiritual, emotional, mental or psychological healing (Example: read Acts 3:6-7).

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he Working of Miracles – A miracle is a phenomenon that is supernatural – an act which is contrary to the physical laws of nature. Miracles defy reason and transcend natural laws. This gift requires God working through individuals to perform the impossible (Example: read Acts 13:11).

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prophecy – Prophecy is speaking under the direct unction of the Holy Spirit. It is primarily “forthtelling” and speaking forth with a heightened sense of inspiration and quickening of the mind of God. It can include a quality of foretelling as well, though this predictive element functions more fully in the office of a prophet. Every saint is encouraged in this manifestation (I Cor. 14:1 – Example: read Acts 21:9).

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iscerning of Spirits- This gift involves the divine ability to perceive the spiritual source behind a word, motive, attitude, mood or action in an individual or group. The spiritual source being discerned may be either heavenly, human or demonic. This gift is manifested the lives of all Spirit-filled believers at various times (Example: read Acts 8:20).

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ongues – The gift of different kinds of tongues is the supernatural linguistic ability to communicate in a language that you are unfamiliar with. It may involve the languages of men, or the supernatural languages of angels. This gift is available to all believers (I Cor. 14: 5), and is important for our spiritual edification (I Cor. 14:4 – Example: read Acts 10:45-46).

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nterpretation of Tongues – The gift of interpretation is the supernatural, spontaneous ability to interpret an utterance given in tongues into the language understood by the people present. This gift has nothing to do with a natural knowledge of languages but rather comes directly from God (Example: read I Cor. 14:13).

THE FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.” (Eph. 4:11).

The Apostle- The ministry of the apostle has continued throughout Church history. It must be distinguished from that of the first apostles in that they were uniquely used to lay the foundation of the Church and to establish the doctrines and teachings of the New Testament. Apostles were “wise master builders” (I Cor. 3:10), able to lay a healthy spiritual and doctrinal foundation in a local church. They are usually pioneers with a vision for the “Church at large.” Church movements with a world vision often arise out of their ministry.

Apostles must be spiritual, self-sacrificing men whose ministries are witnessed by both fruit and signs (II Cor. 12:12). They must work well with the other five-fold ministries since theirs is an administrative and co-ordinative position.

The Prophet – The New Testament prophet must have the gift of prophecy along with the “forth-telling” dimension. They speak for the mind and will of God in a predictive, directive and often times corrective message. Those recognized in this office must be mature, seasoned men, strong in the Word of God and of excellent character.

New Testament prophets differ from Old Testament prophets in that their prophecies rest on a finished revelation. Besides this, their prophecies are to be examined and judged (I Cor. 14:29).

The Evangelist –The ministry of the evangelist is to preach the good news of Jesus Christ. Evangelists have a special burden for the lost. Besides people being saved, their ministry can be accompanied by signs and wonders (Act 8:6- 7). Evangelists should be committed members of a

local church. Their ministry to the church includes inspiring the saints in a burden for the lost and equipping them in evangelism.

The pastor – The title “pastor” literally means “a shepherd.” The pastor is called to tend and care for the flock of God. The nature of his calling demands a broad area of ministry. He must be able to feed the flock with proper teaching from the Word of God. His character example must be above approach. The demands of the flock also require that he raise up other shepherds to assist him.

The Teacher – The ministry of the teacher is vital to the growth and health of the Church. This ministry is foundational in establishing the saints in sound doctrine as well as inspiring them to search out the precious truths contained in Scripture.

The five-fold ministry teacher must have a well developed and anointed gift of teaching. His life must also be a teaching by example.

FINDING YOUR PLACE

Many Christians have a real struggle finding their “ministry”. They live anxiously and confused, waiting for God to say, “this is the way, walk in it” (Is. 30:21). Remember, God has not called you to be something you are not. He wants us to be released for service in what we are. God has made you perfectly suited for the particular ministry He has called you to. Following are some additional tips for finding your place in the Body:

Submit yourself to God’s calling – Jesus Christ is the Head of the Body. We must be willing to accept whatever place or function He has for us. Every ministry and area of service is important. You will find personal contentment when you accept the place God has for you. Remember, what God calls you to, He equips you for! It is also essential not to negatively or competitively compare your place with that of others (II Cor. 10:12). Envy and covetousness destroy our spiritual life.

Give God time – Many Christians get ahead of God in their expectation of their place of service. In the earlier part of our Christian development, the Lord wants us to learn to know Him and His Word. He would rather we be like Mary sitting at His feet learning His Word rather like Martha running about in over-busyness (Luck 10:40-42).

Get involved – Once a basic foundation is laid in our life, we should get involved. There are many areas of service that all saints are called to – such as prayer, witnessing, church work days, other helps, etc. We are called to general involvement. Often our experience in these activities will help reveal our interests and callings.

Consider your abilities and desires – We should evaluate our talents and abilities to realistically determine what we are qualified for. A person who is tone deaf is certainly not called to song-leading. God’s grace energizes our natural abilities. Strong and consistent interest or desire may also indicate a calling in an area of ministry.

The evaluation of others – The comments and opinions of others can give us insight into our own abilities and areas of effectiveness. Leaders can be a special help in this way, as Gods usually gives them a sensitivity to the gifts and calling of members of the church. Personal prophecy may occasionally confirm an area of calling.

Further training and preparation – Once we discover our place of function and calling, we must be diligent to further prepare ourselves. We should employ those disciplines that will enhance our ability to be effective in our area of ministry. We should seek the advice of those with an established “like ministry” in our local church.

Be willing to sacrifice – There is a cost involved with every calling in the kingdom of God. The Lord tests our commitment and motives by our willingness to sacrificially apply ourselves. Through testings and sacrifices, our character is strengthened and God blesses with a greater anointing and effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

The Spirit of God is currently at work in the Church to bring a new and deeper revelation of the Body of Christ. People have been earnestly seeking out their place of service and function. Because of this, the Church is in a time of growth and fruitfulness.

THE GIFTS OF GRACE - WHAT ARE THEY?

The grace of God

This, in general sense, is the bestowal by the Father of His mercy and undeserved favour into our lives. Not one of us deserved God's kindness but He has shown it and given it in Jesus. In this sense we are all recipients of the grace of God and it is in this grace we stand. Grace is also spoken of in relation to individual calls on people's lives and of the authority given to people by the Lord. This grace is the foundation for our life and service for God (Romans 12:3).

We are to be controlled and directed by the grace God has given us. We have a particular call or gifting which is ours through our heavenly Father's choice, and this is the grace of God specifically for us. Our calling is something to be prized and valued, and we should be concerned to work it out in the most effectively way possible. We need to constantly polish this gift of God and use it to its greatest potential for the good of others (2 Timothy 1:6). This grace (call or gifting) of God should be the motivating power of our whole life and work. We are saved by grace and called into grace (1 Corinthians 15:10). Grace is more than particular gifts of the Spirit, it is more like the hand of God coming upon someone's life to single them out for a particular work or area of working. The gifting no doubt comes with the grace God has given us, but this grace is a deep and powerful reality in the lives of those who know its calling.

The gifts of grace

The word "gift" in the New Testament is closely related to the word 'grace'. In fact, they both share the same root. The word for 'gift' is 'charisma' and the word for 'grace' is 'charis'. In fact, 'charisma' has an ending which could properly be translated "the thing of". That is, what we call a spiritual gift is 'the thing of grace.' In other words, it is the expression or result of God's grace being let loose through the Spirit in our experience, so we call it a gift of the Spirit (1 Peter 4:10).

Body Gifts

The gifts of grace given by the Holy Spirit are to and for the body of Christ (the church) and so can be called body gifts. These are manifested through the lives of specific individuals, that is, they are people related gifts (Hebrews 2:3-4). Each gift is interconnected to gifts operating within other members of the body. They are generally available to the members of the body and contribute to the upbuilding and harmony of the body. It would seem that the body gifts are available to who ever seeks the Lord for the gift and, according to the need of that moment, within the body in general. "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." (1 Corinthians 12:7).

The gifts of the Holy Spirit

We have not been promised the gifts of the Holy Spirit for our own indulgence or self display, but that we might be enabled by God as we reach out into the lives of needy men and women around us. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are God's power in action, and they will be released into our lives as we find ourselves in situations that call for their actions. When we reach out in ministry we are not doing it in our own strength, but rather, God will become directly involved in the situation through the manifestation of His enabling in the Holy Spirit. This will lift us away beyond the horizontal levels of our own weaknesses and limitations, and release us in our work for God into a new dimension of capability and insight altogether. In fact, this is what will make and determine the shape of our work for God in the end because it will gradually become apparent how we operate in the gifts of the Spirit, and what gifts find more ready expression through us than through someone else. The style and application of our work for God will be shaped by how the gifts of the Holy Spirit operate through us. Nevertheless, we should remember that it is open to any Christian to ask for the appropriate gift for the situation, even if it is an area in which we normally do not operate. The Father's intention is to bring His power for salvation and healing into the lives of men and women, and He will not withhold the capability to do that if we ask Him with a clean heart and with the right motives. It is through the gifts of the Spirit that we are equipped by God to do His

will. Without the gifts we are living and working at the level of our own natural capacity and strength.

Trinitarian Gifts

Paul teaches us about the gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12. Before he goes on to speak about the gifts in particular, he discloses to us the tremendous fact of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in this area. In fact, it might be proper not to speak about the gifts of the Spirit so much as the gifts of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Paul uses three distinct phrases in verses 4-6 that build up one on the other:

“Different kinds of gifts, but the same spirit”

This demonstrates the source of these gifts within our experience. The Holy Spirit is the bringer of the gifts in a direct sense.

“Different kinds of service, but the same Lord”

This demonstrates who is being served by the operation of these spiritual gifts, and who determines in which direction the gifts will operate, namely, the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men”

The word ‘work’ here in the Greek is the word ‘energemata’. This carries with it the idea of energy and power which is not working aimlessly, but energy working out towards a purpose. This phrase demonstrates the purpose for which these gifts operate, namely, to fulfil the will of the Father in every situation.

So, it is not so much that we exercise the gifts of the Spirit: rather we are engaged in the power and operation of the triune God!

What are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit?

There are nine listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10.

The message of wisdom (the word of wisdom)

Definition: the ability to seek and apply God’s truth to life: by divine revelation, declaring the thoughts and plans of God as a help to handle a particular situation.

Examples: Solomon (1 Kings 3:24-28); Jesus (John 8:4-7; Luke 20:20-26).

This is the very basis of our approach to other people in ministry. Without the gift of God’s wisdom we will find ourselves blundering into situations, making the wrong judgements, taking hasty and irrelevant action, and perhaps leaving a trail of misunderstanding and hurt. God’s wisdom is the ability to see things as God sees them and to gain an insight into the heart of the matter in such a way that we will know what are right, and what to do within a particular context. Remember, the word of wisdom may not be the message given to another person but rather, the word received by the person ministering, directly from the Lord into their own spirit, which will bring the insight and understanding that is essential for the moment.

The message of knowledge (the word of knowledge)

Definition: the ability to know truth by the impression of the Holy Spirit: by divine revelation. Knowing certain facts regarding a person or situation. Examples: Joseph (Genesis 41:25-32); Elisha (2 Kings 6:8-12); Jesus (John 4:17-18; Matthew 21:2-3).

Knowledge is also gift of understanding, but a word of knowledge is more likely to be shared with the other person concerned in a direct way. It will often contain elements which will uncover the truth for you both and enable much deeper areas to be touched than were previously accessible to the Holy Spirit.

The gifts of wisdom and knowledge often operate together because it takes the first to know how to handle and apply the second.

Faith

Definition: the ability to trust God beyond the probable and raise the vision of others: a divine enabling to trust and be assured that God is going to prove His power in a certain situation.

Examples: Joshua (Joshua 10:12-14); Elijah (1 Kings 18:17-40); Jesus (Mark 4:37-40; John 11:41-44).

Faith is the gift that brings assurance and confidence into ministry situation. Through the gift of faith we gain the certainty of what God intends to do and we are given the power to believe with expectation that this will happen.

Gifts of healing

Definition: the ability to administer the life of Christ in healing to a person spiritually, emotionally or physically; a divine enabling to impart God's power to heal.

Examples: Jesus (Mark 1:29-31; Mark 3:1-5); Philip (Acts 8:6-7); Paul (Acts 14:9-10).

The word 'gifts' is in the plural because there are many different gifts of healing which we are given relative to the many different illnesses and traumas that people suffer. It is not uncommon for a person to have the capacity for healing in a certain range of illnesses, or in relation to particular emotional needs.

Miraculous powers (working of miracles)

Definition: the ability to perform acts contrary to natural laws with power beyond human capacity: a divine enabling to perform supernatural acts.

Examples: Elisha (2 Kings 4:1-7); Jesus (John 2:1-11; Luke 9:16-17); Stephen (Acts 6:8). A miracle is something beyond the process of spiritual healing or natural laws. It is an event which relies utterly on the direct intervention of God and which produces results that manifest the extra-ordinary power of God. For example, raising the dead, turning water into wine, replacement or growth of limbs that are missing etc.

Prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:1-6, 22-23, 39-40)

Definition: the ability to convey a special message from God that is in the language of both the speaker and the hearer; communicating a revealed message from the heart of God into a certain situation (sometimes related to future events).

Examples: Isaiah (Matthew 13:14); Jesus (Matthew 24:3-42; John 21:18); Agabus (Acts 11:27-28).

Prophecy is for the upbuilding of the church. Prophetic utterance is very direct and contains within it the need for a responses. "Everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort." (1 Corinthians 14:3).

The ability to distinguish between spirits (the discerning of spirits)

Definition: the ability to distinguish truth from error and good from evil, by divine revelation having insight into what spirit is present in a certain person or situation.

Examples: John the Baptist (Matthew 12:34); Jesus (Luke 13:11-16; John 8:44); Paul (Acts 13: 6-12).

This is the gift of discernment. We are told to test the spirits and see if they are of God (1 John 4:1). It is by means of this gift of spiritual discernment that we can best know what sort of spirit we are dealing with in any given situation.

Different kinds of tongues (1 Corinthians 14:1 – 28)

Definition: the ability to speak in a language of men or angels not previously learned by the speaker.

Examples: Apostles (Acts 2:4); believers in the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:46); Paul (1 Corinthians 14:18).

The gift of tongues is very important in the ministry situation. "Anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirithe who speaks in a tongue edifies himself. (1 Corinthians 14:2-4).

Personal exercise of the gift of tongues can be the means by which we are opened up to the other gifts. For example, as we pray in tongues in our spirits, we become very sensitive to God's will in the situation and to His direction as to what is right to do in ministry.

Interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 14:13, 26-28)

Definition: the ability to interpret the meaning of tongue although the interpreter has not learned the language: being able to understand the meaning of unknown tongues in an understandable language.

This gift is usually more appropriate in a corporate setting where the Spirit responds through interpretation to the exercise of the gift of tongues. What comes is the dynamic equivalent of what is said in tongues. It is not a translation, indeed, it could rather be classed as a response. The tongue is used by the Spirit to draw attention to the fact that God wants to speak, and heightens expectation. The interpreter gives the word from God so that everybody can understand, judge and act on what is said. The gift of interpretation of tongues can also be used, usually within a corporate setting, to interpret the personal offering in tongues of an individual to the Lord.

Remember each gift of the Spirit often needs the operation of some of the other gifts for it to be effective. E.g. gifts of healing may need the gifts of faith and discernment for it to operate effectively; or the gift of faith may need the gifts of wisdom and discernment for it to operate effectively. The gifts are interdependent, and the Holy Spirit will enable us in ministry in whatever gifting are necessary to achieve what God wants us to do in the situation.

Other Gifts of Grace to the Body

There are other gifts of grace to the body of Christ. These are gifting that people are given to serve the Lord in particular ways. Other gifts of grace to people are more for the local body of Christ (i.e. the local church) and they are mentioned in Romans 12:4-8.

1. Prophecy

Definition: the ability to bring prophecy to the body of Christ on a regular basis. The magnitude and frequency of the prophecy brought will depend on the level of the person's faith.

Serving for ministry

Definition: the ability to give assistance or aid in any way that brings strength and encouragement to others. Examples: Jesus 3:1-16; Mary (John 12:1-11).

Teaching

Definition: the ability to analyse and interpret God's truth and communicate it clearly and systematically. Examples: Apollos (Acts 18:24-28); Jesus (Matthew 5:1-11).

Encouraging (or exhortation)

Definition: the ability to motivate people to action, normally using the authority of God's Word. Example: Paul (Acts 20:1-2).

Contributing to the needs of others

Definition: the ability to make and distribute money to further the cause of God. This should be done generously.

Example: Macedonian church (2 Corinthians 8:1-5); Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37).

Leadership (or administration or rulership)

Definition: the ability to lead others and manage the affairs of the church. This should be done diligently. Examples: Elders (1 Timothy 5:17); Deacons (1 Timothy 3:8 – 13).

Showing mercy

Definition: the ability to get alongside and comfort those whom the majority often ignore or have no time for. This should be done cheerfully. Examples: Jesus (Matt. 8:1-4; John 8:4-11).

SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION: introduction

Jesus Christ is Lord and is Head of the Church (Ephesians 1:22 - 23)

God has given all authority in heaven and on earth to Jesus (Matthew 28:18) and Jesus, in turn, delegates His authority to spiritually qualified leaders in His Church. Any authority these leaders have is a 'given' authority and, therefore, they should work in the church as servants, leading by example and not lording it over the flock (1 Peter 5:1 – 3).

God asks us to obey our leaders and submit to them (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17)

This does not mean a heavy submission where we obey everything our leaders say because we have no choice, but rather it is a submission arising out of a respect for and acknowledgement of the leader's place before God. Leaders should have a real love and care for the church for which they are responsible. They should lead so as to enable what is in the best interests of the church. The church members should listen to and act upon the leaders guidance because they hear, recognise and submit to the Word of God in their leaders.

Submission is an attitude of heart, not a position of slavery

To submit is to voluntarily place yourself under the care, protection and guidance of your leaders. Members of the church cannot be forced to do anything. However, when there is recognition of true spiritual authority within a leader, those under that authority will willingly submit. This submission also brings great blessing because those under authority find that they in turn receive authority. (Matthew 8:9).

What do you expect your leaders to be?

People who live by and preach/teach the Word of God (Ezra 7:10). A leader's authority is, in the end only the authority of the Word of God in their life and ministry (Acts 20:28).

People whose way of life is seen to be righteous, successful and worth imitating (1 Timothy 3: 2-5).

People of faith. These people have faith in God that is worth imitating and which enables the church to trust and follow them. A person cannot be a shepherd without any sheep! (1 Thessalonians 1:6; Philippians 3:17).

People who keep watch over those they are responsible for and regard themselves as answer to God their welfare and progress (1 Peter 5:2-3).

What Jesus expects of the Church with regard to its leaders:

They should hear the Word of God through their leaders and take it seriously and personally (Romans 10:15-17; 1Thessalonians 2:13).

They should follow their leaders' example (1 Thessalonians 1:6).

They should humbly submit to the authority of their leaders and be obedient. This will work to the advantage of the church because the church will be living in God's order for each person's life. God raises up all leadership in the first place (Romans 13:1-5). Therefore, when we submit to those God has raised up to be authority over us, we are in fact submitting to God Himself. God has all authority in Himself and He is merely handing it out, or delegating it, when He raises up leadership, and we need to obey those to whom He has delegated authority; just as we need to obey God Himself. We should allow those who have responsibility for us to joy in us and not to find us a burden. We can do this by simply accepting their authority and living in submission to it (1 Peter 5:5-6).

If however, God's delegated authority asks us to do something contrary to what we know God would have us do, then we must obey the higher authority of God and His Word.

They should pray for their leaders: their ministries and their families (Romans 15:30; 2 Thessalonians 3:1).

They should greet their leaders warmly, making them feel loved and welcomed. Appreciate your leaders and give them due respect and recognition (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).

“Remember your leaders ... who brought to you the Word of God ...consider their manner of living....and imitate their faith.... obey your spiritual leaders and submit to them.... For they are constantly keeping watch over your souls and guarding your spiritual welfare, as men who will have to render on account. Let them do this with gladness and not with sighing and groaning, for that would not be profitable to you. (Hebrews 13:7,17 AMPLIFIED)

The Responsibility of Leaders

Leaders have a great responsibility (James 3:1; Ezekiel 33:6; Hebrews 13:17). Every flock needs a shepherd (Number 27:16-17) and the shepherd needs to know how to lead their flock and not drive them (Genesis 33:13-14). The shepherds of God’s people must know the truth of what God is saying today so that they can lead their flock on into the plans and purposes of God. The shepherd must:

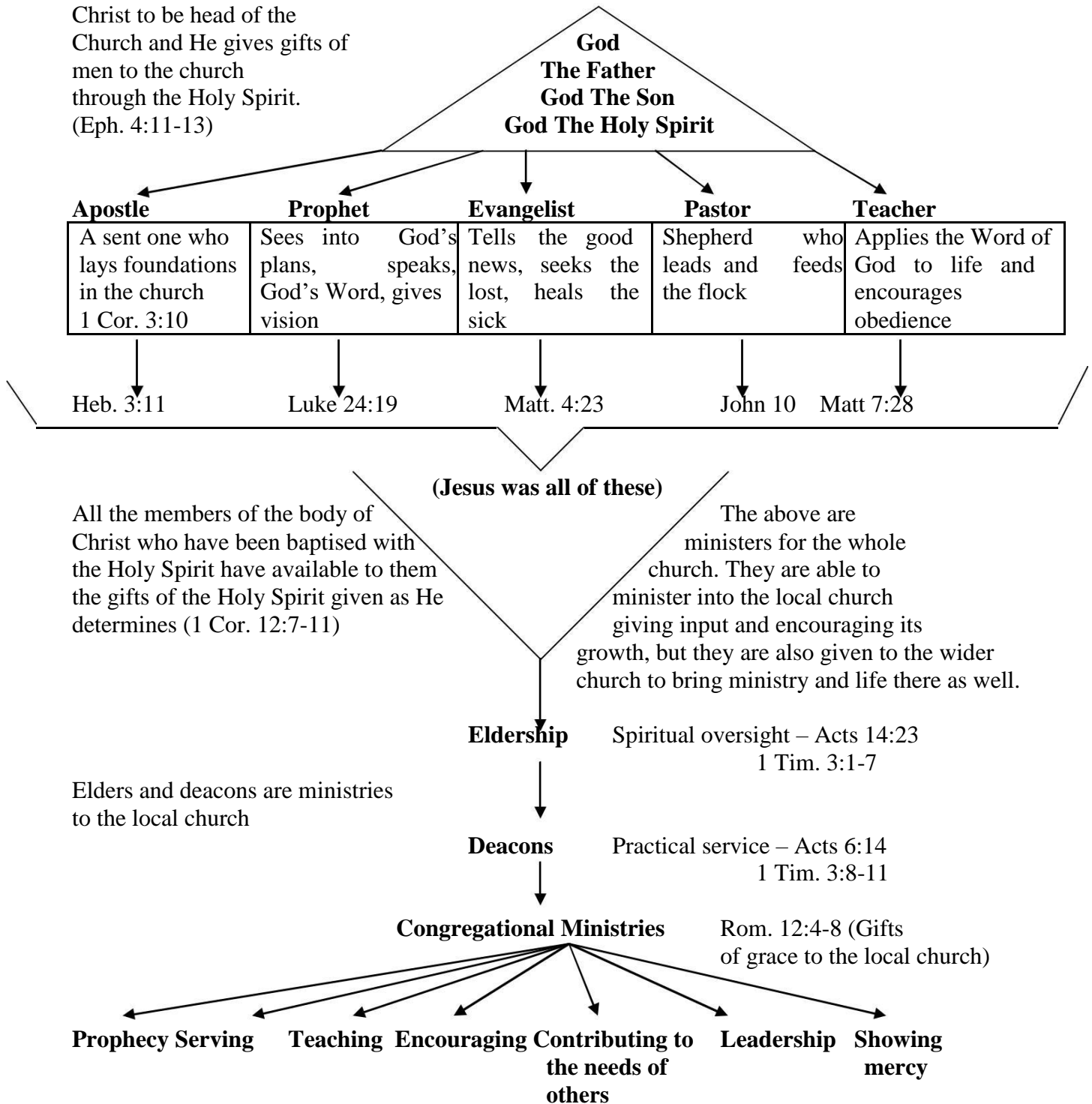
- keep their flock safe from attack. The wolf (Satan) will try to isolate members of the flock by deception, but the shepherd should be there to protect his sheep from this.
- give authority and discipline on behalf of Jesus who is the Head of the church.
- be able to keep their sheep in rank so that they are in step with one another and with God. The church needs Christians who are willing to lay aside their vanity, pride, self-importance, independence and pettiness and, instead, keep rank and be of undivided loyalty.

For a graphic illustration of the Lord's chain of command see below.

The Chain of Command in the Kingdom

The Triune Godhead

The Father appointed Jesus Christ to be head of the Church and He gives gifts of men to the church through the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:11-13)



A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE BIBLE

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION

The word “Bible” comes from the Greek word for “book”. The Bible is a library of 66 books written by approximately 40 different authors over a period of nearly 1500 years (1400 B.C. to A.D. 100). These books are divided into two major divisions:

- The Old Testament (Old Covenant)
- The New Testament (New Covenant)

THE BIBLE’S PURPOSE

One theme unifies all 66 books. The theme is “salvation” or “redemption”. The Bible is an account of what God has said and done in history to save (redeem) mankind from the bondage of sin and disobedience against his Creator. This theme is fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ, God’s Son.

In II Timothy 3:14-17, the Bible clearly states that its purpose is to:

- make people “wise to salvation which is through faith in Jesus Christ.”
- equip such believers for “every good work.”

Thus after a person comes to faith in Christ, the Bible is profitable for four things in equipping for “every good work.”

- Doctrine (teaching)
- Reproof (showing the wrong)
- Correction (showing the right)
- instruction in righteousness (right relationships with God and man)

THE STORY THE BIBLE TELLS

The story the Bible tells may be summarized as follows. God created man in His own image for fellowship and rulership over the earth on His behalf. Through willful disobedience, man lost his unique relationship with God and the destiny for which God had created him.

The Old Testament tells how God actively sought to restore mankind to His intended purpose. He did this by choosing the Jewish nation, through whom He would reveal His salvation and bring it to the whole world. But the Jews, God’s specially chosen servants, violated the covenant by which God had promised to bless them with His salvation and make them a blessing to all nations of the earth. Thus, they disqualified themselves as God’s servants, having been warned repeatedly by the prophets of the consequences of their idolatry and unfaithfulness to the one true and living God, the God of Israel.

The New Testament records the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation to redeem and restore mankind through His Son, Jesus the Christ (Messiah). As God’s perfect Servant Who fully met the requirements of God’s covenant, He took upon Himself the penalty of death and separation from God in His death on a Roman cross. Upon His resurrection and exaltation, God now offers forgiveness of sins and restoration of fellowship. God’s children— the Church – are all who, through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord, receive God’s salvation through the working of the Holy Spirit. Through them, the good news of God’s gift of redemption is to be brought to the whole world. The last book of the Bible, Revelation, shows how God’s salvation of His Creation will culminate in a new heaven and earth wherein man’s fellowship and rulership shall be fully and completely restored....to the glory of God!

GOD’S ETERNAL COVENANT

INTROUCTION

The idea of “covenant” is fundamental to both the Old and New Testaments. From the end of the second century A.D., the Church has named the two sections of Scripture we call the Old Testament and the New Testament as the Old and New Covenant.

DEFINITION OF “COVENANT”

Hebrew: “berith” – an agreement, contract or compact.

Greek: the septuagint (which is the name of the Old Testament version written in Greek) and the New Testament translate “berith” with two words: “sunatheke” – an agreement between equal parties (bilateral contract); “diatheke” – an agreement between unequal parties (unilateral contract). This “diatheke” is the type of covenant we have with God.

DIMENSIONS

God’s eternal agreement includes three basic elements. One or more of these are found in all of God’s covenants, beginning with Abraham.

“I will be your God.”

Abraham (Gen. 17:7)

Isaac (Gen. 26:24).

Jacob (Gen.28:13- 14).

Moses (Ex.29:45-46; Deut. 29:13).

David (II Sam. 7:24).

Jermiah (Jer. 31:33; cp. Heb. 8:10).

Ezekiel (Ez. 37:27).

“You will be my people”

Moses (Deut. 7:6; 29:12- 13).

David (II Sam. 7:24).

Jeremiah (Jer. 31:33; cp. Heb. 8:10).

Ezekiel (Ez. 37:27).

“I will dwell among you”

Moses (Ex.29: 45-46).

David (II Sam. 7:5-14; cp. Acts 7:44-49).

Ezekiel (Ez. 37:27- 28).

Fulfillment of these covenant dimensions finds its fullest climax in Christ and the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:3- 4; cp. II Cor. 6:16-18).

DEVELOPMENT

The ‘new’ covenant promised in the Old Testament (Jer. 31:31-34) and fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:8-12) is “new” in the sense that it is different in quality and nature. The nature of the “old” covenant was external, written on tablets of stone; the “new” covenant is internal, written on the heart (II Cor. 3:1-6). The quality of the new covenant is superior to the old in that the pathway of direct relationship with God is now open to each individual who believes in Christ for salvation. (For further study, please see Hebrews chapters 7 –10.) Nevertheless, both the “old” and “new” covenants have the same three fundamental dimensions. Development of these is as follows:

The covenant initiated: Genesis – Deuteronomy

The covenant illustrated: Joshua – II Samuel

The covenant violated: 1 Kings – Esther; Isaiah – Malachi

The New covenant initiated: Matthew – John

The New covenant illustrated: Acts; Romans – Jude

The New covenant consummated: Revelation

CONCLUSION

God’s eternal covenant reveals His intention to bless mankind in three basic ways:

with Divine headship: “I will be your God”

with Divine relationship: “you will be my people”

with Divine fellowship: “I will dwell with you.”

INTRODUCTION TO THE PENTATEUCH: GENESIS THROUGH DEUTERONOMY

NAME

Hebrew: torah: “laws, instruction”.

From verb “to teach”.

Greek: pentateuch: “five scrolls”.

The Five Books of Moses.

CONTENTS

A . Events

Beginning (genesis 1-11).

creation: Adam and Eve

fall: Cain and Abel

flood: Noah and 3 sons

Babel and the nations

Beginning of God’s People

(Genesis 12 – Exodus 19)

Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph.

bondage in Egypt.

deliverance from Egypt

Revelation at Mt. Sinai

(Exodus 20 – Numbers 9).

Preparation to enter Canan

(Numbers 10 – Deuteronomy 34)

defeat at Kadesh – barnea.

wandering in the wilderness.

second giving of the law on plains of Moab.

B. Themes

Creation: God’s act (direct and indirect)

Election : God’s choice (privilege and responsibility)?

Covenant: God’s commitment (unilateral)

Exodus: God’s deliverance (through blood from slavery for service)

Law: God’s conditions (requirements)

Disobedience: Man’s waywardness (explained by the Fall)

C. Authorship: Anonymous

Traditional – Moses (1400/1200 B.C.).

Information included only what Moses had access to (Mt. Sinai)

Pentateuch claims words of Moses (Ex. 24:3; Deut. 31:9).

Quoted by Jesus as from Moses (Mark 7:10; 10:3; 12:26).

GENESIS : SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Moses.

Date – Around 1400/1200 B.C.

Sources – “Book of the generations of Adam” (5:1).

Occasion – Need for the people of Israel to understand their origin and roots against the background of the origin and fall of mankind.

CONTENTS

Title – “Genesis”.

Hebrew: bereshith (“in the beginning”).

Greek: genesis (“beginning”).

Theme – The beginning of God’s world and God’s people.

Purpose – To show the beginning of God’s chosen people against the background of the beginning of the heaven, the earth and mankind

Key verse: (Genesis 1: 26; 12: 2- 3) “Then God said: let us make man in our image, and after our likeness, and left them have dominion... and I will make of you Abraham, a great nation.... and by you will the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

EXODUS: SUMMARY

BACK GROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Moses.

Date – Around 1400/1200 B.C.

Sources – “Book of the Covenant” (24:4,7).

Occasion – Need for God’s chosen people to: 1) understand how they were formed as a nation through God’s mighty deliverance out of Egypt celebrated in the Feast of Passover, and 2) understand God’s laws, ordinances and statutes which they were to obey as His people.

CONTENTS

Title – “Exodus”.

Hebrew: Shemoth (“names”)

Greek: exodus (“way out”)

Theme – The deliverance and redemption which gave birth to a nation chosen of God to be His people.

Purpose – To record how God delivered Israel out of slavery in Egypt in order to enter into covenant with them as His people through whom His nature and salvation was to be shown to a wayward world.

Key verse: (Exodus 19:4-6) “You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine, and you shall be to a me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

LEVITICUS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship - Anonymous, attributed to Moses.

Date – Around 1400/1200 B.C.

Sources – Sinaitic revelation from God written down by Moses.

Occasion – Written for Israel so that they might know what God has commanded them to do as His covenant people.

CONTENTS

Title – “Leviticus”.

Hebrew: wayyigra (“and He called”)

Greek: levitikon (“pertaining to the Levites”).

Theme – Manual for holy living for a people set apart for God’s service and glory.

Purpose – To set for the clearly those ritual regulations concerning access to God and living for God which were required of Israel, God ‘s chosen nation.

Key verse: (Leviticus 11:45) “I am the Lord who brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.”

NUMBERS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Moses.

Date – Around /1400/1200 B.C.

Sources – Books of the Wars of YHWH (Yahweh 21:14).

Occasion – Need for God’s people to be reminded of the reason for their wanderings in the wilderness: that God was trying to reveal their hearts. Would they trust Him as the Lord their God?

CONTENTS

Title – “Numbers”.

Hebrew: bemindbar (“in the wilderness of”)

Greek: arithmoi (“numbers”)

Two censuses (numberings) taken (Chapters 1 and 26).

Theme – Wilderness wanderings during a generation of divine disciplining.

Purpose – To underscore the truth that insufficient faith, not insufficient numbers, kept God’s people out of the Promised Land.

Key verse: (Numbers 32:13) “And the Lord’s anger was kindled against Israel, and he made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the Lord was consumed.”

DEUTERONOMY: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Moses.

Date – Around 1400/1200 B.C.

Sources – Memories of Moses with some from Leviticus in modified form.

Occasion – In anticipation of entrance in to the Promised Land under a new leader (Joshua), Moses addressed the multitude, popularizing the essentials of Leviticus into something of an “Everyman’s Torah” so that all could understand God’s law and obey it.

CONTENTS

Title – “Deuteronomy”

Hebrew: elleh haddebarim, (“these are the words”)

Greek: deuteronomion, (“second law-giving”)

Theme – A rehearsing of God’s law as Moses’ last will and testament.

Purpose – To give a restatement of God’s requirements so that His people may obey Him and live when they enter and settle in the land of promise.

Key verse: (Deuteronomy 4:1) “And now, O Israel, give heed to the statutes and the ordinances which I teach you, and do them; that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, gives you.”

INTRODUCTION TO THE HISTORICAL LITERATURE

JOSHUA THROUGH ESTHER

HEBREW CANON (8 BOOKS)

Former prophets: Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings (4 Books)

The Writings: Chronicles, Ezra – Nehemiah, Ruth & Esther (4 books)

Greek canon = 12 books, (Joshua through Esther).

SOURCES

For Joshua through II Kings:

“Book of jashar” (Joshua 10:13; II Sam. 1:18).

“Book of the acts of Solomon” (I Kings 11:41).

“Book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah / Israel” (I Kings 15:23,31 etc.)

For I Chronicles through Nehemiah:

“Chronicles of King David” (I Chron. 27:24).

“Book of Samuel the seer” (I Chron. 29:29).

“Book of Nathan the prophet and Gad the seer” (I Chron. 29:29).

“Visions of Iddo the seer” (II Chron. 9:29; 12:15).

“Writing of Isaiah the prophet” (II Chron. 26:22).

DATE OF WRITING

Joshua through II Kings (around 561 B.C.).

Chronicles (around 450 B.C.).

IV. HISTORICAL SPAN

Joshua through II Kings from entrance into Canaan to release of King Jehoiachin from Babylonian prison cell (1400/1200-561 B.C.). Total 650-850 years.

Chronicles: from death of King Saul to Ezra's and Nehemiah's ministry (1011-450 B.C.).

Total: 550 years.

V. THEMES

Prophetic history.

Kingship.

Priestly history: temple and worship.

Human element.

VI. AUTHORSHIP: TRADITIONAL

A. Joshua, Samuel, Jeremiah, Ezra and Nehemiah.

JOSHUA: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Joshua and /or Samuel.

Date – Around either 1440 or 1250 B.C.

Sources – Book of Jasher (10:13).

Occasion – Need of Israelites living in the period of the judges (when every man did what was right in his own years) to understand and be reminded of the conquest and division of the Promised Land with the “stone of witness” calling for obedience to God's law (4:19-24; 24:26-27).

CONTENTS

Title “Joshua”

Hebrew: “Yehoshua (“Jehovah is salvation”)

Greek: Yesus (“salvation/deliverer”)

Theme – The irresistible power of God's people in possessing their inheritance as they walk in full obedience to the Lord.

Purpose – To narrate the conquest of the Promised Land by God's people under Joshua and the subsequent dividing of the land as an inheritance for each tribe in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham.

Key verse: (Joshua 21:43,45) “Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land which he swore to give to their fathers; and having taken possession of it, they settled there... Not one of all the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.”

JUDGES: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship: Anonymous, attributed to Samuel.

Date – Around 1000 B.C. (final form of book as we have it finalized as late as 721 B.C., cf. Judges 18:30).

Sources – Heroic stories/songs.

Occasion – Anarchism between Joshua and Samuel reflected the need for a monarchy to give cohesiveness to the nation of Israel.

CONTENTS

Title – “Judges”

Hebrew: shopenin (“judges / executive leaders”).

Greek: kritai (“judges”).

Theme – Israel's failure to keep God's covenant results in cycles of oppression and deliverance.

Purpose – To show that a centralized hereditary kingship was needed for the well-being of the covenant rulership of the God of Israel in order to maintain its unity and purity.

Key verse: (Judges 2:16-17) “Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the power of those who plundered them. And yet they did not listen to their judges; for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed down to them...”

RUTH: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Samuel.

Date – Perhaps around 1000 B.C. (Ruth 4:7).

Sources – Unknown.

Occasion – Need for tracing King David’s ancestry showing that God’s love transcends Jewish boundaries.

CONTENTS

Title – “Ruth”

Hebrew: rut (“Ruth, female companion”)

Greek: rout (“Ruth”).

Theme – Redemption for a Gentile (Non-Jew).

Purpose - To supply a family tree for King David while making a plea for racial tolerance and kindness toward a widowed Gentile.

Key verse: (Ruth 1:16) “Entreat me not to leave you or to return from following you; for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.”

I and II SAMUEL: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Samuel (I and II Samuel are one book in Hebrew O.T.)

Date – Between 930 and 722 B.C.

Sources – Chronicles of Samuel, Nathan and Gad (I Chr. 29:29).

Period covered – Around 1100–1000 B.C. (end of the judges to height of David’s reign).

Occasion – Need to account for the transition from a weak rulership of judges to a strong monarchy during the time of Samuel, Saul and David.

CONTENTS

Title – “Samuel”.

Hebrew: Shemu’el (“asked / heard of God”)

Greek: basileion A and B (“kingdom I and II”)

Theme –

Samuel: Prophet Samuel and the fall of King Saul.

II Samuel: The significant reign of King David, God’s chosen ruler.

Purpose-

I Samuel: To show the transition from a theocracy (God ruling through judges) to a monarchy (man ruling) in Israel under Saul, the king God rejected.

II Samuel: To show the establishment of the monarchy under David, God’s chosen ruler.

Key verse: (I Samuel 8:7; 12:14)”....they have not rejected you, Samuel, but they have rejected Me from being king over them....if both you and the king who reigns over you will follow the Lord your God, it will be well.”

(II Samuel 7:8,16)”....I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over My people Israel. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before Me; your throne shall be established for ever.”

I and II KINGS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Jeremiah (I and II Kings are one book in Hebrew O.T.)

Date – Possibly between 560 and 538 B.C.

Sources –

Book of the acts of Solomon (1 Kg. 11:41)

Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.

(I Kg. 14:19; 15:31; 6:5,14,27; 22:39; II Kg. 1:18).

Book of the chronicles of the Kings of Judah

(1Kg. 14:29; 15:7,23; 22:45; II Kg. 8:23; 12:19).

Period covered – Around 975-560 B.C. (reign of Solomon to Babylonian exile of the Jews.)

Occasion – The need to explain the captivities of both the northern and southern kingdoms.

II. Contents

Title – “Kings”

Hebrew: melchim A and B (“kings / kingdom I and II”)

Greek: basileion C and D (“kingdom III and IV”)

Theme – The rise, schism, decline and defeat of Israel and Judah.

Purpose – To show how both Israel and Judah persistently violated their covenant with God, resulting in punishment through captivity at the hands of foreign heathen nations.

Key verse: (I Kings 9:4-7) ”...if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping my statutes and ordinances, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel for ever, as I promised David your father...but if your turn aside from following me...then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them.” (II kings 17:19-20) “Judah also did not keep the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the customs which Israel had introduced. And the Lord rejected the descendents of Israel, and afflicted them, and gave them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.”

I and II CHRONICLES: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Ezra (I and II Chronicles are one book in Hebrew O.T.)

Date – Around 450-400 B.C.

Sources – Samuel, Nathan, Gad (I Chr. 29:29). Nathan, Ahijah, Iddo (II Chr.9:29)

Period covered – Around 1025-560 B.C.

Occasion – The return of the Jews from Babylon created the need for a history of Israel, especially Judah, in order to ensure obedience to God’s covenant lest the tragedy of the past be repeated.

CONTENTS

A. Title – “Chronicles”

Hebrew: dibre hayyamin I & II “affairs/words of the day I and II”).

Greek: paraleipomenon I and II (“things omitted I and II”).

Theme – The spiritual heritage of the Hebrew nation.

Purpose – To teach those Jews coming back from exile about their spiritual heritage, so that they might faithfully obey the Mosaic covenant and rituals lest they repeat the errors of their forebears.

Key verse: (I Chron.9:1-2; 10:13) “So all Israel was enrolled by genealogies... And Judah was taken into exile in Babylon because of their unfaithfulness. Now the first to dwell again in their possessions in their cities were Israel, the priests, the Levites, and the temple servants. Saul died for his unfaithfulness.... So David reigned over all Israel; and he administered justice and equity to all his people.”

(II Chronicles 36:15-16) “The Lord, the God of their fathers, persistently sent warnings to them by his messengers because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising His words, and scoffing at his prophets, till the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, till there was no remedy.”

EZRA – NEHEMIAH: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Ezra

(Ezra and Nehemiah are one book in Hebrew O.T.)

Date – Around 440 B.C.

Sources – Memoirs of Ezra and Nehemiah (Ez. 7:27ff.; 8:1ff.; Neh.1-7; 11:1-2).

Census and other lists (Ez. 2:1ff.; Neh. 7:6ff.)

Edict of Cyrus (Ez. 1:1ff.).

Period covered – 538 to 445 B.C.

Occasion – Need for returned Jews to record the rebuilding of the temple and the walls and the reforms under Ezra and Nehemiah, so that they might remain faithful to the Lord.

CONTENTS

Title – “Ezra”.

Hebrew: Esdara (“Ezra, Yahweh helps”).

Greek: Exdras (“Ezra”).

Hebrew: Nehemiah (“Nehemiah, comfort of Yahweh”)

Greek: Neemias (“Nehemiah”).

Theme – The return of the Jewish exiles, and the re-establishment of the religious life by means of rebuilding the temple and re-instituting the law.

Purpose-

Ezra: To show how the edict of Cyrus occasioned the return of the Jews, the rebuilding of the temple, the instituting of religious reforms fulfilling promises made to the repentant minority by the prophets.

Nehemiah: To record how the returns of Jews under Nehemiah occasioned the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem and the eventual recommitment to the Mosaic covenant.

Key verses: (Ezra 6:14: 7:10) “And the elders of the Jews built and prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. They finished their building by command of the God of Israel and by decree of Cyrus and Darius and Artaxerxes king of Persia...Ezra set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach his statutes and ordinances in Israel.

ESTHER: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship - Anonymous and unknown (Mordecai?)

Date – 450-400 B.C.

Sources – Unknown.

Period covered – Reign of Xerxes I (Ahasureus), 486-465 B.C.

Occasion – To record how the Feast of Purim began, since it is not prescribed in the Torah.

CONTENTS

Title – “Esther”.

Hebrew: Hadassah (“myrtle”).

Greek: Esther (from Persian “stara” (“star”?)

Theme – Victory of the Jews over enemies due to divine Providence.

Purpose – To give an historical account of how a feast not prescribed in the Torah had emerged from the plot and overthrow of Haman the Persian, and that God will set people in significant positions of influence in order to accomplish His will.

INTRODUCTION TO POETIC AND WISDOM LITERATURE

JOB THROUGH SONG OF SOLOMON, LAMENTATIONS

THE BOOKS

A. Nature:

Poetical

Books: Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Lamentations.

Sections of other books:

Lament of Lamech (Gen. 4:23- 24)

Blessings of Isaac (Gen. 27:27-29) and Jacob (Gen. 49:2-27).

Song of Moses and Miriam (Ex.15:1-18,21).

Prophetical literature.

Wisdom

Books: Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon and some Psalms.

(1,10,14,19,37,49,73,90,112).

NATURE OF HEBREW POETRY

Definition

Hebrew poetry and song rhymed thoughts rather than words. This is called parallelism: two lines, written together, that express similar thoughts.

Types

Lyric (song) – Psalms.

Didactic (teaching) – Proverbs.

Dramatic (story) – Job.

NATURE OF HEBREW WISDOM

Definition

Hokhmah (“wisdom”) is practical insights into successful living with God and men. Hebrew wisdom is unique, in that it is based on fear of the Lord.

Types

Proverbs (mashal) – brief and very pointed saying about life (Proverbs).

Dramatic story (Job).

Personification (Prov. 1-9).

JOB: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous and unknown (some scholars attribute authorship to Moses).

Date – Unknown (the manners, customs and general lifestyle of Job and his friends are very similar to those of the patriarchal period around 2000-1800 B.C.)

Occasion- Really unknown since authorship and date uncertain. Possibly a time when God’s people were undergoing suffering.

CONTENTS

Title – “Job”

Hebrew: Iyyob (“Job” possibly “come back / repent”).

Greek: Job (“Job”).

Theme – The significance of suffering.

Purpose – To show God’s nature, His wisdom, power and mercy shown in the suffering of the righteous, and that ultimately we can fully trust in Him and His goodness and justice.

Key verse: (Job 42:2,5) “I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted...I had heard of these by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You.”

PSALMS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

A. Authorship –

David – 73 Psalms (Book I-37; II-18, III-1; IV-2; V-15).

Asaph – 12 (Psalm 50,73-83)

Korahites – 11 (Psalm 42-49, 84, 87, 88)

Solomon – 2 (Psalm 72,127)

Moses – 1 (Psalm 90)

Ethan – 1 (Psalm 89)

Anonymous – 50.

Date – Most from time of David (around 1000 B.C.) with some as early as Moses (around 1400/1200 B.C.) and as late as Babylonian Captivity (around 586-538 B.C.). See Psalms 90 and 137.

Occasion:

Book I (Psalms 1-41) probably arranged by David or someone under his direction during his reign, when most were written as largely a book of the prayers of David.

Books II (Psalms 42-72) and III (Psalms 73-89) possibly collected at a later period when Israel was undergoing spiritual awakening (Hezekiah 725 B.C. or Josiah c.625 B.C.).

Books IV (Psalms 90-106) and V (Psalms 107-150) are collections of miscellaneous psalms and prayers, some of which were used in pilgrimages to the Temple in Jerusalem and its worship.

CONTENTS

Title – “Psalms”

- Hebrew: tehillim (“praises”, 40 psalms about praise, 75 about prayer)
- Greek: psalterion (“songs”)

Theme – Personal and corporate praise and prayer of God’s people.

Purpose – To reveal how the God of Israel hears and answers the cries of His people for deliverance, and thus is worthy of their praise and thanksgiving (each of the five major sections: Books I to V – closes with praise).

Key verse: (Psalm 145:20-21) “The Lord preserves all who love Him; but all the wicked He will destroy. My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord, and let all flesh bless His holy name for ever and ever.”

PROVERBS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Solomon (1:1-9:18; 10:1-22:16; 25:1-29:27)

Approximately 375 proverbs

“wise men” (22:17-23:22; 23:23-34).

Agur (30:1-33).

King Lemuel (31:1-9; 31:10-31).

Date – Most during time of Solomon (around 971-931 B.C.); See I Kings 4:32.

Occasion – Need for a collection of the “wisdom of the years” for teaching young men in wise and right living by repetition of wise sayings.

CONTENTS

Title – “Proverbs”

Hebrew: mishele (“proverb/parable”)

Greek : paroimia (“proverb/parable”)

Theme – Words of wisdom based on the fear of the Lord.

Purpose – To record the practical insights of wise men, so that the younger generation may live wise and godly lives.

Key verse: (Proverbs1:7) “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

ECCLESIASTES: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

A. Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Solomon (1:1,16; 2:7-8)

C. Date – Time of Solomon (around 971-931 B.C.).

Occasion – King Solomon’s reflection on the vanities of his own life, recorded before he died so that others may learn thereby.

CONTENTS

Title – “Ecclesiastes”.

Hebrew: qohelet (“one who assembles”)

Greek: ekklesiastes (“one who assembles”)

Theme – Sermons on life’s vanities apart from God.

Purpose – To vividly illustrate the emptiness of life’s pursuits apart from the fear of the Lord.

Key verse: (Ecclesiastes 1:13) “The end of the matter; all has been heard, Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.”

SONG OF SOLOMON: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Solomon (1:5; 3:7, 9,11; 8:11-12)

Date – Solomon’s reign (around 971-931 B.C.)

Occasion – Uncertain.

Interpretation:

Allegorical: God and Israel, Christ and the Church.

Dramatic: Love story of Solomon and Shulamite girl.

Literal: erotic love songs/poems.

Moral: teach the wonder and purity of true love.

Romantic: wedding songs.

CONTENTS

Title – “Song of Songs”.

Hebrew: shir has – shirim (“song of songs” = “most excellent song”).

Greek: asma (“song”).

Theme – Love songs of romance between a bride and bridegroom.

Purpose – To show the beauty and tenderness of the love between a man and a woman, also interpreted as a symbolic “type” of the intimate and deep love God has for mankind.

Key verse: (Song of Solomon 8:6) “Set me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave.”

INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPHETS

ISIAH THROUGH MALACHI

CLASSIFICATION (according to recipients)

To Israel: Hosea and Amos.

To Judah: Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah, Lamentations, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

To Nineveh (Assyria): Jonah and Nahum.

To Babylon: Daniel.

To Exiles in Babylon: Ezekiel.

To Edom: Obadiah.

DEFINITION OF PROPHET

Terms (see I Chronicles 29:29).

Nabi – “one called (of God)”.

Ro’eh – “seer” (from root “to see”)

Hozeh – “seer/prophet” (from root “to see”)

A prophet is a man called by God to be God’s mouthpieces to transmit His Word and will (primarily to His people)

Descriptions

“Forthtelling” (frequent) – God’s mouthpiece to tell forth God’s will, generally for the present.

“Fore”telling (infrequent) – God’s mouthpiece to tell forth God’s will, specifically for the present in light of predicted coming events.

III. NATURE OF PROPHECY

Source – Supernatural (II Peter 1:20-21)

Means:

Dreams & night visions (Num.12:6).

Visions and heightened senses (Isa.2:1;29:7; Amos 1:1; Micah 1:1).

Direct encounter with God (II Kings 20:1-6; Isa. 6:1-10; 38:4).

Historical events with revelation (Jer: 21:2; 36:1-26; 42:7-22)

Life situation of the prophet (Isa. 39:1-8)

Purpose – Ethical (Amos 4:12; cp.II Peter 3:11; 1 John 3:3)

Perspective – Two dimensional

"what" and "who" clearer than "when", thus time dimension not exact but always near (Is. 13:6; Ezek. 30:3; Joel 1:5; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1: 7, 14; cp. Mat. 10:23; 16:28; 24:34; Jas.5:8-9; I Thess. 4:15; Phil. 4:5; Rev. 1:1,3; 22:6, 10,12,20).

Pattern – Balanced.

Present distress is God’s judgment for sin; therefore, repent and return to God in light of the coming “Day of the Lord” (i.e. judgment on the nations.).

God will forgive and restore blessing.

Glorious future messianic age is coming, including a great personage.

IV. TESTS (for false prophets)

Fulfillment (Deut. 18:20-22).

National righteousness (Deut.13:1-5; Jer. 23:13- 14).

Personal righteousness (Jer.23:9-12; cp. Matt. 7:15-20).

ISAIAH: SUMMARY

BACK GROUND

Authorship – Isaiah.

Date – Around 740-681 B.C. during reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Mannaseh (1:1)

Occasion – Growing threat of the Assyrians underscores the need for God’s people to understand and put their trust in the Lord for protection (crisis of 734 B.C. with Israel and Syria; crisis of 701 B.C. with Assyria.)

CONTENTS

A. Title – “Isaiah.

Hebrew: Yesha 'yahu (‘God is salvation’)

Greek: Esaiiah (“Isaiah”)

Theme – God alone is salvation, therefore trust Him only.

Purpose – To call Jerusalem and Judah back to God’s covenant and righteousness by placing their trust in Him for salvation and deliverance rather than in the might of surrounding nations.

Key verse: (Isaiah 49:6) “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach for the end of the earth.”

JEREMIAH: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Jeremiah

Date – Around 627-575 B.C. during reigns of Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jeholachin, and Zedekiah (1:1-3).

Occasion – The increasing apostasy of Judah, and Judah’s impending destruction by the Babylonians, demands God’s Word of assessment through Jeremiah.

CONTENTS

TITLE – “Jeremiah”.

Hebrew: Yimeyahu (“God establishes / raises up”)

Greek: Ieremias (“Jeremiah”)

Theme – Repentance or removal.

Purpose – To warn Judah of coming judgement, in order to bring repentance and return to God, against whom they have rebelled and turned away.

Key verse: (Jeremiah 4:14) “O Jerusalem wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved.”

LAMENTATIONS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Jeremiah.

Date – Around the fall of Jerusalem, 586 B.C. (or as late as 575 B.C.)

Occasion – Jerusalem’s fall prompts a mournful lament by God’s prophet over the tragic destruction of God’s holy city.

CONTENTS

Title – “Lamentations”

Hebrew: ekah (“alas!/ah!/how!”)

Greek: Threnoi (“laments / dirges”)

Theme – Sorrowful laments over Jerusalem’s tragic fall.

Purpose – To express the great grief of the prophet Jeremiah over the fall of Jerusalem due to its stubborn refusal to repent from its idolatrous apostasy (rejection of God.)

Key verse: (Lamentations 2:17) “The Lord has done what He purposed, has carried out His threat; as He ordained long ago.”

EZEKIEL: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Ezekiel.

Date – Around 597 – 571 B.C. during reigns of Jehoiachin and Zedekiah (1:2)

Occasion – Need of Jews exiled in Babylon to know what God had said in warning Jerusalem of its ultimate fall in 586 B.C. and His promised restoration for the repentant.

CONTENTS

Title – “Ezekiel”

Hebrew: Yehezqel (“God strengthens”)

Greek: Iesekiel (“Ezekiel”)

Theme – Warnings of God’s watchman to Judah with promises of restoration of the land and temple for the repentant.

Purpose – To stand as a watchman on the wall to warn of coming judgment on Judah and future restoration of a righteous remnant.

Key verse: (Ezekiel 18:31-32) “Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord God; so turn, and live.”

DANIEL: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Daniel

Date – Around 605-536 B.C. during reigns of Nebuchadnezzar, Awel-Marduk, Nariglissar, Nabonidus, Belshazzar, Cyrus/Darius (1:1,21).

Occasion – Need for God’s people who are under pressure to be encouraged by Daniel’s experiences of deliverance and visions of future events.

CONTENTS

Title – “Daniel”.

Hebrew: Daniel (“God is my judge”)

Greek: Daniel (“Daniel”)

Theme – God’s sovereignty in overruling world powers on behalf of the deliverance of His people.

Purpose – To encourage God’s people by showing them He is in full control of the nations and intervenes to deliver His people now and in the future.

Key verse: (Daniel 7:13-14) “And behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man.... And to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations and languages should serve Him.”

HOSEA: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Hosea.

Date – Around 760-723 B.C. during reign of Jeroboam II (1:1)

Occasion – Prophet to the last generation of the northern kingdom of Israel, during which time God spoke through Hosea of His love for unfaithful Israel who had prostituted themselves by following after and worshipping false gods during the reigns of Jeroboam II through Hoshea, the last king. (See II Kings 14:23-20:21).

CONTENTS

Title – “Hosea”.

Hebrew: Hoshea (“salvation”)

Greek: Osee (“Hosea”)

Theme – Come home to a loving God who patiently waits for the return of His estranged “wife.”

Purpose – To picture and proclaim God’s mercy and love for His wayward people Israel in persistently calling them back to His ways.

Key verse: (Hosea 14:1) “Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God, for you have stumbled because of your iniquity.”

JOEL: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Joel

Date – Uncertain, ranging from 835 to 500 B.C.

Occasion – A fourfold locust plague and drought occasions a prophetic call for the leaders of God’s people to gather the people for prayer, fasting and repentance.

CONTENTS

Title – “Joel”.

Hebrew: Yoel (“Yahweh is God”)

Greek: Ioel (“Joel”)

Theme – Deliverance from the destruction of the locust plagues by means of repentance.

Purpose – To urge the spiritual leaders to call God’s people to repentance, so that the Lord might restore their land and judge the nations in the day of the Lord.

Key verse: (Joel 2:25-26) “I will restore to you the years which the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army which I sent among you... and my people shall never again be put to shame.”

AMOS:SUMMARY

I. BACKGROUND

Authorship – Amos (from Tekoa in Judah)

Date – Around 760-750 B.C. during reign of Jeroboam II.

Occasion – The increased prosperity and spiritual decline of the reign of Jeroboam II led to pride, selfishness, greed, oppression and moral decay, and thus the call for repentance through Amos. (See II King 14:23-15:7; II Chronicles 26)

CONTENTS

Title – “Amos”.

Hebrew: Amos (“burden / burden-bearer”)

Greek: Amos (“Amos”)

Theme – The burden of impending judgement upon Israel because of her unfaithfulness to God’s covenant.

Purpose – To warn Israel of coming judgement for her social and spiritual sins resulting from unfaithfulness to God.

Key verse: (Amos 8: 11) “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord God, when I will send a famine on the land; not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.”

OBADIAH:SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Obadiah.

Date – Uncertain, probably just after 586 B.C.

Occasion – If dated around the time of the fall of Jerusalem (586 B.C.), the book would be occasioned by the Edomites wrongful and wicked aiding of the Babylonians in defeating Judah.

CONTENTS

Title – “Obadiah”

Hebrew: Obedya (“servant of God”)

Greek: Obdiou (“Obadiah”)

Theme – Edom’s pride causes her downfall and judgment as she reaps what she has sown.

Purpose – To spell out the cause and nature of the coming judgment on Edom, Israel’s constant “thorn in the flesh.”

Key verse: (Obadiah vs 3) “The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rock, whose dwelling is high, who say in your heart, who will bring me down to the ground?”

JONAH: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship - Jonah

Date – Around 785-750 B.C. (see II Kings 14:25).

Occasion – Nineveh’s sinfulness causes God to call a prophet to preach repentance, so that divine judgment may be averted even though the Ninevites are Gentiles (Non-Jews).

Apparently the Ninevites were “prepared” to listen to God’s message through Jonah due to “natural” disasters” (plagues in 765 B.C. and 759 B.C. and a solar eclipse in 763 B.C.)

CONTENTS

Title – Jonah

Hebrew: Jonah (“dove”)

Greek: Jonas (“Jonah”)

Theme – The boundless mercy of God for repentant heathen nations.

Purpose – To show a Jewish prophet’s narrow-minded ignorance and prejudice in contrast to God’s love and compassion for Gentiles.

Key verse: (Jonah 4:2) “That is why I made haste to flee to Tarshish; for I knew that You are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil (repents of doing harm by bringing judgement up wickedness).”

MICAH: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Micah.

Date – Around 735-700 B.C. during reigns of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1)

Occasion – Similar in background to Isaiah, Micah's contemporary. Isaiah is concerned with political evils; Micah is concerned more with spiritual and social evils.

CONTENTS

Title – "Micah"

Hebrew: Mikayahu ("who is like God?") (See Mic. 7: 18-20)

Greek: Michaias ("Micah")

Theme – Social reform and personal righteousness based on God's righteousness and sovereignty.

Purpose – To outline God's controversy with His people in Judah and plead for their repentance and return to the Lord as individuals and as a nation.

Key verse: (Micah 6:8) "He has showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

NAHUM: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Nahum.

Date – Around 660-630 B.C.

Occasion – With the death of Ashurbanipal in 627 B.C., the beginning of the end of the Assyrian Empire occurred with Babylon asserting her independence in 626 B.C., and eventually attacking Assyria with the Medes and thus overthrowing the capital, Nineveh, in 612 B.C.

CONTENTS

Title – "Nahum"

- Hebrew: Nahum ("consolation / comfort")

- Greek: Naoum ("Nahum")

Theme – Consolation for Judah and judgment for Nineveh's militarism.

Purpose – To warn of Nineveh's siege and destruction of Jerusalem due to her great wickedness and cruelty.

Key verse: (Nahum 1:7-8) "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; He knows those who take refuge in Him, but with an overflowing flood He will make a full end of His adversaries, and will pursue His enemies into darkness."

HABAKKUK: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Habakkuk.

Date – Around 605-598 B.C.

Occasion – The first deportation of exiles from Judah to Babylon when Jehoiakim was king causes the prophet to discuss the problem of the suffering of the righteous at the hands of the unrighteous.

CONTENTS

A. Title – "Habakkuk".

Hebrew: Habakkuk ("embrace")

Greek: Ambakoum ("Habakkuk")

Theme – Faith in God's mercy and justice is required when God's people are punished by a nation even more unrighteous.

Purpose – To reveal God's ways in judgment and call for a response of faith in Him.

Key verse: (Habakkuk 2:3-4) "For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the end-it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail, but the just shall live by faith."

ZEPHANIAH:SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Zephaniah (great – grandson of King Hezekiah).

Date – Around 640-620 B.C. (first prophet in Judah since Isaiah and Micah).

Occasion – Possibly the threat of the Scythian invasion of western Judah and Philistia occasions a call to repentance under the reigns of wicked Mannaseh and Amon.

CONTENTS

Title – “Zephaniah”

Hebrew: Sepanya (“God hides”)

Greek: Sophonias (“Zephaniah”)

Theme – Mercy in the midst of wrath as God hides those who humble themselves and seek righteousness.

Purpose – To call the humble to seek the Lord for mercy in the midst of the wrath of judgment.

Key verse: (Zephaniah 2:3) “Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, who do his commands; seek righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the wrath of the Lord.”

HAGGAI: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Haggai

Date – Around 520 B.C.

Occasion – External opposition and internal preoccupations had halted the rebuilding of the temple.

CONTENTS

Title “Haggai”.

Hebrew: Haggai (“festival”)

Greek: Aggaios (“Haggai”)

Theme – Back to rebuilding the temple.

Purpose – To exhort the returned exiles to again initiate immediately the rebuilding of the temple, for God would be with them.

Key verse: (Haggai 2:4-5) “Work, for I am with you; says the Lord of hosts, according to the promise that I made you when you came out of Egypt. My Spirit abides among you, fear not.”

ZECHARIAH: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Zechariah.

Date – Around 520-515 B.C.

Occasion – The rebuilding of the temple under Zechariah and Haggai causes Zechariah to look beyond the immediate situation to the time of the Messiah and God’s final consummation of His rule.

CONTENTS

Title – “Zechariah”

Hebrew: Zechariah (“God remembers”)

Greek: Zecharias (“Zechariah”)

Theme – Reassuring the remnant of God’s preservation and Israel’s final victory.

Purpose – To encourage the continued work on the temple under Zerubbabel; to encourage righteous living for the Lord in anticipation of final victory.

Key verse: (Zechariah 8:13) “And as you have been a by-word of cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing. Fear not, but let your hands be strong.”

MALACHI: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Malachi (Since the name means “messenger”, some feel “Malachi” may not be the name of the author).

Date – Around 433-420 B.C.

Occasion – Discouragement and slackness cause God’s people to doubt His love and only grudgingly observe His commandments, claiming that obedience to God’s requirements is unprofitable.

CONTENTS

Title – “Malachi”

Hebrew: Malachiah (“my messenger”)

Greek: Malachias (“Malachi”)

Theme – Return to reality and sincerity toward God by living holy lives.

Purpose – To call God’s people back to purity in worship, holiness in living, and liberality in giving.

Key verse: (Malachi 3:7) “From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from my statutes and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts.”

OLD TESTAMENT: SUMMARY

DIVINE REVELATION

General (Genesis 1-11)

through creation (external; see Romans 1:18-21).

through conscience (internal; see Romans 2:12-16)

Special (Genesis 12- Malachi 4)

through covenant.

“I will be your God”.

“You will be my people.”

“I will dwell with you.”

through commandment.

by prophets – reveal God’s Word.

by priests – represent God’s requirements.

by kings – rule as God’s representatives.

MAN’S RESPONSE (JUDGES – ESTHER, ISAIH – MALACHI

spiritual – idolatry (“you will not be our God”...many gods).

Personal – immorality and perversion (“we will not be your people “...many wives).

Social – corruption and depravity (“you will not dwell among us”...many sins and sorrows.)

PROMISE HOPE

the greater prophet – a heavenly son of man (Deut. 18:15-18; Dan 7:13-14).

The perfect priest – a suffering servant (Isa. 52:13-53:12).

The righteous king-son of David (Isa. 9:6-7; 11:1-5).

THE GOSPELS: AN INTRODUCTION

MATTHEW THROUGH JOHN

THE FOURFOLD GOSPEL

One Gospel (see I Corinthians 15:3-8 “interpreted events”; Acts 1:1).

Jesus’ deeds.

Jesus’ words.

Four portraits: A Unique Perspective (see Ezekiel 1:10)

Matthew: Davidic Messiah (lion-like).

Mark: suffering Servant (ox-like).

Luke: compassionate Savior (man-like).

John: divine Messiah (eagle-like).

Two groups.

Synoptics (common material and view point.).

Fourth Gospel (92% unique material with more interpretation).

Authorship.

Authority/canonicity.

Direct or indirect apostolic authorship.

Apostolic teaching.

Church usage.

MATTHEW: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to the Apostle Matthew (also called “Levi” – see Mark 2:14).

Place of writing – Palestine or Antioch?

Date of writing – A.D. 70-80.

Destination – Palestinian or Antiochian Jews/Gentiles.

Occasion – Believers needing teaching in Palestine or Antioch in “all Christ had commanded.”

CONTENTS

Title – “Gospel of the Davidic Messiah”.

Theme – Teaching for the new Israel under the new Messiah.

Purpose – To provide a teaching manual designed to help Jews living in Greek/Roman cultures and Gentile disciples observe all things Christ had commanded as the promised Davidic Messiah of the new Israel.

Key verse: (Matthew 28:18-20) “All authority...has been given to Me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them... teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.

MARK: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Mark, Peter’s reporter (see II Peter 1:14-15)

Place of writing – Rome (See I Peter 5:13).

Date of writing – A.D. 65 (based on priority of Mark as first written gospel.)

Destination – Roman Gentiles.

Occasion – Believers under persecution by Nero in Rome.

CONTENTS

Title – “Gospel of the Suffering Servant”.

Theme – Christ’s example of victory through suffering.

Purpose – To encourage the suffering Gentile Christians in Rome by showing them how Christ triumphed through suffering as a Servant Who fulfilled the will of God.

Key verse: (Mark 10:45) “The Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

LUKE: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Luke (first volume of a two-volume work-See Acts 1:1 and “we” sections in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16)

Place of writing – possibly Caesarea/Rome

Date of writing – around A.D 70-85?

Destination – To Theophilus (possibly living in Rome)

Occasion – Roman official needs to know about Christianity.

CONTENTS

Title – “Gospel of the compassionate Savior”.

Theme – An orderly account of Christ’s words and deeds.

Purpose – To provide an orderly account of Christ’s life for Theophilus, a Roman Official, so he would know the truth about Christ and His followers.

Key verse: (Luke 2:10-11) “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people, for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

JOHN: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to the Apostle John (see “beloved disciple”-13:23; 18:15; 19:26- 27; 20:2, 8; 21:20-24).

Place of writing – Ephesus.

Date of writing – A.D. 90-100.

Destination – Jews and Gentiles around Ephesus.

Occasion – Believers and non-believers need to know Who Christ truly is in a time of increased rise of cults and heretical teachings.

CONTENTS

Title – “Gospel of the Divine Messiah.”

Theme – Jesus’ life and miracles reveal his Messiahship.

Purpose – To help people believe in Christ as the Messiah, God’s Son, and in so doing experience life and relationship with God Himself.

Key verse: (John 20:31) “These are written that you might believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life through His name.”

ACTS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, attributed to Luke (See 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16, “We” passages)

Place of writing – possibly Caesarea/Rome

Date of writing – around A.D. 70-85

Destination – Theophilus (likely living in Rome)

Occasion – Rome official needs to know about Christianity.

CONTENTS

Title – “Christ’s ministry expanded”.

Theme – Orderly account of the birth and growth of the Church.

Purpose – To provide an orderly account of the birth and expansion of the Church for Theophilus, a Roman official, so he would know the truth about Christianity (See Luke 1:1-4).

Outline – Threefold outline based on Acts 1:8 with periodic summaries.

1. In Jerusalem (2:1-6:1)

In Judea and Samaria (8:1-12:1)
To the end of the earth (13:1-28:31)

Keystone book

Presupposes the gospels.

Anticipates the epistles.

Selectivity:

Acts of Peter (1-2)

Acts of Paul (13-28).

Key verse: (Acts 1:8) “And you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.”

INTRODUCTION TO THE EPISTLES

ROMANS THROUGH REVELATION

LETTER-WRITING FORM

(21 of 27 N.T. books are letters)

Method of production.

Written by author.

Written through a secretary.

Spoken message recorded.

Addresses (recipients) copy verbal message.

Purpose of writing

Specific to certain issues in a local church.

General principles and exhortations.

Structure of letter.

Sender (Rom 1:1)

Addressees (1Cor 1:2)

Greetings (Gal 1:3-5)

Body (Eph. 1:3-6:20)

Final farewells (Col. 4:7-18).

CLASSIFICATIONS OF LETTERS

General (universal) epistles.

Specific (Pauline) epistles.

Eschatological (concerned with end times): I and II Thessalonians

Soteriological (doctrine of salvation): Galatians, I and II Corinthians, Romans.

Prison epistles: Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians, Philemon.

Pastoral issues: I Timothy, Titus, II Timothy.

CHRONOLOGY OF N.T. LETTERS

Earliest period: Galatians, James.

Second missionary journey: I and II Thessalonians.

Third missionary journey: I and II Corinthians, Romans.

1st Roman imprisonment: Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians.

Period of freedom: I Timothy, 1 Peter, Titus.

2nd Roman imprisonment: II Timothy, II Peter.

Post – Pauline: Hebrews, I, II, III John, Jude.

IV. UNIQUENESS OF PAUL’S LETTERS

Length – longer (3 times longer than most other letters)

Content – theological

Address – communal (to the whole church)

V. PAUL, THE MAN BEHIND 13 LETTERS

Divine call and commission (Gal. 1; II Cor 3:1-18; Eph 3:1-13).
Divine apostolic authority (II Cor. Chapters 10-13)
Deep love for people (1 Thess 2:7-8; See Acts 20:19)
Divine insight into Gospel's meaning and application (Rom. Chapters 1-15).
Flexible and adaptable (I Cor. 9:21-23).
Physical endurance (II Cor. 11: 23-29).
Literary background; excellent communicator (Eph. Chapters 1-6).
Deep experience with Christ (II Cor. 12:2-10).

ROMANS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Paul via Teritus (16:22)

Place of writing – Corinth (16:23)

Date of writing – A.D. 55-56 (during third missionary journey)

Destination – Church in Rome. Rome was a cosmopolitan city of about one million people, the capital of the Roman Empire which stretched from Britain to Arabia. It was the diplomatic and trade center of the then-known world. The beginning of the church in Rome is not described in the New Testament; it may have had its beginnings in the return of new believers shortly after the Day of Pentecost (See Acts 2:10).

Occasion – Paul's plan to visit Rome on his way to Spain (15:14-24).

CONTENTS

Title – “The Gospel of Grace”

Theme – A thorough treatise on the gospel of grace.

Purpose – To prepare the way for a visit to Rome on his way to Spain by fully explaining the gospel which Paul preached.

Outline – Doctrine and application.

Key Verse: (Romans 1:16-17) “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel; for it is the power of God for salvation to every one who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith: as it is written: “The just shall live by faith.”

I CORINTHIANS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Paul.

Place of writing – Ephesus.

Date of writing – A.D. 54 (during third missionary journey)

Destination – Corinthian Church. Corinth was rebuilt by the Romans in 46 B.C. and had become a strategic center of commerce; it was located in southern Greece on a narrow strip of land between the Aegean and Adriatic Seas. It had a population of approximately 300,000 made up of Greeks, Romans, Syrians, Asiatics, Egyptians and Jews. The city was dominated by the temple of Aphrodite (“goddess of love” in the pagan religion of Greece); the temple had 1000 religious prostitutes whose service gave rise to the city's infamous immorality. The church was planted by Paul on his second missionary journey (see Acts 18:1-18). I Corinthians is the second of four letters Paul wrote to this church.

Occasion – Report by Chloe's household (location of Corinthian church) concerning moral, doctrinal and practical problems; letter of inquiry brought by three members of the Corinthian church.

CONTENTS

Title – “Practical Christian Living in a Pagan Society”.

Theme – Correcting Church problems at Corinth.

Purpose – To answer the issues and problems raised by means of an oral report from Chloe's house and a letter from the Corinthians themselves.

Outline – Reply to Chloe's report and the Corinthian's letter.

Key verse: (I Corinthians 16:13-14) “Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”

CORINTHIANS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Paul.

Place of writing – Possibly Macedonia

Date of writing – A.D.55 (during third missionary Journey).

Destination – Corinthian church. Paul was in Corinth on at least three different occasions. II Corinthians was written just before his third visit, and is the last of four letters Paul wrote to this church.

Occasion – Report by Titus concerning the repentance of the majority of the troublemakers. (7:13-15)

CONTENTS

Title – “Defense of Paul’s Ministry and Apostleship”.

Theme – Explanation of Paul’s ministry and apostleship.

Purpose – To express joy over the repentance of the majority of the Corinthian church concerning issues addressed in the previous letter, and to reprove small minority who continued to oppose Paul.

Outline – Threefold division, more personal than doctrinal.

To the majority: Paul’s ministry explained. (1:12-7:16)

The collection for the Jerusalem church. (8:1-9:15)

To the minority: Paul’s ministry defended (10:1-13:10)

Key verse: (II Corinthians 4:5) “For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

GALATIANS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship - Paul.

Place of writing – Probably Antioch in Syria

Date of writing – Approximately A.D. 49-50. (Galatians 2:1-10 refers to the famine visit described in Acts 11:27-30)

Destination – Churches in Galatia. Galatia was a large Roman province stretching almost from coast to coast through central Turkey. How much of it Paul evangelized is not clear. We do know (from Acts 13 and 14) that he founded churches in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe in southern Galatia on his first missionary journey. He also made two follow-up visits to this area (Acts 16:6; 18:23). According to the “south Galatian theory” the letter to the Galatian was addressed to believers in those cities and the surrounding areas.

Occasion – Wrong teaching by “Judaizers.” Judaizers were Jewish believers who taught that Gentile believers must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to receive salvation.

CONTENTS

Title – “Laws vs. grace”

Theme – Combating the legalism of Judaizers.

Purpose – To defend Paul’s gospel of free grace preached among Gentiles against the “Gospel of Law-keeping” of the Judaizers.

Outline – Twofold argument and application.

Twofold argument.

autobiographical argument (1:6-2:21)

doctrinal argument (3:1-4:31)

Key verse: (Galatians 2:16) “...a man is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ... because by works of the law shall no one of justified.

EPHESIANS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Paul.

Place of writing – Roman prison (3:1; 4:1; 6:20).

Date of writing – A.D.60-62.

Destination – Churches in and around Ephesus. Ephesus, the leading city in the province of Asia, was a religious and commercial center of nearly a third of a million people on the west coast of Turkey. The church at Ephesus was begun during Paul’s third missionary journey (see Acts 19). From Ephesus, the Gospel spread throughout the province; churches were planted in such places as Colossae, Hieropolis and Laodicea, as well as other towns in the Lycus Valley, which is the general area of the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3 (see Acts 19:8-10).

Occasion – Believer Jews were inclined to separate themselves from their Gentile brethren, who may have looked down on them. This condition at Ephesus possibly led to the writing of the epistle.

CONTENTS

Title – “All One in Christ”.

Theme – The summing up of all things in Christ through the Church.

Purpose – To show the summing up and unifying of all in Christ through the Church, which is a “preview of the unity which is to characterize the age to come.”

Outline – Doctrinal and practical sections.

 Doctrine “The wealth” (1:3-3:21)

 Practice “The walk” (4:1-6:20)

Key verse: (Ephesians 1:9-10) “For God has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth.”

PHILLIPIANS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Paul.

Place of writing – Roman prison (1:13-14).

Date of writing – A.D. 60-62.

Destination – Church in Philippi. Philippi was located in the northern Greek province of Macedonia on the Egnatian Way, the great military road that linked Rome with the East. It was first settled by Rome with Italian citizens as a Roman Colony; thus it enjoyed special rights and privileges such as self-rule and freedom from imperial taxes. Women enjoyed a high status and took active part in public and business life. Paul began the church on his second missionary journey as a result of his “Macedonian vision” (see Acts 16:9-40).

Occasion – Philippians’ most recent offering to Paul, who was now in prison for Christ in Rome (4:10-19).

CONTENTS

Title – “From Prison with Praise”

Theme – Thanks for a gift, with personal notes and exhortations.

Purpose – To thank the Philippians for their gift sent via Epaphroditus (2:25; 4:18); to appeal for unity; to give information about Paul’s present situation in prison.

Outline – Does not follow a strict outline, yet gives profound theological and practical insights.

Key verse: (Philippians 1:21) “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

COLOSSIANS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Paul.

Place of writing – Roman prison (4:18)

Date of writing – A.D.60-62.

Destination – Church at Colossae. Colossae was a small town in the beautiful Lycus Valley, about 100 miles east of Ephesus. It was the least of the cities which made up this “tri-city area”; Hierapolis and Laodicea were the other two cities. There is no record of how the church began. It may well have been that, during Paul’s three years in Ephesus, prominent men from Colossae such as Philemon and Epaphras became believers and returned to their home area, and a church resulted (1:7-8).

Occasion – Syncretism (mixed teaching) at Colossae, involving Jewish legalism (2:16-17, 21-23), Greek philosophy (2:8) and Gnostic mysticism (2:18).

CONTENTS

Title – “Christ Pre-eminent”.

Theme – Salvation through Christ is sufficient.

Purpose – To refute the heresy at Colossae by a positive presentation of Christ’s Person and work for and in the believer.

Outline – Doctrinal and practical sections.

Doctrine

Positive: Christ’s pre-eminence (1:13-2:7)

Negative: Against heresies (2:8-2:23)

Practice

union with Christ (3:1-3:4)

union in Christ’s death (3:5-3:11)

union in Christ’s resurrection (3:12-4:6)

Key verse: (Colossians 2:9-10) “For in Christ the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fullness of life in Him who is the head of all rule and authority.”

I THESSALONIANS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Paul.

Place of Writing – Corinth.

Date of writing – A.D. 50-51 (during second missionary journey)

Destination – Thessalonian Church. Thessalonica, capital of the Roman province of Macedonia, was a prosperous port city in the eastern coast of Greece. It was located on the Egnatian Way about 90 miles from Philippi. The Church had its beginning during Paul’s second missionary journey (see Acts 17:1-20).

Occasion – Timothy’s good report about the church standing fast under persecution.

CONTENTS

Title – “Comfort Concerning the Second Coming”.

Theme – Encouragement, exhortation and comfort.

Purpose – To encourage the Thessalonians in persecution, and comfort them with the hope of resurrection at Christ’s soon return.

Outline – Encouragement and exhortation.

Encouragement (1:2-3:13)

Exhortation (4:1-5:22)

Key verse: (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24) “May the God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.”

II THESSALONIANS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship - Paul.

Place of writing – Corinth.

Date of writing – A.D.50-51 (several months after 1 Thessalonians).

Destination – Thessalonian church.

Occasion – Wrong teaching about the closeness of the second coming of Christ.

CONTENTS

Title – “Correction Concerning the Second Coming”.

Theme – The coming of the day of the Lord.

Purpose – To correct misunderstanding that the day of the Lord had already come.

Outline – Encouragement, correction and exhortation.

Encouragement (1:3-1:12)

Correction (2:1-2:17)

Exhortation (3:1-3:14)

Key verse: (II Thessalonians 2:15) “So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter.”

INTRODUCTION TO PASTORAL EPISTLES

1 TIMOTHY THROUGH PHILEMON

NAME

A. Addressed to individuals.

Not local pastors.

District/area oversights.

AUTHORSHIP

Traditional – Apostle Paul

Authentication of Authorship

Pastoral epistles claim Pauline authorship (I Tim. 1:1; II Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1)

Concern of early church for authenticity in authorship ensured that these epistles were written by Paul.

External evidences early and consistently supports Pauline authorship.

PAUL’S MOVEMENTS AFTER ACTS 28

Prisoner at Rome for 2 years (Acts 28:30- 31; see Phil. 1:19, 25-27; 2:24).

Released for further preaching and traveling (Philemon 22)

Journey eastward to visit the churches.

Ephesus (I Tim. 1:5).

Corinth, Troas, Miletus (II Tim. 4:13, 20)

Crete (Titus 1:5)

Macedonian (Titus 3:12).

Re-imprisoned in Rome (II Tim. 1:8, 16-17; 2:9; 4:10).

IV PAUL’S CO-WORKERS

Timothy

Joined Paul on second missionary journey (Act 16:1-3).

One of Paul’s closest traveling companions.

Wth Paul with Macedonia, Achaia, Asia and Rome.

Shares greetings with Paul in 6 of Paul’s 13 letters (II Cor. 1:1, Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:1, I

Thess. 1:1, II Thess. 1:1, Philemon v.1).

Young yet trusted (I Tim. 4:12; cp. I Cor. 16:11; 4:17; Phil. 2:19-22).

Responsible for churches in and around Ephesus (I Tim. 1:3; 3:14- 15).

Titus

Gentile over whom a dispute arose at Jerusalem (Gal. 2:1-5).

Mentioned 10 years later in connection with the Corinthian church (II Cor. 1:23-2:18; 7:5-15; 8:6, 16-23).

Responsible 8-10 years later for churches in Crete (Titus 1:5)

Ministry in Dalmatia (Illyricum, II Tim. 4:10).

I TIMOTHY: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Paul.

Place of writing – probably Macedonia.

Date of writing – Around A.D. 62-64.

Destination – Timothy in Ephesus.

Occasion – Timothy’s need for instruction in leading the churches in and around Ephesus.

II. CONTENTS

Title – “Advice to a Young Pastor”

Theme – Instructions in leading and feeding the church.

Purpose – To instruct Timothy in how to organize and administer the work of the church until Paul arrives.

Outline:- Organization and administration sections.

Church’s organization (1:3-3:13)

Church’s administration (3:14-6:19)

Key verse: (1 Timothy 3:14- 15) “... I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.”

TIMOTHY: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Paul.

Place of writing – Rome.

Date of writing – Around A.D. 65-67.

Destination – Timothy in Ephesus.

Occasion – Paul’s last words before his execution in Rome.

II. CONTENTS

Title – “Paul’s Final Advice”.

Theme – Paul’s last will and testament (see Gen. 49; Deuteronomy; Joshua Chapters 23, 24; John Chapters 13-17 etc.)

Purpose – To encourage Timothy in properly guiding and teaching the church, and to ask him to bring some needed items before winter.

Outline – Informal.

Past (1:3 – 18)

Present (2:1 – 26)

Future (3:1 – 17)

Paul’s farewell (4:1 – 18)

Key verse: (II Timothy 2: 2) “What you have heard from me before many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

TITUS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Paul.

Place of writing – Nicopolis.

Date of writing – Around A.D. 62-64.

Destination – Titus in Crete.

Occasion – Titus’ need for instruction in leading the church.

II. CONTENTS

Title – “Advice to a Pastor in Crete”.

Theme – Instruction in leading and feeding the church.

Purpose – To instruct Titus in the shepherding of the church the island of Crete.

Outline – Organization and administration sections.

Church’s organization (1:5 – 9)

2. Church's administration (1:10 – 3:11)

Key verse: (Titus 2:7-8) "Show yourself in all respects a model of good deeds, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured."

PHILEMON: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Paul.

Place of writing – Roman prison (vs. 1,9).

Date of writing – Around A.D. 60-62.

Destination – Philemon and church.

Occasion – Return of Onesimus.

CONTENTS

Title – "A Runaway Slave Returns".

Theme – A letter of friendly persuasion on behalf of a slave.

Purpose – To appeal to Philemon through "friendly persuasion" to receive back his runaway slave as a brother whom Paul had led to Christ while imprisoned (vs. 10).

Outline – Informal letter, no definite outline.

Key verse: (Philemon v.17) "So if you consider me your partner, receive him as you would receive me."

INTRODUCTION TO GENERAL EPISTLES

HEBREWS THROUGH JUDE

NAME

A. General Epistles.

Little in common.

Contents varied: ethical (I John), eschatological (II Peter).

Structure varied: I John has no greetings or farewell.

General address in common

Addressed to believers beyond a local fellowship.

Entitled by authors' name.

B. Hebrews.

Unique: author unknown

No address.

BACKGROUND

Persecution.

Religious (Hebrews, James).

Political (I Peter).

Heresies

Gnosticism (I, II, III John written to disprove Gnostic heresy) denied the physical incarnation of Christ and salvation by faith. Gnostics believed instead in salvation by knowledge (Greek: gnosis – "knowledge").

Anti-nomianism: (II Peter, Jude, James written to refute this heretical teaching) a belief that faith in Christ completely frees a person from the obligations of the moral law.

HEBREWS: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – unknown. (Paul? Appollos? Barnabas?) There is no clear evidence; only God knows for certain who wrote this book.

Place of writing – unknown.

Date of writing – around A.D. 67-68

Destination – Rome.

E. Occasion – Increasing opposition against Jewish believers.

CONTENTS

Title – “Christ, the Better way”

Theme – The superiority of Christ over the Old Testament (“better” is used 13 times).

Purpose – To show the superiority of Christ, in order to prevent a return to Judaism by Jewish believers who were undergoing opposition for their faith in Christ (10:32-36; 12:3-4).

Outline – A word of exhortation (“let us” is used 13 time); a sermon with application (Heb. 13:22; see 10:19-25).

Key verse: (Hebrews 4:14) “Since then we have a great high priest who was passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.”

JAMES: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – James (Jesus’ half-brother).

Place of writing – Probably Jerusalem.

Date of writing – Around A.D. 48-62.

Destination – To be circulated among dispersed Jewish believers.

Occasion – Jewish believers facing opposition and anti-nomianism (see under “Heresies” in Introduction to General Epistles).

CONTENTS

Title – “True Religion”

Theme – True religion is practical and works.

Purpose – To explain to Jewish believers that true religion is pure and practical.

Outline – Four sermons.

 Trials (1:2-18)

 Law of Love (1:19 – 2:26)

 Evil speaking (3:1 – 3:12)

 Endurance (4:13-5:20)

Key verse: (James 1:27) “Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this; to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”

I PETER: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Apostle Peter / Silvanus (5:12)

Place of writing – Rome.

Date of writing – Around A.D. 62-64.

Destination – Christians in Asia Minor.

Occasion – Christians coming under persecution from Rome.

II. CONTENTS

Title – “Salvation through suffering”.

Theme – Standing fast in God’s grace through suffering.

Purpose – To encourage Christians who are under persecution to stand fast for the faith in Christ.

Outline – Three doctrinal and application sections.

 Declaring: Salvation (1:3 -12)

 Exhorting: Be Holy (1:13-2:3)

 Declaring: God’s people (2:4 – 10)

 Exhorting: Submit (2:11 – 3:17)

 Declaring : Suffering (3:18 – 22)

 Exhorting: Rejoice (4:1 – 5:11)

Key verse: (1 Peter 5:12) ” ... I have written briefly to you, exhorting and declaring that this is the true grace of God; stand fast in it.”

PETER: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Apostle Peter.
Place of writing – Rome.
Date of writing – Around A.D. 65-67.
Destination – Christians in Asia Minor.
Occasion – Christians facing heretical teachers.

II CONTENTS

Title – “True and False Knowledge”.
Theme – Discerning true and false teachers.
Purpose – To warn believers of false teachers who deny their Lord and scoff at His coming.
Outline – True and false knowledge.
 True knowledge (1:3-21)
 False Teacher (2:1-22)
 Christ’s return (3:1-18)
Key verse: (II Peter 3:17-18) “You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, beware lest you be carried away with the error of lawless men and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

I JOHN: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, but likely it was the Apostle John.
Place of writing – Ephesus.
Date of writing – Around A.D. 90-100.
Destination – Christians around Ephesus.
Occasion - Christians facing heretical gnostic teaching that emphasized special knowledge and depreciated Christ’s humanity.

CONTENTS

“Tests of a True Christian”.
Theme – Infallible signs of divine life.
Purpose – To confirm believers in the true knowledge of salvation over against the false teaching of gnosticism (a heresy which taught that Jesus Christ was not born in human form.)
Outline – Threefold cycle.
 Light and love (1:5 – 2:28)
 Right and love (2:29 – 4:6)
 Life and love (4:7 – 5:21)
Key verse: (I John 5:13) “I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.”

II JOHN: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, but likely it was the Apostle John.
Place of writing – Ephesus.
Date of writing – Around 90-100.
Destination – Christians around Ephesus.
Occasion – Christians facing heretical gnostic teaching that emphasized special knowledge and depreciated Christ’s humanity.

CONTENTS

A. Title – “How to Handle Heretics”.

Theme – Refuse hospitality to gnostic deceivers.

Purpose – To express joy over believers who follow the truth, and to warn them of gnostic deceivers who have a spirit of antichrist.

Outline – none; informal.

Key verse: (II John vs. 9-10) “He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him.”

JOHN: SUMMARY

I BACKGROUND

Authorship – Anonymous, but likely it was the Apostle John.

Place of writing – Ephesus.

Date of writing – Around A.D. 90-100.

Destination – Gaius, who was facing heretical gnostic teaching that emphasized special knowledge and depreciated Christ’s humanity.

CONTENTS

Title – “Showing Hospitality”.

Theme – Give hospitality to traveling teachers.

Purpose – To give instruction concerning proper ministry to strangers and itinerant preachers of the gospel.

Outline – None; informal.

Keyverse: (III John v.5) “Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers.

JUDE: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – Jude (Jesus’ half-brother, brother of James).

Place of writing – Unknown, possibly Jerusalem.

Date of writing – Around A.D. 67-80.

Destination – Christians everywhere.

Occasion – Christians facing heretical teachers.

CONTENTS

Title – “Beware of False Teachers.”

Theme – Contend for faith against false teachers.

Purpose – To urge believers to contend for the faith against false teachers.

Outline – Problem and answer.

Problem – Evil false teachers (vs. 3-16)

Answer – Contending for the faith (vs. 17-23)

Keyverse: (Jude v.3) “...I found it necessary to write to you, appealing to you to contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”

REVELATION: SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

Authorship – The prophet John (1:1), traditionally identified as the Apostle John.

Place of writing – Island of Patmos, 35 miles off the coast of Asia Minor.

Date of writing – Around A.D. 90-100 during the reign of Emperor Domitian.

Destination – Seven churches in Asia Minor, located in a circuitous route around Ephesus, the leading city in the province.

Occasion – Because of the increasing persecution of Christians under Emperor Domitian, John (who himself had been banished for his witness to Christ) writes to the seven churches of Asia Minor concerning the visions God had given him about what was about to take place: tribulation for the saints, wrath for the unrighteous, and the ultimate victory and reward of God’s people at the second coming of Christ.

CONTENTS

Title – “The Consummation”

Theme – “Labour pains” characterizing the end of this evil age as it gives birth to the new age when the Lord rules over the new heavens and new earth.

Purpose – To encourage persecuted Christians to faithfully endure, by showing them that the end is near when God will reward those who defeat Satan’s evil forces and win the victory with Him.

Outline – A fourfold vision of the increasing Lordship of Jesus Christ; each vision is introduced by the phrase “in the Spirit” (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10).

1st vision: Christ, Lord of the Church (1:9–3: 22)

2nd vision: Christ, Lord of history (4:1 – 16: 21)

3rd vision: Christ, Lord of Lords (17:1 – 21:10)

4th vision Christ, Lord God Almighty (21:11 – 22:5)

Epilogue (22:6 – 21).

Key verse: (Revelation 11:15) “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever.”

HOW TO SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES FOR YOURSELF

POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO THE BIBLE

“PROPHETIC”, “SUBJECTIVE” OR “DEVOTIONAL”

This is when you feel God, by His Spirit, taking a passage or verse and speaking directly to you through it. The context of the scripture is not significant.

“DEDUCTIVE”

In the deductive approach, one comes to the text with a thesis and then seeks out passages to support the thesis.

One has already to an extent drawn conclusions before reading the whole text of the Scripture in context.

The deductive approach is fine as long as one’s thesis is correct.

This type of Bible study should only be attempted when one has a thorough knowledge of Scripture.

“INDUCTIVE”

This approach seeks to let the Scripture speak for itself.

Asks the question “what is the author (hence, the Holy Spirit) actually saying?”

Your conclusions evolve out of what you have observed.

It studies the Scripture in context.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INDUCTIVE METHOD OF BIBLE STUDY

For personal growth and maturity; 2 Tim. 3: 16- 17.

To be able to teach others; 2 Tim. 2 :15; Heb. 5 : 12.

To test teaching received; Acts 17 : 11.

Inductive Bible study is the foundation of all Bible study! The human author wrote under the influence of the Holy Spirit of God so when you discover what the human author meant, you discover what the divine author meant.

SKILLS AND TOOLS FOR INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

Any craftsman has developed skills and learned how to use tools. In studying the Bible it is the same. Here we will seek to teach some skills of Inductive Bible Study and show you how to use some tools.

SKILLS

These come by practice, practice and more practice.

TOOLS

The most important tool is a good Bible to use for study.

There are many translations – which one is best?

There are two kinds of choices for Bibles to use:

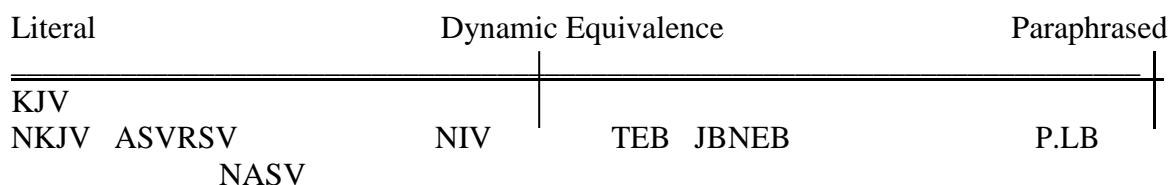
(I)Textual: How do you get as close as possible to the original wording as it left the hand of the writer.

(II)Linguistic: How do you transfer words and ideas from:

One language to another and

From one historical and cultural period to another?

In other words, does the translator bridge the gap or does the translator leave the reader to bridge the gap? See graph of Bible translations in this regard below:



OTHER TOOLS

Some of the other tools you will need in inductive Bible study are:

- Bible Dictionary
- Bible Encyclopedia
- Bible Atlas
- Bible Concordance

Note the absence of any mention of commentaries. This is because inductive Bible study seeks to study the Bible and not what others say about the Bible. Commentaries should never be used until AFTER you have done your own work.

You will also need: note paper, pens and pencil of different colours and a ruler.

STEPS IN INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY

- Prayer - dependence on the Holy Spirit.
- Read the Scriptures – correctly!
- Learn to observe carefully.
- Learn to interpret carefully.
- Learn to apply - the goal of all Bible study.

Step A. - Prayer

Ps. 119: 18; 1 John 2:26 – 27; John 16:13; Eph. 1:17 –18.

Step B. - Read the Scriptures

THINK BOOKS AND PARAGRAPHS NOT CHAPTERS AND VERSES.

Step C. - Observation

What does the text actually say?

Observation is learning to see what the text says free from “baggage”.

Here Six questions can be asked: WHAT - WHEN – HOW – WHERE – WHO – WHY?

Observe if there are significant words to look for, like:

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| a. <u>Contrast</u> | b. <u>Comparison</u> |
| but | too |
| eventhough | also |
| much more | as |
| nevertheless | just as |
| yet | so also |
| although | likewise |
| then | and |
| otherwise | like |
| c. <u>Correlatives</u> | d. <u>Reason</u> |
| asso also | because |
| for...as | for |
| so....as | since |
| e. <u>Result</u> | f. <u>Purpose/Result</u> |
| so then | that |
| therefore | so that |
| thus | in order that |
| then | |
| g. <u>Condition</u> | h. <u>Temporal or
time connective</u> |
| if | now while |
| | until since |
| | when |
| | before |
| | after |

Step D. - Interpretation

What does this passage mean?

What was the intention of the writer?

What did the writer intend his first readers to understand by what he had written?

Or, What did the first readers understand the writer to mean?

Tools for interpretation – four questions:

- What kind of literature is this?
- What is the basic structure of the book?
- What is the historical background?
- What are the meanings of various terms and words?

Ad A. QUESTION ONE – What kind of literature is this? Two main groups: - poetry (language of the heart and feelings)

- prose (language of the head and thoughts)

Different kinds of prose, like: Law, Historical Narrative, Drama, Proverb, Prophetic, Gospel, and Letter.

Ad. B. QUESTION TWO – What is the basic structure of the book?

The significance of the structure

The author has constructed his work in such a way that it will convey the message.

The structure is like a skeleton on which the flesh hangs.

The individual passages need to be seen in relation to the whole.

Example of structure

- 1 Corinthians Ch 1-4, Issues of unity, Ch. 5-6, Immorality, Ch.7, Marriage, Ch. 8-10, Food offered to idols, Ch. 11, Head covering and communion; Ch. 12-14, Spiritual gifts, Ch. 15, Resurrection, Ch. 16, Offering and greeting.

Mark: Ch 1:1-8:27, Jesus with the crowds.

8:27-end, Jesus with the disciples

8:27-30, Peter's confession and turning point.

Acts - Key verse: Ch 1 : 8. The expansion of the Gospel into: (a) Jerusalem, (b) Judea, (c) Samaria, (d) Ends of the earth.

Letter structure:

Name of writer

Name of recipient

Greetings/blessing

Thanksgiving and /or prayer.

Body of letter.

Final greetings/ benediction

Brief autograph.

Ad. C. QUESTION THREE – what is the historical background?

In this question we seek to build up the circumstances or occasion for the document – what was the situation into which it was written?

Some of the question asked would be: (a) Who was the author?

When was it written?

From where was it written?

To where was it sent?

What was the purpose and/ or occasion of the document?

There are two stages:

Internal Evidence – what can we learn from the book itself?

External Evidence – what can we learn from other sources: (a) in the Bible, (b) outside the Bible.

Ad. D. QUESTION FOUR - What are the meanings of the various terms and words?
What does this term mean in context?
What did the writer mean by the phrase he uses?
How do the sentence and paragraphs relate together?

Some more things to consider:

Word studies

The goal of a word study is to find out the meaning of a word as the writer used it, i.e. how was it used in the contemporary language. Knowing the root (etymology) of a word can only have limited value as words change meaning with usage.

Some help in word studies are:

Theological Dictionary of New Testament – Kittel/Friedrich

Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament – Harris/Archer/ Waltke

Expository Dictionary of Old and N.T. words

Vine Dictionary of New Testament Theology – Colin Brown

Figures of Speech

It is important, when seeking the authors intended meaning to realize there are many figures of speech used in Scripture, some of which are:

SIMILE

A direct comparison of two things that are essentially different. Characterized by use of: like, as, so. Example: James 1:10 – 11; Song of Sol. 2:2-3; Matt.23:27.

METAPHOR

An indirect comparison of two things. Asserts that one thing is another. Substitution of the name of one thing for another. Like a simile, but the connectives of ‘like’, ‘as’, and ‘so’ are left out. Example: Galatians 2: 9 – ‘pillars’; Proverbs 23 : 27; Matthew 3 : 7 – ‘you brood of vipers’.

IRONY

Implies something different, even the opposite of what is stated. Used for the effect of humor or sarcasm. Example: 1 Corinthians 4 : 8 and 6 : 5.

HYPERBOLE

Exaggeration, not with the intent to deceive but to emphasize and intensify an impression. Example: Galatians 4 : 15 – “You would have plucked out eyes and given them to me.”; Mark 9 : 43 – ‘If your hands causes you to sin cut off...’

ANTHROPOMORPHISM

The conception of God as a human being with human attributes.

Example: Genesis 19 : 29; Psalm 10 : 12; Psalm 44 : 3.

IDIOM

An expression belonging to a particular language often with a meaning that cannot be guessed from actual words.

Example: Matthew 13 : 31 – 32 – ‘Grain of mustard seed’

Step E. - APPLICATION: THE GOAL OF ALL BIBLE STUDY

FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK:

What are the basic truths in this passage of the book?

How does this truth apply to my life? Be specific.

In view of these truths, what changes should I make in my life?

How do I plan to carry out these changes?

What is my personal prayer regarding this truth and changes I need to make?

In application of the Scripture it is important that the Bible is applied:

Personally

Through the eyes of grace

Seeking to see the greatness of Jesus

A note on possible pitfalls in application that one needs to be aware of:

Mistaking interpretation for application

Having an emotional response to a Biblical truth but not following through to put truth into action.

Frustration in not seeing quick results and changes in your life.

A SUMMARY OF THE INDUCTIVE APPROACH

Pray for the Holy Spirit to lead you into all truth. "To read the Bible without the Holy Spirit is like reading a sundial by moonlight".

Read the Bible as it is:

Leave all aides aside

Use an unmarked RSV translation

Become a Bible "detective".

Read a book through at one sitting. Read aloud. Read rapidly.

What kind of literature is it?

What is its historical background?

What is the basics structure of the book?

What is the "Big Idea"? What is the writer's purpose or theme? Is there a key-verse? Is there a key-word? How would you entitle the whole book?

As you read, lightly underline important words or phrases.

Put a question mark beside words you want to study further.

Re-read the book through several time.

Observe carefully before you attempt to interpret and apply.

Go back to the beginning of the book and study each paragraph.

Note all the significant details: Who did what to whom, when, where, why, how, and with what results?

Look for links and compositional relationships between paragraphs.

Explain literary figures, process of reasoning, recurring words or ideas, difficult details.

Now apply the application questions.

A STUDY ON WHAT HAPPENS AFTER DEATH?

Introduction: II Cor. 5:1 –11

Human life as we know, it is just a brief moment time. We are here today and no one guarantees we will be here tomorrow. The Bible says that life is a vapour and there's only a shadow between us and death.

Death is unavoidable. The living are appointed to die (Heb. 9:27). Death is mandatory, because sin has entered into the world and its wages or penalty is death (Rom 6:23). Physical death comes to both young and old, rich and poor, believers and unbelievers. We could say: death is the door into eternity, which could be either of the two:

For believers: with Jesus in heaven

For unbelievers: with Satan in hell

In the modern world we try to avoid the issue of death: cemetery outside the city. Many people avoid the reality of death and are often unprepared to die. The purpose of life is to prepare for eternity of being reconciled with God through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Biologically, death is lack of air. Yet if the heart stops beating the breath ceases and the body becomes a stiff corpse.

We believers will have to die physically too for the separation of spirit and soul from the body. (I Cor.15:53; Eccl. 12:7). Unless the Lord Jesus returns to take us home like Elijah and we be transformed in the twinkling of an eye (I Cor. 15: 51-52; I Thes. 4:16 – 17)

Results of death before the death of Jesus Christ

Read: Luke 16:19 – 31, the parable of the rich man and the poor Lazarus.

After death: The poor man ended up in place called 'Abraham's bosom' being escorted by angels who are ministering spirits to those who will receive salvation (Heb.1:14)

The rich man ended up in 'Hades' (greek) (Hebrew : Sheol)

Note: This is not Hell (in Greek 'Gehenna') which is the place of eternal torment

Hades was the place for the disembodied spirits of the unrighteous. The righteous spirits, who were separated from the body at death, remained there up to the time of Christ's resurrection. These places were separated by a deep and wide chasm. This temporary paradise was a place of bliss and comfort, whereas Hades was a place of punishment and torments.

Note from this parable that the souls of both persons remained conscious as they could feel, reason, hear, see and communicate.

The believer was escorted to a place called 'Abraham's bosom' which simply meant: resting in Abraham's arms. In other words, Abraham the father of faith, welcomed him, wrapped his arms around him in Paradise.

'Paradise' is a Persian word, and means 'the garden of the king', denoting a most beautiful place.

Another part of this 'unseen state' is called: 'Tartarus', which is used only in II Pet. 2:4.

This is a place of darkness and fire in the earth, lower than Hades.

In this compartment of 'Hell' (referred to as prison or jail, Jude 6) the fallen and bound angelic beings are kept until they will be judged at the Great White Throne (Rev. 20: 11 – 15)

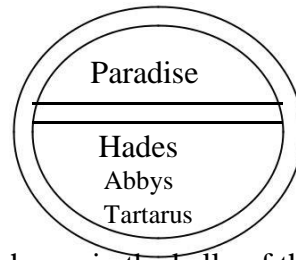
There seems to be a yet lower compartment of 'hell' where prisons or jails exist in this underworld for various created beings who have sold out themselves to do evil! They will remain here until the Great White Throne Judgement, who all will be tried and sentenced eternally to the final hell. Greek 'Gehenna' or the eternal lake of fire.

The Bible teaches us that hell was not made for mankind but actually prepared for the devil and his angels. But if men choose to serve the devil in this life, then they will dwell eternally with the devil in hell. (Matt. 25: 41)

HEAVEN

Graphic illustration:

EARTH



Where is this location of Hades?

Jesus said he will be in the heart of the earth even as Jonah was in the belly of the fish. (Matt. 12: 39 – 40; Ps. 71: 20)

Other evidences:

Satan’s high priest of S.A. testimony.

Researches conducted deep drillings- heard screaming voices.

What happened when Jesus died?

The thick veil in the temple, separating the holy of holies from the Holy Place rend in two from top to bottom (Matt. 27: 51; Heb. 9: 8) and indicating that after Jesus said: “It is finished”, the way to heaven was effectually opened.

Where did Jesus go after He died on the cross?

Clearly his lifeless body was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. While dying Jesus said: “Father into thy hands I commit my spirit. (Luke 23: 46).

Furthermore it might be concluded that Jesus:

went to Hades (Acts 2:27, 31) to take back the keys of Hades and Death (Rev. 1:19).

went even down to Tartarus to proclaim his victory to the imprisoned spirits or demons who tried to pollute humanity, so that Jesus might not take on human nature in days of Noah (1Pet. 3 : 19-20).

went to Paradise announcing to the righteous to get ready and to move out to heaven. Eph. 4:7 – 10, talks about Jesus ‘led captivity captive’. In the olden days of the Roman Empire, after a battle had been won, the Romans would take a certain number of local people back with them as ‘Prisoners of War’, this in order to show their people how great a victory they had won! On an appointed day the victorious army would parade though the city while everyone would be showering them with rose petals and the like. When the citizens saw the prisoners of war, all chained together, the public gave tremendous cheering realizing how great the victory was, and then the soldiers would throw out as gifts the spoil of the battle to the citizens.

Even so Christ after His triumphant victory on the cross (Col. 2:14-15) led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. The triumphant entry of the King of glory. When Jesus returned to heaven, He paraded all of ‘the prisoners of war’ – the believers he had won from the earth – not chained but as free, redeemed humanity before the angles (Ps. 24: 7 – 10).

He gave gifts: the 5 fold ministers to the Church to bring the believers to maturity (Eph. 4: 11-16).

Question: What happened with paradise?

In II Cor. 12: 1 – 4, the apostle Paul tells of being taken up to Paradise, or the third heaven. From man’s point of view:

The 1st heaven- is the atmosphere around us, the planet earth, i.e. the realm where the birds fly.

The 2nd heaven – the planetary heaven with its billions of planets, galaxies, star worlds and suns, i.e. space where the rockets go to (the universe).

The 3rd heaven or paradise – the very throne room of the eternal God. God’s dwelling place. (Compare this with the 3 sections in the tabernacle and temple). This 3rd heaven is above and is the real and eternal paradise, to which the believers now go!

How did Paul get here by the way?

Likely in Lystra, where Paul was stoned. Acts 7:56, Stephen stoned, seeing Jesus. Act 14: 19, likely Paul died, went to heaven, had overwhelming experiences, but continued in Acts 14:20. After stoning apparently raised back from the dead: miracle, as no broken bones nor physical damages, but continued his ministry journey the next day.

Results of death now, after the death of Christ?

Today, when a believer dies in the Lord, Jesus Himself will welcome them, like Stephen, and angels will usher the person direct into the presence of God. Phil. 1:23; II Cor. 5: 8; Ps. 116:15.

Therefore, knowing the reality of the hope set before us, Heb. 10: 35 – 36 exhorts us to hold on to and endure in order to receive what is promised!

Also, praise God for the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus by which we can walk through life absolutely free from the fear of death (Heb. 2: 14 – 15).

What's next?

Resurrection and judgement

In order for God's final judgments to be executed, there must be resurrection as the Bible clearly teaches (Heb. 6: 1 – 2). Resurrection precedes judgement and judgement necessitates resurrection. Therefore, in heaven we will await for the resurrection on last day, as the return of Christ at the end of the age.

Resurrection is a fact! Seen in nature's laws. Jesus Himself spoke of the resurrection in John 5: 28 – 29, was Himself the Resurrection, John 11: 25, and His own physical resurrection is proof of this. In I Cor. 15: 3 – 4, 20, being called the first fruits of those who arise from among the dead.

Our new resurrection body will be like that of Christ Jesus: a glorious body, which is of flesh and bones (Luke 24: 39 cf. I Cor. 15: 50), spiritual (not bound to laws of earth) powerful, glorious (clothed with glory, cf. Matt. 17:2, the transfiguration) and incorruptible (incapable of death and decay), perfect as God will give to each one of us I Cor. 15: 38, 42 – 44; Phil. 3:21. This is the resurrection of the just or the first resurrection, blessed are those who share in it! (Rev. 20: 4 – 6).

What about the wicked or the unrighteousness?

They will be resurrected at the 2nd resurrection, the one of condemnation Acts 24: 15; John 5: 29. For them no description of their resurrected body is given, but they will have a place, as Jesus said in Matt. 10 : 29, fear Him who is able to destroy both the body and soul, in 'Gehenna'. The people of the second resurrection are called the cursed and unholy ones who will receive a terrible judgement of being sentenced to eternal damnation where they will suffer the torments of hell for all eternity (Rev. 21:8).

Judgement and rewards for the redeemed:

Judgement:

John 3:36 + John 5:24. These saying of our Lord refer to our eternal destiny according to our personal choice. If we reject the Lord Jesus as our Lord and Saviour we remain under the eternal wrath of God to be ultimately experienced in 'Gehenna', the eternal place of torment. Now by fully believing in Jesus, we escape from this and as the 2nd reading said: 'we do not come in this judgement, but have passed from death to life!

Note but that those unbelievers, who refuse to trust in Jesus are under God's judgement already at work in a person's life in this present age (Rom. 1: 18 – 28). Followed by their final judgement at the return of Jesus (Matt. 25:31 – 46).

As clear from the above, we cannot be condemned (II Cor. 5: 21), and yet we will have to stand before Christ's judgement seat (See II Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14: 10). Judgment seat, or bema, was a platform, where the judge would sit to hear and decide cases, as we known them even from our present courts.

Here the believers, who are saved, will be judged for our works, not for our sins. (see Heb. 10: 17). In other words, we will have to give an account to the Lord about how we handled the talents, gifts, opportunities and responsibilities He gave us (Matt. 25:14-30).

Why this Judgement? What's its purpose?

4 fold purpose:

- to reveal the true character of every person (I Cor. 4 : 5)
- to determine the value of all the works of men: built on Christ or own efforts (I Cor. 3 : 13).
- to render public reward or punishment, as men are not always punished or rewarded in this life (Matt. 16: 27; Rom. 2: 6 – 9; Luke 16 : 25).
- to vindicate the righteousness of God in His dealings with man. His justice will be acknowledged (Rev. 19 : 1 – 2).

Basis or principles of judgement

Man will be judged:

- with righteous judgement (Acts 17: 31)
- according to God's holy standards (Rev. 22: 12)
- according to their attitudes to Christ (Luke 12: 8 – 9)
- according to the measure of light and opportunity given them (Luke 12: 47 – 48)

For what will a believer be judged?

- our works (I Cor. 3: 13, Eccl. 12: 14)
- our words (Matt. 12: 36 – 37)
- our secrets (Rom. 2: 16), and probably also:
 - the thoughts of our hearts. Heb. 4: 12; Matt.15: 19; Luke 12: 2 – 3.
 - our motives / intentions: constrained by the love of Christ - II Cor. 5: 14, I Cor. 4: 5, or for self glory - I Cor. 3: 21, Matt. 6: 1.

And what will be the final result of the bema?

For the works that remain and stand the test of fire, there will be rewards, but for that which is burned the person will suffer loss, I Cor. 3: 14 – 15.

Rewards for our works done in Christ:

In the Scripture the Lord had given many promises in regards to rewards for His people. The word 'reward' is used over one hundred times in the New Testament and originate out God's benevolence like a trophy of a race well run, or a work well done. In this way the Lord loves to reward us according to our faithfulness and service for Him.

The majority of the rewards consist of crowns. You may have seen sometimes in a palace or on T.V, a royal crown with thousand of diamonds and other precious jewels.

In God's kingdom the crowns bestowed on the faithful ones are:

the crown of rejoicing – for soul winners (I Thes. 2: 19 –20). May be every person you lead to the Lord is a jewel in your crown. How many people have you led to the Lord? (Dan. 12: 3). They will be your source of joy?

The incorruptible crown – for excellent runners (I Cor. 9:24-25). We're in a race and Heb. 12:1 exhorts us to win with perseverance the race set before us, for if we finish through discipline/excellence we will qualify for this crown.

The crown of righteousness – for anticipators (II Tim. 4: 7 – 8). How much are you looking for the Lord's return? Are you living out of this perspective? It will determine our reward. May 'Maranatha' (Lord Jesus come quickly!) become reality to reach one of us, as we faithfully fulfil our ministry?

The crown of life – for the faithful ones and martyrs (Jas. 1:12; Rev. 2: 10). This calls for enduring trials and testings. And as Jesus said: those who lose their lives for His' sake will

receive it back for eternity. Faithfulness to death and martyrdom or persecution out of love for Jesus will be rewarded with his crown.

The crown of glory – for pastors and all those shepherding others (1 Pet. 5:1 – 4). As we are faithful in serving/ teaching and shepherding those of the Lord's flock as under-shepherds, we will hear the Lord's approval in the words, "well done good and faithful servant" and receive this crown. May it motivate us to sacrifice in service and care for others.

Now it is evident that crowns will only be given after the goal is accomplished and therefore let us be faithful as we press on, heeding the exhortation from Rev. 3:11, " therefore hold fast to that which you have so that nobody may take your crown."

Surely, we will not be possessive of our crowns, but will use them in our worship of God our Saviour like the 24 elders around the throne of the Lamb of God. Here we too can join as we lay our crowns at His feet. (Rev. 4: 10 – 11).

Oh Hallelujah! Isn't it wonderful to have such a marvelous God who is our eternal Jehovah Jirah,
Who: - gave Jesus for our salvation
- gave heavenly crowns for eternal worship.

I'm sure the knowledge and reminder of the things God has prepared and kept in store for those who love Him brings tremendous hope and comfort to our hearts and strength to preserve, even against all odds!

Yet, at the same time, this knowledge to be effective must have severe implications upon our lives and life-style!

It should motivate us and stir us on to:

Gather eternal, unseen treasures, Matt. 6: 19 – 21.

Do the works of God; live of life of faith and obedience, John 6: 28 – 29.

Live a holy, Christ-glorifying life, I John 3: 1-13; I Cor. 10: 31; Col. 1: 10.

Service for Christ and work with the Lord, Jer. 32: 19; Eph. 2: 10; II Cor. 6: 1.

In closing, let's read Rev. 21: 1 – 4.

Relationships, Behaviour, Maturity and Attitude

What kind of families and churches would we have if we all assumed responsibility for our own character and sought to meet the needs of those we live with? They would be almost heavenly! But instead of devoting ourselves to develop our own character and meet each other's needs, we often yield to Satan's prodding to criticize each other's character and selfishly meet our own needs. We will only encourage each other to growth and maturity if we practice the former.

Let's read Romans 14: 4, "Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand." That verse is talking about judging another person's character. Before God, each of you is responsible for your own character. Let's also read Philippians 2: 3, "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself." That verse is talking about needs. Before God, each is responsible for meeting each other's needs.

Focus on Responsibilities

Another way Satan has deceived us in our interpersonal relationships is by tempting us to focus on our rights instead of our responsibilities. For example, a husband may interrupt his wife because he feels he has a right to expect her to be submissive. A wife may nag her husband because she expects him to be the spiritual leader. Parents harass their children because they feel it's their right to demand obedience. Members stir up trouble in the local church when they feel their rights have been violated by pastors or other members.

In God's system, our focus is to be fulfilling our responsibilities, not insisting on our rights. Husband, having a submissive wife is not your right; but being a loving caring husband is your responsibility. Headship is not a right to be demanded but an awesome responsibility to be fulfilled. Similarly, wives, having a spiritual husband is not your right; but being a submissive, supportive wife is your responsibility. Parents, raising obedient children is not your right; but disciplining your children in the nurture and instruction of the Lord is your responsibility. Being a member of the Body of Christ and of a local church is an incredible privilege, not a right. This privilege comes with the awesome responsibility to behave as God's children and become a lover of people. When we stand before Christ, He will not ask us if we received everything we had coming to us. But He will reward us for how well we fulfilled our responsibilities.

Don't play the Role of Conscience

I grew up with a good, moral background, and I even went to church, but I wasn't a Christian. In those days I really enjoyed beer, especially on a hot day after cleaning the garden. When I received Christ as a young man I joined a church which preached total abstinence from alcoholic beverages. I wasn't a drunk, so I decided to scratch that rule and keep my beer. Two years later the Lord brought a sense of conviction about my beer-drinking. With the conviction came the power to obey. So I gave it up.

Sometimes we are tempted to play the role of the Holy Spirit or the conscience in someone else's life on issues where the Scriptures are not crystal clear: "Christians don't drink"; "You should spend at least 30 minutes a day in prayer and Bible study"; "Buying lottery tickets is not good stewardship"; "Don't put on make-up", etc. I'm convinced that the Holy Spirit knows exactly when to bring conviction on issues of conscience. It's part of the process of sanctification which He superintends. When we attempt to play His role we often do little more than convey criticism and rejection. Our job is to surround people with acceptance and let the Holy Spirit do His job in His time.

Discipline Yes, Judgement No

Are there any occasions when Christians should confront each other on matters of behavior? Yes. We are required by God to confront and restore those who have clearly violated the boundaries of Scripture. Jesus instructed: "If your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed" (Matt. 18:15- 16).

But let me alert you to an important distinction in this area: Discipline is an issue of confronting observed behavior – that which you have personally witnessed (Gal. 6:1); judgement is an issue of character. We are instructed to confront others concerning sins we have observed, but we are not allowed to judge their character (Matt. 7:1; Rom. 14:13). Discipline behavior is our job; judging character is God’s job.

For example, imagine that you just caught your child telling a lie. “You’re a liar,” you say to him. That’s judgement, an attack on his character. But if you say, “Son, you just told a lie”, that’s discipline. You’re holding him accountable for an observed behavior.

Or let’s say that a Christian friend admits to you that he cheated on his income tax return. If you confront him as a thief you are judging his character, and that’s not your responsibility. You can only confront him on the basis of what you see: “By cheating on your taxes you are stealing from the government, and that’s wrong.”

We must hold people accountable for their behavior, but we are never allowed to denigrate their character.

When you discipline someone it must be based on something you have seen or heard personally, not on something you suspect or have heard about through others. If you confront his behavior and he does not respond to you, next time you are to bring two or three witnesses-not witnesses to your confrontation, but other eye-witnesses to his sin. If you are the only eyewitness, you confront him alone and leave it at that. Every time he sees you God will remind him of his sin. Eventually he will either get right or leave.

Much of what we call "discipline" is nothing less than character assassination. We say to our disobedient children: “You dumb kid”; “You’re a bad boy”; “You’re worthless.” We say to failing Christian brothers and sisters: “You’re not a good Christian”; “You’re a thief”; “You’re a lustful carouser.” Such statements don’t correct or edify; they tear down character and convey disapproval for the person as well as his problem. Your child is not a liar; he’s a child of God who has told a lie. Your Christian friend is not a thief; he’s a child of God who has taken something which doesn’t belong to him. The believer caught in a moral failure is not a pervert; he’s a child of God who compromised his purity. We must hold people accountable for their behaviour, but we are never allowed to denigrate their character.

Express Your Needs Without Judging

If you have legitimate needs in a relationship, and they are not being met, should you risk conveying criticism and rejection by expression your needs? Yes, but express them in such a way that you don’t call into question the other person’s character. For example, you may feel unloved in a relationship, so you say, “You don’t love me anymore.” Or you feel that your spouse doesn’t value you, so you say, “You make me feel worthless.” Or you feel a distance developing between you and your friend, so you say, “You never write or call.” You have expressed your need, but you have also slammed the other person in the process. You are usurping the role of his conscience. And by pushing off your need as his problem, he will probably respond by getting defensive, further straining the relationship.

What if you expressed your needs this way: “I don’t feel loved anymore”, “I feel like a worthless, important person”; “I miss it when we don’t communicate regularly?” By changing the “you” accusation to an “I” message, you express your need without blaming anyone. Your nonjudgmental approach allows God to deal with the person’s conscience and turns a potential conflict into an opportunity for ministry. The other person is free to respond to your need instead of defend himself against your attack.

We all have basic human needs to feel loved, accepted and worthwhile. When these needs go unmet, it’s very important that we express them to our family members and fellow Christians in a positive way and allow others to minister to those needs.

Similarly, every Christian is both a counselor and counselee in the context of his Christian relationships. Remember the difference between discipleship and counseling: discipleship looks to the future to provoke spiritual growth and maturity; counseling looks to the past to correct problems and strengthen areas of weakness. Your role or level of maturity may dictate that you do a lot of

Christian counseling. But there will still be times when you need to seek or receive the counsel of other Christians. Or you may be a new Christian or come from a problem-filled past, and you are still receiving a good deal of counseling. You also need to be alert to opportunities God will give you to offer helpful counsel to other believers around you.

DESIGNS FOR DISCIPLESHIP

I see three levels in the forward-looking ministry of discipling others suggested by Paul in The Colossians 2: 6 – 10. levels of discipleship are summarized.

Discipling in Christ:

Levels of Conflict and Growth			
	Level I:	Level II:	Level III:
	Identity Complete in Christ (Col. 2: 10)	Maturity Built up in Christ (Col. 2: 7)	Walk Walk in Christ (Col. 2:6)
Spiritual	Conflict: lack of salvation or assurance (Eph. 2:1 – 3)	Conflict: Walking according to the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21)	Conflict: Insensitive to the Spirit's leading (Heb.5:11-14)
	Growth: Child of God (1 John 3:1 – 3; 5:11 – 13)	Growth: Walking according to the Spirit (Gal. Gal. 5: 22- 23)	Growth: Led by the Spirit (Rom 8:14)
Rational	Conflict: Darkened understanding (Eph. 4: 18)	Conflict: Wrong beliefs of philosophy of life (Col. 2: 8)	Conflict: Pride (1 Cor. 8: 1)
	Growth: Renewed mind (Rom. 12: 2; Eph. 4:23)	Growth: Handling accurately the word of truth (2 Tim. 2: 15)	Growth: Adequate, equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16- 17)
Emotional	Conflict: Fear (Matt. 10: 26 – 33)	Conflict: Anger (Eph. 4: 31), anxiety (1 Pet. 5: 7), Depression (2 Cor. 4: 1 – 18)	Conflict: Discouragement and sorrow (Gal. 6: 9)
	Growth: Freedom (Gal. 5: 1)	Growth: Joy, peace, patience (Gal. 5: 22)	Growth: Contentment (Phil. 4: 11)

Volitional	Conflict: Rebellion (1 Tim. 1: 9)	Conflict: Lack of self-control, compulsive (1 Cor. 3: 1 – 3)	Conflict: Undisciplined (2 Thess. 3:7, 11)
	Growth: Submissive (Rom. 13: 1- 2)	Growth: Self-control (Gal. 5: 23)	Growth: Disciplined (1 Tim. 4: 7- 8)
Rational	Conflict: Rejection (Eph. 2:1 – 3)	Conflict: Unforgiveness (Col. 3:1 – 3)	Conflict: Selfishness (Phil. 2: 1 – 5; 1 Cor. 10: 24)
	Growth: Acceptance (Rom.5: 8; 15: 7)	Growth: Forgiveness (Eph 4: 32)	Growth: Brotherly love (Rom. 12: 10; Phil. 2:1 – 5)

Level I relates to helping people with the foundational issues of establishing and understanding their identity in Christ. Paul declared the finished work of who are in Christ: “In Him you have been made complete” (Col. 2: 10).

Level II deals with the issue of maturity in Christ, which Paul alluded to as “being built up in Him” (v.7).

Level III reflects the issue of our daily walk in Christ, which is founded on our identity and maturity. Paul instructed: “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” (v.6)

Each level is dependent on the former level for success. A Christian cannot have an effective walk (Level III) if he is not moving into maturity (Level II), and he cannot approach maturity if he does not understand his identity in Christ (Level I).

Notice also that there are five dimensions of application for each level: spiritual, rational, emotional, volitional and relational. At each dimension of application there is both a point of conflict and a step of growth. The point of conflict identifies how sin, the world, the flesh and the devil interfere in the discipleship process. Remember: Satan is committed to deceive, frustrate and disrupt the believer’s identity, maturity and walk in Christ. The points of conflict reveal the expressions of his work which must be resolved and replaced by specific steps of growth.

Please understand that there are no Scriptural boundaries between the three levels of discipleship or the five dimensions of application as the chart implies. The chart is designed merely to highlight specific, foundational issues that must be resolved in order for believers to grow – and help each other grow – to be confident, effective servants of God.

Level I: Identity

The point of spiritual conflict at this level is the individual’s lack of salvation (if he has not been born again) or lack of assurance of salvation (if he has been born again). It’s not your job to give assurance of salvation; God does that (Rom. 8: 16; 1 John 5: 13). Your role in this step of growth is to direct people to Scriptures that declare their spiritual identity as children of God.

Rationally, people come into the kingdom of God having no true knowledge of Him. There is something they must know in order to believe God and be what He wants them to be (Hos. 4:6). Unless their minds are renewed and they develop a proper belief system, they will attempt to meet basic needs in the wrong way: independent of God.

The emotional conflict at this level is fear. Fear compels people to do what they should not do and inhibits (prevents) them from doing what they should do. When people are motivated by the fear of

anyone or anything except God, they are not free, and freedom is our inheritance in Christ. Satan, binds through fear, but the fear of God expels all other fears (Prov. 1:7).

Volitionally, people have learned to live in willful rebellion, independent of God. They are either used to looking out for being independent or living in sick dependency on a parent, spouse or another person or institution. Most people want to sit in judgment on those in authority over them. Growth at this dimension involves understanding and applying Biblical submission to God as a loving Father and to others.

Relationally, since the world's criteria for acceptance are based on performance, most people have experienced rejection from childhood. Yet the kingdom of God is based on God's unconditional love and acceptance (Titus 3: 5). Therefore, the basis of relationships is not giving others what they deserve – which is judgment –but what they need – which is mercy. Building up others does not start with authority which demands accountability. It begins with acceptance which is followed by affirmation. Once accepted and affirmed, people will make themselves accountable to authority.

So the first goal of discipleship is to establish identity in Christ. This entails:

- Leading individuals to Christ and directing them to their Scriptural assurance of salvation;
- Guiding them to true knowledge of God and who they are in Christ, and teaching them the path of knowing God's ways;
- Changing their basic motivation from fear of people and circumstances to fear of God;
- Helping them see the ways they are still playing God or rebelling against God's authority.
- Breaking down their defenses against rejection by accepting and affirming them.

Level II: Maturity

Building people up in Christ, which is the process of sanctification, begins in the spiritual dimension by helping them distinguish between walking according to the flesh and walking according to the Spirit. The more they choose to walk according to the flesh, the longer they will remain immature. The more they choose to walk according to the Spirit, the sooner they will mature. Fundamental to this truth is the believer's understanding that outside circumstances do not determine who he is, how he walks or what or becomes. Only God and the individual's response to Him determines that.

Rationally, when Christians buy into Satan's lie or worldly philosophies, they will not be able to grow (Col. 2:8). The battle is for the mind, and we must learn to expose Satan's strategies and take every thought captive (2 Cor. 10: 4-5). Discipleship requires mental discipline. People who will not assume responsibility for their thoughts cannot be discipled.

At the emotional dimension, feelings are a product of the thought life. If a person's thoughts and beliefs are wrong concerning what will make him successful, significant, happy, etc., he will be victimized by negative emotions. Anger, anxiety and depression are usually the result of a faulty belief system. The greatest determinants of mental and emotional health are a true knowledge of God, an acceptance of His ways and the assurance of His forgiveness.

Volitionally, Christians need to exercise the spiritual fruit of self-control instead of succumb to the compulsiveness prompted by the flesh.

Relationally, forgiveness is the key to maturity. It is the glue that holds families and churches together. Satan uses unforgiveness more than any other human deficiency to stop the growth of individuals and ministries. The unforgiving person is yoked to the past or to a person and is not free to move on in Christ.

The second goal of discipleship is to accept God's goal of sanctification and grow in Christ likeness. This entails:

- Helping people learn to walk by the Spirit and by faith;
- Guiding them to discipline their minds to believe the truth;
- Encouraging them to develop self-control;
- Challenging them to resolve personal problems by forgiving others and seeking forgiveness.

Level III: Walk

So many Christians want to start their journey of discipleship at this level instead of at Levels I and

They ask, “What should I do to grow as a Christian?” when they should be asking, “What should I be?” One of the great failures of Christian ministry is to expect people to behave as Christians (Level III) before they have matured as Christians (Level I and II). In so doing we are asking people to behave in a manner that is inconsistent with their perception of their identity and their level of maturity, and that’s an impossible task. However, as believers affirm their identity in Christ and grow in maturity, we can further disciple them by challenging them to consistent Christlike behavior in their daily walk.

Spiritually mature people are identified as those whose senses are trained to discern good and evil (Heb. 5: 14). Discernment is a often misunderstood concept. True Biblical discernment is not just a function of the mind; it is also a function of the spirit. Through His Spirit, God will identify to the spiritually mature believer a compatible spirit and warn against an incompatible spirit. Spiritual discernment is the first line of defense in spiritual warfare.

Since increased knowledge tends to prompts it, pride is always a potential danger in the rational process. But the believer will never know so much of God and His ways that he no longer needs God. If Christians get to the place where they lean on their own understanding, they will stop acknowledging God. The honest student of God’s Word must admit that the more he knows about God, the more dependent he must be upon Him.

Emotionally, the nature believer learns to be content in all circumstances (Phil. 4: 11). There are a lot of discouragements in this life, and many of the believer’s desires will go unmet. But none of his goals will go unfulfilled as long as they are godly goals. In the midst of life’s trials, Christians need encouragement. To encourage means to give people the courage to carry on. Every discipler should be an encourager.

Someone has said that the successful Christian's life hinges on the exercise of the will. The undisciplined persons is incapable of living a productive life. But the disciplined person is a Spirit-filled person who has no unresolved conflicts and who seeks to have his needs met in Christ.

Relationally, the mature believer no longer lives for himself but for others. Perhaps the greatest test of the believer’s maturity is found in the call to “be devoted to one another in brotherly love” (Rom. 12: 10). After all, the world will not recognize us as true Christians by our theology, our titles, our educational degrees, our appearance or our buildings, but by our love!

Simply stated, the third goal of discipleship is to help believers function as believers in their homes, on their jobs and in society. The effective Christian walk involves the proper exercise of spiritual gifts, talents and intellect in serving others and being a positive witness in the world. These behavioral objectives are only valid when an individual accepts his identity and experiences maturity in Christ.

My observation is that most Christian preaching is directed at Level III, hoping to evoke a behavioral response in the hearers. But most Christians are struck down around Level I, locked into the past, immobilized by fear, isolated by rejection. They have no idea who they are in Christ, so they have no way of succeeding at the Christian walk. Rather than continually telling immature believers what they should do, let’s celebrate with them in what Christ has already done and help them become what they already are in Him.

LIVING IN THE FREEDOM OF THE NEW NATURE

Sarah is a middle-aged woman who was dealt a bad hand in life right from the beginning. Memories of ritual and sexual abuse that she suffered as a young child have haunted her continually throughout her Christian life. When she came to see me her damaged self-image seemed beyond repair. As she told me her story, Sarah displayed little emotion, but her words reflected total despair.

“Who are you, Sarah? How do you perceive yourself?” I asked as she concluded. “I am evil,” she answered coldly. “I’m just no good for anybody. People tell me I’m evil, and all I do is bring trouble.” “You’re not evil,” I argued. “How can a child of God be evil? Is that how you perceive yourself?” Sarah nodded.

I reached for a printed sheet of paper containing a number of statements describing who we are in Christ based on verses in the Bible and handed it to Sarah. “I want you to read these statements aloud right now,” I instructed. “They will remind you of your scriptural identity.” Sarah took the paper and began to read the first statement aloud rather haltingly: “I am th-the-s-s-salt of the ...” Suddenly her character changed. She looked up and sneered, “No way, you dirty son of a!”

It is never pleasant to see the evil one express his ugly personality through a victim like Sarah. But I took authority over him through prayer in Christ’s Name and led Sarah through the steps to freedom. She was able to throw off the chains of spiritual bondage and begin living according to her true identity as a child of God.

Later she told me that the sheet of paper I asked her to read appeared to go blank as she started to read it. Was there something magical about the paper or the statements printed on it? No, it was only ink on paper. But there was something infinitely significant about Sarah realizing who she is in Christ. Satan had deceived her into believing she was worthless and evil, which was a lie. He was dead set against her reading those statements of truth about her identity as a child of God. He knew that God’s truth would disarm his lie just as surely as the light disarms the darkness. And he wasn’t about to give up without a fight.

Nothing is more foundational to your freedom from Satan’s bondage than understanding and affirming that God has done for you in Christ and who you are as a result. We all live in accordance with our perceived identity. In fact, no one can consistently behave in a way that is inconsistent with how he perceives himself. Your attitudes, actions, responses, and reactions to life’s circumstances are determined by your conscious and subconscious self-perception. If you see yourself as the helpless victim of Satan and his schemes, you will live like his victim and be in bondage to his lies. But if you see yourself as the dearly loved and accepted child of God that you really are, you will live like a child of God.

Here I want to highlight several critical aspects of our identity in Christ. Many of you have already internalized the biblical truths summarized here, and others of you may find this section to be a little on the heavy side because of its doctrine content. But I urge you not to skip over this. These concepts are foundational to your freedom from spiritual conflict as a child of God. The issue of spiritual identity and maturity in Christ is so vital!

You Are Eternally Alive and Well

You are comprised of at least two major parts: your material self and your immaterial self. On the outside you have a physical body, and on the inside you have a soul/spirit: the ability to think, to feel, to choose (mind, emotions, and will are often collectively identified as the soul), and to relate to God (spirit). Your body is in union with your soul/spirit, and that makes you physically alive. As a Christian, your soul/spirit is in union with God as a result of your salvation, and that makes you spiritually alive.

When God created Adam, he was totally alive-physically and spiritually. But because of Adam’s sin and subsequent spiritual death, every person who comes into the world is born physically alive but spiritually dead. Being separated from God, you lacked the presence and wisdom of God in your life, so you learned to live independent of God, centering your interests on yourself. This learned independence from God is referred to in Scripture as the flesh.

When you were born again, your soul/spirit was united with God and you came alive spiritually, as alive as Adam was in the garden before he sinned. As the epistle of Ephesians repeatedly declares, you are now in Christ, and Christ is in you. Since Christ who is in you is eternal, the spiritual life you have received from Him is eternal. You don't have to wait until you die to get eternal life; you possess it right now! And contrary to what Satan would like you to believe, he can't ever take eternal life away from you because he can't take Jesus away from you, who promised never to leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13: 5).

You Are Changed from Sinner to Saint

How you ever heard a Christian refer to himself as “just a sinner saved by grace?” Have you referred to yourself that way? If you see yourself as a sinner you will sin; what would you expect a sinner to do? Your Christian life will be mediocre at best, with little to distinguish you from a non-Christian, thereby riddling you with feelings of defeat. Satan will seize that opportunity, pour on the guilt, and convince you that you are doomed to an up-and-down spiritual existence. As a defeated Christian you will confess your sin and strive to do better, but inwardly you will admit that you are just a sinner saved by grace, hanging on until the rapture.

Is that who you really are? No way! The Bible doesn't refer to believers as sinners, not even sinners saved by grace. Believers are called saints-holy ones—who occasionally sin. We become saints at the moment of salvation (justification) and live as saints in our daily experience (sanctification) as we continue to believe what God has done and as we continue to affirm who we really are in Christ. If you fail to see yourself as a child of God, you will struggle vainly to live like one, and Satan will have little trouble convincing you that you are no different from who you were before Christ and that you have no value to God or anyone else. But appropriating by faith the radical transformation of your core identity from sinner to saint will have powerful, positive effect on your daily resistance to sin and Satan.

You Are a Partaker of the Divine Nature

Ephesians 2:1 –3 describes our nature before we came to Christ: “You were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air....and were by nature children of wrath.” Before we became Christians our very nature was sin, and the result of our sin was death (separation from God). As such we served ourselves and Satan as a matter of course.

But at salvation God changed our very essence; we became “partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is the world by lust” (2 Peter 1: 4). You are no longer in the flesh; you are in Christ. You had a sinful nature before your salvation, but now you are a partaker of Christ's divine nature. You are neither eternal nor divine, but you are eternally united with Christ's divinity. Paul said in this way: “You were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8); “Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Corinthians 5:17). In the face of Satan's accusations that we are no different, we must believe and live in harmony with the fact that we are eternally different in Christ.

The New Testament refers to the person you were before you received Christ as your old self (“old man” in the King James Version). At salvation your old self, which was motivated to live independent of God and was therefore characterized by sin, died (Romans 6:6), and your new self, motivated by your new identity in Christ and characterized by dependence on God, came to life (Galatians 2:20). Your old self had to die in order to sever your relationship with sin which dominated it. Being a new person doesn't mean that you are sinless (1 John 1:8). But since your old self has been crucified and buried with Christ, you no longer need to sin (1 John 2:1). You sin when you choose to act independently of God......

You Can Be Victorious over the Flesh and Sin

Your death to sin ended your relationship with sin as master, but it did not terminate sin's existence. Sin is still alive, strong, and appealing, but its power and authority have been broken (Romans 8:2). Furthermore, your flesh, that part of you which was trained to live independently of God before you met Christ, did not die either. You still have memories, habits, conditioned

response, and thought patterns ingrained in your brain which prompt you to focus on your own interests. You are no longer in the flesh as your old self was; you are now in Christ. But you can still choose to walk according to the flesh (Romans 8:12-13), complying with those old urges to serve yourself instead of God. It is your responsibility to crucify the flesh (Romans 8:13) on a daily basis by learning to walk according to the Spirit (Galatians 5:16) and by re-patterning your old thoughts by allowing your mind to be renewed through God's Word (Romans 12:2).

Even though you are dead to sin, sin's strong appeal may still cause you to struggle with feeling that you are more alive to sin than you are to Christ. But Romans 6:1-11 teaches us that what is true of the Lord Jesus Christ is true of us in terms of our relationship to sin. God the Father allowed His Son to "be sin" (i.e., establish a relationship with sin) in order that all the sins of the world – past, present and future – would fall on Him (2 Corinthians 5:21). When He died on the cross, our sins were on Him. But when He rose from the grave, there was no sin on Him. When He ascended to the Father, there was no sin on Him. And today, as He sits at the Father's right hand, there is no sin on Him. Since we are seated in the heaven lies in Christ, we too have died to sin.

When we find a promise in the Bible, we claim it. When we come to a commandment, we obey it. But when we read a truth, we believe it. The verses in Romans 6:1-11 are not commandments to obey; they are truths to be believed. Christ already died to sin, and because you are in Him, you have died to sin too. You cannot die to sin because you are already dead; you can only believe it. I've met many Christians who are still trying to die to sin, and their lives are miserable and fruitless as a result because they are struggling to do something that has already been done.

Notice the use of the past tense in Romans 6:1-11 (emphasis added); "We who *died* to sin" (Verse 2); "All of us who *have been baptized* into Christ Jesus *have been baptized* into His death" (Verse 3); "We *have been buried* with Him" (Verse 4); "Our old self *was crucified* with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin" (Verse 6); "For he who *has died* is freed from sin" (Verse 7); "If we *have died* with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him" (Verse 8). Since these verses are past tense, indicating what is already true about us, we can only believe them.

Verse 11 summarizes what we are to believe about our relationship to sin because of our position in Christ: "Even so **consider** your selves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." It doesn't matter whether you feel dead to sin or not; you are to consider it so because it is so. People wrongly wonder, "what experience must I have in order for this to be true?" The only necessary experience is that of Christ on the cross, which has already happened. When we choose to believe what is true about ourselves and sin, and walk on the basis of what we believe our right relationship with sin will work out in our experience. But as long as we put our experience before our belief, we will never fully know the freedom that Christ purchased for us on the cross.

On the basis of what Romans 6:1-11 instructs us to believe, Romans 6:12-13 tells us how to relate to sin: "Therefore **do not let sin reign in your mortal body** that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." Sin is a sovereign master which demands service from its subjects. You are dead to sin, but you still have the capacity to serve it by putting your body at sin's disposal. It's up to you to choose whether you're going to let your body be used for sin or for righteousness. Satan, who is at the root of all sin, will take advantage of anyone who tries to remain neutral.

To illustrate, suppose your pastor asks to use your car to deliver food baskets to the needy, and a thief asks to use it to rob a bank. It's your car and you can choose to lend it however you want, for good or for evil. Which would you choose? There should be no question!

Your body is also yours to use to serve either God or sin and Satan, but the choice is up to you. That's why Paul wrote so insistently: "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (Romans 12:1). Because of Christ's victory over sin, you are completely free to choose not to give yourself to obey sin as your master. It is your responsibility not to let sin reign in your mortal body.

You Can Be Free from the Power of Sin

“Not allowing sin to reign in my body sounds wonderful, but you don’t know how hard my battle with sins is,” you may be thinking. “I find myself doing what I shouldn’t do and not doing what I should do. It’s a constant struggle.”

Yes, I know how hard the battle is; I’ve faced it myself. So did the apostle Paul. He wrote Romans 7:15-25 out of the same feelings of frustration that you experience. In this passage we discover God’s path to freedom from the power of sin. I invite you to listen in as I walk through this passage with Brother A., who is really struggling to overcome the power of sin in his life:

Sir: Brother A., let’s look at a passage of Scripture that seems to describe what you are presently experiencing. Romans 7:15 reads: “For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.” Would you say that this verse describes you?

Brother A.: Exactly! I desire to do what God says is right, but sometimes I find myself doing just the opposite.

Sir: You probably identify with verse 16 as well: “But if I do the very thing I do not wish to do, I agree with the law, confessing that it is good.” Brother A., how many personalities or players are mentioned in this verse?

Brother A.: These is only one person, and it is clearly “I”.

Sir: It is very defeating when we know what we want to do, but for some reason can’t do it. How have you tried to resolve this in your own mind?

Brother A.: Sometimes I wonder if I’m even a Christian. It seems to work for others, but not for me. Often I wonder if the Christian life is even possible or if God is really here.

Sir: If you and God were the only players in this scenario, it would stand to reason that you would either blame God or yourself for your predicament. But now look at verse 17: “So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.” How many players are there now, Brother A.?

Brother A.: Apparently two, but I don’t understand.

Sir: Let’s read verse 18 and see if we can make some sense out of it: “for I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.”

Brother A.: I learned that verse a long time ago. It has been easy to accept the fact that I’m no good.

Sir: That’s not what it says, Brother A. In fact, it says the opposite. Whatever it is that is dwelling in you is not you. If I had a wood splinter in my finger it would be “nothing good” dwelling in me. But the “nothing good” isn’t me; it’s the splinter. It is also important to note that this “nothing good” is not even my flesh, but it is dwelling in my flesh. If we see only ourselves in this struggle it would be hopeless to live righteously. These passages are going to great lengths to tell us that there is a second party involved in our sin struggle whose nature is different from ours.

You see, Brother A., when you and I were born, we were born under the penalty of sin. And we know that Satan and his emissaries (agents) are always working to keep us under that penalty. When God saved us, Satan lost that battle, but he didn’t curl up his tail or pull in his fangs. He is now committed to keep us under the power of sin. We also know that he is going to work through the flesh, which remained after salvation.

Let’s read on to see if we can learn more about how this battle is being waged: “For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil that I do not wish. But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good” (verse 19-21).

Brother A., can you identify from these passages the nature of that “nothing good” which indwells you?

Brother A.: Sure, it is clearly evil and sin. But isn’t it just my own sin? When I sin I feel so guilty.

Sir: There is no question that you and I sin, but we are not “sin” as such. Evil is present in us, but we are not evil per se. This does not excuse us from sinning, because Paul wrote earlier that it is our responsibility not to let sin reign in our mortal bodies (Romans 6: 12). Do you ever feel so defeated that you just want to strike out at someone or yourself? Brother A.: Almost every day!

Sir: But when you cool down, do you again entertain thoughts that are in line with your identify as a Christian?

Brother A.: Always, and then I feel terrible about lashing out.

Sir: Verse 22 explains this cycle. “For I joyfully concur (agree) with the law of God in the inner man.” When we act out of character with who we really are, the Holy Spirit immediately brings conviction because of our union with God, and we often take it out on ourselves. But soon our true nature expresses itself again and we are drawn back to God. It’s like the frustrated wife who announces that she has had it with her husband. She wants it out with him and couldn’t care less about her husband. But after she acknowledges her pain and expresses her emotions, she softens and says, “I really love him, and I don’t want a divorce. But I just don’t see any other way out.” That’s the inner person, the true self, being expressed.

Verse 23 describes the nature of this battle with sin: “But I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.” According to this passage, Brother A., where is the battle being fought?

Brother A.: The battle appears to be in the mind.

Sir: That’s precise where the battle rages. Now if Satan can get you to think you are the only one in the battle, you will get down on either yourself or God when you sin. Let me put it this way. If a dog came along and bit you on the leg, would you beat on yourself or beat on the dog?

Brother A.: On the dog. But in my struggle with sin, nobody has ever told me that it’s the “dog” – sin – which is inflicting the pain!

Sir: Exactly! So you beat on yourself. But I find that people eventually get tired of beating on themselves, so they walk away from God under a cloud of defeat and condemnation. Paul expressed this feeling in verse 24: “Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?” He’s not saying “wicked man that I am”; he’s saying “miserable man that I am.” He is defeated because he is not free. His attempts to do the right thing are met with defeat. He wonders, “Is there any victory?”

Verse 25 gives the answer. “Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin.”

Brother A.: I think I’m getting the picture. I’ve been blaming myself for my inability to live the Christian life. I see Paul frustrated about his failure, but he doesn’t get down on himself. He accepts his responsibility, but he doesn’t blame himself. More important, he expresses confidence by turning to God because the Lord Jesus will enable him to live above sin.

Sir: You’re on the right track. Condemning yourself won’t help because there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus and who don’t walk after the flesh (Romans 8: 1- 2). You need to understand the nature of the battle for your mind. Then you need to discover where you are losing that battle in your own life by allowing sin to reign in your body. When you discover it and deal with it, you can find freedom in Christ.

You Can Win the Battle for Your Mind

Romans 7:23 and 8:5 – 7 show that the center of all spiritual bondage is the mind. That’s where the battle must be fought and won if you are to experience the freedom in Christ which is your inheritance. Paul wrote: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3 – 5).

Some fortresses (“Strongholds” in the King James Version) of bad habits and sinful thought patterns were established when you learned to live your life independently of God. Your non-Christian environment taught you to think about and respond to life in a non-Christian way, and those patterns and responses were ingrained in your mind as strongholds. But when you became a Christian, nobody pressed the “CLEAR” button in your mind. Your old fleshly habits and patterns weren’t erased; they are still a part of your flesh which must be dealt with on a daily basis. Thankfully, however, you are not just a product of your past; you are a new creature in Christ (2

Corinthians 5: 17), and now you are primarily the product of the work of Christ on the cross. Old strongholds can be destroyed!

Just because you are now a Christian, don't think that Satan is no longer interested in manipulating you to his purposes through your mind. Satan's perpetual aim is to infiltrate your thoughts with his thoughts and to promote his lie in the face of God's truth. He knows that if he can control your thoughts, he can control your behavior. But Satan is clever: He doesn't rumble in like a bull in a China shop; he sneaks in like a snake in the grass (2 Corinthians 11: 3). He can introduce his thoughts, tempting you to act independently of God, as if they were your own thoughts or even God's thoughts. Scripture clearly teaches that Satan can put thoughts in our minds even as he did with David (I Chronicles 21: 1), Judas (John 13: 2), and Ananias (Acts 5: 3).

If you don't conquer Satan's temptation right at the threshold of your mind, you will begin to mull his thought over, consider it as an option, and eventually choose to act it out. Repeated acts form a habit, and if you exercise a sinful habit long enough, a stronghold will be established in your mind. Once a stronghold is established you have lost the ability to control your behavior in that area.

How are strongholds destroyed? Patterns of negative thinking and behavior are learned, and they can be unlearned through disciplined Bible study and counseling. Some strongholds are anchored in demonic influences and spiritual conflicts from past and present mental assaults which lock their victims in bondage. These people need to be freed from the shackles of Satan's lies by God's truth. Jesus said: "If you abide in Me and My Words abide in you, then you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8: 31- 32).

I hope you're sensing the fact that victory is truly available for those who are in Christ. There is a war raging, but we are on the winning side, for we are more than conquerors Christ!

DEVELOPING A GOOD ATTITUDE

Mr. X saw Mr. Y going in a motor bike. Both worked in the same office in the same grade. So Mr. X was offended at the other's prosperity. He started moving off from Mr. Y. If he had just touched the bike and given a word of commendation they would be still close friends today.

Mrs. A's precious son plucked off Mrs. B's precious rose. Mrs. A defended her position not knowing what else to do. Mrs. B bristled like a porcupine. Mrs. A didn't know that a word of apology would have healed the wound or did her pride hold her back?

Mrs. C would peep in Mrs. D.'s kitchen and ask for a piece of ginger. Shortly she would return for a few green chillies. Mrs. C would untiringly hand over anything asked for with a big smile. But in her heart she was tired of her neighbour and stared avoiding her like plague. Such trivial incidents are too numerous to quote. Here are ten building blocks for good relationships.

O. Great Unreservedly!

Even good neighbours fail to greet each other. An unreserved smile is the best greeting, be it friends or strangers you would like to get to know. Don't lock up a smile in your mouth. Smile freely. Say "hello" or "good day" and add a few words of inquiry. Even within the family, greeting one another is a must to cement the members. Don't demand a cup of coffee without good morning and with a pleasant face.

If someone is walking off without noticing you, don't mumble, "good riddance." Clap your hands and wave out. Approach the new neighbours with a smile and inquire and their suspicious wrinkles in the face would smoothen out and their shut hearts open up. Learn from Mary how to greet. The hearer must be filled with the Holy Spirit and the life within her must leap! Such sincere, holy and warm greeting (Luke 1: 41).

P. Thank Profusely!

"In the last days men shall be unthankful" (2 Tim. 3:2). You may say you were thankful in your heart. But people cannot see your feelings. Express your gratitude openly. Explain how their help helped you. "Oh the meal you sent was a real blessing! I rested all afternoon and my backache is gone!" or "But for you I would not be in this position today." Thank even for small helps. And for greater helps, remind your benefactor of the help they gave just to let them know that you still remember it with gratitude. Praying for help doesn't mean you don't need to thank. Thank when you get down from the car. Thank the shopkeeper when he hands over your purchase. If Jesus could be disappointed at 10% thankfulness none of us is more angelic than Him! (Luke 17:16-17).

Q. Apologise Freely!

The first step in apology is to admit your fault. Mishap is everyone's lot. Let not pride or fear stand your way. Do not hesitate to take up the responsibility of your mistake. Gird yourselves to face the consequences and meet the offended. Open the conversation with a note of apology. Let the offended know how sorry you feel about it. Even if he reacts violently try your best to pacify him. Try to make good the loss incurred. It may be your own child, your subordinate, your boss or a stranger on whose toes you stepped. Never hesitate. Even if you have every chance to hide yourself, come out of the shadows to acknowledge and apologise. Then, not only others, you yourself will be able to respect yourself. Jacob cheated Esau. But the way he apologised, oh, even the hardest heart would melt (Gen. Chapters 32, 33). See what the man who vowed to murder his brother did. "And Esau ran to meet him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him and they wept". Jacob wept for his cheating and Esau for his revengeful attitude. That is true repentance and apology. Once we blamed a couple for stealing a big amount. After a week it was clear that they were not the culprits. We were tempted to keep quiet or send them a word apology. But we decided to go through the painful discipline of humility. The moment we started to apologise large drops of tears started rolling down their cheeks. We felt their pain. Beautifully the fellowship was restored.

R. Appreciate Aptly!

You don't need to flatter. Truthfully appreciate the other person for his appearance, dress, performance, talents, gifts, possession, help, etc. What does this convey to him? By a few words of commendation you tell him you are not at all jealous of him and you desire his well-being. Paul lost a good companion because he saw only the negative aspects of John Mark. But it needed a Barnabas to see something positive about him. When Paul matured and learned to appreciate he commends Mark (2 Tim. 4:11). But the credit of saving a future minister goes to Barnabas. Appreciation is tonic for children and spouses. Give it three times a day before meals. The Bible feels a man must be commended aptly (Prov.12:8). The mind grows by taking in, but the heart grows by giving out.

S. Help Habitually!

The very thought makes us feel a pinch in our purse. Yet help need not always be monetary. If you want to know more about helping ask Job and he will teach you (Job 31). If you are struggling to repair a broken relationship, be on the look out to give a helping hand naturally. Or send a special greeting card. For a time your enemy friend is certain to misunderstand your motive. He/she may not even accept it. But let that not dishearten you. A subtle enemy of a helping spirit is to expect help in return. Never do that. Let people learn to help you from what they learn from your attitude without a hint. Helping people will not guarantee that they respond positively. You can count on about one in ten, but that one makes up for the others. You may have to face some ungrateful remarks also. That should not dampen your spirit. Over the years one verse has helped me very much to continue to do good. "Trust in the Lord and do good!" (Ps. 37: 3a). If you trust in the helped, your helping spirit may soon flicker and die.

T. Accept Unconditionally!

Psychologists speak of four basic temperaments. Let's not worry about it. Suffice is to know each person is different physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally or temperamentally. It is very difficult to adjust to another person unless you give a generous allowance to his temperament. Remove "if" from your vocabulary as far as relationships are concerned. "If he is not so sensitive", "If he is not so dumb", "If he were not so talkative", "If...if...if." There is no end to the list. But turn the if inward and say, "If I am not so sensitive..if...if...if." There you are, a person easy to live with. Let, "Whoever-comes-to-Me-I-will-never-cast-out" be our spirit! Give a good allowance to the younger ones. You would have acted much the same way when you were his age.

U. Listen Intently!

How often do your thoughts run somewhere else while someone is talking to you? Let him who has ears listen! How often we fail to use our ears! The world is in need of listeners. Parents who wail, "Our child never listens to us", try listening! What is listening? It is giving undivided attention to the person who speaks and communicates to us. Do you do that? Or do you listen with newspaper in one hand or eyes on the TV screen or feet shuffling away? Listen with eyes focused on the person, with facial or verbal expressions you have understood what was said. Listening relieves more than half the pain of sufferers. It gives enthusiasm to a cheerful talker and encourages a feeble, fearful person.

V. Borrow Rarely!

The Bible says, "The borrower is a servant to the lender" (Prov. 22:7). Even thick friends may become master and servant because of a small deal. If at all it is possible for you to manage without borrowing, do manage. Try to never borrow, especially money! The lender may give cheerfully, willingly, helpfully, but he will carry a fear or a grudge in his heart involuntarily. If at all any object is borrowed, like a book, hammer, vessel, cassette, etc. make sure to return it within a week or two at the maximum. For other needs, learn to live by faith, knowing that the Lord will provide for He is Jehovah-Jirah! "Owe no man anything, but to love another." (Rom. 13:8).

W. Criticise Minimally!

Criticism, even when enclosed in a blanket of love still stings. People have enough hurt in this world. Spare them. Avoid criticism at any cost. If something needs to be said, let it take some other form with an introduction of love and a conclusion of apology to minimise the unavoidable pain. Think of the adulteress thrown before Jesus for judgement. What years of public criticism could not do forgiveness did. A useful aid would be to stop and think how you would have yourself to be dealt with in a situation worthy of criticism. "Do thou likewise." We were backbiting about a lady who always spoke at the top of her lungs. After a year we came to know that her husband was hard of hearing. Oh, how sorry we felt for our critical attitude.

Do never criticise from hearsay. Never allow a relationship to be strained because somebody said something about him. Go, sit with him and have an open talk, though the mediator told you not to talk to him about it. More often you'll find that the information you received was a lie or a half trust spoken without love. Clear it off with the concerned person and leave with a warm handshake in good and friendly terms.

**Love like God. Love like Jesus. There is no situation or person beyond love.
Mature and grow in love, then relating will be no problem.**

X. Love Divinely!

Love like God. Love like Jesus. There is no situation or person beyond love. Mature and grow in love, then relating will be no problem. Are there some unlovable persons in your life? See them through God's eye and love will surge in your heart, for "the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit"(Rom.5:5). Love the irritating neighbour's child, the trouble-some neighbour, the rival colleague, and so on. It was Stephen's old associates and friends who stoned him for some difference of opinion. Yet he did not gnash his teeth at those who gnashed their teeth at him but told God with all his heart that they did it ignorantly and pleaded for their forgiveness. That is love divine.

Divine love means sacrifice. God so loved the world that He gave (or gave up)! See to what extent Abraham goes to preserve unity. "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brothers. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left." (Gen.13: 9). Discipline yourself to give up what may be rightfully yours and enjoy the blessings of God like Abraham. "Follow peace with all men" (Heb. 12:14).

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