

DR DIRK H

# MINISTRY LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE

A  
PRACTICAL  
GUIDE TO  
BECOMING  
A WORLD  
CHANGER

BOOK - 4  
LEVEL  
CELL LEADER

ENGLISH



# MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE

Level: **CELL LEADER**

Study book no: 4

## LEVELS:

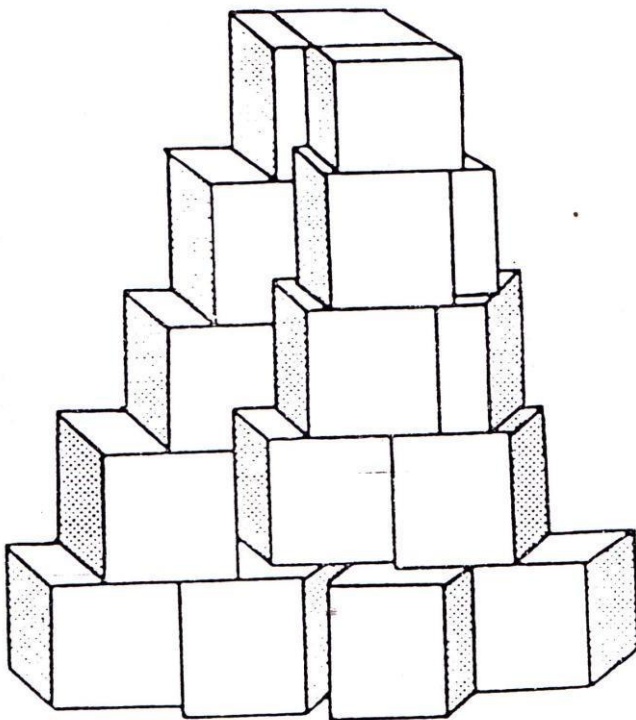
5. Minister

4. Leader / Pastor

3. **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 Savior 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."

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

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# LEADERSHIP COURSE: Introduction to leadership

## Lesson 1 Leadership – The Call of God

### Introduction:

It all starts with a call from God! It is through the church that God want's to carry out His purpose and that's why basically all believers have responded to a call from God, according to His purpose (II Thes. 2:13-14). We are called by God, out of darkness for a purpose I Pet. 2: 9. God has prepared a work for every believer that only he can achieve Eph. 2: 10. We need to be zealous to make our calling and election more sure by godly conduct II Pet.1: 10 (e.g. defacing of envelope with stamps) and as we abide in Him we will be fruitful for our Master, because that's the reason He choose us. John 15: 16.

### Call to Leadership/ Ministry

Above and beyond this general calling is the highest call into the ministry of Lord Jesus Christ. It's a divine call to distinct ministry and / or leadership role. This is a tremendous privilege, but also a great responsibility.

In order to be an effective leader / minister, one must be called by faith to this task. A true call of God brings great confidence, it's knowing that God has initiated it and He's going to uphold you, even when it gets tough. Therefore, only a true call carries the sustaining power and grace to be victorious and successful!

### **Discerning God's will?**

How do you know you've called to leadership/ ministry?

All leaders are called by God. He may not always call the most likely or gifted persons, as His ways are higher than ours (I Cor.1: 26-27; Is. 55: 8-9). God only knows how much He can work through a particular person, that's why leaders need to be totally dependent on God and not to rely on natural talents only.

### **Factors to be considered in regards to a God-given call to ministry or leadership:**

#### Is there a clear sense of God's calling?

Ambitious is good (I Tim.1: 9) but not enough. We need to know that God has called us! May be not as dramatic as the apostle Paul, but in our hearts/ lives we know He called us. (Heb.5: 4; Ps. 75: 6- 7.) A real call of God is like a seed planted in a field which will grow when given even half a chance. A true call will be productive and lead to action.

#### A heart for the work

Is there a willingness to serve the Lord? Are there God-given desires that accompany the call? There should be a deep concern for the souls of people. A readiness to sacrifice and love, care and concern for the people as they are. Fulfilling the call is burning in our bones (Jer. 20: 9). Whole hearted willingness to embrace the call (Matt.16: 24). Willing to deny himself, (self-discipline), willing to take up the cross (to suffer offences for the Word or Ministry) and to follow Him (100% commitment)!

#### Exercise of gift

A person's gift /ministry makes room for itself, but it's the character that will keep him there! (Prov.18: 16). Is the call resulting in a inner spiritual drive (not strife!) to move forward, use one's gifting and willing to draw from one's potential in God. (I Pet. 3:10). A sincere effort to use our talents and resources to fulfil our calling. The calling should be gripping, so that it produces purposeful action. Willing to spend much time in prayer and in study of the Word in order to progress and mature (II Tim. 2:5).

#### Fruitfulness

As you begin to move into your calling and using your gifts, are there signs of fruitfulness? Do others recognise the anointing on your ministry? (II Tim.1: 6; I Pet . 4: 10).

God's grace is always effective and it produces fruit in us and in the lives of those to whom we minister (I Cor.15: 10-11). Effectiveness is the real witness that one is truly called and gifted by God.

**Other factor is discerning God's call:**

- often natural learning's are tied up with one's calling.
- don't confuse body gifts (I Cor.12: 7-11) with calling.
- can we see God's "red thread" in our live?

Therefore, all leaders and ministers are called by God. He appoints and anoints them with the Holy Spirit (see eg. Paul, Gal.1: 1) He also gives them the necessary charisma (gifts) for the role or function they are to undertake.

Yet a personal call is not enough. We can all be self-deceived, that's why a personal call needs to be confirmed and ratified by the church (e.g. Paul submitting his ministry to the other apostles, Gal.

2). The church will recognise those called, possessing and exercising their charismatic gift and thus affirms those whom God has Himself first called and ordained.

**Other issues to consider:-**

- Not all may be necessarily called to full-time
- Recognise God's timing; don't run ahead of God.
- There might be a need for preparation and training
- Confirmation of one's call:
  - God's opening door
  - Where He leads, He feeds!

**Enabling and fulfilling God's call:**

- Make choices and commitments with wisdom and
- Remain open and teachable to grow in capacity
- Be true to your calling and don't spread yourself too thin
- Live in your calling, because His Anointing will enable you

NOTE :- Its never too late to turn to God and yield to His call for our lives! (Rom.11: 29)

## **Lesson 2 Qualifications for Leadership**

**Introduction:**

In the Bible we see God looking for a certain man, an individual, to fulfil His divine purpose (e.g. I Sam.13: 14; Ezek. 22: 30). Even so in the Church Christ desires mature believers who model godly attitude and actions to lead and minister by example, doing the work of service. One may be called to the ministry while getting saved, yet in order to see this call confirmed by the local church certain Biblical conditions will have to be met.

**Basic pre-conditions for spiritual leadership:**

1. Salvation - Must be saved by being born again of the Word and Spirit having assurance of its by the witness of the Holy spirit.
2. Water Baptism - Exposes a visible identification with the death of Christ and an obedience to His Word (Acts 2: 38)

3. Baptism in - Having the fullness of the Holy Spirit is an essential experience for ministry (Acts 1:8); being filled with the Spirit to be controlled and led by the Spirit.

In the New Testament we see that in the early days of the church, as the work continued to grow, new leaders were carefully selected and chosen. This was done on the basis of specifications given by the apostles (Acts 6: 3). Later on we see that Paul expands upon these and gives more detailed instructions to Timothy, as he had to choose and appoint new leaders in the churches. Based upon I Tim.3: 1- 2 the following seven qualifications for spiritual leadership can be distinguished.

**Leadership qualifications:**

**Good reputation** I Tim. 3: 2 says that a leader’s life and conduct needs to be “worthy of respect” and “above approach”. Titus 1:7 talks of being “blameless”. This doesn’t mean that a person has to be perfect to be a church leader but that there is nothing in his life with which people can (ordinarily) find fault. His life will be patterned in line with Biblical standards. (Remember – a chain is only as strong as its weakest link).

The character of the leader should command the respect of the outsiders as well as inspire confidence in those he is called to lead.

**Self control** A leader is to exhibit a disciplined life. A daily self-discipline will build the inner character of self-control, which is one of the fruit of the Holy spirit. He will be in control of his passions and appetites (Gal.5: 23) as they are controlled by the Holy spirit. Such a person will not fly to extremes nor sway by sudden impulses. In other words there’s no room for sudden outbursts of rage, uncontrollable fits of depression, uncontrolled strong passion or carnal desires.

3a. **Godly values** Verse 3 talks about “not greedy for money, nor covetous”. A leader needs to check his motives. It should be a desire to serve men and not money, because the love of money can lead a person away from the faith (I Tim.6: 10).

b. **Right attitude** To serve – because selfish ambition will lead to strife (Gal.5: 20), a deadly sin. There should be no competitive spirit, a desire for power, which will lead to politics and division.

**A loving heart** Ministry doesn’t flow through the mind, but it flows, through a heart of love. This includes being gentle, gracious, kind forbearing, considerable. At the same time being a person of integrity; sincere, honest, truthful, etc., because of a right heart – attitude.

**A healthy home** A leader needs to practice what he preaches and therefore he must be a good example to those he guides and serves. His home life will show his true character and leadership ability. I Tim.3: 4-5 is very clear on this, kingdom principles need to exist in his or our family first; Biblical moral behaviour. Godly interpersonal family relationships, caring and providing for his family (Heb.11: 7).

**A mature faith** A mature faith, should not be a new believer but one who has a proven and steady faith – a faith that is experienced and mature. In order to avoid Satan’s trap of pride (I Tim. 3: 6), he needs to be broken, someone who is clearly dead to self (Gal.2: 20).

Has he gone through testing and trials, and did his faith remain unshaken, consistent and stable?

**Faithful to the truth** Needed is a firm founding and grounding in sound doctrine, being convinced of its truthfulness and working in obedience to the revealed truth of the Word. The Word should be living in the leader, who should be able to teach. (I Tim. 3: 5). This requires having a firm handle on the truth and being able to explain the demands of the Word upon our lives (II Tim. 2: 15).

**Note on how to spot potential leaders (spot the anointing for leadership). Look for:**

Someone whom people are following. (are sheep following the shepherd?)

Someone who is uninterested in fame or power. (no strife for position)

Someone who cares more for those he leads than for himself. (a true servant heart)

Someone whose house is in order. (watch for a radiant spouse and obedient children)

### **Lesson 3 Preparations and Testings**

**INTRODUCTION:** Is. 49: 1- 3.

Isiah was made a polished arrow by the Lord in order to be used by Him. The shaft of an arrow must undergo much before it will be a straight polished instrument that will hit the mark when aimed and fired correctly. In the same way, God will attempt to do some preparation work in your life so that you will hit the mark that God has pre-ordained for your life.

As such, every leader who's going to be used by God must be prepared by Him. Proper preparation may be costly, but it's the only way a leader can function effectively and fruitfully for God.

To prepare something is to make it ready so that it is going to be usable and function properly. In Is. 64: 8, we find the analogy of the potter working with his clay. Before any beautiful, useful result can be achieved, the clay needs to be made ready, worked, dried and taken through the fire. In the same way leaders need to undergo a process of preparation before they can function in their role as a leader. In this process God will allow them to be stripped to their self-dependence and be moulded in what He wants them to be.

Trials and testings are God's way of preparing us for leadership. Our God is a consuming fire (Heb.12: 29), who shakes that which can be shaken in order to be left with the unshakeable (Heb.12: 25). As a result of the testings of God in our life we can either progress by faith and persevere or regress into unbelief and despair (Jas. 1: 2 -4). Leaders need to learn how to stand on God's Word and go on until they see it fulfilled. This is the way to spiritual maturity and growth in exercising and demonstrating our faith in God.

#### **WHO TESTS AND TRIES US?**

From Ps.11: 5, we learn that the Lord tests the righteous. It's good to keep this in mind so we know how to respond in the right ways. At times we face problems as a result of our own mistakes and at other times we may indeed face the devil troubling us. The discernment of the cause of our trial is important, because:

If it's God's dealing: we need to submit (Jas. 4: 7a), and depending on His grace to go through the test and be victorious (I Cor.10: 13).

If it's our own mistake: learn from it.

If it's an attack of Satan: stand against it and fight it off to overcome (Jas. 4: 7b)



## **REASONS WHY GOD TESTS AND TRIES US:**

### **TO TEACH US OBEDIENCE**

We see this in the life of the saints of Old Testament, e.g. Abraham who was tested to offer up Isaac and because he obeyed he inherited a mighty blessing (Gen.22: 15-18). Obedience honours God and pleases Him; it's better than sacrifice (I Sam.15: 22). Yet each one learns it by suffering and chastisement (Heb.12: 6- 8). Even Jesus had to undergo painful suffering to be perfected, how much more will God use the problems in our life to mature us! (Heb.5: 8).

### **TO TRY OUR MOTIVES AND INNER ATTITUDES**

God wants to see what our heart is really set on. Only the test will show one's true and deepest motives: is it for God's kingdom or selfish gain, e.g. the life of Balaam (Numbers Ch. 22-24). The prophet Balaam was moved by selfish greed. He knew he could only speak the word of the Lord, yet it appears he ultimately gave wicked counsel although in the beginning he refused the bribe to curse Israel. His motives were not pure. (II Pet. 2: 15; Jude 11).

### **TRIALS PRODUCE PERSERVERANCE AND MATURITY**

In Jas.1: 2- 4 the Word teaches us that there is no short cut nor escape, nor do fiery or deals produce instant results. But when they come we should joyfully embrace them and endure and persevere in the midst of them. A perfect example is found in the cocoon and the butterfly. A butterfly was emerging from a cocoon and after 45 minutes only the head and part of one wing had emerged free. An observer thought to help the struggling butterfly speed up the process and took a sharp pen knife and cut the cocoon open to release and emerging larvae. Surprisingly he found out that only the part which had emerged through great effort and struggle was developed. The part he had cut free was still underdeveloped and not ready to be exposed to the elements outside the cocoon. Instead of helping the larvae become a butterfly he aborted the process. The half-developed butterfly soon died. In the same way, at times we try help others in their difficulty only to discover that they fall back into the same problem again a short while later. Had we allowed them to suffer for a while and learn the lesson God was trying to teach them it would have been better for them and the church.

### **4. TESTINGS INORDER TO SORT OUT THOSE WHO ARE TRULY CALLED BY GOD**

We may be able to fool people into following us, but God is never fooled. Only those who are called and anointed by God can take the pressures of living as a leader over time. As God puts His people in desperate situations those who do not feel a true call from God upon their lives, will drop out of the preparation process, which is best for them and the church. In Is. 48: 10 it says, I have chosen You in the furnace of afflictions, trials and frustrations. He will see our response to adverse and difficult situations and through His grace we are able to learn and grow.

Yet not all may pass the test (Matt. 20: 16). Rev.17: 14 ads one more quality to the called and chosen and that's faithful. Even at the cost of life they remained faithful to the Lord.

### **TO TEST OUR FAITH IN GOD'S WORD (PROV. 30 : 5; Ps. 12: 6)**

Even though God may have given you a word or a promise, He will test you with it. You may experience circumstances that seem to nullify the written or living Word of God and you may feel He has forgotten His promise. God will test His Word in your life to you, as a leader, to reject your own resources and depend only on God's strength to bring His Word to pass. This may not be easy, especially when one has many talents and abilities.

E.g. the life of Joseph (Gen. 37: 45). As a teenager the Lord had given him two dreams that he would be a leader even of his family. Yet he is sold as a slave and eventually ends up in prison. Ps.105: 17- 19. The Word of the Lord tested (refined) him, but as he held on he finally saw the fulfillment of God's Word to him. During this testing time God developed character, wisdom and humility in his life.

## 6. THROUGH TESTINGS GOD EQUIPS LEADERS

Through testings God equips leaders with the spiritual understanding and necessary experiences of life they need to help and understand the people they minister to. All believers experience a variety of tests and trials. Only those leaders who have successfully overcome God's tests for themselves will be able to help other believers through the same tests.

DURING TIMES OF TRIALS AND TESTINGS IT IS IMPORTANT TO KEEP A RIGHT AND POSITIVE ATTITUDE.

Therefore:

SEE THE HAND OF GOD IN EVERY TRIAL  
YIELD TO GOD AND DON'T MURMUR OR GET BITTER  
REALISE THAT ALL THINGS WORK FOR GOOD, EVEN THE TRIALS  
AND HARD TIMES (II COR. 4:17).

## Lesson 4 Self-evaluation and Growth Factors

### SELF-EVALUATION – 1 Sam.16 : 7

As believers we need to be real with ourselves, for God knows us through and through and is not fooled. More so for leaders it is important to be honest with one's self to aid your personal development. In order to achieve progress a leader needs to assess himself and be a self-aware person. A leader needs to know his strengths and weaknesses.

### AREAS FOR SPIRITUAL CHECK-UP

If we want to be effective for God we need to grow in the following five areas of life:-

#### **Self-awareness** – I Thes. 5: 23- 24

God wants us to be real people. Being aware of how we operate and present ourselves to others. If we don't pay attention we may create and build up an unreal shell in which we live and lose touch with reality around us. The result is that we live with a mask of pretence.

God desires we are honest with ourselves and with Him. He wants us all to think of ourselves as He does: not too highly (Rom.12: 3), but with sober judgement.

Learn how to live with imperfections, allowing God to help and improve you, even as you press on towards perfection (Phil. 3:12- 14), depending on His strength and grace (II Cor.12: 9).

Without becoming self-centered it's important we assess ourselves from time to time, by asking such questions as :-

How do I function?

What are my strengths and weaknesses?

What is my attitude towards people or activities?

#### **Self-discipline** – II Tim.1: 7

In order to reach our potential in God we need to develop a disciplined life, something that is achieved in the power of the Holy Spirit. Self-control is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal.5: 23). Only through the discipline of life can we achieve what God wants us to achieve for Him.

Our lives can be compared with a car battery. A car battery consists of lots of little cells which hold all the acid fluid. If one of these cells gets damaged the battery will be weakened, but if a few of them are damaged the battery will be useless. The whole power output of the battery depends on each cell inter-relating functionally. In our lives it is the same way; we can think of our lives as having small compartments like finance, home life, relationships, time, job, gifting, emotions, learning, habits, etc. Over lives need to be gathered together in all these areas in order for them to function effectively. If these are bits in our lives that do not function in the way they

should and do not relate as they should, then its effectiveness will be wiped out. Some bits may be good, but the bad bits will spoil the lot. E.g. we will never be able to minister effectively to other people, if our emotions are not gathered together and discipline is lacking.

### **Spiritual maturity** – Eph.4: 11-16

God desires that His people grow into maturity in Him and become more Christ-like. Yet this is a process and does take time (II Cor.3: 18). Ask yourself the following questions to assess your spiritual growth?

Have I grown:

- in my knowledge of Scripture?
- in my spiritual understanding?
- in the development of gifts?
- in the eyes of others?
- in over-coming of difficulties?
- in handling circumstances well?
- in coping with pressure?
- in relationship with others?

### **Attainment** – Phil.3: 13-14

Accomplishment is a good source of motivation. Yet the Lord wants us to be motivated by love for Him and a desire to obey His will. In order to grow it's important to evaluate our level of achievement in our: a) relationships and b) ministry.

Thus we need to ask ourselves:-

Do I achieve whatever I set out to achieve?

If God gives you something to do, do you finish it?

What has hindered your achievement:

Lack of: a) motivation; b) clear goals; c) opportunity; d)training; e)support?

### **Impressions/Presentation** – Heb. 13: 20- 21

We all create an image in the minds/ eyes of other people by the way we present ourselves. We need to discern how well we relate to other people by way we present ourselves. We need to estimate how we relate to other people in terms of what effect they have on us and we on them. The following questions will help us in doing this:

Is your image to others positive? Does it help your work for God?

Have you ever considered what image you do project on others and what you want to project?

Do your manner, cleanliness, personal hygiene bring glory of God?

What do you communicate to others by your body language? Confidence/ timidity, etc.?

What do your relationships communicate about you? What sort of people do surround you? Do you rub off on them or they on you?

## **B. GROWTH FACTORS :-**

Having evaluated ourselves and taken stock we realise the need to grow up more! II Pet.3: 18. Especially for a Christian leader, spiritual growth is of utmost importance in order to be fruitful for God, especially in the area of:

Character – Who am I?

This involves the development of personality, identity, integrity and morality.

Capability – What can I do?

Involves the development of gifts and talents.

Understanding – What do I know?

This is the development of intellectual capacity, insight, sensitivity and perception.

Relationships – How do I relate?

Regards to capacity to integrate with other human beings on formal and personal levels.

Just note how these four questions relate to each other. Who you are will determine what you can do, what you can know and to whom you relate.

Maturity in God is keeping our lives on a level plane, even when turbulence or trouble comes. We need to be able to stay level and stable in any situation and so cope with trouble, overcoming it by adjusting our lives in the appropriate way.

**The process of our development and growth can be aided by the following growth factors:**

1) **Instruction** - Prov. 22: 6

It's of utmost importance to apply the Word of God to ourselves in order to get to know God and be instructed in His ways. II Tim. 2: 15. Any leader needs to come to God constantly and to His Word to keep his mind sharp, active and useful to Him.

**Inspiration** - I Cor. 4: 15- 16

Without exactly carbon-copying another person, great stimulation to spiritual growth is found in a person who is setting an example of living a life in Christ that is worth imitating.

3) **Adversity** - I Thes. 5: 18

Know God in control and therefore allow circumstances to teach us its lessons. Most important is our reaction to them and keeping the right attitudes.

Pressure will also demonstrate one's character strengths and weaknesses.

Furthermore, it will develop our ability to preserve in faith through all circumstances.

**Experience** - Phil. 4:12- 13

Whatever the circumstance or situation, we need to be content, put our confidence in God and trust in Him. Experience is a great teacher, provided we are open to its lessons. It will develop practical wisdom. It will also polish our character and change us.

**Challenge-** Phil. 3: 13-14

Challenge and change should never pose a threat to us, neither should it disturb our security. As we discern the movements of God by His Spirit, we should be open to the changes He wants to bring in. He is our true security and therefore, even in the midst of change and challenge, responding spirit-led to new challenges, we can rest in Him. Challenges should cause us to be creative, fresh and more fruitful for God.

**Relationships** - 1 John 4: 19- 20

As believers, we're not called to be "lone-riders", but we should learn how to relate to others. You may meet all kinds and sorts of people, and this will teach you how to handle them, it will test your reactions to a whole range of attitudes, and it will also expose your own inner attitudes.

## **Lesson 5 Characteristics of a Leader**

### **Introduction:**

In Christian leadership it is not just gifts, talents and abilities that make a leader. What is needed is Christ-like character. Leaders need strong, godly characters in order to withstand the various trials, persecutions and temptations that will inevitably come their way. To have the character of Jesus does not come automatically. God desires to build this in our lives. Through His Word, His Holy Spirit, people and circumstances God seeks to develop in us leadership qualities and character. Romans 5: 3- 5.

Character deals with who we are, i.e. our mental, emotional and moral qualities. Character includes all the negative and positive qualities in a person's life i.e. our thoughts, values, attitudes, feelings, motives, morals and what comes out when we are under pressure.

Since character is build and developed, we need to be aware of that which we receive as input in our lives. Leaders need to only feed on the right things (Phil 4: 8- 9), and only act in a godly way in response to situations of life they encounter.

### **The Fruit of the Spirit**

What the Holy Spirit seeks to develop in our lives is the character of Jesus through the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5: 22- 23). Jesus exhibited all the fruit of the Spirit and as we are to imitate Him, we need to yield our lives to the working of His Spirit. (II Cor. 3: 18; Rom. 8: 29).

#### **A good Christian leader will therefore:**

- love God and people, being motivated by love (Matt. 22: 37- 39; I Cor. 13)
- be filled with joy which arises out of your relationship with God. (John 15: 10-11)
- allow God's peace to rule in your heart as we are always following and obeying the Lord (Col. 3:15; Is. 48: 18)
- be patient, waiting for God's time, steadfast and long suffering with others (I Tim. 1:16)
- be kind in terms of respecting and understanding others (Rom. 2: 4)
- protray goodness through benevolence and generosity towards others (Gal. 6: 9- 10)
- have faith in God and be faithful, loyal, trustworthy and reliable (Luke 19: 17)
- depend on God in humility and be gentle, considerate towards others, forbearing in love (Eph. 4: 2)
- be self-controlled, self-restrained, disciplined, keeping fleshly impulses under control (Prov. 25 : 28)

#### **OTHER IMPORTANT CHARACTER QUALITIES OF A LEADER:**

(P.S. The qualities of being a shepherd and a servant will be discussed in the following chapters)

Leaders should be stable, firm, dependable. They are to be a pillar, to be strong – spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically – having solid deep and well laid spiritual foundations which are based on the Word of God and Jesus and therefore cannot be shaken. Leaders are people whose example others can follow.

Leaders need to be good listeners, both to God and to others. Listening is not just hearing, but understanding what is being communicated.

Leaders need to forgive always! Whatever people may say, or however they hurt you, forgive from your heart without harbouring grudges or hurts. (Eph.4: 31- 32).

Leaders must be honest, sincere and trustworthy. Having one way of life and behaviour towards everybody. Hating hypocrisy by practicing what you preach. Being open about yourself to others, never pretending, because its ultimately God's grace that qualifies one as a leader.

Leaders are to be bold, strong and courageous and inspiring these qualities in those they lead. (Joshua 1: 9; Prov. 28: 1). A leader should go first and go ahead of his people, settling the pace, so they can follow.

Leaders need to be responsible. They should know the buck stops with them.



Leaders need to be concerned and compassionate for those they lead. Able to empathise with those to whom they minister.

Leaders should maintain a teachable spirit. Even a leader doesn't know it all, thus he needs to be open to learn, flexible and willing to change.

Leaders should be diligent and zealous. Hard working, burning zeal for God and His Kingdom. Able to carry out decisions.

Leaders must be willing to sacrifice. Willing to put the interest of others before themselves. Being committed to his people at any cost, desiring to serve them.

Leaders should have a heart of unity, this will secure God's blessings (Psalm 133), as the people are of one heart and mind, great things can be achieved through unity.

Leaders need to be pure and holy.

Leaders need to be courteous, warm and approachable. Should have a sincere interest in the welfare of others.

Leaders should have a clear focus or vision, living and working with focus and strategy, having insight in spiritual things, hearing God's voice and knowing God's will, able to see things ahead of time – foresight and insight, thereby taking proper action. Filled with hope and optimism.

Leaders are to be wise, able to judge between right and wrong, good and evil.

Leaders must live disciplined lives. Living with Biblical priorities (God first, then family, followed by ministry and work and finally society at large). Proper food and sleep habits. Efficient time use, punctual. Maintain his finance well (not over-spending or borrowing!)—example in tithing and giving. Example in devotional life, prayer, worship and words.

Leaders should be able to teach those they lead, instructing them in God's way and principles. (1 Tim. 2:15).

Leaders should be submissive to God and those over them.

Leaders should be experienced, both in life in general as well as life in Christ.

## **Lesson 6 Following the Great Shepherd**

Thought: SO SHEPHERD, SO SHEEP!

Jesus is our perfect example.

The Bible calls Jesus: - The Good Shepherd (John 10: 11, 14)

The Great Shepherd (Heb. 13: 20)

The Chief Shepherd (I Pet. 5: 4)

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect example of a true shepherd. He was prepared to come and be a sacrificial Lamb, that we might be accepted by God. (John 1: 29). This shows us the purity of His motives which should be an example to us! Jesus owns His sheep (all born again believers), leading them and taking care of them. (Rev.7:17; I Pet. 2: 25). The Lord provides for His people directly and also through His chosen leaders.

Spiritual leaders are therefore all under-shepherds with delegated authority, being accountable to the Chief Shepherd (Heb.13: 17). As such leaders need to pattern their lives according to the character and likeness of Christ Jesus Himself. That's why God appoints leaders/ shepherds, choosing them after His Own Father's heart. (Acts 20: 28). This in order that they may shepherd the harassed and helpless, multitudes/ sheep in distress (Matt.9: 35-38). In our care for people we should imitate and be like the Good Shepherd.

### **What is a Shepherd ?**

In the Old Testament the word `raah' (Hebrew) is used. Meaning: to feed (Sheep), pastor, shepherd (Ps. 23: 1).

In the New Testament the word. `poimen' (Greek) is used, which means to shepherd, to guide, to tend as a shepherd (to rule, to feed). (John 10: 11-16; John 21: 16; I Pet. 5: 2).

A shepherd is a spiritual guide, who cares for, guides, protects and feeds God's people. In other words shepherding is building up God's people in the way of the Lord.

Strictly speaking, there are two aspects to the shepherding ministry:

the feeding, tendering and caring aspect

the leading and ruling aspect

True shepherding involves a balance in these two aspects and connected attitudes in the under-shepherd's dealing with the sheep.

## **FUNCTIONING AS A SHEPHERD (I Pet. 5: 2-4)**

### **In order to motivate and build up his people, a shepherd/ leader should:**

#### **Know and be known of the sheep** (John 10: 3,14, 27)

"He knows them by name", speaks of personal relationship, ability to relate, interested in his people, knowing their needs, aware of their spiritual conditions, what God is doing in their lives. Don't just see the sheep as a crowd – a mass of people, but take time for every individual. Being known of the sheep indicates their trust and confidence in him, and therefore willingness to follow him, because they see Christ's character in him and God's wisdom.

#### **Lead the Sheep (by example)** (John 10: 3b - 4b; I Pet. 5: 3)

A true shepherd does not drive the sheep, but he goes before them and then sheep follow him. He leads by example. In all aspects concerning our walk with God the good shepherd will apply them first in his own life and practice them himself, and after that encourages the sheep to follow (I Cor. 11: 1). As such he must always be giving direction. (Heb. 13:7). For example, if he wants his people to pray, fast, tithe, etc., then he must be himself a man of prayer, one who fasts and gives his tithes first. In this way, the shepherd leads his people by guiding them and providing oversight by example.

#### **Feed the Sheep** (John 21: 15- 17)

As a shepherd needs to provide for his sheep, in the same way a leader must be able to feed God' people the Word of God. He needs to teach and instruct them in God's ways and minister the Word of God that the people will be nourished, strengthened and build up. He should encourage people to read and obey God's Word by doing so himself first. The leader needs to stay ahead of his people doing so by studying in and feeding on the Word of God constantly. When the sheep are rightly fed with God's Word they will mature, become more like Jesus, and be fruitful for God.

Furthermore, the leader needs to be discerning what diet of teaching people need, discerning their growth level and feeding them appropriately. Knowing who to give milk to and who to feed meat (I Pet. 2: 2; Hebr. 5: 13-14). New believers need to be established in the most important and basic principles, breaking down God's word for him so they can grasp it. Don't overfeed them with meat (John 16: 12), that's for the maturing ones. Therefore people must be given a balanced diet of practical, devotional, inspirational and instructional food in order to enable proper growth.

#### **Heed the Sheep** (Heb. 13: 17; John 10: 10)

Leaders need to understand the signs of the times and always be watchful for enemy attack. The devil still roars like a lion (I Pet. 5: 8), and that's why leaders need to be a spiritual covering for their flock, protecting those who don't know how to protect themselves by praying and interceding for them. (Acts 20: 28). For this reason leaders need to always pray

for their people, guarding the flock from external attacks and protecting them (like temptations, wrong teachings, seductions). Yet shepherds need to also heed for internal diseases, watching for signs of spiritual lethargy, lack of joy, wrong attitudes, besetting sins, unbelief, resentments, backsliding, etc. With love and care, in wisdom and with patience, yet with courage and authority, God's Word needs to be brought to them in order to exhort, correct, rebuke or discipline them (II Tim 3:16).

#### **OTHER ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED IN SHEPHERDING:**

Willingness to lay down his life (John 10: 15)

A shepherd must have a deep commitment and loyalty to his sheep. Caring for them in times of need (John 10: 13). Pouring out one's life and strength (John 10: 11; Mark 10: 45). Visiting their homes, serving them out of concern for their welfare. Willing to sacrifice (I John 3: 16)

Minister in the power of the Holy Spirit to a variety of need: (Ezek. 34: 11-16)

seek and restore the lost - through gentle correction and prayer (Gal. 6:1; Rom. 15: 1)

bind up the crippled/broken hearted/ hurting ones - through loving counsel and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Is. 61: 1)

heal the sick – through prayer and loving concern (Jas.5:14- 15)

strengthen the weak in spirit – through encouragement and fellowship (I Thess. 5:14)

## **CALLED TO SERVE: SERVANTHOOD and its implications**

**Thought:** Leadership is not the end of servanthood – it is beginning of even greater servanthood.

### **Introduction**

A servant is a person who is not his own master – he serves another master. Put another way, a servant is a person who lives without the right to fulfil his personal will: he exists to do the will of his master. In fact, a true servant has no rights of his own that he can demand.

Servants of God are those who have dethroned themselves and everything else in their life and experience, and enthroned Jesus and made Him Lord of all their life.(Gal. 2: 20). This means they put Jesus first in everything and they do not serve riches, power, possessions, or anything else that is contrary to God’s will (Mathew 6:24). Instead of putting God first in everything, most Christians with-hold something. They may say with their lips that ‘Jesus is Lord’, but they do as they please in many areas of life. When Jesus is truly Lord of our lives, we will never say ‘no’ to Him when He asks us to do something for Him, no matter how costly.

“So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secret things of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” (I Cor. 4: 1-2).

In the Kingdom of God, the leaders are not the lords of those who follow them, because everybody in that Kingdom has only one Lord: Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 8: 6). In God’s Kingdom, those who lead other people are the servants of those people. In fact, Christian leaders should set the example of being a servant of God, by serving Him and the people for whom they are responsible, wholeheartedly. God’s leaders should be able to say to those who follow them, ‘Imitate me’, because they are imitating Christ and walking as He did (1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 John 2:6). Jesus said,

“Let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and him who is the chief and leader as one who serves”. (Luke 22:26)

### **Who Do We Serve?**

The truth is that everybody serves a master, either the devil or God (Mathew 6:24; John 8:34-36; John 15:19; Romans 6:6-22; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 John 4: 4-6); there is no middle ground. We are either under the dominion of sin and the devil, or we have been ransomed by Jesus Christ and we are now His servants (Galatians 1:10). There is no possible way that we can pay back the Lord Jesus Christ for what He has done for us, therefore, our only right response is to serve God with all our heart.

In today’s society we rarely, if ever, think of ourselves as serving anybody. However, the majority of people put themselves first in most, if not everything, they do. They are, therefore, in grave danger of serving {or even becoming slaves of} their own selfish desires.

Whatever takes up most of our time and energy and that to which we have given our heart – it is these things we really serve! If these things are in line with God’s will, they are okay, but if not, we are allowing other things or people to be lord, at least in an area of our lives. We need to put God first in everything and have accomplishing His will as the number one priority of our lives (1 Peter 2: 21; Philippians 2: 5-8).

As leaders, we need to be servants of God; we need to do the will of our Master, Jesus Christ; and we need to give ourselves humbly in service to the needs of others. When we see ourselves as nothing but God’s servants, there is very little that can get in the way of our doing God’s will and of our being channels of the Holy Spirit. When we become something in our own eyes, we stop being just servants of God’s will and we start doing what we think is right. The things we decide to do may be good ideas, but the power of the Holy Spirit will not flow and enable these things, because they are not the will of God. The Holy Spirit only moves in power when the will of God is being carried out (Galatians 2:20).



“Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord”. (Joshua 24:14-15).

### **Jesus Our Example of Servanthood**

Slavery was basic to the ruling Roman society at the time of Jesus. Slaves were well treated generally, but they were non-persons. The Greeks and the Jewish authorities saw slavery as demeaning and shameful. The Greeks felt it was their life’s aim to fully achieve their potential. Being forced to subject their will or surrender their time and effort for another was unthinkable. The Jewish authorities thought of themselves as those chosen by God to rule. They were, therefore, not there to serve other people, but to be served as they served God. It was into this context that Jesus spoke His word about servanthood.

Jesus said,

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10: 45)

We can learn what servanthood and humility really are from Jesus and by following His example (John 13:1-17; Philippians 2: 5-11). For Jesus, being nothing in Himself was a way of life. Servanthood became a way of life for Him long before He saw the cross. He really was someone, but He made Himself nothing. Jesus called Himself the servant of all and yet He was and is, the name above all names, who knew the ways of God’s power in an immediate and personal sense. He brought life out of death more than once during His earthly ministry; when He touched men they were made well; when He spoke, demons trembled and fled.

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus; Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:5-8).

### **True Servanthood is Powerful**

Jesus was the ultimate example of humility and servanthood and yet He was the most powerful man who ever lived. The truth is though, that Jesus only had the same power available to Him as we have to us – the Holy Spirit. Jesus understood that the Holy Spirit only moved in power when God the Father released Him to do so. Therefore, Jesus submitted His life totally to the will of God the Father and He did nothing but the will of God. This is true servanthood (John 5:19). This gave Jesus His authority and power, because He knew that when He did as His Father wanted, the Holy Spirit would act in power on His behalf. Jesus became, therefore, a channel for the releasing of God’s will. Whenever He saw the Father doing something, He knew that He could do it on earth in the power of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus spoke, it was as if the Father spoke and when He acted, it was as if the Father were acting.

### **We Can Live the Same Way**

We are called to follow the example of Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Peter 2: 21; 1 John 2: 6). If we, as born-again, Spirit-filled Christians, discover the will of God and become its servant, God will release the power of his Holy Spirit to enable His will to be done. Nothing will be impossible, because nothing is impossible to God (Luke 1:37; Luke 18:27). To do this, we need to live lives that are totally submitted to the will of God; then we too will be channels through which God can bring about His will. God will show us what to do if we make ourselves available to Him.

We can see the secret of God’s power in the experience of Jesus. We receive the Spirit of God only by measure: the Father is just as willing to give us the Spirit, but the limitations of our own hearts determine the measure of the Holy Spirit in us. We are so full of garbage and self-concern that there is no room for the Spirit in great measure. Hurts, pride, selfishness and rebellion inhibit our hearts and prevent the Holy Spirit from having room to work within us. The truth is that there were

no inhabitants of darkness within the heart of Jesus. There was room for God to pour in the Spirit without measure (John 3:34).

Most Christians do not give God enough room in their lives and they are not servants of the will of God. These two factors are the main reasons for the power failure in the church today. We can not serve God in the way that He asks us to in our strength – we need to discover God’s will and then step out in faith, knowing that God’s power will enable His will to be done.

We should never do things just because they seem good at the time. We should regard ourselves as nothing but God’s servants, having no rights and making no demands. If we do this, there will be nothing to stand in the way of the power of God being released in order to achieve God’s will.

### **No Striving**

There is no striving when you are living as a true servant of God. You can rest in God if you know that He will take care of all the details of your life as you do His will (Matthew 6:25-34; Hebrews 4:1-11; 2 Peter 1:3). Life becomes simple; God speaks, we obey, it happens. Of course, there is a cost to such a life as can be evidenced in the life of Jesus, but for the Christian, there is no other way to live, if we want to be really effective for God. Our flesh (i.e. body and soul) also battles against such a way of life, because it is unable, in itself, to live a life of faith. We need to discipline our lives and allow God to renew our minds in order to attain this quality of walk with God. Jesus said,

“Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:29-30).

### **Signs That We Are Acting as a Servant of God**

A Hebrew slave was to be released after 6 years, unless at that time, he chose to remain with his master’s family. If he did wish to remain, his ear was pierced with an awl in the sight of the judges of a city as a sign that he was a servant for life [Exodus 21:2-6; Deuteronomy 15:12-18]. As Christians, our lives should be a sign to others that we are servants of Jesus Christ.

Some of the signs that we are acting as servants include:

We will be seeking first the Kingdom of God [Matthew 6:33].

We will be a servant of all [Matthew 20:26-28].

We will look to our Master to reward us [Matthew 25:21].

We will be serving others and, in doing so, be serving the Lord Jesus Christ [Matt. 25:31-40].

We will deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow our Master, Jesus [Luke 9:23].

We will be following the example of Jesus and so living an unselfish life, serving rather than being waited upon [Luke 22:27].

We will give generously, because we know it is more blessed to give than to receive [Acts 20:35].

We will be faithful when entrusted with something [1 Corinthians 4:2].

We will carry the burdens of others [Galatians 6:2].

We will be humble, gentle, patient, and we will bear with other people in love [Ephesians 4:2; 1 John 3:11-24].

We will work at everything wholeheartedly, because we always work for the Lord and not for men [Colossians 3:23-24; Ephesians 6:6-8].

We will look to the interests of others, as well as our own interests [Philippians 2:4].

We will want to please our Lord in all we do [2 Timothy 2:4].

### **A Servant is Available**

As leaders, we have been made responsible by God for those we lead. This means that we must be available to those people at all times – even when it is inconvenient! Everything we do should be service to the Lord [Ephesians 6:6-8] and so we always need to be ready to take advantage of every opportunity of service that presents to us [Luke 12:35-48; Matthew 24:45-51; Matthew 25:31-46].

We need to be available to hear objectively what other people have to say without preconceived ideas or prejudice. This may not always be easy, but giving careful attention to what other people are saying and hearing them out is so important. Once we have heard the person, we must never give them just any old answer in order to get them off our backs; we need to bring God into the situation and give them His answer.

We need to have the right attitude to people who interrupt us. We may be in the middle of some task and yet, if there is a need to be met and you know it is God's time for it to be met, then stop and meet the need. Jesus did this time and time again [Mark 5:21-43; Luke 13:10-6; Matthew 15:21-28]. He would be doing one thing and people would ask Him to do something else in the middle of what He was doing. He did not rebuke these people, but did as they asked and then He got on with the task He originally was doing. Often, what we consider are interruptions, are really times that God wants to use to break into our routines, so that we can minister to someone's need. We need to be available to God 100% of the time and we need to do things in His way and in His time, not in ours – He knows best!

We need to be available to reassure those we serve as leaders. Our words of comfort and reassurance can mean a lot to those we lead. In fact, such words of encouragement, when people are frustrated or disillusioned, are often the means by which a person is able to continue in their service of God.

Leaders must not always lead from a distance or by directives only; they need to be available to their people. Leaders, at times, need to be with their people. They need to understand their people and their needs and they will never do this from an ivory tower into which no-one else is allowed. Some tips to help you in this area include:

Pastors should stay talking after their services, keeping an eye out for those who obviously want to talk, but are too shy to come forward.

Those we lead should know that we have an open-door policy towards anyone with a real need [provided it is appropriate for us to handle]. Obviously, it is wrong to get overburdened by people's problems personally, if we have delegated the responsibility in that area to another person.

Leaders should make regular visits to those they lead, visiting them in their work situations, or socially interacting with them in places like their homes, so that people have access to those they lead in a more relaxed environment.

If you discover a need and you are too busy to handle it at the time, take a note of it and make sure you do not forget to do something about it.

Leaders should always be looking for an opportunity to give a word of encouragement or a word in season [Proverbs 15: 23 ] to those they lead.

Leaders should be people who will go the extra mile with those who need it. They need to be willing to sacrifice time and energy for those they lead and for others that come to them. In fact, leaders should set the example of doing more than is expected of them [Matthew 5:40-42].

In leadership, we often cannot choose who we are to serve. We need to be people who are willing, as Jesus was, to meet the needs of all those who come to us. Leaders must never just make themselves available to those they favour. It is easy to surround ourselves with people who are easy to be with and people who affirm our ministry. Jesus did not do this and neither should we. Like Jesus, we should seek to do the will of God only. This may mean exhaustive hours ministering to the needs of the unlovely and the hurting, but a servant of God will not mind doing this. We should pattern our life after Jesus.

### **Meeting the Needs of Others Right Where They Are At**

Good servants know the needs of those they serve and how to meet those needs; they even try to anticipate the needs of those they serve, so that they can be ready and prepared to meet those needs. Christian leaders have got to learn what the appropriate response is to a situation and they have got to learn when to minister this response. This may mean reaching out and touching those to whom

this is appropriate; hugging another; weeping or laughing with another; or ministering to another by the laying on of hands etc.

### **Willingness to Do the Menial**

Leaders must never be too proud to get stuck in and do the little jobs that need to be done. Of course, leaders should not have to do this type of job all the time [if they do, they should learn the art of delegation], but they should be willing to do it, if necessary. If leaders [and especially those aspiring to leadership] can do these menial jobs, they may find that other people will be willing to serve this ministry later in life. No task should ever be regarded as too menial for God's leaders to lower themselves to, if they are true servants of God.

Some leaders are called to serve the Word and others are called to serve the tables [Acts 6:1-7]. When each part of the body of Christ does its bit, serving God in the way He asks them to, no matter how menial the task, then we today will see what the early church saw: "So the Word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly." [Acts 6:7].

### **Serving Those Over Us**

Every Christian is called to serve Jesus Christ, who is the head of His body, the church [Ephesians 5:23]. Christian leaders need to set the example in this area. They must also be committed to serve those who are over them in leadership. Jesus Christ is in charge of His church; He raises up and pulls down as He sees fit. (Ps. 75: 6- 7). Leaders need to submit to God and to His delegated authority. It is no good asking people to respond to our leadership, if we in turn, are not responding to those who are in leadership over us. Leaders need to be able to set the example of following leadership.

### **Serving With the Right Motivation**

The most effective Christian leaders are those who want to serve God because they know Him and love Him. Such leaders do not serve for money, position, reputation, power, fame or any other selfish motivation. These leaders are also able to put in far more effort, take on board far more pressure, and sacrifice far more, than those who work in God's church for any other reason. These leaders are not out to prove themselves and, therefore, they are secure, resting in their relationship with God.

### **Serving With Joy**

We are called to serve with joy, because God does not want service grudgingly given. He wants us to serve Him wholeheartedly. If we can serve God with joy, it helps to keep us sane, to keep our motivation right, to maintain the peace of God ruling in our hearts as it should [Philippians 4:4-7; Colossians 3:15-17]; and it helps us to keep the right attitude of heart as we serve. True servants of God realise that the source of their joy is servicing God and other people, rather than serving themselves and their own selfish desires. To be mostly concerned with attaining your own joy or happiness is contrary to having a servant heart. "Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord." (Romans 12:11]

### **The Gifts of Service**

The gifts of the Spirit are gifts of service to the body of Christ [1 Corinthians 12:4-11]. These gifts are not given to exalt anybody or to give us power for our own sake; they are given that we, as God's servants, might be enabled or empowered to serve the body of Christ, in whatever way is necessary. In fact, leaders in particular have a responsibility to administer these gifts faithfully, so that the body of Christ is built up and the Kingdom of God is extended.

"Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever Amen".

(1 Peter 4:10-11]

### **Servants are Raised Up by God**

If we take the last place and serve God and others first, and if we have no rights that we demand, God has promised to lift us up to the best possible place for ourselves [Matthew 20:25-28; Matthew 23:11-12; Mark 9:35; Mark 10: 43-44]. We need to humble ourselves before God [1 Peter 5:6]. Humility is not groveling about in the dust. It is living as Jesus did, being a servant, submitting Himself to the will of God and doing only it [Luke 14:11]. Jesus was no weak worm, He was the most powerful man who ever lived.

Many leaders experience failure in their ministry, because they try and do things in their own way and in their own strength. God needs to break such self-reliance and independence so that instead, He is left with a leader who serves His will and who, therefore, operates in the power of the Holy Spirit. This process of humbling enables God rightly to receive the glory for any success a leader may have in ministry. Self-dependence is really pride, selfishness and self-confidence and this is contrary to what God requires of His people. In fact, God hates pride and arrogance [Proverbs 8:13] and He opposes the proud [1 Peter 5:5]. He desires us to walk humbly before Him [Micah 6:8].

We need to see ourselves as God sees us - both as servants and sons at the same time. We, in ourselves, are nothing, and but for the grace of God, we would still be nothing. We owe everything we are and have to Him. We need to entrust our lives to our faithful God. Jesus said,

“I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me”.  
[John 12:24-26].



## HOW TO SERVE LIKE JESUS?

“Behold! My Servant!”

Father God presents Jesus Christ several times like this in the prophetic Scriptures [Is. 42:1; 52:13; Zech. 3:8]. Jesus is God’s perfect Model for our service. To be like Him is the Father’s greatest desire concerning each of us.

God works all things together towards that good purpose of conforming us to the image of His Son [Rom. 8:28-29]. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is to transform us into that image [2 Cor. 3:18]. The challenge of apostle Paul was, “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” [1 Cor. 11:1]. The purpose of the five-fold ministry in the Church is to grow very Christian “to the stature of the fullness of Christ” [Eph. 4:11-13]. We dare not settle down for anything less than the model presented by Christ. He said, “Follow Me!” As we follow Him, He makes and moulds us to be servants after God’s heart, God’s desire.

We must study and meditate the four gospels frequently. It is there we trace the footsteps of the Master. He took “the form of a servant” and demonstrated for us how to serve people. It’s a life-time study but we consider here five of His outstanding characteristics as a Servant.

### **His love for individuals.**

No one was perhaps busier than Jesus in His times. His schedule was quite tight and the time very short. His fame spread out fast and multitudes were after Him. But His love for individuals remained the same. He never failed to realise the worth of each man and each woman. Take for example the John’s Gospel. In the first chapter we see Him making personal contracts with Peter, Philip and Nathanael. He makes specific promises to Nathanael. In chapter two the Lord spends time with the servants at a wedding. He is found in patient and long conversation with Nicodemus in the third chapter, though it was night, the resting time. There was no food and amidst journey tiredness He was after winning the soul of that Samaritan woman, in chapter four. The next chapter opens up with the Lord ministering to a helpless paralytic. Study the other chapters yourself. Even on the cross He was winning a person for Paradise!

To emphasize the importance and value of each individual, Jesus gave three parables one after the other [Luke 15]. The shepherd loses one of the hundred sheep. He does not stay back saying it is after all one that is lost. When he finds the lost sheep he “disturbs” everyone to rejoice with him. The woman loses one of her ten silver coins. She sweeps the whole house to find it. When she finds it she calls all her friends to share her excitement and joy. Then comes the father whose younger son gets lost. What a joy when the boy comes back. Even if the elder son refuses to come in, the celebration goes on! The preciousness of each lost soul! For the shepherd the percentage of loss was just one, for the woman it was ten and for the father it was fifty. That’s immaterial. Each person is important. The 99 sheep in fact should not satisfy and stop us from going after the one that is lost. We will accomplish little in our ministry until we understand the value of individuals. The news of one repentant sinner makes angels dance! Are we so excited?

A large crowd followed Jesus as He passed through Jericho [Luke 19]. There was a seeker in that city. He had all the money he wanted but no peace and joy. Forgetting his position as a chief tax collector, he climbed up a tree to see Jesus. Before he saw Jesus, Jesus saw him. He wanted to just see Jesus but Jesus wanted to stay with him. Greatest surprise! In the midst of a crowded programme Jesus took time to stay with Zacchaeus. What love for the seekers! Here is a definition of a servant. One who goes to seek and to save that which is lost! [Luke 19:10].

We have seekers all around us and of all walks of life. Man is in continuous search, not knowing that God has already revealed Himself. Let’s give that Good News to everyone we meet. Their position in society does not change or diminish people’s search for true peace and joy. The prison officer at Philippi was there to punish and change the prisoners. But he was not changed himself. He fell at the feet of the preacher prisoners crying, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” [Acts 16:30]. In the same chapter we meet a business woman. Sitting on the river-bed she listened to the open-air preachers and was saved. Think, she was the first European believer!

Let's learn to love and value each person. That's the first step in becoming a Christ-like servant.

### **His concern for the unreached.**

“And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice” [John 10:16]. This concern for the “other sheep” constantly kept our Lord on the move. He refused to stay at one place. Even success in ministry in one locality did not dim His vision for the regions beyond. When the people at Capernaum witnessed great miracles of healing and deliverance from demon-possession, they “tried to keep Him from leaving them”. But He said to them, “I must preach the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.” [Luke 4:42-43].

While His disciples had gone away to buy food, Jesus was conversing with a woman of Samaria about eternal life. With enthusiasm and excitement she brought a whole lot of people from her city to hear Jesus. As they almost every month a new book rolls off the press on the book of Revelation. But there is very little practical comment on verse nine of chapter seven. What are we to do *today* so that innumerable multitudes “of all nations, tribes, people, and tongues” would stand before the Lamb in eternity worshipping Him? This verse in the last book of the Bible deserves our most serious attention and action. Let's not forget the more than 2,000 languages without the Bible. Jesus commenced outreach evangelism and the early church continued faithfully following His footsteps. [Acts 1:1-2]. Shall we model our ministries also after the same pattern and complete this glorious task of reaching everyone who is unreached?

### **His spirit of sacrifice.**

Servanthood and sacrifice were synonymous to Jesus. He could not think of one without the other. Dare we? “I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep” [John 10:11]. There's no other way to serve and save the sheep. Christian ministry is not a forced labour but a friendly service which involves and includes sacrifice. Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for his friends” [John 15:13]. Ministry that costs nothing accomplishes nothing.

### **There are at least three things we must sacrifice if we are to do a service that pleases God and blesses people.**

**ur prestige.** “Being in the form of God, He did not consider it a robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant” [Phil. 2:6-7]. We cannot serve people until and unless we come down from our so called prestige and position to identify and intermingle with them. The sinless Saviour became the Friend of Sinners. Every Christian must earn this nickname. Preaching from a pulpit is not superior to distributing tracts in street corners. Writing books is not higher than door-to-door outreach. Jesus told His disciples, “Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” [John 4:35]. The team had a rich harvest during their two day stay over there [vv. 39-41]. We must learn to look beyond. We should not keep on evangelising the evangelized. There are millions and millions sitting in darkness and midnight gloom. They are awaiting their first opportunity to hear the gospel.

With Baby Jesus in his arms, Simeon blessed God saying, “My eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles” [Luke 2:31-32]. Notice how the apostles applied a Messianic promise to themselves: “The Lord has commanded us: I have set you to be a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth” [Acts 13:47; Is. 49:6]. Untold millions are still untold and untold millions are outside the fold. Do we care? Paul was a fan of Jesus. He copied Him meticulously. He shared the concern of his Lord for the unsaved, unreached, unevangelized, unchurched. He wrote to the believers in Rome, “I have made it my aim to preach the gospel not where Christ was named,.....but as it is written: To whom He was not announced, they shall see; and those who have not heard shall understand” [Rom. 15:20-21].

“Do you know Jesus?” asks the minister. The tribal man answers, “He is not here, please try in the next village”. Dear brothers and sisters, who is responsible for this total ignorance of the rural masses in Africa and Asia? “How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?” [Rom. 10:14-15]. Let’s go. Let’s send.

Laying hands on a person’s head is not more dignified than washing his feet. We are suffering from distorted values in Christendom today. Any form of Christian service is worthy of highest honour. We must be ashamed only to commit sin.

Our pleasure. Jesus that day was so tired and hungry. But He was winning souls. His hunger was more for folks than for food. He told His disciples, “I have food to eat of which you do not know..... My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work” [John 4:32-34]. Prophet Amos pronounces woe on the lazy Zionists. They lie on the beds of ivory, stretch out on their couches, eat lambs from the flock and calves from the stall, chant to the sound of stringed instruments, invent for themselves musical instruments like David, drink wine from bowls and anoint themselves with the best ointments, but!, “But are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph!” [Amos 6:1, 4-6]. Joseph typifies those in bondage and slavery. Constrained by the love of God for these people we should come out of our seats of luxury and chambers of pleasures to save them. When 90 persons die every minute and most of them slide into a Christless eternity or hell, it is not too much for us to even sacrifice some of our legitimate pleasures. “Brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none...those who use this world as not misusing it” [1 Cor 7:29-31].

Our possessions. Jesus was rich but He became poor to make us rich. So also we must open up our purses and give away our money liberally so the poor may have the gospel. Jesus profusely appreciated the widow’s mites and Mary’s perfume, because both meant sacrifice. We must give until it affects us. As said, “we ask how much a man gives; Christ asks how much he keeps!” The Cross is the symbol of the greatest sacrifice in history. We hang it on our neck or use it as a tie-pin. Let’s not forget its true meaning.

### **His dependence on the Holy Spirit.**

In these days when so much of Christian activity is carried out by mere human strength and skill, we need to have a fresh look at Jesus to learn how He ministered. Luke, a doctor as well as a historian, explains the secret of Christ’s ministry, “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good” [Acts 10:38]. Jesus emptied Himself of all His own power and strength and received the power of the Spirit, thus giving us a pattern. “Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of Hosts” [Zech. 4:6]. The sooner we learn this truth the better.

Christ’s dependence on the Spirit was manifested by the fact that prayer was His top priority. He spent 40 days in fasting and prayer before His 40 months public ministry. He came out from the wilderness “in the power of the Spirit” [Luke 4:14]. Today this wilderness experience is substituted by many for an academic degree. No wonder we accomplish little. Even when He became very popular and great multitudes came to hear and to be healed by Him, Jesus “often withdrew into the wilderness and prayed” [Luke 5:15-16]. When the battery runs down the car becomes a push model. An hour a day alone with God is but a minimum (Matt. 26: 40).

Jesus commenced His ministry in prayer. He carried it on by prayer. He consummated it in prayer [In Gethsemane and at Golgotha]. He now continues praying [“He ever lives to make intercession”—Heb. 7:25]. Do we attempt to fulfill our ministry any other way? Prayer is an acknowledgement of our insufficiency. Prayer tells God we need Him and the power of His Spirit. As someone wrote, “The self-sufficient do not pray, the self-satisfied will not pray, the self-righteous cannot pray!”

### **His sense of urgency.**

“I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night comes when no one can work” [John 9:4]. We must be gripped and possessed by this spirit of Jesus. He had no time to waste. So much had to be accomplished in so short a time. He had just a little over three years for His public ministry. There was no panicking at His death. On the other hand He triumphantly declared, “It’s finished!” what a model!

We need rest but we can’t relax. **Not less than 150,000 persons die each day!!** Floods, earthquakes and other calamities claim thousands and thousands of lives. Some countries are closing the door but many others are opening the door for evangelism. This is a day of opportunity. The Lord of the Harvest is perhaps giving the Church the last chance to gather in the grains. If we delay, the harvest will waste. Let’s hurry up! The very reason for the delay in the Second Coming of Christ is that “the Lord is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” [2 Pet. 3:9]. Jesus said, “this gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world...and then the end will come” [Matt. 24:14].

Let’s not postpone to tomorrow what we can do today. Tomorrow is not ours. We do not know what will happen tomorrow [Prov. 24:1]. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” [2 Cor. 6:2]. Now to preach the gospel, to plant churches everywhere. To prepare a people ready for the Lord.

In Capernaum the Lord had a wonderful reception. But in Nazareth the people rejected Him. Nothing discouraged Him. He kept on going. He kept on preaching. He kept on spreading the message of the Kingdom. So should we “Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will be on the earth...In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which will prosper” [Eccl. 11:26].

Let’s give ourselves to non-stop evangelism until the last person is reached. We should not end our work until we witness to the ends of the earth or our life is ended, whichever comes first! Jesus “sat down” only after He finished His work. Let’s not sit until the job is done!

Consider the following Scriptures before you decide to truly be a radical, sincere, loyal and faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ:

David pondered over:

“What shall I render to the Lord for all His bounty to me?” (Psalm 116:12)

Jesus said to His disciples:

“If any man would come after me, (and be my disciple), let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.” (Mark 8:34-35).

If any one comes to me and does not hate (meaning love less and give secondary importance to) his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26-27).

Jesus challenged Peter:

“Do you have a love for Me called out of your heart by My preciousness to you, a devotional love that impels you to sacrifice yourself to Me?” (John 21:15b –Moffat).

Paul concluded following:

“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20)

“And Christ died for all, so that all those who live might live no longer to and for themselves, but to and for Him who died and was raised again for their sake.” (II Cor. 5:15).

Thus, in light of the above:

What is your true response?

And what is your deepest motive in knowing, loving, following and serving the Lord Jesus Christ?

# UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

What's all about? 'Covering is the protection given to those who are submitted to the appropriate authority of God'.

Starters:

God, who has all authority, provides maximum covering [Ps. 23:1]. For

example: His cloud – [Ex. 13:21; Ps 105:39; Numbers 12:15]

His wings – [Ps. 91:4; Matt. 23:37]

His angels – [Ps. 91:11; Matt. 18:10; 1 Cor. 11:10]

Obedience is basis of His government [1 Sam. 15:22] and lawlessness its opposite – e.g.

'everyone did what was right in his own eyes'. [Judges 21:25; Matt. 7:23; 24:12; 1 John 3:4]

God delegates his authority to men and institutions but it all comes ultimately from Him

[Rom 13:1-4; John 19:11 etc]

## **The scope of Authority in the government of God are in three spheres:**

### **Angelic**

- Rebellion - Isaiah 14
- Respect - Jude 9
- (angelic covering) - Psalm 91:11 and 1 Cor 11:10

- (b) **Relationships** - Eph. 5:21

### **Church**

- Shepherds - Heb. 13:17
- Elders - 1 Tim. 5:17
- Men/women - 1 Cor. 11:1

2.

### **Family**

- Husbands - Eph. 5:22
- Wives - 1 Peter 3:1
- Children - Eph. 6:1

### **Institutions**

1. **State** - Romans 13:11; Peter 2:13; Titus 3:1  
(limits: Matt. 22:21 and Acts 5:28-29)

2.

### **Work**

- Employers - Eph. 6:5
- Employees - 1 Peter 2:18

Examples of disrespect and rebellion: Gen. 9:20-27; 2 Sam 6; Numb. 12-16.

Examples of respect for delegated authority: 1 Sam 24:1; 26:9-11 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine....(Acts 2:42)

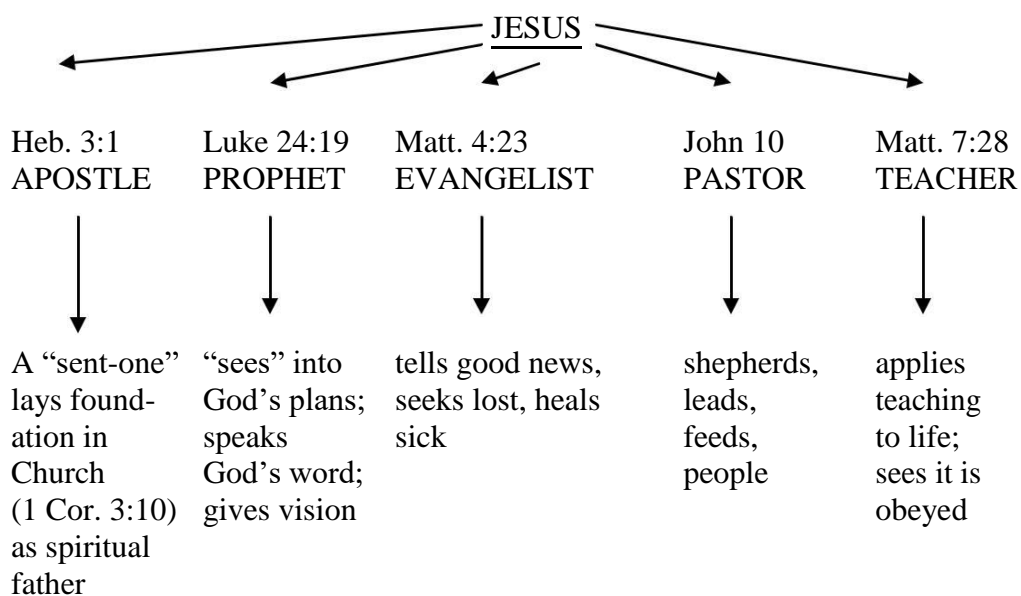
Here we look at the leaders Jesus gives to His church.

N.B. Leadership is a gift to us for our blessings. [Rom. 12:8].

## **Let's look at Ephesians 4:11**

Jesus gives leaders to the Church to express His life, to represent His authority and to continue His ministry.

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



N.B. All these leaders are ‘your servants for Jesus sake’ [2 Cor. 4:5]

They equip you and train you to serve the Lord in the Church and in the world. [Eph. 4:12]

There are ‘varieties of gifts’ in the Church and not one man has all the gifts.

### **Spiritual Authority and Submission**

Jesus is Lord and he delegates His authority to spiritually qualified leaders in His church. He wants you to obey those who rule over you, and be submissive [Hebrews 13:17]. Submission is an attitude of heart; To submit is to voluntarily place yourself under the care, protection and guidance of your leaders.

N.B. Willing submission to spiritual authority brings great blessing because those “under” authority find they have authority [Matt. 8:9].

### **What should you expect of your leaders and what does Jesus expect of you in relationship to them?**

Let’s look at Hebrews 13: 7, 17-18, 24.

‘Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith you follow, considering the outcome of their conduct’ (v.7). ‘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 out with joy not with grief, for that would be profitable for you. Pray of us;’ (v.17-18). ‘Great all those who rule over you’ (v.24).

From this we see:

#### **WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT YOUR LEADERS TO BE**

Men who live by and preach ‘the Word of God to you’.

A leader’s authority is in the end, only the authority of the word of God in his life and ministry

Men whose ‘conduct’ is seen to be righteous and successful.

Men of ‘faith’ – faith which is worth imitating and attracts you to trust them and follow them.

Men who ‘watch out for your souls’ and regards themselves as answerable to God for your welfare and progress.

## **WHAT JESUS EXPECTS OF YOU WITH REGARD TO YOUR LEADERS**

Hear the 'Word of God' through them and take it personally.

Follow their example and the lead they give in living by 'faith'.

'Obey' them and be submissive.

Make their responsibility for you a joy, not a burden by humbly accepting their authority. This works to your advantage.

'Pray' for them, their ministries and their families.

'Greet' your leaders warmly, making them feel loved and welcomed.

Appreciate them and give them due respect and recognition. [1 Thess. 5:12-13].

# PREPARE FOR WHAT YOU WANT

You have to prepare for what you want. It doesn't happen to you.

**Preparation** is the foundation for confidence in yourself and in what you are doing. Everything in life depends on how you prepare for it. You can predict success in an individual or entity based upon how they prepare. If you don't prepare today, you are going to be in serious trouble tomorrow.

One of the greatest things that we can do is prepare for eternity. It's amazing that we made the decision to make heaven our home, but then we don't prepare for the daily life of victory. We don't prepare for the years to come.

The word prepare literally means, to establish, to apply with certainty, faithfulness, to be fixed, to make provision, to make ready, to be stable, or to stand.

Let me ask you some questions so you can determine if you're preparing for success. **Question # 1. Where do you need to go?**

You've got to have a target. You've got to have something you're aiming for. Success is knowing your purpose in life. You may be in the stage of devising, developing or discovering that, but you should be on a journey of discovering your purpose.

**Question # 2. Are you going to seek God's will?**

Now that sounds like a simple question. "Oh yes brother, I'm going to seek the will of the Lord." You've got to go into the secret place with God daily and get your mind cleared to where you quit telling God what you want to do. Stay in that room with God until you break through.

**Question # 3. What does your heart want to do? What makes you happy? What brings you enjoyment? What brings fulfillment?** Find what's in your heart. Meditate upon what you feel fulfilled in. Find your gifting and abilities. Focus in on using them.

**Question # 4. How do you get to where you need to go? How do you know where you need to go?** Look at those gifts and ask your close friends, "What do you see in me?" And then look for opportunities. I didn't look to be a pastor. I just looked for a place to serve. I followed my heart. If you'll follow your heart, it will lead you to the place God wants you to be.

Next, make an evaluation of where you're at to estimate or determine the importance. Ask yourself, "How far out is my goal?" Start where you are. Do what you know to do. Do what you have to do.

The situation always determines the strategy. You've got to know what you're getting into. I had no idea what I was getting into when I began pastoring, but I did count the cost to the best of abilities.

Are you ready to move? Are you ready to change? Are you ready to go forward? What is your purpose? What is your plan? How can you reach out? What is it going to take for you to get to the place that you believe you're going to?

## Three Things

The preparation. The greatest preparation begins within yourself.

The process. What is your strategy? How are you going to get there? What is your plan of action?

The people. It takes people to help you get where you need to go. You've got to find some eagles to soar with you.

You're either preparing for success or failure, one of the two. By not preparing, you're basically throwing your destiny to the wind. Success is a daily thing, it is not a destination thing. I used to think, if I could just get to this place in life, I will be successful. Success doesn't start tomorrow, it starts today.



Get in the midst of what God is doing. What you are has already been determined in heaven, what you need to do is press into it. Move on to what God has for you. Don't settle for today, but prepare today for the victories of tomorrow.

Preparation today always gives success for tomorrow. Successful preparation in any endeavour begins with knowing what you want. What do you want? Sit down and think about it. Don't take your future lightly. Prepare today for what you want tomorrow. Accomplish your God-given destiny!

## **WAITING ON GOD - The key to be effective**

Any leader in the Kingdom of God will only be as effective as the quality of his relationship with God.

### **Introduction**

Spiritual leadership begins and ends with a full dependence on God. In fact, every Christian needs the Holy Spirit to work in and through him constantly in order to do the work of God. We always need to be making room for God in our lives and we need to be waiting on Him regularly.

Too many Christians relegate waiting on God to times of stress and difficulty. Others try everything but waiting on God in order to find fulfillment in life. These people try to stay motivated as Christians and attempt to fill the void in their life by going through the right activities, but they find it does not work and they are, therefore, tempted to abandon their commitment to God. God is more concerned about our availability to Him, than He is with our ability or our work for Him. We can do nothing that matters for eternity without God.

All God's leaders should be people who meet with God regularly. This will help them to keep Jesus as Lord of all their lives; help them to live humbly before their Almighty God who they are progressively getting to know; enable them to worship Him to whom they owe everything they are and have; and help them to live holy lives which do not dishonour God, thus enabling them to stay as pure vessels which God can use whenever He needs.

### **The Need to Wait on God**

The Bible states that living a Christian life is not going to be easy. In fact, it suggests that we weigh up the cost before we start [Luke 14:25-35], because we are going to undergo trials, persecutions, suffering and difficulty. The only way to live such a life is to draw on the resources of God. They are available to all who need them, but we often need to wait on God to receive them.

Waiting on God is not a once in a while thing – it needs to be a daily discipline that spans our lifetime. It needs to be something we incorporate into our lifestyle, because otherwise we will not be able to cope with normal life as a Christian, let alone when the difficult times come. Many Christians feel that their lives are too busy to give the necessary time to this activity, so they rarely, if ever, do it. Leaders especially have trouble in this area. Because their life is so public, leaders often try to press on with a smile on their face even though their spiritual life is falling apart. No Christian can afford to do this. It is a sure recipe for disaster. If even the Son of God, Jesus needed to spend time with God in order to carry out His work on earth, how much more do we as His followers need to do the same. God has made a way for us to come into His very presence through Jesus and He wants us to avail ourselves of his tremendous privilege [Ephesians 2:18; Ephesians 3:12; Hebrews 4:16; Hebrews 10:19-12; 1 John 3:21-22]. God wants us to come to Him and to develop our relationship with Him.

“Come near to God and he will come near to you”. [James 4:8]

Many Christians know how they should be living, but as they look at themselves they find that all is not in order. They know the ideals, but they do not seem to be able to live up to them. It is only as we see ourselves as God sees us and we again yield our lives to Him that things begin to look better. We should let Him point out the problems, give us His strategy for living, give us His heart and His love, and in-fill us with the power we need to carry out His work. This does not just happen. God has reserved such provision to those who wait on Him [Matthew 6:25-34].

### **What Are Our Life's Priorities?**

Christians cannot function effectively for God unless their lives are right with Him. In fact, Christianity will not seem to work unless our inner spiritual life is in order. Therefore, waiting on God needs to be our number one priority of life as a Christian. Most people spend the majority of their time and energy attaining possessions, positions, achievements, friends or a good family life

etc. Of course, all these uses of our time are valid, but as Christians they should not be our first priority. Jesus said the greatest commandment was to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind [Luke 10:27] and you can only do this if you know God first. He is willing to come and to reveal Himself to us and meet with us, if we make room in our busy lives to meet with Him. These times are not easy or cheap. They should be times that we value highly and, in fact, we should put them in the priority place of our lives.

If Christians could look at their time-use priorities with God's eyes, they probably would be shocked. Remember Jesus words to Martha who was very busy serving Him and complaining that her sister Mary was doing nothing to help; He said Mary chose the better thing because she sat at His feet and was listening to Him [Luke 10:38-42]. Most Christians are very weak spiritually because they do not give the time they need to wait on God. We need to see our time as God sees it and use it wisely, having His priorities for its use. After all we are God's stewards and we are going to be held accountable for our use of this non-repeatable commodity.

In the modernised world, where competition is encouraged and where achievement and the making of money are the hallmarks of success, we find that there is a strong pressure to push aside the things God asks us to do. These things are seen as unimportant and do not demand our attention as much as our family, friends and those with whom we work. These all have a voice which can scream at us, whereas God wants us to choose to come to Him.

Christian leaders today are not exempt from this pressure. They are in demand more now than they ever have been and more tends to be demanded of them. The pressure is on and many leaders do not have what it takes spiritually to cope. Many, as a result, are falling into sin or are resigning their positions or even suffering mental breakdown or other ill health. The reason for this is that they are not coming to God and drawing on Him as they should. They are trying to work for God in their own strength relying on their own reserves and it does not work! Working harder or faster or spending time trying to learn better techniques only hastens trouble. Christian leaders need to know how to come to God and draw from Him and they need to teach their people to do the same, if they want a church which runs effectively. If they do not, they will find a never ending list of casualties beating a path to their door or leaving their church. There is only one true source to whom we as Christians can go in order to avoid these pitfalls, and that is God Himself.

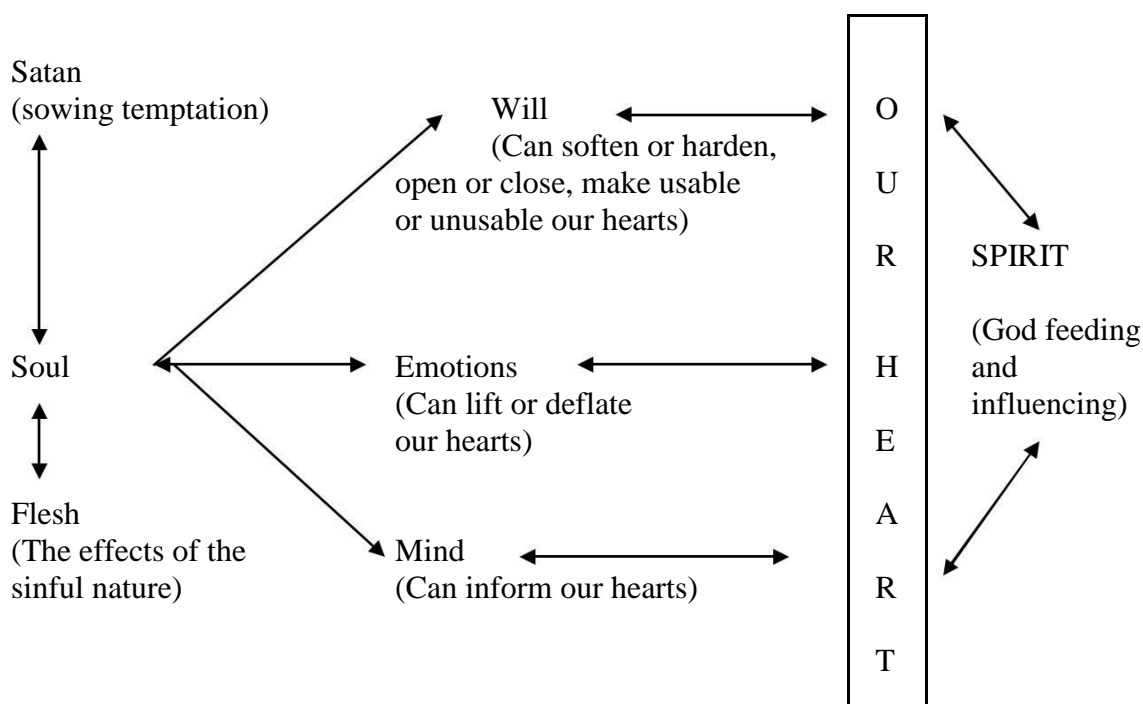
## **God's Order**

God created us to work from our spirit and heart outwards [John 7:37-39; Luke 6:43-45; Matthew 15:18-19]. If our heart [which can be thought of as the doorway to our spirit] is in a disordered state, we can expect nothing but turmoil to surface. Most Christians have learned to cover this up very well, but it renders them largely ineffective for God. It is only when we are right with God in heart that God can begin to use us by His Holy Spirit to touch the lives of other people. Our heart is made right by waiting on God and responding to anything of which the Holy Spirit is convicting us. Once we have repented, we can make Jesus Lord again of all our life. We can keep our hearts right by allowing the peace of God to reign there [Philippians 4:7; Colossians 3:15], by obeying our consciences, by disciplining our lives so that we spend time each day waiting on God, by making sure we filter the things we allow ourselves to participate in, and by doing that which God wants us to [Psalm 51:10-12; Psalm 139:23-24].

“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” [Proverbs 4:23]

As Christian leaders, we should so know God that we need nothing else in order to stand firm in Him. We should be able to go on in God no matter what is happening around us. Nothing should be able to shake us or cause us to fail or give up. We can only do this by offering ourselves to God and allowing Him to change us so that we become more Christ-like [Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:22-24; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 2:12-13]. We also need to yield our lives to the Holy Spirit who can show us God and lead us in His ways [1 Corinthians 2:10-16]. For many Christians, this process has all but stopped. The reason is that they do not yield every area of their life over to God and, therefore, He cannot work through those areas. These things clutter up these people's lives so much that the Holy Spirit is hindered in His ability to flow through them. This may happen

to such an extent that it seems God cannot use them. As Christians, we have been created to have living water flow from within us and, if this is not our normal experience, something is wrong.



Waiting on God is not an option. It should not be the domain of the more spiritually minded only. In fact, it is an essential part of every believer's life. Seeking God in solitude and silence is not a lazy alternative to doing something more fruitful for God nor is it unproductive, but rather it is the foundation upon which we should build our lives and our service for God.

Even God's leaders need to recognise that they are weak people who are dependent on God for their very existence, let alone their sustenance and their ability to serve Him. When we meet with God and give Him the room He needs in our lives, HE can pour in all the strength and power we need. We will receive all the insight and wisdom necessary, faith that can move mountains will be generated, our priorities will be ordered as we see ourselves as God sees us, and a love for God and other people will begin to grow.

### **We Need to Let God Have Control**

Unfortunately, in many Christian lives the Holy Spirit has to spend all His time sorting them out, instead of being able to empower them in their service for God. These people often think of themselves as not spiritual enough for God and, therefore, they make no attempt to get right with Him. They simply put up with their problems and let others do all the work. This is not God's way. Instead of having a life in which God is enthroned and in total control, they live a life that is partly controlled by God, partly by themselves and partly by the enemy. This acts like a cork or log-jam and makes these people's lives ineffective for God. Even if these people do decide to serve the Lord, they usually quickly find that they do not have what it takes or they fail to match up to the standards and expectations which God has for them [or they have for themselves]. They, therefore, run out of steam and give up. No amount of ministry, preaching, Bible study, book reading, etc., will sort these people out; they need to meet with God personally, get their lives right with Him, and allow Him to meet their deepest needs. Once they are right with God, they can begin effective service for Him.

Every one of God's leaders must obey when God speaks to them, even when at times it will seem to be against their perception of things. Leaders must not be foolish in this area, but they should obey God to the letter when they know it is Him who is speaking. We need to gain God's wisdom to know what to do with the words He speaks to us and when. At times, it will be right to wait with a word from God and not to go and shout it out to everybody who will listen, and at other times, it

will be right to speak out a word boldly straight away, e.g. in a ministry situation. God has promised to give wisdom to all who ask with faith [James 1:5-8].

It is out of a leader's relationship with God that they grow in their ministry. God knows where we are at and what we need to know at any particular time. Leaders need to make room in their lives for God to be able to reveal His truths and will, when it is needed. God will prompt us to come to Him, but He will not force us. We need to respond with a willing heart and make ourselves available to Him. We need to learn how to respond to God's Spirit whenever He speaks to us and be able to draw aside at any time to listen to Him. The Lord wants His leaders to always be dependent on Him and His resources and never to rely purely on their own strength and ability. If a leader can maintain such a walk with God, it will save them much wasted time.

### **Deep Calls to Deep**

“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? My tears have been my food day and night, while men say to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’ These things I remember as I pour out my soul: how I used to go with the multitude, leading the procession to the house of God, with shouts of joy and thanksgiving among the festive throng. Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God. My soul is downcast within me; therefore I will remember you from the land of the Jordan, the heights of Hermon—from Mount Mizar. Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me. By day the Lord directs his love, at night his song is with me – a prayer to the God of my life. I say to God my Rock, ‘Why have you forgotten me? Why must I go about mourning, oppressed by the enemy?’ My bones suffer mortal agony as my foes taunt me, saying to me all day long, ‘Where is your God?’ Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Saviour and my God.” [Psalm 42:1-11].

This Psalm expresses the desperation of a man to meet with God. He had found the reality of spiritual depth with God and he needed to meet with God afresh. As Christians, we all needed to learn how to reach into the depths of our own being and into the depths of the heart of God. This is what the Psalmist is trying to describe in verse 7 when he writes ‘Deep calls to deep’. This is not talking about waiting on God in your Bible study or even in your praying in a traditional sense, it is deeper than this. It is your heart touching the heart of God. It is getting a direct sense of God. It is as if we are standing before the throne of God and meeting with Him who is the Lord of all.

There is a great danger among Christian leaders today that we only take our stimulation from our ministry. We assimilate doctrine, ideas, truth, and charismatic experience, but we do so without going deeper into the reality of God. Standing in faith for something or working in troubled times are stimulating to most leaders, but there is a grave danger that we will take these external stimuli as the foundation of our ministry instead of meeting with God. We need to know the difference between these things. Too many Christians lack a direct sense of God. He is our Source-not external things like the demands and challenges of ministry and people. Such external stimulation is valid, but we need to go beyond this. If we do not, we will find that we will struggle when things go wrong or our ministry activity dries up. We need to understand experientially what it means when the Scriptures talk about deep calling to deep. There is a depth of knowing and waiting on God we need to understand. Of course, the only way we can do this is by the Spirit of God [1 Corinthians 2:10-16]. Only He can enable us to reach out of the depths of our spirit and touch the depths of God.

Waiting on God is like those people who go down into deep underground caverns. The people who really know what they are doing, know how to get safely right into the depths, where no person has gone before.

Most of us have a mechanistic approach to our faith. We read someone's book or we get someone's ideas and we try to program these things into our lives-and that's our faith. Christianity should be deeper than this. Whilst theology, doctrine, practical and strategic things are important

and interesting, they should not ultimately form the foundation of our faith in God. There is a deeper reality of God – something which it is hard to define. The Psalmist here was searching after this as a deer pants for water. This is a searching of the soul after God, an openness of the heart to God, a God-awareness in our spirit that really, in the end, you cannot teach other people about.

When all is said and done, it is only the reality of God which will last for eternity. He is the ultimate reality. Our experience, ministry, vision, doctrine etc., will fail, but God will go on for all time. This is where invisible realities are more important and powerful than visible ones. The sense of God is a very real thing, although it is not always immediately touchable or practical. Saying our prayers, sitting quietly, writing things, mediating etc., all need to be an expression of something deeper. Of course, part of waiting on God is withdrawing and waiting physically, but waiting is a much deeper thing than anything we do externally. This sense of God is only communicable to the human spirit as God Himself reveals it and grips our heart.

### **The Place of Waiting**

The Bible talks about the knowledge of God. This is not knowing about God or the externals of faith: It is knowing God Himself! “My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you.” [Job 42:5].

The Bible does say no man shall see God and live [Exodus 33:20], but there is a powerful strand of Biblical witness that there are people who have seen God and have had dramatically changed lives as a result. These two statements do not contradict each other, because the former is talking about seeing God with our physical eyes. No man can see God in this way and live. Moses was only able to see God’s back, because to look on His face with the naked eye would have been the end of him. We can, however, see God with our spiritual eyes. Isaiah, Ezekiel and John, to name a few, had this kind of experience. They were ‘in the spirit’ and they saw God; and they were not the same afterwards. They had such a sense, or understanding, of the living God that it changed who they were. It impacted upon their humanity in an irrevocable way so that God became part of the very fibre of their whole life. We can know something of this ourselves if we give all we are over to God and we make room in our lives in order to meet with Him. Many sections of Christianity usually miss this. Instead, it has made a gospel out of what is secondary. Adult baptism, free preaching, charismatic worship, etc., are all important, but they should never be the central things. Knowing this sense of God is what counts. It makes us strong and unshakable. It cannot be destroyed by persecution, disappointment or hardship, whereas, they are many Christians today who would fall apart if they did not get the external trappings of Christianity. In a sense, they have married their faith to the externals, instead of to God Himself.

“O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify You. I will praise You as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. My soul will be satisfied as with the richest of foods; with singing lips my mouth will praise You. On my bed I remember You; I think of You through the watches of the night. Because You are my help, I sing in the shadow of your wings. [Psalm 63:1-8]. We, like King David, need to know that we can afford to lose our material possessions and our position, but we cannot afford to live without an intimate relationship with God. No matter how bad it got, David knew that his priority was to keep a right relationship with Him. David, like us, was only in real trouble when his relationship with God faltered.

### **The Process of Waiting**

Waiting on God should not be a mystical, dreamy sort of thing. God is portrayed in the Bible as a vibrant, powerful, real, active, dynamic personality. Meeting with Him should have an affect on our lives. It should be revelation to us; it should make us aware of God and His ways; it should enable us to grow in understanding and practical wisdom; and it should change our hearts. We can never have this by just reading a couple of books, even if one is the Bible. Many people read, live in, and even worship the Bible, but they hardly know God.

Waiting on God grows out of two polar experiences, and yet in the heart of God they find a conjunction. The one pole is God making Himself so real to us that the desire to meet with Him will not go away [Psalm 42:1]. The other pole is a desperate sense of our need to meet with God in a deep, life-changing way.

Do you really understand what God is doing in your life? There are very few Christians who do. For example, many of us are always trying to avoid trouble and desperation, when God is trying hard to lay it on us. Often we blame the devil for what God is trying to do. We need to know that God is in control. We need to ask God what is happening and not take things for granted. We need to get desperate for God and He often uses our points of need to enable this. The people who know the most about faith are the people who have walked through the greatest difficulty and stayed close to God.

**Some practical tips to enable us to wait on God include:**

**Laying aside:**

distractions

temptations

concerns [1 Peter 5:7]

We need to seek God for Himself. To aid this, it is helpful to find a place to wait on God which will be free from interruption and interference. It is, therefore, best to be alone when possible.

We must also make sure that our lives are right with God. There is no need to dig around inside ourselves to find this out, because the Holy Spirit will point out anything that needs sorting out when we first come to wait on God. Sin is like a darkness within us; when we come to God's holiness, that darkness is exposed by God's light. We need to be holy in order to see the Lord [Hebrews 12:14] and we can only achieve this by confessing our sin, repenting and availing ourselves of the redemptive work of Jesus Christ [1 John 1:7,9]. The fear of the Lord should help us in this area [Psalm 25:14]. We can then enthrone Jesus over all of our life [particularly our mind], i.e. submit to God; and shut out the enemy by resisting him [James 4:7]. When we are alone, after silencing the voice of enemy [by resisting him] and our own mind [by discipline and submitting it to God], it is only God who can speak to us!

**Taking time [making space]**

Allocate time in your program to wait on God on a regular basis. Be ruthless and do not let excuses or busyness rule the decision. Waiting on the Lord can be done anywhere and at any time, because it is simply a setting aside of our time and our heart in order to seek the Lord and bring Him into our situation. It can be done for a few minutes when needed or it can be carried out over a whole day or even longer. At times, it is valid to go to a quiet retreat where we can set aside a longer period of time in order to wait on the Lord. It is the best to wait on God as the first thing in the day. This helps us to be more God-aware during the day; it helps prevent us pushing this important activity into the background; it enables us to start the day right with Him; it allows us to get His order and direction for the day; it invites Him to be in control of our lives; and it assures us that He will look after us etc.

It is also helpful to pray with your family after your private time with God. This helps to keep the Lord central in your family life; it brings unity to the family and a sense of God's peace; and it enables Him to minister where and when needed into your family life. If a leader's personal or family life is not in order, he will not be able to minister to other people effectively.

**Training the mind:**

concentrate

meditate

When we first start to wait on God, our minds probably will try and rebel. We need to discipline ourselves to this and our minds will come around as it becomes a habit and thus we start to see results.

We must learn to sound-proof our hearts against the intrusive noises from the world around us, including those demands on our time that scream at us on a regular basis. Many people are so addicted to noise that they find silence louder than noise and so feel very uncomfortable when trying to be quiet. This needs to be overcome if we are ever going to get anywhere in our times of waiting on the Lord.

It is helpful to write down God's words to us so that we do not forget them. We can then obey God to the letter; we will have a record that we can later go to for encouragement and strengthening; we can more readily trace God's hand upon our lives [i.e. see how we have grown in God and how He has proved faithful over the years]; and we are helped to externalise, define and make sense of what is happening inside of us.

### **Finding the right environment**

Waiting on God is not dependent on atmosphere, but finding the time that best suits us can help us to get into the right frame of mind to meet with the Lord. Find a place / situation in which your spirit can be at ease. It often helps to go to the same place for your times of waiting on the Lord and to consecrate those places to Him. Do not allow these places to be used for anything ungodly. This can help you to settle quickly and get into the right attitude of heart to seek the Lord.

### **Cultivating your spirit [learning how to activate your spirit]**

Use:

- being quiet [still yourself and relax]
- praise
- thanksgiving
- remembering God's past faithfulness
- worship
- speaking in tongues
- other gifts of the Spirit
- God's Word
- prayer
- reading and meditating on Scripture
- reading good devotional aids
- a change in routine [to shake yourself from lethargy]

Learn to recognise what stimulates your heart towards God. Do not, however, wait for an urge to spend time with Him. Start it as a discipline and let God inspire you and change your attitude. If you have continuing trouble, pray about it with other Christians. There is a sense in which the person who has met with God is never satisfied. They always want more and they always seem to be panting after God.

### **Knowing the reasons for failed times of waiting on the Lord**

We are so dry spiritually and God seems so far away that we do not recognise the need for input from God in order to be able to get right with Him and to be able to minister to others.

Tiredness or fatigue prevents us from concentrating.

Personal burdens that cause us to be so pre-occupied with our problems that we do not go to God.

Just using our quiet times as study periods. We, therefore, do not meet with God, do not listen to Him, and do not make room in our lives to enable God's specific word to us to have an effect, i.e. there is no life in it.

Thinking that we do not have the time or rushing our times of waiting on the Lord.



We are so bored with our quiet time that our heart is not in it.

Indiscipline

Discouragement, i.e. we are failing and it turns us from God, instead of to Him.

Wrong priorities.

Too much noise or too many distractions.

Failure to obey God when He speaks to us. We should have a deep desire within us to obey whatever God tells us to do during our times of waiting on Him. Many Christians fail to hear from God, because they stubbornly refuse to obey His directives to them.

### **Being active not passive**

If we want answers from God, we need to ask Him questions, especially about the things which are relevant for that day or our life at that time. We then need to give God some room so that He can answer. Remember, God answers when the time is right and we must obey God's Word to us if we expect Him to speak to us again.

God does not waste words on the disobedient. The things which God repeatedly speaks to us are either the really important things or those which we continue not to obey.

Do not limit your time of waiting on the Lord to just asking questions of Him. Give some time to waiting quietly before Him and allow the Holy Spirit to do as He wills.

Time given to God is never time wasted, even when the pressure is on. "Seek the Lord and live". [Amos 5:6]

Seeking God demands a total giving of ourselves to God and His purposes [Deuteronomy 4:29; Isaiah 55:6]. "You will seek me and find me when you seek me when you seek me with all your heart". [Jeremiah 29:13].

## **The Fruit of Waiting**

### **Patience**

This is not the kind of patience where we put up with everything and do nothing; it is a dynamic, godly patience. There are two words for patience in the New Testament. Translated, one means 'steadfastness or perseverance' and the other means 'patience with an image of keeping up the pressure'. God is patient with us in the second way. He keeps leaning on us until we cave in and we let God be God.

"Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret –it leads only to evil. For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land." [Ps. 37:7-9].

When we hear God's word to us, obey it and wait patiently on Him, it is very fruitful and productive in our lives [Luke 8:15]. "I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His Word I put my hope". [Psalm 130:5].

### **Rest**

"There remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work". [Hebrews 4:9-10]

Resting in God is drawing aside for a period of time to meet with Him. To rest in God is to know absolute dependence on Him [Psalm 62:1-5]. It is to cast all our cares on Him [1 Peter 5:7]. It is seeing our lives and circumstances as He does and it is a bringing of our difficulties and placing them at His feet.

When leaders are tired and their spiritual resources are at a low ebb, their flesh will often demand to be satisfied, e.g. watching T.V., eating food, staying up and not sleeping, sleeping too much etc. It is alright to rest and relax, in fact, it is very important to, but do not give the enemy any victory. Only do things that glorify God.

## **Instruction**

“Show me your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; on you I wait all the day”. [Psalm 25: 4-5].

The Word of God comes as a consequence of knowing and waiting on God. It gives us the guidance, insight and clarification we need as God’s leaders [Isaiah 55:8-11]. Leaders need to know God’s strategy on every occasion in order to live victoriously and fruitfully for God [2 Samuel 5:17-25].

Waiting on God allows us to listen to God. It is a poor servant who is deaf to his master’s voice! God can use a variety of ways to speak to us including an audible voice, visions, dreams, still small voice, circumstances, other people, etc. Many Christians are good at talking to God, but terrible at listening to Him. God often speaks to us in pictorial form because it is easier to remember than words. Also, if what we are hearing is from God, other people will usually be hearing the same thing.

### **Waiting on God also:**

helps us to discover God’s will for our lives.

helps us to know why God is doing what He is doing.

enables us to get our spiritual priorities and our time priorities sorted out in God.

enables us to know what is on God’s heart and prepare our sermons around this, instead of preaching always to perceived needs or out of frustration. If you do not wait on God as a leader before preparing for a meeting itself, you are effectively saying you can do a better job and make better decisions than God Himself for that meeting.

assists us in our decision-making, because we can make decisions out of God’s wisdom and revelation rather than human reasoning.

enables us to get to know what God desires and not just what He requires.

Like king David, we will know that the laws of sacrifice were not the total expression of God’s will. What God really wanted and still wants is obedience.

## **Strength and refreshment**

“They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint”. [Isaiah 40:31]. “Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.” [Psalm 27:14]. “For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him”. [2 Chronicles 16:9].

Waiting on God increased our motivation to serve Him. The motivation to serve the Lord, when we genuinely meet with Him and hear His words addressed to us, is great. It seems that there is nothing we would not do for Him and anything seems possible.

### **Waiting on God also:**

helps us restore our motivation to serve Him, because we are sufficiently sorted out in God.

helps us to receive the rest and reassurance we need in God.

enables us to regain our confidence and strength, not in ourselves, but in God and His ability to use even us to carry out His will and to live victoriously.

recharges us or refuels our spiritual reserves.

enables us to continue to face the challenges that are before us in our service for the Lord.

helps us to overcome discouragement when things go wrong, even when our ministry is removed from us, because our hope is in the Lord and not in what we do for Him.

assists us to regain our courage, our hope and our desire in the Lord to get back into the battle for Him.

### **Brokenness**

“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise”. [Psalm 51:17]. “The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit”. [Psalm 34:18].

God has chosen the things that are nothing to bring to nothing the things that are [1 Corinthians 1:25-31]. The brokenness we are talking about here, does not come through being crushed. There is more profound brokenness than any that comes on a horizontal or human level. There is the brokenness of a person who has met the reality of God. Some of us are broken by circumstances or relationship etc. God can use these things, but eventually they need healing. Those who have been broken by meeting with the reality of God do not need healing [Genesis 32:24-32]. If this brokenness was healed, they would be back in the flesh.

### **God**

‘The Spirit is the real living presence and the power of the Father working in us’.  
“Since ancient times no-one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides You, who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him.” [Isaiah 64:4]. God becomes bigger to us and His reign becomes more firmly established in our lives as we wait on Him. The more we express our love for Him, the more we will find we love Him and have love in our life; the more we worship Him, the more we will want to worship Him; the more we thank Him for all His faithfulness and provision, the more grateful we will be for the way He is working in every detail of our life.

What is important in your life? We may want to rush ahead and do great things, but at the end of it all, what will we have achieved? The thing that is really important is to let God be God. If God would only appear in mighty power one time in our life with great effect, and then we were anonymous for the next 40 years – that would be enough. If our lives allowed God to be God, we would not have to strive or manipulate or counter-copy the miraculous; God would be God!

### **Waiting on God also:**

helps us to develop an attitude of submission to God.

enables us to reconcile ourselves to God [1 John 1:7-9].

gets our heart turned in to God’s heart enabling us to feel as He feels.

helps us to recognise afresh God’s love for us [Lamentations 3:22-23]. His willingness to help us [Joshua 1:15; Isaiah 41:10], and His desire to protect, nurture and care for us, His children [Deuteronomy 32:10-13; Psalm 57:1; Psalm 91:4; Matthew 23:37].

enables us to spend quality time with God.

enlarges our knowledge of God, helping us to see that nothing is impossible for Him and for us, if He so wills it.

helps us to understand, at least to some extent, the power of God which is far greater than anything in the world and, therefore, get a true, godly perspective of our life and our circumstances.

enables us to experience the majesty and glory of God.

builds our relationship with God.

assists us to worship God for who He is and give Him praise and thanks-giving for all He has done for us.

## **Changed lives**

By waiting on the Lord we can transform our self-centeredness into God-centeredness, because we can more readily see things as God sees them. When we have met with God and heard His words to us, we need to allow those words to have an effect in us. We do this by obeying them, and allowing them to become part of our lives; by giving them room and meditating on them. Meditating is like tuning our souls into God and His will, and giving Him the opportunity to work in the areas which He has revealed to us as we have waited on Him. Meditation helps us to personalise and internalise God's Words to us so that they become living, active and effective in our lives. Remember though that the Holy Spirit should be in charge of any time of meditation. Many Christians hear God's word to them, but never obey it or allow it to have the life-changing effect God intended.

## **Other fruits**

### **Waiting on God allows us to:**

- give room for the Holy Spirit to search us and work within our lives as God knows He needs to.
- bring to God our point of need together.
- be filled with the Holy Spirit afresh [Ephesians 5:18] and so be filled with the power and strength of God.
- assess where we are at with God with His help.
- understand the reality, significance and true size of our problems and situation in God, i.e. see things from God's perspective.
- gain a growing love for God and for other people.
- receive insight and wisdom from God.
- remember and praise God for His past goodness and faithfulness.
- generate faith that can move mountains.
- have God's peace reigning in our hearts, because it encourages dependence on Him. When we wait on God and pray through to a place of peace, we can then respond creatively rather than react to any problem or difficulty. We are able to hear God's answer to the situation and set out in the faith and assurance
- have a child-like trust in God even in the darkest of situations, both inside and outside God's church. Out of this relationship of trust, leaders can shine like stars even in the darkest places. This is what others will see and follow.
- gain the power we need in ministry, because we will humbly acknowledge our own lack of power and ask Him to work through us by the power of the Holy Spirit. This gives us the faith to do God's work and not to hinder it by our own lack of faith.

Every Christians has a great deal of potential in God, but this will only be realised if we make room for God to work out His will in our lives. Christians are created by God to hold the power of God within them. Nothing is impossible for this Holy Spirit power and Christians should discharge this power as God directs. Instead, most Christians are dried up and empty inside or are just filled with religious knowledge, criticism, discouragement or disillusionment. They know what should be happening, but they haven't got what it takes in God. Instead of living an abundant, fruitful, powerful, victorious life, they are just 'hanging on'. Waiting on the Lord is the answer for these people. This helps us to get right with God and to release the spiritual dynamite within us. God will show us where and how to unleash the power of the Holy Spirit that will be released as a result.

## **Worship Arises Out of Relationship with God**

‘To train our people in their worship to wait on God and to make the cultivation of a deeper sense of His presence, of more direct contact with Him, of entire dependence on Him, is a definite aim in our ministry’.

Worship should not just be an activity or experience carried out during Christian meetings, it should be the lifestyle of every believer. Everything we do as Christians should be an act of worship of God. Of course, this does not mean we go around singing songs 24 hours a day. Worship is offering or giving ourselves to God; being totally available and totally obedient to Him. It arises out of our relationship with God and so its depth should increase as our relationship with God matures. God wants this response from us and so we should be seeking to develop an ever deepening relationship with Him. God does not demand this of us- He wants us to choose to do this. Our heavenly Father is seeking people who will worship Him in spirit and in truth [John 4:23-24]- let’s not disappoint Him! True praise and worship also gives us a God-awareness that takes away our self-awareness and so it is an important part of waiting on the Lord.

### **Praying for others**

Waiting on God, as leaders, should include interceding for those we lead, i.e. standing in the gap for them. Without Spirit-led intercessory prayer, God’s leaders cannot have an effective ministry to those they lead. Moses continually had to do this on behalf of Israel: without his intercession, that nation might not be here today [Exodus 32:7-14; Numbers 14:10-35]. We must never allow it to be said of our group that God found no one to stand in the gap, i.e. between the problems and God [Ezekiel 22:30-31].

Do not be afraid as a leader to pray a heart-felt prayer, even with tears. If we saw things as God sees them, we would probably do this more often. God is not unmoved by the suffering or difficulty of His people. One of the reasons He gives gifts of men as leaders to His church is so that they can lead His people out of trouble and help them in times of difficulty. Leaders need to feel what God feels and communicate something of this to God’s people.

We can ask great things of God if we ask humbly and with the right motivation [James 4:2-3]. Who knows what the Lord will do [Joel 2:12-14]. Effective service for God springs from closeness to Him. In fact, our relationship with God means much more to Him than our service for Him.

Leaders are people to whom others look to bring something of God into their lives. We can only do this if we are closely in touch with God [1 Peter 4:11]. Some leaders failing to deliver the goods because of their impoverished times with the Lord. Leaders who listen to God before they talk to their people are far more likely to find their people listening to them.

Christian leaders need to watch that they do not promise more than they can deliver. If a person needs to wait on God, do not suggest that they do anything else. Christians grow tired of hearing of remedies that do not work, of experiences that build up their expectations and hopes but which result in nothing. People suffering from this tend to lose their zeal and interest and either: chuck it all in; go through the motions of Christianity; have other things that become more important than their Christianity; or they begin to wait on the Lord. To know God personally and to spend time with Him is the answer to many Christians whose God seems a million miles away or who have tried all the formulas for successful Christian living and still cannot get their act together.

### **Waiting on the Lord Corporately**

Corporate waiting on the Lord brings us to God as a group. God uses all such opportunities, if we make room for Him to speak to us, to make sure everyone is right with Him and with each other. This leads to greater unity in the group, because the closer we get to God, the closer we will be to each other. God blesses a group which is of one heart and mind [2 Chronicles 30:12; Psalm 133:1-3; Acts 4:31-33; Roman 15:5-7; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Philippians 1:27; Philippians 2:1-4]. Praying as a group also gives members of the group a chance to hear the same thing from God and so learn how to hear Him speak; and it also enables corporate guidance [Acts 13:1-3].

Remember, all Christians have the opportunity to enter into God’s presence, because we are all part of His royal priesthood [1 Peter 2:9] and we are all equal in that we are sons of God [Romans 8:15-

17]. Corporate waiting on the Lord, therefore, should not be left for the ‘spiritual’ few, but is a group responsibility.

### Exercise

Do you know what it means to cultivate a deep sense of God’s presence?

OR

is your faith dead?  
is your worship stale?  
is your prayer mechanical?  
is your spirit inactive?

Begin to learn to practice the presence of God. Build time into your dairy now and make it a priority.

What do you think would change in your life if you knew God more deeply and directly?

From where are you as a leader obtaining your:

direction? (from the circumstances, the needs of the people, pressure, the Lord)?  
strength and joy? [from your work, success, affirmation of others, family, friends, the Lord]?  
power? [from your ability, energy, communication skills, leadership skills, the Lord]?

Most Christians know in theory that God only wants the best for them [Romans 8:28] and that He can supply all their needs according to His riches in glory [Philippians 4:19; 2 Peter 1:3], but they do not live lives that show they trust God in these areas. Many feel that if they gave themselves to God fully He would be mean to them or give them a dull, boring, life that lacked fulfillment. They think that they can do a better job with their life than God can. Many would never say it in public or even admit it to themselves, but they feel that God gets it wrong when He asks them to do certain things. What they do is help God out by doing what they feel is right. Do we really trust God with our lives? Do we as leaders know how to bring those we lead to a place of trusting in God?

“The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you”. [2 Chronicles 15:2]

If you are having trouble meeting with God, What is wrong? Do you want to meet with God? If not, why not?

Would you enjoy spending the whole day waiting on the Lord? How do you react to the thought?

What priority do you give to waiting on the Lord [1 Thessalonians 5:17]? Remember, when you pray, it is acknowledging the existence and greatness of God. It is affirming that He is greater than us and that we have needs which He can meet.

## WAYS GOD SPEAKS TO US

Unlike dumb idols, ours is a God of communication. He speaks. His very name is “The Word” (John 1:1; Rev 19:13).

God spoke that day. He speaks today. And He will speak tomorrow. But we must recognize His voice. Here lies the actual problem. This chapter seeks to present a wholesome and balanced teaching on this art of hearing God speak.

One of the thoughts that runs through the Epistle to the Hebrews is God speaking to man. “God, who...spoke...., has....spoken...” This is the opening verse! And towards the end of the book, 12:25, “See that you do not refuse Him who speaks!” Seven means through which God speaks are gathered from this Epistle.

### **Through His Son**

“God,...has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Heb. 1:1-2).

Jesus came as the Word to declare and demonstrate God’s truth (John 1:14). God’s message came full through His life, teaching and works. Though He is no more on earth bodily form, He is the same yesterday, today and forever (Heb. 13: 8).

Jesus is the Way so we may follow Him. He is the Truth so we may learn of Him. He is the Light so we may walk in Him. He is the Shepherd so we may obey Him. Yes, Jesus is God’s voice. Concerning Him God told Moses, “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you.....and He shall speak to them all that I command Him” (Deut. 18:18).

The life of Jesus is God’s standard for us. How He behaved as a teenager or grown-up man, at home or outside, in a religious community or a secular world, among friends or foes, in festivals or funerals, during times of joy or suffering, all these are recorded in the gospels so we may emulate. “Christ...leaving us an example; that you should follow His steps.” [1 Pet. 2:21].

Not only His life but also His teaching is ever to be held before us. Certain officers who heard Him testified, “No man ever spoke like this man!” (John 7:46). No testimony is truer!

We must give ourselves to a regular and close study of the life and teaching of the Son of God.

Therein God speaks louder and clearer than anywhere. He is calling us, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” [Mark 9:7).

### **Through His Spirit**

“As the Holy Spirit says: Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (Heb. 3:7).

Jesus promised His dear disciples, “The Holy Spirit....will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things, that I said to you” [John 14:26]. This is the Pentecostal age. Whereas the Father and the Son dwell in Heaven, the Holy Spirit has descended to the earth. The message to each of the seven Churches in Revelation was, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches” (Rev. 2:7,11,29; 3:6,13,22).

Of the six functions of the Spirit prophesied in Is. 11:2, four refer to communication. The spirit of “wisdom....understanding...counsel...knowledge”. Of the nine gifts listed in 1 Cor. 12:7-10, five relate to communication. “Word of wisdom, word of knowledge...prophecy... tongues...interpretation of tongues”.

With none of the modern technological advantages, the early Church operated solely on the "neither-might-nor-power-but-Spirit" principle. The pride of our theological knowledge hesitates to confess, “The Spirit said...” But the apostles and the author of Acts unashamedly acknowledged the voice of the Spirit. “The Spirit said to him...Arise...go...doubting nothing” (Acts 10:19-20). “The Holy Spirit said, “Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul...” (13:2). “The Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me” (20:23). “Now the Spirit expressly says...” (1 Tim 4:1). These are just a few examples.

God speaks through the gifts of the Spirit. He also employs visions, dreams and signs. These are all promised for the last days (Acts 2:16-21). There is no Scripture to warrant the withdrawal of these means by the end of the apostolic era. Don’t limit God! True there are innumerable instances of misuse. But then, is disuse the remedy for misuse?!

Both the Giver and the gifts are perfect (Jas. 1:17). The problem is with the gifted! “We” prophecy in part or imperfectly! (1 Cor. 13:9). Which means, a prophecy cannot be conclusive but it must be checked and discerned (1 Cor. 14:29; 1 Thes. 5:19-21). We should neither despise prophesying nor totally depend on it. A negative attitude quenches the Spirit. Some folks are too careful and cautious to be blessed! Shed all blind prejudices, please! The inner voice of the Spirit is a boon to the redeemed (Rom. 8:14,16). In order to stay sensitive to this voice, we must be clothed with a spirit of prayer and praise (Acts 13:2). God spoke to Moses when he went into the tabernacle of meeting (Num. 7:89). The Spirit plants irresistible impressions in our minds when we wait patiently on God.

Expecting God to always speak in a dramatic manner is a sure road to deception. Audible voices, flashy visions and ecstatic experiences are more an exception than a rule. Satan is a master counterfeiter. He has transformed himself into an angel of light and deceived many (2 Cor. 11:14). All that appears supernatural need not be from God. Thousands have given heed to “deceiving spirits” (1 Tim. 4:1). The “still small voice” appeals less to our sense, nevertheless it is safe (1 Kings 19:11-13).

### **Through His Scriptures**

“The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12).

So is guidance through the Word. Sharp and distinct! Through the Scriptures God teaches, reproves, corrects and instructs us (2 Tim. 3:16-17). When we grope in the dark, He lights our path with His Word (2 Pet. 1:19). The Bible is God’s very voice. Reading the Bible for half an hour is the same as hearing God for thirty minutes! The Bible speaks to us in the very tones of God’s voice.

With the completed Scripture in our hand and that in so many translations, our privilege surpasses that of any other generation. But there is a gross neglect of personal mediation. Unless we regularly meditate on the “law” and the “testimony”, that is, the teaching and the examples of the Scriptures, we cannot understand the mind of God in life’s situations (Is. 8:20). An hour a day with the Bible is but a minimum! Turning hurriedly through the Bible in a crisis to catch a straw may be misleading. The Bible is not a lucky dip. We must feed on the Word as regularly as we eat our bread (Matt. 4:4). “All” Scripture is profitable, therefore no portion may be neglected.

At a confusing situation or a dead end, a season of quiet meditation should be resorted to. The Spirit of the Lord will bring alive a verse or a passage from the Scripture. The cloud will clear. Those who memorize Bible verses experience the gentle reminder of a promise or a principle by the Spirit leading them into a glorious deliverance from any tight corner. History overflows with lives of men women of God who never heard a voice or seen a vision but accomplished God’s will so beautifully in their generation because they walked consistently and faithfully in step with the written Word. Undoubtedly Biblical guidance is the surest and the safest of all.

### **Through His Saints**

“Exhort one another daily, while it is called today” (Heb. 3:13). “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).

Oh the blessedness of having fellow-believers who are Spirit-filled and Scripture-filled! (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). It is not enough to just say “Hello” or “Praise the Lord” when we meet each other. We are committed to the building up of one another. While comparing tongues and prophecy in 1 Corinthians 14, the apostle’s emphasis is on edifying one another. How much we lose when we don’t seek the counsel of our brothers and sisters! Age and experience are an advantage but they are not always the criteria for counseling. No one should be despised. Even “a little child shall lead” in the Kingdom! God spoke to Esther through Mordecai. She obeyed. And a nation was saved (Esther 4:13-14). Joab advised King David not to number the people, but David refused. And a nation suffered (2 Sam. 24: 2-4, 10). Frank counselors are becoming rare. But the Bible says, “Open counsel is better than love carefully concealed” [Prov. 27:5-6,17]. The fear of offending others prevents us from exhorting them. But don’t we then fail in our responsibility? He



was a murderer who asked, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The Body of Christ suffers when its members fail their mutual responsibility. “Mind-your-business” is the slogan of the world. But in God’s family it is different. When my brother is dull, I must stir him up (Heb. 10:24). When he deviates from the way, I must bring him back (Jas. 5:19-20).

### **Through His Servants**

“Remember those who lead you, who have spoken the Word of God to you...And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words” (Heb. 13:7,22). Paul exhorted Timothy, “Consider what I say, and the Lord will give you understanding in all things” (2 Tim. 2:7). Paul was God’s mouthpiece both by his life and lip. He challenged the Ephesian elders and believers to emulate his example (Acts 20:35). To the Philippian saints he wrote, “The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.” (Phil 4:9).

In Revelation John saw the leaders of the Churches portrayed as “stars” (Rev. 1:20). Guiding stars! In his epistle he wrote, “We are of God, He who knows God hears us.” (1 John 4:6).

The five-fold ministry in the Church is only to equip, edify and educate the saints (Eph 4:11-13). An apostle will bless you with his authority, wisdom and pioneering spirit. A prophet will thrill you with his penetrating insight and boldness. An evangelist will fill you with enthusiasm and passion for souls. A shepherd will guide and guard you with sincerity and love. A teacher will enlighten and establish you with his thoroughness and balance. By and large believers these days are struck up with either evangelists or pastors. They are not exposed to apostles or prophets. So the majority in the Church remains directionless, visionless and missionless! Study and read missionary biographies. Many have found the will of God for their lives while reading them.

God speaks not only through ministerial elders but also elderly members in the Church. Ministers also need to listen to these senior Christians and benefit from their rich fund of experience. Those who have despised this have done so to their own disaster...God spoke so many things to Moses face to face. But the simple principle of distribution of work and delegation of authority he had to learn from his father-in-law (Ex 18:13-24). Moses greatly valued such advisors. When his brother-in-law wanted to depart to his land and kinsmen, Moses pleaded with him saying, “Please do not leave...you can be our eyes” (Num. 10:29-31). Literally it means, “you can be our guide.” But the story of Rehoboam is a grim reminder. He rejected the counsel of the elders and caused an irreparable breach in the kingdom (1 Kings 12:8, 16).

Oftentimes we think that ministers are good to offer guidance for spiritual issues but not competent to counsel on secular and business matters. True, a pastor or an apostle may not be able to give technical advice but he certainly can offer general guidelines from his insight and inspiration. During Paul’s voyage to Rome, the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul said, followed the advice of the pilot and that of the owner of the ship. The result was damage and loss (Acts 27:11,21).

### **Through Situations**

Circumstances forced Moses to flee from Pharaoh to the land of Midian (Ex. 2:11-15). But the writer of the Epistle, commenting on this incident, calls it an act of faith by Moses (Heb. 11:24-27). Yes, God speaks through circumstances.

After anointing Saul as king, Samuel told him, “And let it be, when these **signs** come to you, that you do as the **occasion** demands: for God is with you” (1 Sam. 10:7). If we believe that God is the Lord of nature and the ultimate Controller of all events, we can safely read His message from what’s happening around us. “Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge” (Ps. 19:2). “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood from the things that are made” (Rom. 1:20). We are called to discern “the signs of the times” (Matt. 16:3). The apostle Paul believed in understanding God’s mind through circumstances. While on his mission, the Holy Spirit closed doors for his team in Asia and Bithynia. So they came to Troas. There Paul had the vision of a Macedonian calling him to his province. Putting all these

events together the team members “concluded” that the Lord had called them to preach in Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10). There they got their first European believer!

Two excellent verses encourage us not to take situations lightly. Prov. 3:6, “In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths”. Rom. 8:28, “All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose”.

At the same time, circumstances alone cannot be our guide. God told Abraham that he would have a son. But he and Sarah were aging. The wife herself voluntarily suggested to him to go to the servant lady. The logic of circumstances led Abraham astray.

### **Through Sufferings**

“You have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord” (Heb. 12:5).

The all-wise God may choose to feed us on the bread of adversity and the water of affliction. Even in such times the promise is, “Your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, but your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, This is the way, walk in it” (Is. 30:20- 21). Why did God allow His people to hunger and then give them manna? That He might make them know that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from God’s mouth. Moses called it a teaching through chastisement (Deut. 8:3,5).

God agonizes when we don’t run to hear Him amidst adversity. Jeremiah laments God’s sorrow: “In vain I have chastened your children; they received no correction.” (Jer. 2:30). God wields His rod primarily to get our attention. If we still go careless, defeating the purpose of chastisement, it only leads to further complications. The life of David was one of suffering. But he grabbed its educative value. He testified, “It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn your statutes” (Ps. 119:71). No moulding before melting! Saints of all ages have learnt the best of lessons in the valley of tears. Instead of running here and there like King Saul seeking instant cure through mediums, we must examine our ways and fall into God’s hand. God’s silence is wonderful to listen to!

### **Summary**

These seven means of communication are interrelated. Rarely does God use any of them in isolation. “God speaks perhaps audibly, frequently through signs, sometimes through other people, usually through circumstances and always through the Bible”. These words best summarise the teaching on this subject.

# SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

## Key to success:

Any real endeavour is the ability to lead other successfully  
Everything rises and falls on leadership  
Your effectiveness in work will never rise above your ability to lead or influence others

## Leadership can be taught: 90% one learns and 10% is a gift

No one is born a leader! Why? We're born as babies!  
Leadership is developed not discovered  
Leadership modeled throughout life (like Jesus, Paul did)  
Self-discipline is necessary to become a leader

## People want to be led not managed!

World leaders, whether political, educational or business, they all lead, not manage  
Inspiring others to do better work is the accomplishment of a leader  
In every age there comes a time when leadership must come forth to meet the needs of the hour

## Leadership is influence: either for the good or bad! To obtain followers.

## Five Levels of Leadership:

Position: People follow because they have to – influence will not go beyond stipulated line of job description – longer you stay – low morale

Permission: People follow you because they want to. Relationship developed – when leadership is in same position for too long the highly motivated people become restless

Production: People follow because of what you have done to the organisation. Success is sensed by most people

Personal Development: People follow because what you have done to them – this is where long range leadership occurs.

Personhood: People follow you for who you are and who you represent.

## Leadership: Contrasts in a boss and a leader:

### Boss

Drives people  
Depends on authority  
Inspire fear  
Says: I / Me  
Fixes blames for breakdown  
Knows how it is done  
Says 'Go'

### Leader

Coaches people  
Depends on good will  
Inspires enthusiasm  
Says: We / Us  
Fixes the breakdown  
Shows how it is done  
Says 'let's go'

## Key to leadership:

**Priorities:** Learn to set and live with priorities in line with your vision, thus staying focussed, in order to become successful!

The challenge is to do things in order of their priority. Remember the 80%-20% rule! 20% priority will give you 80% of results; 20% time produces 80% of results.

Spend 80% of your time on 20% of your people (the key persons) Determine 20% of work that gives 80% of the results. It is not how **hard** we work but how **smart** we work!

## **Contrast between leaders and followers:**

### **Leaders**

Initiates  
Leads / Picks up phone  
Makes phone contact  
Spends time planning  
Anticipates problems  
Invests time with people  
Fills calendar with priority

### **Followers**

Reacts  
Listens, waits for phone to ring  
No contact initiated  
Spends time day to day  
Reacting to problems  
Spends time with people  
Fills calendar with requests

## **The good is the enemy of the best:**

E.g.: Light house keeper who had supply of oil for the light house. Yet some women begged for oil to keep their families warm. A father begged for oil to keep the lamp. At the end of the month the oil was less. When in the night several ships arrived, they got stranded on the rocks. Thus the ships got lost and several people died! Why? No right priorities!!

## **Small priorities demand too much time:**

Like the airplane which crashed on a coastal area. When the flight engineer tried to remove a bulb while descending to land different people, everyone including the captain, tried to fix the bulb. Ultimately plane crashed.

## **Key ingredients of leadership – Integrity**

We need: Character above performance / work. Leaders of integrity are people whose words match with their deeds. What you speak equals what is in your heart equals what you do!

Integrity is not **what** we do as much as **who** we are.

**Image** is: what people think we are. **Integrity** is: what we **really are**.

People spend all their efforts on building their image rather than integrity.

The more credible you are, the more confidence people place in you.

## **Leadership functions are based on trust**

Integrity has high influence value

Leadership means: to live higher standards than followers.

Integrity means living myself right before leading others.

Charisma will draw people but only integrity will keep them with us.

Integrity is a victory not a gift : It is the result of self discipline, inner trust, relentlessly truthful in all things

People remember what they see in the leader!

Remember: Maturity does not come with age, but with the **acceptance of responsibility!**

Habits are produced by thought patterns. **Thought is the father to the deed.**

# COMMON LEADERSHIP ERRORS AND HOW TO PREVENT AND AVOID THEM

**More leaders should “set the pace” in concentrate prayer rather than through endless activities. Instead of walking by sight, we should walk by faith.**

May be you have heard this saying: “Stray one step ahead of your people and you are called a leader. Stay ten steps ahead of your people and your are called a martyr.” Those of us who serve in leadership positions undoubtedly would like to stay in those positions. We do not want martyrdom (any more than we want boredom or termination).

As you read through a few of the leadership errors pastors and staff ministers sometimes make notice also some of the ways suggested to prevent or to overcome those errors. You will discover that the list is not exhaustive. Nevertheless, it should prove instructive. By the way, the errors listed are not in order of their frequency; neither are they in order of importance.

## **No common Vision**

One of the errors I notice concerns the idea of vision. Some leaders have no real vision of what they would like to see their church family to accomplish. And, “where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29: 18). Other leaders may have a vision, but it is not a vision the church holds. The leaders find themselves going one way, while the congregation is going another way (or no way at all).

The answer to this vision problem involves planning and includes communication. No person, not even a staff member, has the complete right to dictate a vision. Leaders should be leaders, and a congregation should follow the leadership God has provided. Everything works best, however, when the congregation follows their leaders toward a common dream. The pastor and staff should share their own ideas and goals with people in formal and in informal settings. The congregation should be led to pray and to seek God’s dream for the church. May of the ideas surrounding the church’s vision should be adopted by the church as a whole or for at least by as many people as possible. People tend to work harder toward accomplishing a goal if they have played a part in envisioning it.

## **Failure to Plan**

One of the reasons churches are failing to reach more people for Christ has to do with planning. Too many leaders are not directing their congregations toward congregational goals. Thus, they are not making any action plans, which the result that is nothing happening. Pastors are preparing their sermons and visiting the sick. Youth ministers are doing things with the youngsters and may be teaching. Ministers of education are making announcements and recruiting workers. Ministry turns out to be maintenance of the status quo. Someone has said, “If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.” Someone else has said, “Unless you plan, you’ll spend your time reacting rather than acting.”

## **Poor Communication**

I believe the number one error pastoral ministers make is the failure to communicate well. We fail in our communication with each other and we fail to communicate properly with the congregation. Consider for a moment, communication among the ministerial staff. If you serve with a least one other staff member, chances are your conversations have included phrases such as” “I did not even know he was in the hospital!”

“No one told me her mother died!”

“I assumed you would take care of that!”

“What do you mean it’s not one the calendar? I’ve had that planned for months!”

To avoid a lack of communication among the staff, make sure you have staff meeting on a regularly scheduled basis. Staff meetings provide the best setting for planning, scheduling, and sharing

personal and church concerns. Also beneficial is to spend informal time together during lunch, at recreation, and so on.

Communicating well with the congregation begins with the leader's attitude. Every leader needs to make sure his activities and plans are out in the open and above reproach. Most congregations do not like surprises.

### **Being a "One-Man Show"**

Many leaders are guilty of trying to do everything on their own. "If you want it done right, do it yourself" is a motto to which many ineffective leader adhere. Such an attitude increases the chances of ministerial burnout. It also means that when the leader goes to another place of service, the church's ministries and accomplishments are likely to suffer. More than anything else, the one-man show idea conflicts with the clear teaching of Scripture. Ephesians 4:12 says that it is the job of a leader "to equip the saints for work of ministry". An ancient proverb comes to mind. "Give a man a fish and he eats for a day. Teach him to fish and he eats for a lifetime." Whatever ministerial position you hold, it is your job to equip people for ministry. Most people want (and need) to work. They also want (and need) to learn. In a world famous National Park bears die by the scores after the tourists leave each summer. Why? Because they (the bears) have depended too much on others.(the tourists for their food supply). The congregations we serve need to learn to minister themselves rather than depending on staff to do so. To prevent this particular leadership error, you need to commit yourself to teach others about ministry (see 2 Tim. 2:2).

Equipping needs to take place in personal setting (taking someone with you when you visit, one-on-one discipling of a new Christian, etc.) and in congregational settings (witnessing clinics, teacher training). The church is the body of Christ and each part (person) has a function. Part of our job is to help people carry out their function (develop and use their gifts and talents).

### **Delegating Without Following Through**

Closely in line to the failure to equip and delegate (as mentioned earlier) is the problem of delegating without follow-through. Many people who are trained (and do volunteer) need encouragement as well as accountability. Countless times I have discovered in a staff meeting some major task that did not get done, only to hear the staff member in charge say, "I gave that responsibility to so and so." Praise the Lord that the staff member had the insight to get others involved. But, ultimately, the leader himself (herself) is responsible. If we ask people to do something, we either need to help them or to check back with them to make sure the task was accomplished. Our job is not to interfere or to limit freedom; nevertheless, we are to be leaders in the best sense of that word.

### **Working in the flesh**

Pastors and staff members often feel the pressure "to produce results." Many of us expect more of ourselves than church members expect of us. Some of us expect more out of ourselves than maybe even God does. If we are not careful, we will find ourselves working in our own strength rather than in God's strength. Not only is this sin, it is a leadership error. More leaders should "set the pace" in concentrate prayer rather than through endless activities. Instead of walking by sight (that which we visibly accomplish), we should walk by faith.

In Matt. 17:20 Jesus rebuked the disciples for their lack of faith. Preventing this error means spending more time in prayer. If Jesus needed to spend time alone to pray, certainly we need to. Ministry is tough business. I heard a wise person say, "As long as interior condition is equal to exterior circumstances, there is no stress." Let me encourage you to spend time in prayer. Seek God's directing regarding the leadership concerns on your heart.

### **Overlooking the Faithful**

Leaders who are growth oriented are always working to find ways to attract people to Christ and to their church. Leaders who are more pastoral oriented (and you can be both pastoral and growth

oriented) tend to try and meet the needs of those who have problems (the sick, down and out, etc.) However we are oriented, we mess up when we fail to recognize the people who are faithful and who seem to have few problems. They need a leader's love and encouragement too! To prevent overlooking these faithful and seemingly "together" people, let me encourage you to mention them to God in prayer often. Thank the Lord for these people. They are the ones who often keep things going. Also, write notes of encouragement-not just to people who are discouraged, but to those who act like they need no encouragement. Everyone needs to hear encouraging words. Set out to notice each week at least one person who is doing something well. Praise that person on the spot. I hope as a leader you will always seek the lost and the hurting. That's priority; however, don't forget the others.

### **Handling Criticism Poorly**

Aristotle said, "Criticism is something you can avoid easily by saying nothing, doing nothing." All leaders will be criticized at least some of the time. None of us particularly likes criticism, and we hurt ourselves and our ministry when we respond to it poorly. Some leaders get in the habit of responding to criticism the same way every time. Getting angry usually doesn't help. Feeling like you have to defend yourself (by making excuses) produces no benefit. Being a "cry-baby" accomplishes little. Ignoring the criticism may in fact hurt the leader at times. Here are some helpful hints:

Realize that good people do get criticized.

Understand the difference between constructive criticism and destructive criticism. Constructive criticism will help you making some corrections and will help you grow. (Criticism usually bothers me the most when there's an element of truth in it.)

Consider the source: if the person criticizing you, criticizes everyone-well, that should tell you something. If your critic shows a lack of Christian maturity or is obviously not a team player-well, that should tell you something, too. Criticism can be beneficial if it comes in a positive, loving way from a person you highly respect.

Don't take yourself so seriously.

Refuse to use the typical responses of over-sensitivity, anger, or excuses. "Out love" your critic.

### **Ignoring Conflicts**

Ignoring a problem with someone, (hoping it will go away), rarely works. If you are facing a conflict, deal with it. Otherwise, the problem may get out of hand, particularly if you let things "built up" in you or in the person with whom you are having a conflict. Jesus told us to deal with conflict quickly (see Matt. 5:25). He made clear the responsibility lies on our shoulders - that whoever is willing to listen to Him is to make the initial move towards reconciliation.(see Matt. 5:23-24). Leaders also need to remember that if we refuse to forgive the person with whom we disagree, we will not be forgiven by our heavenly Father. (see Matt. 6:14-15).

### **A Desire to be Served**

Some leaders have an overwhelming need to be noticed. The leader who is exceptionally gifted may want people to take note and to respond in kind ways. This problem also happens to the dictatorial leader who gives "orders" to those who work under him or her (including the volunteers!). This particular problem usually shows up when the leader comes to expect "special favours" from the congregation or community (free or reduced medical care, a discount on clothing, extra attention at social gathering, gifts in kind or cash, etc.). The call of every leader is to serve. Service ought to be the continual outcome of our relationship with the Lord.

## The top ten mistakes leaders make!

Leaders have incredible power for good or bad in people's lives. A few control the destiny of many. But how many of us start out with lofty ideals and dreams, only to be soured by our experience with leaders? Before we know it, people lose trust and the trench warfare begins. Or, nothing is said, but confidence in our leadership begins to erode quickly. People resign and walk out. Leaders are fired, division, strife and back-biting reign. The work is slowed down, damaged or comes to a screeching halt.

Poor leadership habits spawn new generations of poor leaders.

**THE TOP TEN MISTAKES LEADERS MAKE** exposes the ten most common leadership faults and short-comings.

- The top-down attitude
- Delegation without accountability
- Putting paperwork before people work
- Communication chaos
- The absence of affirmation
- Missing the culture clues
- No room for learners
- Success without successors
- Dictatorship in decision-making
- Failure to focus on the future

Today leaders replicate the poor leadership habits they have observed in others. They often lack basic skills for common leadership demands. Many of them lack formal training, but more than that, lack of good models and mentoring could be the loophole. Bad habits many of us have observed in our leaders have perhaps fallen into ourselves.

Few prepare themselves or volunteer for leadership. It is a calling for the appointed. This seems to be true across the board – in industry, business and government. Many people who come into positions of leadership in organisations have little or no training in leadership and management. Leaders of enterprises tend to be qualified, but often organisationally illiterate. The problem is, leadership requires both the heart and the head.

### **DANGERS OF LEADERSHIP:**

- |                                   |                 |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1) Pride                          | Rom. 12:3       |
| 2) Murmuring                      | Numb. 12: 1- 16 |
| 3) Rebellion                      | Numb. 16: 1- 50 |
| 4) False Revelation               | I Tim. 4: 1-3   |
| 5) Discouragement                 | Josh. 1:9       |
| 6) Negligence                     | Prov. 13: 3     |
| 7) Covetousness                   | Josh. 7: 21     |
| 8) Opposite Sex                   | II Cor. 6: 14   |
| 9) Fear                           | II Tim. 1:7     |
| 10) Expecting rewards<br>from man | Col. 3:23       |



## **HOME CELL GROUPS AND SMALL GROUPS**

"So continuing daily with one accord in the temple (church), and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart." (Acts 2:46). "And daily in the temple (church), and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ." (Acts 5:42).

### **WHY ARE HOME CELL GROUPS IMPORTANT?**

#### **# Practical Fellowship**

Home Cell Groups provide closer fellowship where people can care, share and relate to one another in a face-to-face relationship.

Home Cell Groups provide the environment where new believers can experience tender nurturing and a sense of belonging.

Home Cell Group provide a network of friends where people with needs can turn to for practical assistance.

#### **# Discipleship And Spiritual Growth**

Home Cell Groups provide a means to bring believers into maturity.

Home Cell Groups provide a channel for interaction, discussion and application of the most relevant Bible truths that the church is studying.

Home Cell Groups provide an environment where believers can grow by worshipping and praying together, sharing testimonies, and exercising faith for the miraculous.

#### **# Ministry Development**

Home Cell Groups provide a place to develop believers in pastoral care and Christian counseling.

Home Cell Groups provide a platform for our gifts and talents both spiritual and natural – to be used by God to meet the needs of others.

#### **# Biblical Accountability**

Home Cell Groups provide a means where the Scriptural principles of spiritual leadership, submission, delegation and accountability can be practically exercised.

#### **# Evangelism**

Home Cell Groups provide an environment for evangelistic outreach where un-reached people can feel comfortable in a small group setting.

# HOME CELLS

Growth is the natural expression of life, and a living church must grow.

Many pastors work towards growth, but do not adequately prepare to accommodate it. The result is that the church grows beyond the pastor's physical capacity to minister personally to everyone, and he is faced with a crisis. Either he must lower the quality of his ministry in order to minister to all or he must neglect some people to cater to others. This results in people dropping out and the growth declining.

The pastor who anticipate this problem must prepare for it, but what can he effectively do?

## Options

On the one hand, he can increase his ministerial staff but this is only a temporary solution. As growth continues the identical crisis will recur. On the other, he can utilise the lay resources which are already in the church; he can train and use the people in the benches. They are a resource as elastic as the growth of the church, and if well used will account for effective worship, teaching, evangelism and discipling.

## Structure

Most pastors create sections and departments within the church, but fail to realise that the main ministry of a church is beyond its four walls. It must reach the unchurched neighbourhood; it must reach people who may never readily walk into a church. The resource for accomplishing this is once again right at hand – the families of the church. Their homes form a network of outreach points, and they are known and accepted in their neighbourhoods.

## How to Begin

### The Pastor's Cell

The pastor begins by establishing a cell-group himself from among the members of the church. By this he shows the membership how a cell-group should operate and confirms to them the importance he assigns to this program.

Using this cell-group as a base, he prepares the prospective leadership of the Home Cell ministry. While ministering to their needs, he also imparts his vision and teaches them. He then leads them into the formation of Home Cells in the homes of the members of his church. Ideally, this should be done in their own homes.

It is very necessary that the leaders be members of the church, and the homes in which the Home Cells operate also be those of members. This ensures that the pastor has authority over the Home Cells and that they will remain loyal to him and the church.

It is also necessary that Home Cell leaders emerge from within the Cell-group program. Any person being used for leadership should be familiar with how the program operates and can best do this if he has already been in a cell-group.

### The Home Cell

The Home Cell program is effective when the entire membership of the church participates in it; this makes it a foundational ministry of the church. The pastor must therefore encourage every member in the church to attend a Home Cell every week. Through the leaders his ministry will reach them; their needs will be met; they will be cared for individually.

## Growth

What happens when the church grows? The flexibility and growth orientation of the cell-group structure is visibly demonstrated here.

Growth occurs in one of two ways. Home Cells themselves evangelize the neighbourhood and grow, channeling new believers into the church. The church also, through its evangelistic programs brings in new people who are channeled into the cell-group for discipleship.

When a cell-group grows to more than fifteen people it becomes too large to handle and the personalised ministry of the leader begins to diminish. The structure, however, is geared to accommodate an increase in cell-groups. The leader must therefore prepare his group to divide and form a second cell-group. He begins well ahead by training an assistant leader, who will be able to take the reins of leadership when the new cell-group begins. When this happens, the pastor will realise that his cell-group strength has doubled, and when the groups do this again, it will have increased four-fold.

Growth has its impact on the Pastor's Cell as well. When the number of leaders increases, his cell becomes crowded and he too will lose personal contact. He therefore incorporates an intermediate level of leadership through the formation of Divisions and Sections. Ten Home Cells come under a Divisional Leader and ten Divisional Leaders come under the Pastor. At each level there is a cell-group which is a small unit.

As growth occurs the pastor will minister to Divisional Leaders, who ministers to Section Leaders, who ministers to Home Cell Leaders, who in their turn minister to the rest of the membership in the Home Cells.

This structure has unlimited growth possibilities and will not impede the growth of the church. It harnesses the entire potential of the church; it helps to identify ministers and develops them; it effectively discipled those who are newly brought to the Lord. The result is a strong and useful church membership. This resource has always been close at hand, but is rarely developed and used. It adds no cost to the church budget since all involved are laymen. It is only at the later stage that the pastor may make his Divisional and Section Leaders into full-time ministerial staff, if he so desires.

## **Other Ministries**

How can the Home Cell structure benefit the other ministries of the church?

### **It develops leadership potential**

Since the members are discipled and built up in the home-cell they develop the potential to be useful in other areas of ministry.

### **It makes possible the mobilization of resources**

When the church embarks on a city-wide outreach the Home-Cells are the most effective means of organizing the distribution of handbills, and the invitation of people takes place on a home-to-home basis. Instructions for this are communicated rapidly down the structure from the pastor to the every individual member, and the entire church can be mobilized for this in a very organized manner.

## **Responsibility at Every Level**

### **The Pastor**

As is evident, the success of the entire program will depend largely on how much the pastor puts into it. He must promote it encourage its leadership, direct its growth and inspire its membership. He must ensure that it operates in an organized manner. The pastor must insist that the geographical structure is maintained, and that members attend the Home Cell nearest to their home.

The pastor must provide an on-going training program to ensure the high quality of the leadership; and organize retreats and seminars so that they keep the vision before them. The teaching material he puts before them must be geared to aiding the discipling process.

### **Divisional and Sectional Leaders**

The intermediate leaders perform a very important function, since they are an extension of the pastor's ministry. At this level the leadership bears important ministerial responsibilities towards the groups functioning in their Divisions and Sections. They must foster among the groups a sense of unity and give them identity and perspective as part of the body of the church. They develop, train and disciple the Cell-Group leadership.

### **Home Cell Leaders**

These leaders minister at the grass-roots level, where church growth takes place. They must ensure that the meetings are effective and interesting; that the needs of the body of the church are met; that the new believers are correctly disciplined. In the process of weekly cell meetings, the leader must involve the membership in sharing testimonies, praying together and studying the Word together. He must lead the group in witnessing and draw them into the activities of the church.

### **Qualifications of Leadership**

The quality of the leadership is therefore a very important consideration, and it is necessary that the leadership be (1.) examples before congregation; (2.) loyal to the pastor and church; (3.) submissive and teachable; and (4.) totally committed.

This is a programme that depends on commitment, and the leadership at every level must be committed to it. They must give at least three evenings a week on a regular basis; one for the cell-group at which they are ministered to; one for the cell-group at which they minister; and the third for visiting the members of the cell-groups at which they minister; in addition they must be available to counsel and pray with the people of their cell-groups.

### **Flexibility or adaptability**

The same basic concept is easily adaptable to the particular needs of the culture it is used in. The cell-group programs around the world are basically the same, but have been adapted to suit the requirements of the respective regions.

### **Benefits**

The pastor who sows his time and effort in building up a cell-group program in the church will very soon reap a harvest of benefits in a number of areas:

#### **Time**

He will find that he is dealing less with trivial problems, and more with the ministry he was called to. The problems are tackled at the Home Cell level, and only those that cannot be handled there are sent up the structure to the Section and Divisional Leaders, and ultimately to the pastor only if they cannot be handled at these levels.

#### **Growth**

The healthy growth of the cell-group leads to the healthy growth of the church.

#### **Maturity**

The involvement of the leadership and cell-group members in ministry helps them develop and grow spiritually.

#### **Communication**

The communication process is greatly aided by the structure of the program and its personalised ministry. The leadership is able to monitor the response of the membership and the church can be react faster to the general needs of the body because of this process.

#### **Durability**

The cell structure is also survival oriented, and highly effective in even oppressive situations, where there is religious persecution or a political crisis and large groups find it hard to meet.

## THE POWER OF SMALL GROUPS

The growing interest in small groups represents one of the most hopeful signs of revival in our time. In all walks of life and within every kind of church these spiritual associations are springing up. The movement expresses a deep yearning in the hearts of men and women for the realities of Christian experience.

Some years ago Billy Graham was asked, “If you were a pastor of a large church in a principle city, what would be your plan of action?”

He replied, “One of the first things I would do would be to get a small group of 8 or 10 or 12 people around me who would meet for a few hours a week and pay the price! It would cost them something in time and effort. During a period of a couple of years, I would share with them everything I knew. Then I would actually have 12 ministers among the laymen who in turn could take 8 or 10 or 12 more and teach them.....Christ, I think, set the pattern”.

### **Together in Christ.**

The principle noted by Dr. Graham can be seen being implemented on the cutting edge of evangelism and discipleship around the world. There is something awesome about a group united in the Spirit of Christ. Even two or three persons “together” in His name have tremendous power when they truly “agree”. (Matt. 18:19-20). The word used here by Jesus means “to agree in sound” or “to be in harmony”. A harmonic sound is not easy to obtain, and the difficulty of achieving it becomes greater as instruments are added. In this respect, small groups have an advantage. As we get to know one another, we are made to sharpen our God-created personalities and gifts in order to create a symphonic sound. That is why a group united becomes greater than the parts. Yet there is no diminishing of the unique contribution of each person. This can be seen most beautifully in marriage. In this relationship love finds its highest human expression, and if we realize its spiritual significance, we can comprehend more deeply Christ’s love for His Church. Out of this union comes the procreation of the human race. God has so structured the universe that human life in its inception can be surrounded with a quality of His own nature. In these family circles of kindred spirits we learn the basic values around which our character takes shape. Properly functioning, then, we can see why the Christian home can become the most powerful instrument for renewal in society.

### **Pattern in the New Testament Church**

With the breakdown of the institution of marriage, every aspect of civilization suffers, including the Church. Nevertheless, whatever the situation in the world, the principles of God’s plan for the family and its potential for good can be incorporated in small groups of Christian disciples. This is what Jesus did. While ministering to the multitudes, He brought around Himself a few followers, creating an environment for dynamic learning. From this fellowship emerged a growing nucleus of believers infused with a vision of His Kingdom and equipped to reproduce His ministry. What the disciples learned from Jesus carried over into the apostolic Church. To be sure the whole Body met for worship in the Temple court or some public place, but usually people met in their homes. Essentially it was a small-group movement.

### **Seen in the history of revival**

But as the believers gained in worldly prestige, and as Christianity eventually became recognized as the state religion of Rome, spiritual fervor noticeably declined. Still there was a faithful remnant which kept the smoldering fires of faith alive. Occasionally it broke forth in new intensity.

The Protestant Reformation brought renewed hope to the Church, though its force focused more on correct doctrine than revival. When the Church became caught up in theological debates, it was the pietists, nurtured especially in home Bible study groups, who breathed new life upon dry bones. And history in its various forms has been repeating itself.

### **The privilege**

All of us need the fellowship of a small group. At first two or three earnest souls are enough,

though 8 or 10 would be preferable. Assuredly, as God has dealt with you, He has spoken to others who are seeking God's best, who know there are deeper riches in God's Word yet to be fathomed and who are open to the Holy Spirit's instruction. Likely such a group is waiting for direction in your church. They may be unorganized, perhaps not even aware of their mutual desires, but they are there, in need only of encouragement and leadership to become a force for revival. Find them, discover what you can do together to stimulate your faith and enlarge your ministry. You do not need to break off other contacts to have this association. In fact, to give your witness an effective expression, you should cultivate your wider friendships in the church and community. But in your continuing witness through the ongoing program of the congregation, do not ignore the need to develop a small group focused on personal growth and outreach.

### **Develop a group discipline.**

The simplest way to help this nucleus grow is to meet regularly for prayer and Bible study. Whatever the form of fellowship, at its heart should be a determination to seek the highest in God's purposes.

In your openness to the Holy Spirit, be honest with God and with each other. Selfishness prevents any growth. This requires that you keep faith with each other and never carry beyond the group matters that are shared in confidence. Be careful not to get off on some tangent or become complacent. Any time that you lose your sense of adventure, the door of progress closes.

A disciplined study in Scripture will help stretch your vision and dedication. Be creative in your methods; you may want to discuss a devotional classic or a popular spiritual book. As you mature in the Word, so also you should grow in the practice of prayer. When the fellowship is filled with the Spirit of Christ, this will come naturally. In your desire to draw closer to God and to each other, occasionally you and the group may want to take an overnight or weekend retreat.

### **The overflow to others**

The group dare not become occupied only with its own concerns. Whenever it becomes self-contained, the water stagnates. But as the fellowship drinks deep in the Water of Life and grows strong in the love of God an increasing desire to share the blessing will unfold.

In addition to encouraging personal witness, you might adopt a cooperative project, like visitation in the community, conducting neighborhood study groups designed to reach outsiders or participating in a service mission.

As the group's influence grows, new people will want to join your ranks. In time, you may need to divide and start new groups with different combinations of people. The experience and confidence which you have gained in your fellowship provide a reservoir of leadership for an ever-enlarging outreach.

Gradually the flame of revival will spread as the Gospel goes out in society. The world will take note.

## How to practically organise your cell group meeting

### **Chair Arrangement:**

The idea is that all seats should point to the middle, facing each other, not toward the speaker. Remember, it is not a teaching session, nor is it a classroom environment. It is a Holy Spirit huddle—a clan meeting. The leader is not sitting at the head or in front but in the same ring or circle with the others. The minimum goal is a seating arrangement in which each person feels comfortable speaking. The idea being that the leader is more of a support than a coach. They are all in the cell process together. Each family participates in the success of the whole. Success means each member is being formed in the image of Christ. Each member helps the other in the group.

### **Room Environment:**

Lighting is important. Each person should have enough light to read if necessary. It is no good idea to have people read in rounds or out loud. Many people were traumatized in school by having to read out loud; as adults it is often times very stressful. Learn who likes to read and use them. Take turns if necessary.

In regards to temperature, it is always nice to have a comfortable temperature when the situation allows. A little on the cool side will help keep working folks awake during the meeting.

Even though optimum situations are desirable, they are not always possible. If the space is too small for the chairs to form a perfect circle, the house/work site is not climate controlled, or if the lighting is poor, then don't get too worried. It is the love of God shining through us that draws in the people. Love is what spells success, not the chairs or the lightening. If we continue to lift Jesus higher, men will be drawn unto Him. Our job as under-shepherds is to eliminate obstacles in the way of the sheep coming to Christ.

### **Meeting order:**

Next we'll look at the meeting order, which includes the ice breaker, time of worship, prayer, and the Word. It is very important that everyone strives to be on time for the meeting. A visitor coming an hour early can catch a housewife off guard and unprepared. It can also cause a very uncomfortable situation if the visitor happens to be single male arriving before the husband gets home, or the other guests arrive. The reverse can also happen and is just as undesirable. One solution is to have a few chairs outside just in case. To help train everyone to be on time, it is important to start on time, no matter how many people are there at the predetermined starting time. If you wait until everyone shows up, you will find the meetings getting pushed back later and later.

### **Ice Breaker:**

During the ice breaker, it is nice to serve something to drink or even a light snack. Neither is necessary, but having something light to drink and eat does add to the fellowship. It stimulates social contacts and especially helps relax the visitors, reducing tensions and anxieties. Food and drink helps an outsider 'blend in.' It also gives them something to do which keeps them from being too self-conscious.

During these 'ice breaking' time, the host should be prepared with some questions or interesting topics to share. This helps move people into a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere crucial to a successful meeting. The questions or discussions during the opening few moments should be kept light and not pushy. The questions should stimulate conversation and help people relax. It is very important that everyone attending feels welcome. This is not the time to put a visitor through heavy questioning. Don't pry, or let others pry into the private lives of first time visitors.

### **Time of Worship:**

The time and location of the meeting will influence the type of worship that is appropriate. Also, the length of the meeting is a determining factor. A typical worship session should last 15 to 20

minutes for a normal meeting of an hour and a half. If, however, you only an hour, 45 minutes of worship will not leave you much time to do other things necessary to have a successful meeting.

A gifted guitar player can usher a small group into the throne room of God and be a tremendous blessing. Even a learner can help harmonize a group, leading them in worship. If you can't sing well, you can always sing along with a cassette or CD. Don't be intimidated to go "acappella", without any musical guidance. If hearts are sincere, it is always beautiful to God. Another major key for entering into the presence of God corporately as a cell group is the individual prayer lives of each member. If the only time members of the group pray or worship is during the cell meeting or in the church service, their attempt to enter into the presence of God will be little dry. The group should do all it can to encourage the members to pray and worship at home as well as in the cell meetings.

If you are meeting in a public place, like a restaurant or job site, you might not have the boldness or liberty to sing out. Worshiping God can be defined as any act that brings you into His presence. Without the presence of God in your meeting you will have nothing more than a social gathering. If the worship is off, it will be very difficult to get into unity during the rest of the meeting. The least you should expect from a time of worship is unity. Singing or worshipping together brings the group together. Your goal in worship should therefore always be unity with God and with your fellow cell group members.

**Prayer:**

After worship, while the group is still in that wonderful atmosphere of praise, is a great time to pray. Allowing anyone who desires to step right on in to make their request known to God. In some circles everybody at the same time, while others prefer taking turns to pray. It really doesn't matter how you do it. What does matter is that there is a relaxed and anointed atmosphere as they pray to their Heavenly Father. Prayer that follows worship can be the most special time of the week.

**Word:**

The study of God's Word remains extremely important and is probably the main agent, through the power and anointing of the Holy Spirit, to change minds, hearts, attitudes and lives! Keep emphasising the authority of the Bible as God's infallible Word and it's importance in our lives to be renewed in our thinking by the Word.

Your responsibility is to prepare the Bible study and make the study of the Word inter-active and exciting! Helping your members to discover truth, involve them in answering questions (this may require asking some persons by name to respond as they may feel shy or inferior), respecting answers (by responding graciously and lovingly), knowing how to keep the focus, and always keep people pointing back to the truth found in the Word of God! Also great emphasis needs to be given to application of Biblical truths. Here you may share your own experiences, and impart your life to the cell group.



# CELL LEADERSHIP

## Key elements in spiritual leadership:

### Heart for God

Obedience to God.

Living your life according to the Word of God

Living your life by conviction and not circumstances or convenience

Dependence on God

‘Walk by faith, not by sight’ (2 Cor. 5:7)

‘And without faith, it is impossible to please God’ (Heb. 11:6)

Confidence in God in spite of circumstances and consequences

### Heart for people

God places a HIGH PRIORITY for people (1 Chron. 14:2; Phil. 2:20-21)

Check your ATTITUDES towards people:

- Do other people’s failures annoy us or challenge us?

- Do we use people or serve them? •

Do we direct or develop people?

- Do we criticize or encourage people?

- Do we shun problem people or seek them out?

God knows that it is not easy to have for people (Eph. 4:2).

### Committed to God’s Word

Committed to knowing God’s Word

- Implies diligent study (2 Tim. 2:15)

Committed to applying God’s Word

### Demonstrates Discipline and Growth

Discipline:

- In the use of finances •

In the Christian Basics

Growth in the Basics:

- Personal time with God •

Word-life

- Prayer life •

Character

### Pace-setter

Gets others to do what you’re first doing

More is caught than taught

### Leads by serving

Model of Christ – (Mark 10:45; John 13:15)

People are drawn first to our servanthood, rather than our leadership

Our service is an outward indication of our love for people

### F.A.S.T

Faithfulness: In little things (Matt. 25:21)

What is one thing you would not like to do because you think it is insignificant?

Availability: God is more concerned about my availability than my ability

How available am I to do:

- Hard tasks

- Humble tasks

Submissiveness: (Heb. 13:17)

To be submitted to God’s ordained leaders

Submit not only when we agree  
Teachability: (Prov. 9:8-9) Are  
 you a wise man or scoffer?  
 How do you handle criticism or instructions from others?

**H.Owns a vision**

How well do you dream big things for God?  
 What is your vision for your group as you take up leadership?  
 Have you asked God to give you a vision?

**Four characteristics of a spiritual leader:**

**He MODELS for real living.**

“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity”. I Tim. 4:12.

**He MINISTERS to people’s needs.**

“...Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave – just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” Matt. 20:26-28.

**He MOTIVATES people into action.**

**He MAKES THINGS HAPPEN.**

He doesn’t just sit around to wait for things to happen.

**Three Types of Leadership**

Leaders all have an "Entrepreneur, Manager and Technician"-aspect inside of us. If they were equally balanced, we’d be describing an incredibly competent individual. But the three are seldom balanced in one person. Therefore, we must depend upon each other to provide these three important leadership functions.

<b>Entrepreneur</b>	<b>Manger</b>	<b>Technician</b>
Visionary	Pragmatist	Doer
Dreamer	Planner	Fixer
Future	Past	Present
<b>Motto</b>	<b>Motto</b>	<b>Motto</b>
“If you want it done right, create a new....”	“If you want it done right, train good worker”	“If you want it done right, do it yourself”
<b>Boundary</b>	<b>Boundary</b>	<b>Boundary</b>
How many managers can be in his vision?	How many technicians can he supervises?	How much can he do by himself?
Builds a house and plans the next one.	Builds a house and lives in it forever.	Never stops building the house.
<b>See opportunities</b>	<b>See problems</b>	<b>Sees a job to do</b>
What wall should be the ladder be against?	How do I best get the ladder to the wall?	How many times do I go up and down?
Needs change	Craves order	Wants activity

<b>Worldview</b>	<b>Worldview</b>	<b>Worldview</b>
Opportunities abound everywhere Creates things to be put in rows.	Messes must be cleaned up. Puts the things into neat rows.	Produces bread to eat at tonight's dinner. Fixes the things that are in neat rows.

#### **Four leadership roles in a cell church**

General pastoral oversight of the church – District Pastor He oversees a church of several congregations.

Specific pastoral oversight and co-ordination of a congregation – Zone Pastor He pastors a congregation of 6 to 25 cells.

Co-ordination and training of a network of cells – Zone Supervisor He supervises 3 to 5 cells.

Care at the cell level in the basic task – Cell Leader He nurtures one cell of 5 to 15 Christians.

#### **Seven conditions that threaten spiritual passion:**

The DRAINED Condition

I Kings 18: 24,29,36-37; 19:3-4,7; Luke 8:46.

The DRIED-OUT Condition

The unfilled spiritual tank...empty tank".  
King David before Ps. 51.

The DISTORTED Condition

Gen. 13:10, "And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw..."

The DEVASTATED Condition

2 Cor. 1:8-9, "...we were under great pressure, far because our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death".

The DISILLUSIONED Condition

Ex. 2:14, "Then Moses was afraid...."

Is. 7:2, "Now the house of David was told, 'Aram has allied itself with Ephraim', so the hearts of Ahaz and his people were shaken as the trees of the forest are shaken by the wind".

The DEFEATED Condition

Peter in Luke 22:33, "And he went outside and wept bitterly".

The DISHEARTENED Condition

I Kings 19:3 – 5, "Elijah was afraid and ran for his life...'I have had enough, Lord', he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors....."

## 21 FACTORS THAT FOSTER FELLOWSHIP

“How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity...there the Lord bestows his blessing...” (Ps. 133:1,3). It is because of this truth that Satan constantly seeks to destroy unity. Fellowship needs to be worked at. It doesn't just happen. Scripture teaches the need to observe these principles:

### **Commitment**

“Be devoted to one another in brotherly love” (Rom. 12:10). So often ‘love’ only flows when we satisfy each other’s standards, not because it is a basic requirement irrespective of the others performance. Are you deeply and unconditionally committed to the members of your fellowship on the basis of your oneness in Christ?

### **Love**

The ultimate in spiritual experience is love. Note that we are commanded to love. John 13:34 says, “Love one another”. This implies that true love is not an emotion but a result of deliberate action. Furthermore, Romans 5:5 proves that is possible to love with the love of Christ. “Christ has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.” Love is a basic ingredient of discipleship: Jesus specified it as the means whereby “all men will know that you are my disciples” (John 13:35).

### **Transparency**

“Walk in the light, as he is in the light” (1 John 1:7), means living transparently with one another and with God so that no wrong spirit, grudge, hardness or negative attitude is allowed to continue and impair relationships. 1 John 2:9-10 says that we can't walk in the light if there is a wrong attitude in our hearts to someone else.

### **Humility**

The basis of brokenness or meekness is a recognition that we have no rights. Jesus talked about accepting and bearing the cross as a fundamental ingredient of discipleship (Luke. 14:27). A cross is a capital ‘I’ crossed out. Paul talks about being “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20) Have we ever accepted the cross as a principle? It is the only basis for good personal relationships.

### **Openness**

Fellowship also includes a freedom to go to another if we sense a wrong spirit in that person toward us. Of course, if we go with a grieved or prejudiced attitude we will only make things worse. Jesus said that if we want to worship the Lord and we know that another person has something against us, then we should seek to re-establish fellowship first. At this point reconciliation has a higher priority than worship (Matt. 5:23-24).

### **Forgiveness**

One of the major road-blocks to the flow of the Spirit in one's life is an unforgiving attitude. The need for a forgiving spirit recurs again and again in the Gospels, where it is often linked with effective prayer, for which it is an essential precondition. Paul puts it as an essential ingredient in continuing Christian fellowship. Colossians 3:13 says, “forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another”.

### **Forbearance**

Jesus recognised that the real crunch in fellowship is maintaining love when another's fallibility is very obvious. Indeed there is not much merit in loving lovable people. Paul teaches forbearance as ‘big feeling’ or largeness of heart. In other words, we are to have a ‘high

tolerance threshold; this is only possible in the Spirit. Col. 3:13 again reminds us, “bear with each other”.

### **Sensitivity**

The Lord wants us to be sensitive to the consensus view and to temper strong personal feelings in the light of fellowship attitudes. An overbearing disciple is a contradiction in terms. “Clothe yourself with humility towards one another” (1 Pet. 5:5).

### **Communion**

Christians are to obey the Scriptural exhortation to meet with one another for worship and fellowship. “Let us not give up meeting together...but let us encourage one another” (Heb. 10:25).

### **Encouragement**

This is one of the most strategic ministers. The terms ‘exhort’ and ‘comfort’ mean ‘encourage’. The references to ‘encourage one another highlight the usefulness of this function (Heb. 10:25). 1 Thess. 5:11; Rom. 12:18). The Devil’s ministry is the opposite – discouragement and depression.

### **Counsel**

“Admonish (counsel) one another” (Col. 3:16). The original word for counsel carries the idea of placing the truth in the mind. A symptom of true fellowship is when a Christian knows he can give a word of counsel or advice (input of truth) to another without fear of reaction. In other words, a bond of trust has been developed which is strong and does not break, when truth, even unpalatable truth, can be shared in love and accepted in the spirit. “Competent to instruct (counsel) one another” (Rom. 15:14).

### **Sharing**

Actually our English word ‘fellowship’ is the translation of a Greek word meaning ‘mutual sharing of what is held in common’ or ‘to go share with’. It is used in Romans 12:13 and 15:27. Discussing what we have learnt about Christ is fellowship; giving of one’s substances to another is fellowship; giving time to help others is fellowship; sharing one another’s load is fellowship. Galatians 6:2 says, “Carry each other’s burdens.”

### **Restoration**

Suppose a serious breakdown in fellowship has occurred. How can it be restored? The Scriptures in Matthew 18:15-22 are very clear. The offended person should go to other party and seek to have the matter put right. If this can’t be achieved he is to go again, possibly with one or two church leaders or brothers, and if this is also unsuccessful he is to lay the matter before the local fellowship of which they are members. We are not to remain satisfied with impaired relationships.

### **Servanthood**

Galatians 5:13 teaches that the true expression of the Christian life is a spirit of servanthood – a concern to help one another and a desire to serve one another. Christ washed his disciples’ feet, cooked breakfast for them and went about doing good. Paul describes his desire to make himself “a slave to everyone” (1 Cor. 9:19).

### **Hospitality**

1 Peter 4:9 says we are to open our homes to one another ‘without grumbling’. This verse shows that our home is a key factor in cultivating fellowship. In the qualifications for Christian leadership this attitude is twice mentioned as necessary (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8) and it is listed in Romans 12 alongside other Christian virtues such as prayerfulness, humility and fervency.

### **Participation**

1 Peter 4:10 teaches that one of our fellowship responsibilities is to exercise our spiritual gifts for the benefit of the group. Not to do so is to fail in our function as stewards and to deny the fellowship the blessings which the exercise of these gifts are meant to bring.

### **Unity**

Romans 15:5, “May...God...give you a spirit of unity” and I Cor. 1:10 “I appeal to you... that all of you agree with one another” teach the responsibility of seeking to find God’s mind on an issue. The Holy Spirit does not have two opinions. Voting on a controversial issue (not elections) should be a last resort measure in a truly Christian fellowship, the ideal being to seek a consensus through prayer and exchange of views so that clarity and conviction develop in the whole group.

### **Diversity**

Unity does not imply uniformity. It is the genius of the Holy Spirit that he equips us all in different ways, and the clear teaching of I Cor.12 is that while we all have been an inescapable relationship to the body, we are each to contribute through our own unique function.

### **Acceptance**

Romans 12:10 teaches us to “honour one another”. Do we only appreciate people when they agree with us? If so, we are guilty of favouritism, which is condemned in James 2:9. A mark of true humbleness or humility of mind is that you “consider others better than yourselves” (Phil 2:2,4).

### **Submission**

Ephesians 5:21 makes it clear that we are to “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ”. The word means to ‘place under’ and the teaching means that our motivation constantly has to be the other’s good other’s welfare, not our own, out of a fixed acceptance that our priorities are to be Jesus first, others next and ourselves last. Sweeping? Yes. But totally Biblical. “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5).

### **Prayer**

A fellowship is only as strong as its members' ministry of prayer for one another. In many local churches especially, this is a great area of weakness; often the prayer meeting has either disappeared completely for lack of support, or degenerated into some less strategic form of gathering or discussion. Pray together, stay together! “Devote yourselves to prayer” (Col. 4:2). “Pray continually” (1 Thess. 5:17; “Be....faithful in prayer” (Rom. 12:12).

# **BIBLICAL BASIS FOR HOUSE CHURCHES**

## **The City**

The world is experiencing a growing rate of urbanization. Recent research has shown that by the turn of the third millennium urbanization will reach over 52 percent.

Traditionally, the Church worldwide has viewed, “the city with fear, suspicion, and as a place to be avoided”. Therefore there is a powerful trend for the church to vacate the city centre and go to the suburbs. The trend towards urbanization has caused great problems for the population of our cities. When the population increased quickly, an unbearable pressure on necessary resource such as potable water, housing, and health care can develop. This explosion of population can lead to various health epidemics, homelessness and poverty.

The socio-economic needs are obvious in all this. Behind them are the pressures on the family; increased marital instability; the new urban financial struggles that strain human relationships; the role changes of wives from rural homemakers to second-income earners; families splitting their time between the city and their country roots; kin obligations on narrowed incomes; conflicts between parents and children as rural value systems are challenged by urban ones being adopted by the children, newly emerging patterns of sociability, based now not only a family but on vocation. Reports state that various people have different views of the city, “but all agree that in every expanding city there is a spiritual and moral vacuum”. On the whole, the church has avoided the cities.

Yet, we as believers and leaders we are to take the city and make it a place for His Glory.

## **The New Testament House Church**

The New Testament church was effective in reaching the metropolises of its time. The beginning of the N.T. church was the family unit and the family home. N.T. history and the Bible clearly show that in N.T. times the household was regarded as a basic political unit. The household could include not only family but “slaves, freedmen, servants, laborers, and sometimes business associates and tenants”. One of the most important methods of spreading the Gospel was by use of home. The first meeting of the church in Jerusalem occurred in a home – the upper Room (Acts 1:15). The house therefore, was both a fellowship and a place of meeting. As the movement grew, more houses were incorporated as meeting places. John Mark's mother's house was an example of a sub-group of the whole meeting for prayer. Both Acts 12:12, and Acts 2:47, mention that the people broke bread in their homes.

To begin a new congregation in a new city, one of Paul's first objectives was the winning of a household which could serve as the nucleus and centre of his further work. Paul needed a meeting place in order to establish a church. Notice the various households in which Paul had relationships with: Lydia, the Phillippian jailor, Crispus (Acts 16:14-15, 31-34, 18:8), Priscilla and Aquila, Narcissus (Rom. 16:3,10,11), Chole, Gaius, Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:11, 14-15) Caesar (Phil. 4:22) and Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 1:16; 4:19).

The house church became the basic unit of the church in the N.T. It is identified clearly by the phrase, “the church in their / your / her house”. This phrase is used four times, all in the Pauline epistles. It is used to describe the church that meet in Aquila and Priscilla's home in Ephesus and Rome (1 Cor.16:19; Rom.16:3-5); in Nympha's home in Laodecia, and in Apphia's and Archippus' home in Colossae.

## **The House Church – A Meeting Place**

The size of a house church was limited by the size of the largest room in the house. The largest possible meeting would include 45 people. Housing patterns...varied considerably across the Empire. The church in the various cities of the Aegean coast would gather in the dining room of the house, which in some cases might open into a portico or open space. Greek and Roman homes, known for the dinner parties their owners hosted, would have well-equipped rooms for meetings. These rooms would often be the largest in the house.

Once the house church was filled to capacity, the continued growth of the church occurred logically through the addition of more house churches. The occurrence of more than one church in a city is suggested in Acts. The early church broke bread “from house to house” (Acts 2:47). The word was taught “house to house” and persecution happened “house to house” (Acts 5:42; 20:20; Acts 8:3). We can safely say that in major cities there were probably several such house churches loosely tied together.

Increasing the congregation by adding more house churches made the N.T. church an effective ‘ground roots’ movement. It did not depend on the acquisition of a church building for expansion. All that was needed was another family willing to open up its home for meetings. By the middle of the first century there was a proliferation of settled house churches throughout the Roman world.

Initially, before persecution made it difficult, the church of Jerusalem would meet in Solomon’s Colonnade, part of the Temple complex (Acts 2:46; 3:11; 5:12). Here, they would receive teaching from the apostles and participate in fellowship and prayer. Miraculous signs and wonders were also performed by the apostles. (Acts 2:42-45). Fellowship included sharing the wealth among all who had need (Acts 2:42-45). Unfortunately, because of the treatment the church received from the hands of the Jewish leadership, people interested in the message of the apostles were afraid to join them in Solomon’s Colonnade (Acts 5:13).

The house church provided a safe opportunity to seek the truth. At the house church level, the church met for breaking of bread, teaching and prayer (Acts 2:46; 20:7-12; 20:20). In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, Paul mentioned different aspects of the services. They included singing, instruction in God’s Word (1 Cor. 14:26) as well as the celebration of the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:17). He also stresses the importance of prayer (Phil. 4:6).

### **The Purpose for House Churches**

The N.T. commandments for relationship cannot be fulfilled only in large assemblies. House churches are smaller gatherings of people that gather together regularly to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. House churches must be accountable to the vision of leadership in the wider body of Christ. House churches are one vehicle in which the Great Commission in Matt 28:19 can be fulfilled.

Listed below are some of the Biblical purposes of a house church:

- To praise, worship and obey Christ. (Acts 2:42).
- To learn God’s Word and how to apply it. (Acts 2:42).
- To pray together, and celebrate the Lord’s Supper together. (Acts 2:42,46).
- To foster fellowship and develop communities of hope, healing and life. (Acts 2:44-45; Heb. 13:16).
- To bring people to a living faith in Christ. (Acts 2:47).
- To minister to each other. (1 Corinthians 14:26).
- To prepare each other for mission in the world. (Matthew 28:19).

House churches ought to be organised to gather regularly for a united purpose in the overall vision of the Local Church, which we can call Celebration Centres, which meet on Sundays. These assemblies gather together to pray for the city (1 Timothy 2:1-2), to praise and worship God in unity, to read the Word of God, and to hear the ministry of the Word from anointed and proven ministers of the gospel.

These ‘Celebration Centres’ are Biblical (Acts 5:42). They have the following purposes:

- To foster unity between Christians (1 Corinthians 1:10)
- To change the spiritual atmosphere over a locality (Ephesians 3:10; Matthew 18:18-20).
- To enable anointed preachers and teachers (Ephesians 4:11-12) to reach more believers at once with their messages from the Lord.
- To provide a venue for different creative expressions of praise, worship and communication which are not practical at a house group level (Psalm 149:1).
- To provide a larger and more credible witness to the community (Acts 6:7).



To enable the organisation of projects and ministers which require a more broadly based co-operation between Christians gifted and called to minister together in a certain domain. (2 Cor. 8:10-15).

## **Leadership**

The N.T. church started with the leadership of the apostles. They were initially responsible for all the functions of the church, from preaching to overseeing food distribution. As the church grew, new levels of leadership arose. These new leaders were chosen by the congregation and were responsible for the daily distribution of food. This freed up the Twelve for “prayer and the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:4).

Another leadership position, that of “elders,” (Greek: “*presbuteros*”) came into being. The elders of the Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:30). On his and Paul’s first missionary trip, they appointed elders for the house churches they planted (Acts 14:23). Elders were involved in the decision making at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). The church in Ephesus also had elders (Acts 20:17). Luke also referred to these elders as “overseers” or “bishops” (Greek: “*episkopos*”; Acts 20:26).

Paul lists the requirements for these elders / overseers (1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9). Peter gives a charge to leadership (1 Pet. 5:1-6). These passages also focus on the role of the elders; handling the Word of God, knowing sound doctrine and serving and managing the church. In Philippi, the office of overseer was mentioned alongside of “deacon” (Greek: “*diakonos*”; Phil. 1:1). Paul states the requirements for this office in 1 Tim. 3:8-13.

In this passage, there is a reference to ‘*gunaikas*’ (Greek) which can refer to either “wives of the deacons” or “women who fulfill the role of deacons”. Phoebe is referred to as a “*diakonon*” (Greek), a “deacon / servant”. This could be an example of this leadership (Rom. 16:1). These passages show strongly that female leadership was easily accepted by the N.T. churches.

The role of deacons in Acts 6 was to serve the church. The Greeks used this term “to describe one who was a servant or responsible for certain welfare duties within the city”. The Greek usage parallels the usage in Acts. Deacons acted as “assistant to” the elders. In the late first century, bishops / elders and deacons were the two offices. By the time of the first century, church officers were more defined. The bishops were a distinct office from that of the elder. There was one bishop for a city, a board of elders and various deacons. The bishop was the authority for the church in a given city. The elders reported to him. The deacons reported to both the bishop and elders. As the church grew, so did the leadership structure.

## **Influence**

The N.T. House Church’s influence was felt at all levels of society. It penetrated the leaders of the Sanhedrin (Joseph Arimathea; Luke 23:50) and Nicodemus (John 3:1), and the synagogue (Crispus; Acts 18:8). It got to the point that the Christians were known as the ones that “had turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6).

## **House Churches of the Twenty-First Century**

The N.T. house church was not a phenomenon that occurred in only one geographical setting. It spread throughout the entire Roman world. It had the advantage of being a ‘small group network’. That fact enabled it to expand and withstand persecution. Having multiple house churches within a city ensured that the church was adaptable to the various cultural and social groups contained in that city. Key cities of the Roman Empire were impacted by these fellowships (Antioch, Syria; Corinth; Ephesus; and Rome). The social structures of today’s cities are similar to the N.T. time. The house church thrives in areas where persecution (or the threat of persecution) is the strongest. China is a great example. The key to each of these is the commitment and fellowship that happens at the core level - the family house unit.

## **City Church Definitions:**

### **CELEBRATION CENTRE:**

A Celebration Centre is a gathering of House Churches [HC], House Groups [HG], Preaching Points [PP] and Prayer Cells [PC] along with newcomers. Uncommitted members and those genuinely not able to attend the weekday meetings. This meeting is usually in a hired hall or auditorium on Sundays, at a convenient time.

In a Celebration Centre there should be around 5 House churches or at least 35 members who meet together for:

- Praise and worship with functioning in the gifts.
- Testimonies
- Preaching / Teaching of the Word.
- Breaking of Bread
- Collection of Tithes and Offerings
- Prayer and Ministering to the people

This is where the Worship Team, Elders and Leaders function to the fullest of God's calling in their lives. It is here that newcomers are prayed for and ministered to in a larger setting. This gathering also serves as a place where other fresh ministers are identified and given place to function.

### **HOUSE CHURCH / VLLAGE CHURCH:**

[Relationships, loving, caring, sharing, praying for one another]. A place where a minimum of 2 families would gather, along with the House Church leader. This group should comprise of at least 7 members who are 15 yrs. and above. The House Church must divide when the size exceeds more than 20 members. The House church meets once a week at a specific time and location and is open for new members to be added.

The House Church activities comprise of the following:

- Praise and Worship with function of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
- Prayer
- Testimonies
- Preaching / Teaching of the Word – systematic course
- Breaking of Bread
- Collection of Tithes and Offerings

Each House Church shall be free to conduct its own outreach / follow-up and other related activities within the vision of the local church.

The House Church should normally last for approximately 1 1/2 hrs.

### **HOUSE GROUP:**

This is a group of people who may not be committed to the local church, but are seekers and are interested in knowing more of God. Here there is basic teaching given on the foundation of Christian walk / life and experience. This group has the potential to become committed to the local church and eventually become a House Church. The House Group meets once a week with people coming together to hear God's Word. This is at a specific time and location.

The activities of the House Group will be as follows:

- Praise and Worship with function of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.
  - Prayer
  - Testimonies
  - Preaching / Teaching of the Word
- The House Group should run for about one to 1 1/2 hrs.

Aim of House Groups is to mature and grow into House Churches.

**PREACHING POINT:** This is a place where people gather solely to hear the Gospel. It is in this place that evangelists and workers have full opportunity to function. This is also a place where signs follow the preaching of the Word and where many turn to the Lord.

This meeting consists of:

- Praise and Worship and special singing / music
- Testimonies
- Preaching of the Gospel leading to salvation
- Praying for the sick and needs of people
- Carefully noting down names and addresses of contacts for follow-up.

This meeting could function on a weekly basis to open the way for House Groups to begin.

#### PRAYER CELL:

This is a group of committed believers who meet at a convenient time and place to pray. In this group there is prayer for specific needs of the church and individuals. The members are normally those with a marked intercessory burden and are adept at spiritual warfare. This may comprise at least 2 members but can go up to a maximum of ten people.

#### ACCOUNTING PROCEDURE FOR TITHES AND OFFERINGS:

The House Church leader takes an offering each week at the house church meeting. The offering includes both 'tithes and offerings'.

At the end of the meeting two members (Other than the house church leader) counts the money and records it ( 1 + 2 copies) in the standard form and signs off on the form. The money along with one copy of the form is put into an envelope and sealed. The other two copies are attached to the outside of the form by. Staple or clip. The sealed envelope is then handed over to the House Church leader.

The House church leader takes one copy of the form and files it in a file for his reference. This file will be maintained by him.

The House church Leader ensures that the envelope is kept in a safe place until Sunday.

The House church Leader hands over the envelope with one copy of the form attached to it on the outside on Sunday, after the celebration service, to his Zone Leader.

Then:

At the celebration service on Sunday, the Zone Leader collects the offering envelopes from the House church Leaders reporting to him. (This may also be a good time for him to get a quick summary of what took place at the house church).

The envelope of what are taken by the Zone Leader to his home and there, he removes the 'outside' copy of the form and files them in his file.

He then opens each envelope separately and checks if the money in the envelope tallies with the amount recorded in the form that is inside the envelope.

He writes 'checked' and signs the form to validate that the amount had been correctly recorded in the form.

He then records the total amount collected by the house churches reporting to him in a fresh form. Signs off on it and then puts the money, the form filled in by him as well as one copy each of the forms filled in at the house churches in an envelope and seals the envelope.

The Zone Leader should ensure the safety of the envelope containing money when it is with him.

He hands over the envelope to the church accountant on Monday evening at the Leader's meeting for which the accountant gives him a receipt acknowledging receipt of an envelope.

**SAMPLE of Tithes and Offerings Collection Book Slip:**

NAME OF HOUSE CHURCH: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF HOUSE CHURCH LEADER: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF ZONE LEADER OR PASTOR: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TITHES

OFFERINGS

CHEQUES: \_\_\_\_\_

CHEQUES: \_\_\_\_\_

NOTES:

NOTES:

1000 \_\_\_\_\_

1000 \_\_\_\_\_

500 \_\_\_\_\_

500 \_\_\_\_\_

100 \_\_\_\_\_

100 \_\_\_\_\_

50 \_\_\_\_\_

50 \_\_\_\_\_

20 \_\_\_\_\_

20 \_\_\_\_\_

10 \_\_\_\_\_

10 \_\_\_\_\_

COINS \_\_\_\_\_

COINS \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL: \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS: \_\_\_\_\_

AMOUNT IN WORDS: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURES AT HOUSE CHURCH OF THOSE COUNTED THE COLLECTION:

i) \_\_\_\_\_ ii) \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE OF ZONE LEADER / PASTOR: \_\_\_\_\_

(only on master copy)

**ORDER OF HOUSE CHURCH:**

PRAISE AND WORSHIP – 20 MINUTES

GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT AND RESPONSE – 5 MINUTES

TESTIMONIES – 10 MINUTES

BREAKING OF BREAD – 10 MINUTES

WORD OF GOD – 20 MINUTES

TITHES AND OFFERINGS – 5 MINUTES

PRAYER AND INTERCESSION – 10 MINUTES

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND FELLOWSHIP – 10 MINUTES

TOTAL TIME: – 90 MINTUES

**HOUSE CHURCH REGISTRATION RECORDED**

REGION : SOUTH	AREA :	ZONE :	DATE:
H.C. LEADER'S DETAILS	HOUSE CHURCH'S DETAILS	"VISION" DETAILS	
NAME: ADDRESS: PHONE:	DATE STARTED : DAY OF MEETING : TIMINGS OF MEETING : LANGUAGE : PLACE : PHONE :	NAME ASSISTANT HCL : DATE TO MUTIPLY BY :	

FULL NAME OF REGULAR MEMBERES	OCCU-PATION	SEX M / F	MAR STA *1	DT OF BIRTH	YR OF B.A *2	MONTH JOINED	ATT R/I * 3	W BAP Y / N
1								
2								
3								
4								
5								
6								
7								
8								
9								
10								
11								
12								
13								
14								
15								
16								
17								
18								

Note: - \*1: Indicate: S for Single or M for Married

-\*2: Indicate Year of Born - Again

-\*3: Indicate: R for Regular attendance (75% or more) or I for Irregular attendance

### HOUSE CHURCH MONTHLY REPORT

REGION:	AREA:	ZONE:	REPORT OF MONTH:		
HOUSE CHURCH LEADER'S NAME :					
NUMBER OF MEMBERS ON REGISTRATION RECORD:					
DETAILS OF HOUSE CHURCH SERVICES OF THE MONTH:	WEEK I	WEEK II	WEEK III	WEEK IV	WEEK V
	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE	DATE
PRAISE & WORSHIP					
TESTIMONIES					
BREAD & WINE (Y / N)					
TITHES & OFFERINGS (Y / N)					
GROUPS PRAYER (Y / N)					
MINISTRY OF H.S. (Y / N)					
MINISTRY OF WORD (Y / N)					
SUBJECT TAUGHT					
LESSON OF GROWING IN GRACE NO					
REMARKS					
NO.OF REGULAR MEMBERS					
NO.OF FIRST TIME VISITORS					
NO.OF FOLLOW UP VISITS					

**P.S.: PLEASE PRAY FOR YOUR HOUSE CHURCH MEMBERS BY NAME DAILY!**

## **HOUSE – CHURCHES AND HOW TO PLANT THEM**

House churches functioned from their inception as the nucleus of the Christian community. The Lord of the Church intended it to be that way; if He had desired it to be otherwise He could have shaped its lifestyle differently. There were many organizations in His culture that assembled members into halls or specially constructed auditoriums. Guilds had their own edifices. Synagogues had dotted the countryside for generations, gathering members in impersonal large groups. Pagan temples were also common. Nevertheless, Jesus shaped the church to meet in homes. His own disciples were gathered together with Him in a home setting when He served them their last supper together.

### **The Home Ministry Of Jesus**

It's significant that in Jesus' ministry he operated out of homes, not formal buildings. He often taught his disciples in houses (Mark 2:1; 7:14-27; 9:33; 10:2-12; Matthew 13:36). We frequently see Him in the homes of others, including Peter, Matthew, a ruler, Simon the leper, Simon and Andrew, Levi, a Pharisee, Jairus, Zacchaeus, and Martha. He referred to his upper room Jesus' "guest room" (Mark 14:14).

While, "the Son of man had no place to lay His head, "at the same time He taught in Mark 10:29-30 that, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age "(homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, and fields....). His itinerant servants took this literally. They lived with families in homes wherever they went. In fact, living in a home was a prime strategy for bringing people to personal faith. In Luke 10, Jesus assigned the seventy disciples to go to Perea to enter homes, offering peace to all who lived within. When they found a "man of peace" (one desiring to find peace), they remained in that home, eating and drinking whatever was set before them. In this way, a household would be saved to Christ – and another house church would be formed.

Peter's vision came at the house of Simon in Joppa. It was in the house of Mary the mother of John that Christians gathered to pray. Salvation took place in the house of Judas, as Ananias prayed with him. We see him staying in homes wherever he served, including the house of Jason – who, as host, had to pay his bail when he was jailed. He lived in the house of Lydia after her household had been saved and ate in the jailer's house after his whole family had come to believe in God. There are many more who hosted the Apostle, including Titius Justus, Crispus, Phillip, Gaius, Aquila and Priscilla. There is a very important reason for the early church to be shaped in homes. It is in this location that values are shared. It may be possible to transmit information in a neutral building, but few values are implanted there. Value systems are ingrained through living together in a household. Something stirs deep within when life is shared between the young and old, the strong and the weak, the wise and the foolish. In the house groups, all participated and all were impacted by the values of the others as Christ lived within them.

### **The Impact Of House Groups**

The lifestyle of the first Christians meeting in house groups was so powerful that daily salvations took place. The total involvement of Christians in house groups overwhelmed outsiders: "But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all; he is called to account by all; the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you" (1 Corinthians 14:24-25). This may be termed "Body Life Evangelism". The simple witness of the life of Jesus, observed as it flowed in His body with power and reality, caused the most hardened skeptics to confess Him as their Lord.

In that early church, there were no specialists. Apart from the teaching of the Apostles, leadership was not emphasized to any great extent. Details were handled by those who were closest at hand as needs arose.

Our Lord knows there are two factors in spiritual growth. One is receiving His power; the other is becoming the channel of it. Maturity only occurs when both are experienced and activated. The

greatest men and women among the house churches were those who served, not those who led. Every household had a “father,” a man respected and obeyed. At the same time, a good father would encourage the development of all within the household. He would not be a tyrant of it. Only at the end of the New Testament era do we find a house church with a petty dictator, and he is soundly rebuked by John (3 John 9-11). The domination of one person over others limits the possibility of growth. This was not permitted in the early church. It is important to realize that cults universally control their members, while the true body of Christ desires to see each member grow into wholeness of life.

The house groups were not independent from one another. They networked together from the first hour of their existence. This city-wide federation shows that the “house churches” combined to form a “local church”. Paul twice refers to “the church of God which is in Corinth” (1 Corinthians 1:2 and 2 Corinthians 1:1), indicating a general relationship existed between all the believers there. Again, he speaks of the “church of the Thessalonians” (1 Thessalonians 1:1 and 2 Thessalonians 1:1). He also refers to “the whole church” in Romans 16:23. In 1 Corinthians 1:1, the city-wide gathering of the house groups for the Love Feast created a scandal of lovelessness. In Acts 20:6-12, Paul’s visit to Troas occasioned a gathering of all the house groups to break bread and hear the Apostle teach them.

### **The Church’s Servants**

As the movement developed, equippers of the saints for the work of their ministry arose from within the house groups. Ephesians 4:11-12 specifically states that Christ Himself “gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for work of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...” Nothing is ever said about Paul or anyone else in the church appointing any of these men. This silence is significant. These men earned their positions by demonstrating the anointing of God on their equipping ministers.

The first task of an “equipper” is to model the lifestyle that is to be transferred to members of the body. Thus, Paul’s comments about bishops / elders and deacons dealt with their characters, not their duties. In all probability, the role of “deacon” was assigned by the home group itself to one in their midst who modeled a servant life. This man (or woman, as in the case of Phoebe in Cenchrea) has no job description in all of Scripture. When one discards the traditional hierarchy developed through the centuries, the reason for the lack of job description becomes clear. When house groups met, they shared the Love Feast. “Deacon” means literally, “one who waits on tables”. Had not Jesus said, “the greatest among you is the one who serves”? Had He Himself not washed feet at the Last Supper? Clearly, the godly man or woman in the midst of the house group was awarded this title, and respectfully permitted to serve the Lord’s Supper, perhaps the entire meal, to the rest.

As we examine the life of the current cell group church structures around the world, we can reflect some practical light on the tasks of the offices mentioned in the New Testament. These cell group churches share common church structures needed for their celebrations. Each cell has a servant-leader. For every five cells, there is a pastoral figure (often called a “Zone Servant”) to counsel and guide the ministries. For every 25 cells and five Zone Servants, there must be a person to shepherd this flock of two to three hundred people (often called a “Zone Pastor”). Working with the entire city-wide local church, men who are recognized as equippers provide guidance, teaching, and equipping to all the cells, called the “Ministry Team”.

While it is a matter of speculation, we may well consider the offices mentioned by Paul in the light of the universal pattern for churches in his day. In each area, the church originated when home groups clustered to form local churches. In the light of this, how would the offices be structured? If they were even close to the way current cell group leadership is arranged, this illustration may explain the function of a church life that had no hierarchy.

The Deacon serves the house group. Since an Elder (also called “Bishop”) requires experience in the developing and multiplying of house groups, it would take about two years before he or she would be prepared to assume responsibility for several of them. Thus, Paul would rightly tell Timothy to appoint elders when returning to churches after an absence of a couple of years. Those



to be appointed as Elders would be easily recognized after such a length of time. Note that in this interim no "Senior Pastor" (to use a modern term) or "Elder" even existed. Until the house groups proliferated, there was no need for these workers. If such an office existed, Timothy would not have had the freedom to direct the internal affairs of the local church. Church planters in the book of Acts were careful about interfering in the churches after they were launched.

There is both Biblical and extra-Biblical evidence that some apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers were itinerant servants who traveled between the local churches. These titles refer to offices within church life. They founded churches, taught and equipped members, transmitted divine revelations, and expounded Scripture. They were links between the house churches and their assembled local church structure and also between all the cities where churches existed.

# THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH'S EXISTENCE

“What is the purpose of the Church’s existence?”

We will find that the reason for the existence of the Church is basically fourfold. God had an eternal purpose in mind when He planned creation and redemption. This purpose was manifested in Christ and it is an ‘eternal purpose’. This great purpose is THE CHURCH. Nothing will frustrate the eternal purpose of God in Christ and His Church (Ephesians 3). All things work together for good to them that are called according to this purpose (Romans 8:26-28).

Let us consider the fourfold purpose for the existence of the New Testament Church.

## **Ministry unto the Lord**

The chief purpose for the Church’s existence is to glorify and worship God. All things were created by God and for Him and for His pleasure (Revelation 4:11).

The church is redeemed to be a worshipping community (Psalms 29:1-2). Redeemed to worship Him, then to serve Him (Matt. 4: 10). It is first upward, then outward; it is first God, then man. Worship always precedes service! Study these Scriptures: Deuteronomy 4:19; 5:9; 6:13; 8:19; 11:16; 12:32; 17:3; 26:20; 30:17; Joshua 24:14-24.

Man was created to be a worshipper. Sinners cannot worship God. Only the redeemed can. Worship must be in spirit and in truth. John 4:20-24 is the major passage in the New Testament concerning worship and the word “worship” is mentioned here ten times.

John is told “to measure the worshippers” (Revelation 11:1-2). The redeemed must worship God by the energy of the Holy Spirit and according to His Word of truth (John 17:17).

The Catechism answers the question: “What is the chief end or purpose of man?” by saying: “The chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever”.

Let us consider in outline form some of the major points in Scripture concerning the subject of worship in the redeemed community.

### **WHO to worship?**

Man does not know of himself how to worship God and thus creates various forms, liturgy, ritual, etc. and then asks God to bless his program. The great danger is formalism, deadness, monotony, and lack of the life of the Spirit (Jeremiah 3:16- 17; 7:8-16; Psalms 63:1-4).

There is no specific form of worship or order of service laid down in Old or New Testaments. However, the following ingredients are scattered throughout the Old and New Testaments. These things show that one, or more, any or all may be used at any given period of time when the redeemed community meets for worship.

The key is availability, flexibility and adjustability. “To everything there is a time...” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-11).

Men worship according to traditions and nullify God’s Word so often (Mark 7:1-10). It is GOD who is SPIRIT who must be worshipped! (John 4:20-24). NOT God through any images, relics, priests or ministers, or God of our own concept, but the God of the Bible who reveals Himself as SPIRIT! Any other worship is actually idolatry!

### **HOW to worship?**

John 4:20-24 tells us that we are to worship “in spirit and in truth”. This is what the Father God is seeking for! How much does He really find in the church throughout the earth? Worship is honour, reverence, homage in thought, feeling and act. The Hebrew word means “to prostrate, render homage, hold in awe, serve religiously”.

Worship in spirit means that the Holy Spirit is moving upon, energizing and quickening our redeemed spirit to worship God who is Spirit. True worship begins in the spirit of man quickened by the Holy Spirit (John 3:1-5 with John

4:20-24). How can one not “born of the Spirit”, “worship God who is Spirit in spirit and in truth?” There is no possible way to do this!

Worship in truth means to worship according to the way God has set out in His Word. His Word is truth so to worship in truth is to worship according to the Word of God.

The Word of the Lord gives such variety in expression of worship (Psalms 149-150). Singing and speaking praise to God, lifting hands, kneeling, prostration, and clapping of hands, lifted heads, silence, worship, etc. are involved in the various expressions of worship in truth. Musical instruments also are included (Hebrews 4:15; 12:1; 13:15; I Timothy 2:8; Psalms 3:3; 19:14; 22:22,25; 28:2; 34:1; 42:5,9; 49:1-3; 63:4-5; 95:6; 121:1; 134:2; 141:1; 143:6; Lamentations 3:40-41; Isaiah 45:23; Luke 11:21; 22:41; 24:50; John 11:41; 17:1).

### **Old Testament Order of worship**

In the Old Testament we see WHO (The Person), and HOW and WHEN (The Times), and WHERE (The Place) and the ingredients of worship set out here which ingredients follow in principle into the New Testament Church.

Israel was “The Church in the Wilderness” (Acts 7:38). They were the redeemed community and become a type of the New Covenant Church (1 Corinthians 10:6,11).

Weekly Sabbath day was set aside for rest and worship (Psalms 41:4; 81:1-3; Psalms 92-Title; Exodus 31:12-17; 20:8-11).

Freewill occasions and gatherings at the Tabernacle of the Lord took place (I Samuel 1-2; Psalms 119:164).

Festival seasons of the year (Deuteronomy 16; Leviticus 23). These were three:

Passover – Celebration of Paschal Lamb and deliverance from Egypt (Exodus 12).

Pentecost – Celebration of giving of Law and Corn Harvest (Leviticus 2).

Tabernacles – Celebration of fruit harvest, rains, atonement, booths, etc. (Leviticus 16:23; Psalms 81:3).

The Place where all gathered was where His Name was recorded i.e. Tabernacle of Moses, Tabernacle of David, Temple of Solomon. The people of the altar and ark (Deuteronomy 12:16 with Matthew 18:20). Patriarchal Altars were also symbolic.

### **New Testament Order of Worship**

The New Covenant community follows the basic principles typified in the Old Covenant Church.

First day of the week assembling together (Acts 20:8; I Corinthians 16:1). The resurrection of Christ took place the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1). The Holy Spirit Pentecost took place the first day of the week (Acts 2:1-4). The disciples broke bread the first day of the week (Cf.. John 20 with Acts 20:28). Collections were laid aside the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1).

Believers seek the Lord individually as New Covenant priests.

Festival occasions of the year, i.e., Camp Meetings, Special times and seasons of the year.

The Person and Place – Christ Jesus (John 1:14-18; 2:19-21), and then the Local Church (Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:25; John 4:20-24; Ezekiel 11:16; I Peter 2:5-9; Revelation 1:6; 5:9-10).

## **Old and New Testament Ingredients of a Worship Service**

The basic ingredients of a worshipping service of the priestly body are seen in these things. These things are the WHAT and the HOW of worship in truth.

### **Ministry of Music**

Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:17-18. Tabernacle of David order. Psalms, Hymns, Spiritual Songs. Good melodies and words for congregational singing. Psalms 100; 150. Instruments of music, however, never to replace the instruments of the believers, individually and corporately. Music to the Lord, to the saint, and also to the sinner. Song leader must have ministry in this area.

### **Prayers, Thanksgivings, Intercessions**

I Timothy 2:1. Prayer for kings, rulers, authorities. His house to be a house of prayer for all nations. Includes adoration, thanksgiving, petition and praise (Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13).

### **Tithes and Offerings**

Malachi 3:6-10. An act of worship. Not to be belittled or apologized for.

### **Ministry of Word**

Psalms 40:9; 138:1-2; Deuteronomy 6:3-15; 11:13-21; Malachi 2:1-7. Priests and Levites teach the Word. The Word is above all things. It is the HUB of the service. All that precedes and follows relates to it as the spokes of a wheel to the hub. The meeting falls apart without this hub; the preaching, teaching and exhorting the Word, the sword of the Spirit. Note the ministry of the word in the Book of Acts.

### **Ministry of Members of Body**

I Corinthians 12-13-14. Testimony, sharing, items, exhortations, Scripture readings, etc. (I Corinthians 14:26).

### **Gifts or Charisma**

Gifts of the Spirit should be evidenced (I Corinthians 12-13-14). Fellowship.

### **Ordinances**

Water Baptism, Laying on of Hands, Communion, etc.

**Announcements** – Bulletin or brief announcements time.

### **Benediction**

Worship is judged as to its final analysis whether it: (1) Glorifies the Lord, and (2) Edifies the worshipper in the most holy faith to minister to the world. The church is called first to minister to THE LORD. All other ministry will only be as effective as this ministry is (Psalms 50:23; John 15:8; Titus 2:10; I Peter 2:9; 4:11; Romans 15:6,9; Ephesians 1:5-6,12,14,18; 3:21; II Thessalonians 1:12). Read also I Chronicles 16:5; 23:30; II Chronicles 5:12-14; I Chronicles 16:4-6; 25: 1; concerning instruments of music and the singers.

The Book of Revelation shows the redeemed WORSHIPPING God and the Lamb (Revelation 4:4-11; 5:1-14). As we present our bodies a living sacrifice then we can move in priestly ministration and service (Romans 12:1-2).

### **Practical Guidelines for Leadership**

The Service should be one unified and harmonious whole. God has a purpose for each meeting. Move from part to whole, whole to part. Seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Should lead the people out to meet God (Exodus 19:17; I Corinthians 11:17).

The Service should flow like a river, not a flood, not a jerky river. River cuts its own path. The Holy Spirit is a river (John 7:37-39).

Ministry of the Word is the hub of the service. All else flows to and from the Word ministry.

Edification of the saints is key to all (I Corinthians 14). Does it edify? Does it build up or tear down?

Glorification of God and Christ by the Spirit. The Spirit comes to point to the Father and the Son (John 14- 15-16).

Variety of the Spirit. Not stereotyped, forms, ritualistic, stiff and starchy. Living Presence of Christ to be there. Not just emotional climax without spiritual and Biblical climax. Not old wineskin with new wine, old garment patched up with new patches.

Revelation is a Book of worship connecting heaven and earth (Hebrews 12:22-24). Allow for the creativity of the Holy Spirit, and His variety.

Beware to not allowing the leadership to do the priestly ministrations for the people instead of the priesthood of all believers. The persons who lead the service should be the most spiritual, not the carnal ones!

Beware of “me” centered services. Beware of over subjectivity and not objectivity. Need balance in both. Spirit needs to quicken each area of the service.

Types of Ministry can be:

Praise and worship meetings.

Prayer and intercessory meetings.

Communion services

Foot-washing services

Ministry of the Word meetings

Presbytery meetings

Body members ministry meetings

Worship team and musicians meetings

### **Ministry to the Saints**

The second purpose for the Church’s existence is to edify itself, this being done by the saints ministering to one another. This is ministry of the Body edifying and increasing itself in love (Ephesians 4:9-16; I Corinthians 12).

Enough has been dealt with this fact. We note some of the major points in connection with this area of ministry.

The saints are to be built up in the most holy faith (Jude 1-4). God has given various ministers for this purpose (Ephesians 4:9-16; Colossians 2:7; I Corinthians 3:10-15; 14:26; Jude 20).

The fivefold ministers are to educate the members of the Body of Christ with the Divine doctrines of the Word (Matthew 28:18-20).

The saints are to be built up as to holiness of character and conformity to the image of Christ. It is the Lord’s will that the Church be holy, without spot, blemish, or wrinkle or any such things. He desires to present to Himself a glorious Church as His bride (Ephesians 5:23-33; John 15:2; Hebrews 12:10; I John 3:2; Rev. 19:7; I Corinthians 11:28-32; II Corinthians 7:1).

The saints are to be brought into the work of their ministry as functioning members of the Body of Christ also (Ephesians 4:9-16).

The Church is also to be a covering and protection for the saints of God. It is the house of the Lord and all that a natural home provides, so should the house of the Lord (Isaiah 2:1-4).

The saints will minister one to another (John 13:34-35; Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:21), even as the members of the natural body minister one to another.

Love one another (John 13:34-35; 15:12,17; I Peter 1:22; I Thess. 3:12; 4:9; I John 4:7,11-12). Love in word and in deed (I John 3:18).

Comfort one another. Help, call alongside (I Thessalonians 4:18)  
 Consider one another (Hebrews 10:24).  
 Exhort one another, call near (Hebrews 3:13; 10:25).  
 Edify one another, build up (Romans 14:19; I Thessalonians 5:11).  
 Admonish one another (Romans 15:14, Colossians 3:16).  
 Minister to one another, serve, as deacon (I Peter 4:10).  
 Forbear one another, hold self back or up (Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:2).  
 Forgive one another, graciousness (Colossians 3:13; Ephesians 4:32).  
 Submit to one another, set in array under (Ephesians 5:21).  
 Subject to one another, as submitting (I Peter 5:5).  
 Teaching one another, instruct, show lessons (Colossians 3:16).  
 Prefer one another, set above in estimation (Romans 12:10).  
 Pray for one another, supplicate, petition (James 5:16).  
 Hospitality to one another, lover of strangers (I Peter 4:9).  
 Greet one another, salute, welcome, embrace (I Pet. 5:14; Romans 16:16).  
 Fellowship one another, partnership (I John 1:7)  
 Have the same care one for another (I Cor. 12:25; Ephesians 4:25).  
 The human body, with its millions of cells and members, all working in harmony, unity and life show what can be in the members of the Church, the Body of Christ!

### Ministry to the Sinner

The third purpose for the Church's existence is to minister the Gospel to the sinner. The more effective our ministry is to the Lord, the more effective ministry is to the saints, then the more effective should be our ministry to the world, to the unsaved. When the saints are built up they should multiply themselves. The church is to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom to the world before the end of this age comes (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20).

God's promise to Abraham included blessing on all the families of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3). This is the Abrahamic Covenant.

God called Israel to bless the nations of the earth as a kingdom of priests also (Exodus 19:1-6).

The inheritance of Christ is the salvation of the lost (Psalms 2:8; 11:6). The world's ordained ministry ministers to 10% English speaking people, and 6% speak to the 90% non-English speaking world.

We are to scatter the seed and win souls (Proverbs 11:23-24, 30: 13:17; 19:17; 21:13; 22:9; 24:27; 28:27; 31:8-9).

We are to be a light in the world (Matthew 5:14-16).

Signs and wonders are to follow the preaching of the Gospel (Mark. 16:15-20).

The Church is to fulfil the Great Commission and make disciples of all nations in this present age (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:5-8; Luke 4:18-24; John 20:20-22).

This is the age for the coming in of the Gentiles to be grafted into the good olive tree with believing Jews (Romans 9-10-11). Here the Non-Jews, with the Jews gather into the Tabernacle of David (Acts 13:1-4; 15:15-18; Romans 11:25).

The Church is to be God's arm of salvation to a lost and dying world (John 3:16). He sent His disciples out to continue His ministry until out of every kindred, tongue, tribe and nation there will be those who are the redeemed (Revelation 5:9-10). The Lamb will see the fruit of His sufferings. The Church is to minister the gospel!

## **Ministry of Conquering Satan and His Kingdom**

The church is to finally bring about the downfall and casting out of Satan and his evil hosts. We see this in the following points.

### **The Church is Militant and Triumphant (Matthew 16:15-20).**

The type of Church Christ will build is a victorious Church. The Gates of Hades will not prevail against it (Genesis 22:17). It will be militant and come in conflict and warfare in the spiritual realm with the Gates of Hades (Genesis 24:10). It will prevail and go forth conquering and to conquer.

The Church will be clothed with the armour of God and the spiritual weapons of warfare for battle (Ephesians 6:10-20; II Corinthians 10:1-5). The weapons will be mighty through God. Our kingdom is not of the world system, thus not a physical battle. The warfare is with principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world, and wicked spirits in heavenly places (John 18:36-37; Revelation 12:10-11; Acts 12:10; Psalms 9:13; Isaiah 38:10; Matthew 7:13; Genesis 28:17; Isaiah 26:2).

The Gates are symbolical of the places where the ancients held their business transactions, council, law-courts and entrance to the cities. The Gates of Hades have to be stormed (Genesis 3:15). The enemy will be bruised by the seed of the woman, the Church militant and triumphant.

### **The Church and The Keys of the Kingdom**

The Church will have the keys of the kingdom (Matthew 16:19); the key of knowledge (Luke 11:51); the key of David (Revelation 3:7; Isaiah 22:21-22); and the Lord who holds the keys of death and Hades, and the key of the bottomless pit will be working with it (Revelation 1:18; 9:1; 20:1).

The key is always significant of authority and power. The key is an opener. It opens and shuts doors, letting people in or locking them out. Peter at Pentecost opened the door to the Jews and then in Acts 10-11 opened the door of faith to the Gentiles (Acts 2).

The four keys in Acts were The Word, The Spirit, The Name and The Prayers of the Church and of all the saints working together.

The kingdom is the rule and reign of Christ. The kingdoms of this world are subject to His kingdom (Revelation 12:13,17). The Church is to preach and demonstrate the power of the kingdom (Matthew 24:14).

The message of the kingdom is repentance, faith and baptism (Matthew 4:16; 3:2). The early Church taught and demonstrated the kingdom (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:28-31). This kingdom is entered by new birth (John 3:1-5; Colossians 1:13-14). The law and the prophets were until John, since then the kingdom is preached and all men press into it (Luke 16:16; Matthew 5:17-18; 11:13).

Old Testament Israel was God's Church and Kingdom (Exodus 19:1-6 with Acts 7:38). The kingdom in its present form has mixture of good and evil, but and evil will be taken out at Christ's advent (Matthew 13).

### **The Church in Binding and Loosing Ministry**

Binding Ministry – Greek “*Deo*” = “to bind, to knit, to wind”. It relates to the Gates of Hades in conflict against the Church. The Church is to have power to bind those who oppose; Principalities, powers, wicked spirits (Matthew 12:29). First bind the strong man. The tares are bound into bundles first (Matthew 13:30). Those who are cast out of the Church are bound (Matthew 18:15-20). The Word of God is not bound. Satan is to be bound eternally (Revelation 20:2 with Psalms 105:22-26; 149:8; Mark 5:3; II Timothy 2:9).

Loosing Ministry – Greek “*Luo*” = “to loosen, break up, destroy, dissolve, melt”. It relates to the keys of the kingdom. The church is also to have a loosing ministry. Jesus loosed a daughter of Abraham who had been around by Satan (Luke 13:16). Satan has bound his captives and the Church has to loose these powers that bind (John 11:44; Psalms 102:20; Mark 7:35).

Whatsoever you bind shall be bound...whatsoever you loose on the earth shall be loosed (is already loosed in heaven).

Heaven and Earth.

“Bound...loosed in earth...bound, loosed in heaven”. The Church is the Body of Christ in the earth, yet joined to her risen Head in heaven.

All power is given to Him in heaven and earth (Matthew 28:19-20). After the ascension of Christ to heaven the disciples went everywhere preaching the Gospel, the Lord working with them from heaven, confirming the Word with signs following (Mark 16:15-20).

He is the possessor of heaven and earth (Genesis 14:8). His will is to be done in earth as it is heaven (Matthew 6:9). The earth totally depends on heaven for all blessings. Otherwise earth will become dry, empty, a waste and a ruin without heaven’s blessings (Deuteronomy 11:1-21).

The New Testament Church is redeemed to minister to the Lord, to the saints, to the sinner and finally be used to judge Satan and his evil kingdom. This is the fourfold purpose of the Church’s existence. No wonder Paul said, “Unto HIM be glory in THE CHURCH both now and ever more”. (Ephesians 3:21).



# A SHORT STUDY ON THE HOW OF HOME VISITATION

As an introduction to the topic of 'Visitation' I want you to consider for a moment a common scenario: a church member goes to the pastor and the talk goes like this: Church member: "Pastor can we do....?" Pastor: "That's a great idea and a needful thing but ...I don't have the time."

How can we initiate new ministers in the church ministry without turning the pastor into a nervous wreck? This problem was also present in the early church. The apostles in Acts 6 saw a need but felt it was not their priority. As a result they chose and appointed seven men who could do the job without having to distract the apostles from their area of ministry of prayer and the Word. The apostles were not being proud or lazy. They were not above visiting people. But they were establishing a priority in their own ministry. They saw that their distinct contribution to the Body was not menial activity, but praying and teaching the Word to equip the saints for the ministry. It has been said that the people who train are more important than the people who do the actual work. The old adage about it being better to teach people to fish than give them the fish applies here too. Yet too often, the Biblical pattern is thwarted by church members who expect pastors to do everything.

## **Biblical Basis and Purpose**

The Greek for 'visit' is '*episkeptomai*' meaning simply 'to go see'. This is used in a number of situations.

### **To Pay a Visit**

Paul said to Barnabas, "Come let us return and visit the brethren in every city...and see how they are". (Acts 15:36).

Paul here simply wanted to know how they were doing. In the first chapter of Romans he has a deeper longing to visit the people (Romans 1:10-13).

To strengthen them spiritually

To mutually encourage

To reach out to them with the Gospel

The early church placed great emphasis on fellowshiping together in their homes (Acts 2:42). Their visiting was to:

Encourage

Fellowship

Teach

Pray

Break bread

Note that the breaking of bread was a celebration of communion. Jesus told them to remember Him and they did this by breaking bread together. Like at the Last Supper, they would often share a simple meal together beforehand and fellowship together.

### **To Get Acquainted**

There is another Greek word for visit, '*historeo*' which carries the idea of: getting to know a person's history! In Gal. 1:18 Paul uses this word when he visited Cephas. It was a "getting to know you" visit.

### **To Minister to Needs**

"Religion is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction." (James 1:27).

We are to visit widows and orphans. Note that it says 'in their affliction'. There are many people who are troubled. Widows and orphans simply show two kinds.

The orphans are people for whom no one cares.

The widows are those who have been left alone.

There are many 'widows' and 'orphans' around us that we can reach out to.

Jesus also taught the need to visit.

"I was sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to me". (Matt 25:36)

## **How to Visit**

### **Who Shall we Visit?**

It is important to visit people to whom we are able to relate. If there are some new-comers to the church who are teenagers, then it may be helpful if some of the younger people visit them. If the people to be visited are very ill it may be best if the leaders, or mature believers visit.

Another consideration in this area is the number of people who will visit. If it is simply a fellowship visit of a church member it may be alright for three or four to go together. Normally however the optimum number is two, and at least one of the two should be mature believer. Note that Jesus send out His disciples two by two! (Mark 6: 7; Luke 10:1).

### **Time**

#### **Arrange the visit beforehand.**

In planning a visit it is better to ask if people would like a visit. If we say, "I would like to visit you" there is a sense in which the visit is for us. If we say, "would you like me to visit you?" then the visit is for them! Make sure it is wanted, otherwise we will be wasting our time.

Note: A visit does not have to be at their home as this may not be feasible. We can meet in a park or a coffee shop or a tea house.

#### **Arrange a specific time**

It can be embarrassing if someone suddenly drops in unannounced. It is a waste of time if they are not at home. We should therefore arrange a convenient time and place.

#### **Be sensitive to the time**

It is better that we leave a little early than late. If they sincerely are hoping we would stay longer than another visit is easily planned. Have overstay our welcome however, they may not want us to come again. Try to limit your visit to an hour at the most.

### **Goals**

We must have a clear goal, depending upon the kind of visit. Prayerfully decide beforehand what is to be achieved, prepare possibly a short passage of Scripture to share and bring encouragement or direction to the person or family to be visited and in this way plan out the visit carefully.

### **Practical Preparation**

Visitation will often involve taking gifts. Consider the practical needs of the person or bring some fruits along.

### **Prayer**

Our visit should always include a time of prayer. Don't wait until the end of the visit to pray. Find a suitable time perhaps after they have shared needs or worries. In this way the prayer can be more spontaneous.

## **Visitation Options and Insights**

### **Visiting the Elderly**

When visiting the elderly try to have a meal with them. We can invite them out to a nearby restaurant, or ask them if we can buy some food and help them prepare it.

Don't pity them. They need love, encouragement and friendship.

Don't do everything for them. It is their home and they will want to be a good host. Be available to help them when they need it.

We should not pretend to understand when we didn't hear correctly. Ask them to repeat the matter if not heard. We are there to communicate.

Be sure to read the Bible with them (a passage or one of the Psalms) and have a time of prayer to especially pray for their needs.

Remember – the goal is to make the visit special for them so they will be happy, encouraged and know that someone cares.

### **Visiting the Sick**

There is comfort and strength in having someone visit us when we are sick. It is often a time when we are restricted from fellowshiping with others as we normally would, and therefore we derive great strength and encouragement from such a visit.

Aim to encourage, fellowship and pray for the sick person.

Take some fruit or maybe even some food. If possible ask them beforehand what they would like.

### **Prison Visitation**

Prison visitation is best done through one of the prison ministries. They may also train people to do it.

It is good to take literature to those in prison, and may be tapes if they are allowed to receive them.

This ministry can also be backed up by letter writing to keep in touch and follow-up.

### **Visiting New People**

When people have been to church a few times they can be asked if they would like a visit. This visit may be used also to share the gospel. In this event it is important to take some literature such as a gospel booklet or a New Testament. The visit may not primarily be used to evangelise, but to welcome people and get to know them and their spiritual state, yet using the opportunity to minister the Word to them.

### **Visiting Backsliders**

A 'backslider' is someone whose relationship with God has grown cold, and who has lost his desire to come to church and fellowship with God's people. He turns up once in a while but is always 'busy'. If we visit a backslider then our goal will be to encourage, love and motivate the person to be restored to the Lord.

If we personally know people in the church who seldom come any more, or not at all, we can call them and ask if they would like us to visit.

### **Visiting Families**

Some families in the church find it difficult to be in church other than Sunday because of their commitment to children and babies. A mid week visit will often be appreciated, especially from people they know well, and thus establish more meaningful fellowship with other believers. Make sure this is done at a convenient time.

### **Church Member Visitation**

It is a good idea from time to time to visit church members, leaders and even the pastor!

This is often a 'getting to know you' situation, but can also simply be to spend time with someone you know and appreciate, to deepen the relationship and share fellowship.

### **Hospital Visitation**

Some people may feel called to visit seriously and terminally ill patients in hospitals. It is good to get specific training for this ministry. Here are some of the problems and guidelines that deal with terminally ill patients:

Acceptance of terminal disease

The stage that a terminally ill patient goes through after the initial shock.

Anger. Sometimes directed at God, or a relative or a doctor, and sometimes this may be vented upon the visitor.

Denial. Though they may know they are terminally sick they may suddenly deny it totally. This is a psychological release.

The final stage is an acceptance of the disease, though sometimes they get angry again and the cycle is repeated.

# **The Feelings of a sick person**

Negatively they may feel fear, hopelessness, grief, worry, isolation, guilt and depression. Some feel that their illness is a punishment for sin.

Positively they often change their values. Money and possessions become less important. They are more honest and open. They often seek God and the real meaning of life. They also desire real friendship.

**Guidelines for the visitor**

Before doing this ministry we should ask ourselves why we want to do it. The motive is important because a terminally sick patient is very sensitive to attitudes. If our motive is a real compassion and desire to help the patient there will be no problem here.

Be sure to pray with them, and let the Holy Spirit lead.

**DO BE** honest; listen; try to understand how they feel; share their burden; respect them; share time; encourage and love.

**DON'T** pretend; make speeches; pity or judge them; be impudent; come to satisfy our own need; give up.

This ministry costs. Be committed to the task and prepared to give out.

# THE MINISTRY OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Discouragement is a killer. In Num.21: 4 the people were discouraged and as a result it caused them to sin. This in turn caused them to lose what they had. Later in Num.32:7-9 the people were robbed of their inheritance because of discouragement. Today the church is no less robbed by this very effective tool of Satan. To counter this the Scriptures abound with exhortations to encourage, to comfort, to exhort. In this study we shall consider both discouragement and encouragement, and look at ways in which the exhortations of Scripture can be implemented practically in the local church.

## **Discouragement What**

does it mean?

- To neutralise. Make of no effect.
- Cut down like a stalk that is reaped.
- To break into pieces.
- To cause fear.
- To cause to be oppression and weariness.
- To lose passion.

All the great men of God had times of discouragement.

## **There are 7 basic causes for discouragement:**

### **Personal Failure**

Do you feel you have failed somebody? Do you feel you have failed yourself? When we face a task and make a mess of it, fail to complete it or fail to resist temptation, then we get discouraged. Another common cause of failure is when someone tells us we are no good. This also brings discouragement and discouragement will bring defeat.

It grieves me to hear a parent, a teacher, or friend tell a child that he or she is useless, or not as good as elder brother. The child ends up with a double handicap. He is perhaps not well guided, but also gets discouraged and loses self-esteem. Believe it or not this is also a problem for many adults in the church.

### **Prolonged Warfare**

Difficult times can also be discouraging. We all face tests and trials. Sometimes these circumstances are prolonged and we are slowly drained of our spiritual resources. The longer the battle goes, the less we feel we will win. The Christian's motto is "Never give up", but in the midst of the battle it is hard, and our resolve and faith are challenged.

### **Continued Unanswered Prayer**

There are times when faced with a situation or a problem that we pray very hard and very long and nothing seems to happen. We wonder if God has really heard. We ask ourselves "is it any use?" This can be discouraging if we lack understanding of God's purposes, or are seeing things from too earthly a viewpoint.

### **Emotional Strain**

There are a number of things that cause emotional strain and stress. A death in the family, a birth, a change of environment, a change of job and many more. Just as being tired physically drains us of our ability to cope, so being drained emotionally puts pressure on our faith. Furthermore this condition is often difficult to recognise ourselves.

### **Physically Illness**

Physical illness is draining physically but it also causes emotional strain. This saps our zeal and passion, it makes us weary, and often causes fear to raise its head against us. We often disassociate the physical from the spiritual, but there is a real and important connection. In 1 Thess. 5:23 Paul prayed that the people would be kept whole. He specifically mentioned

spirit, soul and body. Paul felt it was important. We also should pay attention to physical health and well being, and be aware of the discouragement it can bring.

### **Satanic Attack**

The devil wants to discourage us. He therefore will attack us in areas of our lives that are weak. This oppression and attack is often discouraging, especially if we try to handle it alone.

### **Lack of Understanding**

Failure to understand what is happening in our lives can be a source of discouragement. Living in the world, dealing with the problems that it brings, and then getting too busy to enjoy fellowship with God makes us 'earthly minded'. We begin to see everything from man's point of view when we need spiritual wisdom and an eternal viewpoint to discern and understand.

## **Encouragement**

"Behold the Lord your God has set the land before you; go up and possess it, as the Lord God of your fathers has said unto you; fear not, neither be discouraged." (Deut. 1:21).

Encouragement gave the leaders strength to possess the land. When standing on the threshold of inheriting the land the Word of the Lord was "encourage him!" (Deut. 1:38).

We are all going to be discouraged in one way or another. God knows this, and He has therefore commanded us to encourage. This can mean the difference between victory and defeat.

First of all the words for encourage in Greek are '*parakaleo*', meaning: called alongside, '*paramutheomai*', meaning: 'with counsel'. Note that the Holy Spirit is also 'the One called alongside'.

### **Let us consider a few scriptures:**

"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up" (1 Thess. 5: 11)

"Let us not give up...but let us encourage one another" (Heb. 10:25)

"See to it brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called today, so that none of you may be hardened sin's deceitfulness." (Heb. 3:12-13).

The devil roams around like a roaring lion looking for some one to devour. Unfortunately, since we joined the church we all have seen people fall away. The church would be much larger if they had not left. Why did they leave? Because of a sinful and or unbelieving heart that turned from the living God and were unwilling to repent. God shows us in the above given Scriptures how we can avoid that. Encourage one another daily! When we see brothers or sisters who are down and discouraged, we must go to them and encourage them. Today is the time. Do not let sin harden in their hearts. Do not let them become the target of Satan. By the ministry of encouragement we can cause many to stand steadfast in God.

The secret of encouragement is the Word of God. When we dwell upon lies and falsehoods, and think that we know better than God then we get a sinful and unbelieving heart. When we elevate the Word of God by faith above these thoughts we get victory.

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:5).

This verse gives to us a key to encouragement. We first get rid of the things that bring discouragement.

### **Cast Down Imaginations**

The Greek word used here: '*logismos*' means: 'reasonings'. It is a word only used in one other place in the Bible, Rom. 2:15, to describe the thoughts of the natural man. It is logical to think this way. We can reason it out. For instance, "I am not very clever. I have failed my exams. I cannot seem to ever do anything well". This is the reasoning of natural man.

Paul's advice is clear and simple: cast down these thoughts! Casting them down simply means not allowing them room in our mind.

### **Cast Down Every High Thought**

We are to cast down any thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, an exalted opinion, for instance, when our attitude is: "I know better than God!"

How do we appropriate the promises of God? We accept them as being higher than our reasoning and opinions. If we believe our reasoning we exalt ourselves and become proud. i.e. "God does not understand my situation. God cannot help me". We are all aware that we have these thoughts, especially during the times mentioned in the teaching on discouragement. We should not allow these thoughts room in our minds.

### **Let Jesus be the Lord of the Emotions**

We should not be ruled by emotions and the feelings of our hearts. We should be ruled by the Word of God. The argument is not what I feel but what God says! God said it; He is my Lord; He wants the best for me. He knows what is best for me. Therefore I will believe His Word.

We need to encourage people to replace the reasoning of the old man with the promises of God. We need to encourage them to replace feelings of fear with facts of faith. (Col. 3: 16a)

## **Encouraging**

Roman 12 gives a list of ministries. We are given a ministry and we are also given the grace to do it. Each one of us should have a ministry in the body. Here we see we can have the ministry of prophecy, service, encouragement, giving, ruling, and showing mercy.

Some are to have the ministry of encouragement. We are all to encourage, but some people are especially anointed to have this ministry.

### **Examples in the Bible**

Barnabas – Acts 4:36

Barnabas literally means: the 'son of encouragement'. He lived up to his name. He was always there when he was needed. It cost him much but he did it.

Epaphroditus – Phil. 2:25

His name means: 'one who distributes'. He was willing to pay the price of helping Paul. Even when it nearly cost him his life. He was not an apostle, or even an elder. He was simply an encourager.

Onesiphorus – 2 Tim 1:16

His name means: 'profit – bearer'. When Paul was a prisoner he no doubt was feeling a little 'down'. Onesiphorus found him. He was not ashamed that Paul was a prisoner. He was not a prophet or an elder yet his ministry to Paul was noteworthy.

## **How do we Encourage?**

### **Share God's Word**

Share what you received from God today. Share revelation and things that God has spoken to you about in the past. This reminds us of our responsibility to read the Word of God daily. If we don't get from God we can't share it with others.

### **Share Testimony**

Share what God has done in your life recently. Share how the Lord has blessed you in the past. This is testifying to the ability of God to work in our situation. It is vital, if is uplifting.

### **Share how God has Helped you**

We often see brothers and sisters who are faced with situations that we have personally encountered and had victory over. We can then share our victory. Be careful not to minimise the problem, they are still going through it!

### **Share the Testimonies of Others**

In addition to personal testimony we can also share what God has done in the lives of others. For instance things that you have heard or read that show the power of God and His love and concern.

### **Be Sensitive to People's Needs**

We very often laugh when we should be getting alongside and uplifting. Try to see things from the other people's perspectives, and try to imagine how they must feel.

### **Show an Interest in People**

Let the conversation centre around them not you. Make sure the words and testimonies you share relate to them and their situation. Put the emphasis on listening.

## **When do we Encourage?**

### **In Meetings**

Take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves before or after a service. Don't always talk to your friends, be sensitive to new people who are perhaps feeling left out of things because they don't know anybody. Be sensitive to others in the body that may have specific needs.

### **At other Times**

Will we see people at different times during the week – as we go about our daily routines, or as we go to work or school? More and more people have telephones also. We can perhaps follow up contacts we have made by calling them on the telephone. It may be that we simply see them around the village. We can also encourage people we have talked to in meetings. Pray with them if necessary.

### **By Meeting People Socially**

We can often do more over a meal or a soft-drink than we can in a service. It is also a good way to get to know people. The comfort and relaxed atmosphere of a home promotes fellowship and this can be mutually satisfying and beneficial. When we fellowship in this way we are saying we care.

Note: This should be done with people of the same sex so as to avoid misunderstandings or inviting the full family.

### **In Difficult Times**

When people are going through difficult times we should contact them to encourage them or simply to assure them of our prayers. People need to be overwhelmed by our love and concern.

## **Conclusion**

“Therefore, brothers, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged by you because of your faith”. (1 Thes. 3:7).

‘Persecution’ here means: ‘the choking pressing care’. ‘Distress’ means: ‘the crushing trouble’. That was their condition when the encouragement reached them. As a result Paul said they ‘really live’!

Discouragement can be crushing and choking.  
Encouragement brings God's life and strength into people's situation.

Sometimes it is the Holy Spirit that comforts. Sometimes it is the brethren. We need this ministry in the church today. It will mean fewer people will fall away; it will mean God's people will be stronger. We shouldn't wait until tomorrow. We must encourage today.

The devil causes us to major on negative things and to criticize. He wants us to fail.  
We should heed the words of the Lord and be an encourager God wants us to succeed!



## Encouragement

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, “And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some of us are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the day approaching”.

Questions to examine ourselves whether we are truly an encouragement to others in our lives:

Do you feel you are a person who cares about others? What or who brings out your compassion?

How well can you hear beyond what others are saying but which is not said in words?

Is there anyone in your life now for whom your presence is making a difference? How are you “there” for others?

Proverbs 3:27, “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due when it is in the power of your hand to do so.”

Have you ever withheld “good from those who deserve it when it is in your power to act”? Why? How can you deal with negative feelings that cause you to withhold encouragement when you know others need it?

Can others depend on you for encouragement – why or why not? How can you be more spontaneous in encouraging others?

How can you keep others taking advantage of you and becoming too dependent on your encouragement?

As you encourage, so you will be encouraged. (Prov. 11: 25). Have you found your encouragement returning to you at times?

As an encourager, do you feel the pressure or responsibility to be “up” all the time? How can you relax and let Jesus shine through you?

As you laid aside your personal pain to encourage someone else, have you grown? How?

Have you ever experienced God’s enabling? Has He ever given you gifts or words of encouragement for others beyond what you know you personally have to offer? What are they?

What or who is the greatest source of discouragement in your life right now? Can this be changed? If not how can you encourage yourself “in the midst of” the problem?

David encouraged himself in the Lord. (I Sam. 30: 6).

In Psalm 103 and 104 David commanded his soul to praise the Lord. He repeated the phrase “Praise the Lord, O my soul” five times. Praise builds up our inner selves.

One way of encouraging ourselves is to find purpose in your pain. From God’s perspective, what is happening in your life? How is He developing His character in you through your pain?

Are you or God carrying your hurtful situation? How can you release it and then leave it where it belongs?

We get well one step at a time. Can you commit to “encourage yourself in the Lord” at least once a day. How will you begin?

## Encouraging others

*Did you encourage anybody today? If not, start practising from today, and make it a point that you shall encourage, motivate, nourish someone daily, who is depressed, distraught and discontented physically or spiritually, leading that person to God's love and salvation through your words, deeds and activities.*

Encouragement isn't always an easy thing to give. Encouraging others doesn't necessarily mean giving them a pat on the back or a word of praise. Sometimes it means being honest when you'd really rather say nothing at all. In fact, encouragement can take many forms. It can be a shoulder to lean on, a warm hug, a hand to hold, an understanding smile, or a nudge in the right direction. Whatever form encouragement takes, it sends the same message: "You're important to me, and I care enough to tell you so."

Everyone loves receiving a word of encouragement. Everyone does not know how to give it. You can learn now. The following pointers are a great place to begin with:

### **Be Specific: -**

When it comes to encouragement, don't talk in generalities. It may help to say something like: "I like how you always look at the positive side of a situation." Statements like this let people know exactly what you think.

### **Be Honest Yet Kind: -**

Constructive criticism is OK, but it should be given at the right place and time. Telling a friend, her singing is awful in front of the entire music group isn't just bad timing, it's inconsiderate. Speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4: 16) is a lesson we all need to learn by being sensitive and led by the Spirit.

### **Be Spontaneous: -**

Never let an opportunity to compliment someone pass you by. Everyone enjoys being praised, through unexpected praise seems the sweetest of all.

### **Be there: -**

Sometimes your presence can be an encouragement to others. When a friend is going through a tough time, just knowing there's someone to talk to can make life a little more bearable. (Prov. 17: 17; 18: 24).

### **Proverb 25:11**

It says that words appropriately spoken are like apples of gold set in silver. May your words of encouragement be of equal value to others.

## REASONS WHY CHRISTIANS SUFFER

“And if we are (His) children, then we are (His) heirs also; heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ [sharing His inheritance with Him]; only we must share His suffering if we are to share His glory”. (Romans 8:17).

As Christians, we like the thought of sharing in Christ’s glory, but what about sharing in His suffering? Jesus took care of the death penalty once and for all, and we don’t ever have to worry about that again. But the Bible teaches that we must suffer times of trial if we are to share in the glory. Is it worth it? Listen to the words of Paul in Romans 8.18... "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time (this present life) are not worth being compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us and in us and for us and conferred on us!" Too often we think we suffer because of our circumstances. We believe that if our circumstances would change, we’d be able to act right. But God wants us to become so mature and stable that we act right even when none of our circumstances are good.

There are different levels of faith, and most of the time we want to use our faith to get rid of a problem. But sometimes God’s plan is for us to exercise a higher level of faith that will carry us through life’s challenges. I believe this requires greater faith than being delivered from a situation. Too often we marvel at the delivering power of God and overlook His keeping, strengthening, and enabling power.

### **Lack of Word Knowledge:**

Many Christians suffer because they’re too busy seeking carnal knowledge instead of the knowledge from the Word of God. The Lord Himself said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...."(Hosea 4:6).

Paul was an educated man with a wealth of carnal knowledge. But when he realized the importance of spiritual knowledge he said, "...I resolved to know nothing (to be acquainted with nothing, to make a display of the knowledge of nothing, and to be conscious of nothing) among you except Jesus Christ (the Messiah) and Him crucified."(1 Corinthians 2:2).

Like Paul, we need to realize the importance of learning spiritual things. Galatians 6:8 says, "...he who sows to his own flesh (lower nature, sensuality) will from the flesh reap decay and ruin and destruction, but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life."

### **Disobedience**

Once we know the Word of God we have a responsibility to be obedient to it. Too many of us intend to be obedient, but sometimes we put it off. Even procrastination (delayed obedience) is disobedience, and it can cause us to suffer. James 4:7 gives us good advice: "Submit yourselves therefore to God...." When God tells me to do something I find it helpful to write it down. This serves as a reminder that I must be obedient if I want God’s blessings. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land." (Isaiah 1:19).

### **To Purify and Test Your Faith**

Sometimes people seem surprised that they must go through a time of trial or suffering. Perhaps they have been faithful to learn and obey the Word of God, and still the trials come. Sometimes trials come simply to test and purify our faith. "You should be exceedingly glad on His account though now for a little while you may be distressed by trials and suffer temptations, so that [the genuineness] of your faith may be tested. [Your faith] which is infinitely more precious than the perishable gold which is tested and purified by fire. [This proving of your faith is intended] to redound (overflow) to [your] praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ [the Messiah, the Anointed One] is revealed." (1 Peter 1:6-7).

## **A Need For Brokenness**

The word “brokenness” may strike fear in some people, but it’s really not a bad word. God does not desire to break our spirits, but He wants to break that outer shell (the flesh) that prevents Him from being all He wants to be in and through us. He wants to break off things like pride, rebellion, selfishness and independence. God wants us to be totally dependent on Him, and suffering seems to bring us to that point. However, having to depend on God shouldn’t cause us to feel sorry for ourselves. I once said, “Oh, God. I’m so lonely, and I don’t have anybody but You. “I’ve discovered that having only God is a good position to be in!

## **To Build Compassion**

Compassion is born out of experiencing similar problems. The Bible says, "...we do not have a High Priest Who is unable to understand and sympathize and have a shared feeling with our weaknesses and infirmities and liability to the assaults of temptation, but One who has been tempted in every respect as we are yet without sinning." (Hebrews 4:15). It comforts me to know that Jesus understands me and has compassion. Going through trials and experiencing God’s deliverance better equips us to minister to others. Our pain is never wasted; it brings about compassion that reaches out to other hurting people to say: “I’ve been there, and God brought me out of it. And He’ll do the same for you!”

## **To Encourage Others**

The apostle Paul said there were many things that God allowed him to go through simply as object lessons for the people. "I want you to know and continue to rest assured brethren, that what [has happened] to me [This imprisonment] has actually only served to advance and give a renewed impetus to the [spreading of the] good news (the Gospel)...most of the brethren have derived fresh confidence in the Lord because of my chains and are much bolder to speak and publish fearlessly the Word of God..." (Philippians 1:12,14). Even in Paul’s imprisonment his stability and ability to be used of God was evident.

If we are to minister to others we too must face some adverse circumstances. But if we stand in faith and confidence God will bring us through to victory, and we’ll be a great encouragement to others in the process.

## **Because of the Word**

Sometimes we suffer attacks from the enemy simply because of our involvement with the Word of God. Mark 4:17 speaks of those who hear the Word and endure it for a while and then when trouble or presecution arises on account of the Word they immediately are offended (become displeased, indignant, resentful) and they stumble and fall away. When someone receives the Word of God Satan delights in coming immediately to try to steal what has been sown in the heart. He knows the Word will strengthen us and help us to live a victorious Christian life, and he wants to stop it if he can. So it is important to guard the Word in your heart and not allow the devil to steal it from you.

## **Because of Living in the World**

Many times Christians face trials and suffering simply because we live in a world full of sin. (II Tim. 3: 12). "But Jesus said, I have told you these things, so that in Me you may have [perfect] peace and confidence. In the world you have tribulation and trials and distress and frustration; but be of good cheer [take courage, confident, certain]. I have overcome the world. (I have deprived it of power to harm you and have conquered it for you). (John 16:33).

What a promise! Understanding the reason for our sufferings and having the assurance of the glory we’ll share should make it a little easier to enjoy life...even during the time of “sharing in suffering”!

**But if we stand in faith and confidence God will bring us through to victory and we’ll be a great encouragement to others in the process.**

## **DEVELOPING A CHRISTIAN LIFE - STYLE**

Life style has become a popular word of late. I spoke to a man about Christ in a bookstore and invited him to our special meetings. “That’s just not my life-style,” he replied, as if that completely excused him from any further consideration of God. Even Christians wrap themselves in an exclusive little cocoon called “life style.” “Each to his own”, they say, which is another version of, “I’m doing my own thing.”

Let's study Romans Chapter 12 for lessons on developing a true Christian lifestyle.

### **Presentation**

In verse one of Rom. 12 we read that we are to present our bodies to Christ. After all, He purchased them when He gave Himself as a ransom for us on Calvary's cross! Further note that Romans 12 begins with the word “therefore.” It points back to the closing statement of chapter 11: “Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” That should settle it. All that we have is in Jesus, and through Him and for Him. What would we be without Him? Therefore, Paul urged us to enter the Christian’s life-style by presenting our bodies to Him as a living sacrifice, a ‘reasonable service’. This is the key to understanding the will of God for our lives. God is no longer asking for bloody sacrifices on dripping Old Testament altars. Christ is the Lamb of God, and His once for all sacrifice (Hebr. 7 27; 9: 28) makes a new life style available to us as we present our bodies to Him. And verse one reveals that this presentation is both holy and acceptable, as well as reasonable. Have we ever just stopped in His presence to yield our bodies to Him and to His service (Cf. Rom. 6: 13).

### **Transformation**

Romans 12:2 speaks of a revolutionary change, a transformation, as a result of presenting our bodies to Him. We are not to be conformed anymore to this world, so the conforming must be dropped before the transforming can begin.

Many of us are still conformed to the world, still in tune with it, still pressed into the mould. We hurry over such verses as those in 1 John Chapter 2 where we are told not to love the world nor ever “the things in the world” (I John 2:15), like money. Some of these things in the world are necessary and important, but we are not to love them. Instead, we enjoy something higher and holier, even a glorious transformation into His likeness. And this transforming of our lives leads to the will of God for our lives. (Rom. 8: 29-30). This is here declared to be “good, and acceptable and perfect”. It’s difficult to beat perfection! Anything less than the will of God is imperfect.

### **Humiliation**

Next, God speaks of humiliation, the humbling of oneself before God and man. We are here enjoined in Romans 12:3 not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. Some of the religious shows we see today seem to be perpetual parades of the flesh, and some who started out to live for God now seem always to speak of themselves, their attainments, their books, their songs, their experiences and one wonders what God thinks of all this.

Humility seems to be a lost art. Yet God instructs us, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in the right time” (1 Pet. 5:6). And this humiliation extends not only to our submission to Him but to those around us, for we read that it is our honour to prefer one another (See Rom. 12:10). (Most of us prefer ourselves!) Rather than lording it over others, we are to “be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but associate with men of low estate” (v.16). And then he wraps it up by commanding, “Be not wise in your own conceits.”

### **Designation**

Now comes designation, as we seek His plan for our service. We have “gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us”. (Rom. 12:6). So whether He wants us to minister, teach, give or rule we are to give ourselves to the task diligently, simply, faithfully and cheerfully.

Christ said, "I must work the words of Him that sent Me" (John 9:4), and we should not rest until we find what He wants us to do and then obey that designation.

### **Separation**

Many today would like to do away with separation, but here we are told that our love should be without hypocrisy; that we are to "abhor that which is evil; [and] cleave to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9). Today's religious life-style that seems "Christian" ought to abhor evil, yes, "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 1:23).

We ought to be diligent about keeping dirt and grime out of our lives. A little boy once said, "I know why flowers grow, they want to hurry and get out of the dirt!"

"How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6: 2), Paul wondered. We are to come out from the world and be a separate people (See II Cor 6:17). Are we not a "new creation?"

### **Consecration**

Whatever our business, we are to be consecrated to it. "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord" (Rom. 12:11). Many a Christian has injured his testimony by being lazy on the job or by failing to do his best, as unto the Lord. We are servants of the Lord and should try to do our work properly (see Col. 3:23), "Knowing that of the Lord you shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for you serve the Lord Christ" (v.24).

Paul continues in Romans 12:12, "Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer." A fervent, rejoicing, patient Christian is somewhat of a rarity, isn't it? Yet I believe all of us can be as consecrated as we want to be, God never gives an impossible command.

### **Association**

Paul challenges us to distribute freely to the needs of another saints (see Rom. 12:13). We are to be generous and hospitable. Selfish, miserly, stingy people are always miserable, and a sour countenance often reflects the self-centered life-style of such believers.

We're going to serve God as consecrated believers. Some may persecute us, but we are to bless them and curse not (see v.14), though we may feel like it some times! "If it be possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceful with all men."(v.18). I'm glad God put that in there. We've all had the experience of wearing ourselves out trying to get along with someone who just won't like us, no matter how hard we try! We Christians can generally get along with people better than others do. It helps to use common sense. Be practical. Be genuine. Be cheerful. Be real. When we have done that, along with soaking them in prayer, we've done about all we can do and God will take over and bless our efforts in His way.

"Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord"(v.19) Isn't it wonderful to know that? Meanwhile, we are to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep" (v.15). We should be genuinely interested in others and "be of the same mind one toward another" (v.16). And a most important part of our lifestyle in associating with others is to "recompense no man evil for evil [and to] provide things honest in the sight of all men"(v.17). If we are not absolutely honest, there is a terrible flaw in our character somewhere that can drive people away from the Lord whom we say we love. As one has said, "that what keeps most people out of the church is the crowd that's already in it!"

### **Jubilation**

The summation, which leads to jubilation, is found in the last verse of this chapter on the Christian's life-style. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (v.21). So, we overcome evil with good! The best defense is a strong offense, as many a football coach will affirm. We need to lose sight of the devil in the dust we stir up in serving the Lord. May this ever be our life-style, until the Lord of life returns!

## HOLINESS - THE KEY IS: SURRENDER

In talking about holiness the key is to surrender! Surrender of one's heart, mind, soul and strength is an absolute key to living an overcoming life. To experience the kind of life which Paul lived where, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me;" (Gal 2:20), which is impossible without unreserved surrender of self. We are not talking about the Adamic self that has been dealt with at Calvary (Rom. 6:6), but the Isaac self. While it is not born in sin but of the promise as was Isaac, it still needs to be surrendered. Some reading this will discover the missing link to successful triumphant Christian living. The question is often asked, "How do I make that surrender?" Personally I find that question puzzling. It has never occurred to me that it was difficult to know how.

When my brother or friend asked me to surrender my bicycle for a day or week, I knew what it meant – simply during that time I could not ride it. When the Lord told me to surrender my new car to my interpreter while on the field, I knew that it was totally his and I would not drive it again. I didn't say, "I am loaning it to you, when I return for a visit I want to use it". Surrender in my understanding meant to give it up with no strings attached. Surrender to me means, give it up, take your hands off it because it is no longer yours. That was the way I surrendered my life, self and will to God. When you do, your life, time and talents are no longer yours. They are to be used any time, place and how the Master chooses. . . . .

Someone may feel that God is unjust in requiring such surrender. We may feel that way if we do not understand God's laws of ownership and life. We are not our own, we are bought with a price. That price is not mere metal such as silver or gold, but His own precious blood. "For as much as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain way of life received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as a lamb without blemish and without spot." (I Peter 1:18-19). Since He has redeemed us from death, from eternal separation from God, from an eternal hell, He has the right to require absolute obedience. But it goes further than that. There is a love-principle involved here. I know that such submission is for my good. He not only showed me His love in dying for me, He wants me to have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). He that "shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:33). If I refuse to live for self and surrender my all to Him, He will so use it, that it is lived to the fullest potential. Being acceptable to God, a blessing to others results in self-actualization. It is impossible to have self-actualization when serving sin. Sin will be actualized. Man was not created to be in the image and likeness of Satan. The born again man is being transformed and conformed into the image and likeness of God. When that new man matures unto the stature of Christ, that is self-actualization. Even then he cannot take any credit for it because it is Christ in him who lives.

The will of the new-born man must yield self unto sacrifice. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone" (John 12:24). He must not live unto himself. He must not yield his members unto unrighteousness but unto righteousness and eternal life. God so loved the world that He surrendered His only and holy Son. Abraham so loved God and cherished covenant relationship that he gave his only son of promise. If we love God we will not withhold self from the altar. We cannot be a blessing because we cannot be blessed. He can only bless that which is surrendered to Him. The Apostle Paul experienced such a surrender. He really discovered the purpose of life. Little wonder he says to the church:

"I beseech you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). He once prayed for the Galatians to be born-again, now he says:

"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." (Gal. 4:19). The Holy Spirit can only fashion Christ in us as we yield ourselves to Him. We are His '*poiema*' (Greek)– workmanship (Eph. 2:10). As a sculptor works on a good piece of wood or stone, so the Holy Spirit is fashioning the new man into the image and likeness of Christ. God was well pleased with His Son. God's character and standard calls for no less than Christ-likeness. We could never

be happy through all eternity if we were stunted spiritual "pygmies"(a tribe of extremely short people). He can only work in us and bring us unto maturity if we surrender all to Him.

He cannot remake and transform a mind and will that are not surrendered. That is the key to Christ-likeness, to live a life above sin. Alternately the lack of a full surrender is the key to continued failure and sin. A mind that is yielded will be thinking His thoughts. It will not be pre-occupied with self but with things above and others. I say "others" because born-again people all too often are entirely too pre-occupied with self. Yes, they are born-again. They do have a new self that wishes to rise above self into maturing into Christ's stature. But because the will has not been unreservedly surrendered, and because satanic forces are constantly at work to make even that new self a "god", the will all too often co-operates with such forces.

Again we see such forces at work in Eve. She had a "self" and a free will. Satan appealed to the will to make 'self' a god. She had no 'carnal self' yet responded and allowed self to become carnal. She allowed the "spirit of her mind" to respond to an evil spirit, became carnally minded and did the carnal thing. In contrast to this, Jesus, the second Adam, upon assuming the status of Adam (Heb. 2:7, 9), as a Man with a free will, immediately turned that will over to the Father and did only the Father's will. When Satan pressed Him hard to do His own will He immediately quoted the written Word. "Then Jesus said unto him, Get You hence, Satan: for it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve" (Matt. 4:10).

It is important, therefore, to know the Word of God. When the sinner has the work of regeneration done in his spirit, Christ comes into the spirit and all things become new (II Cor. 5:17). In this born again spirit is no old carnal nature but a new nature. Not the "old-man" (Rom. 6:6), the "old self" but a new self, and a will. This will, if un-surrendered totally to Jesus, will lead this new self into desiring to become a "god." When this happens it does not mean that a person has lost out with God or that the person is demon-possessed. The Spirit of God within the new believer strives with the will through the 'spirit of the mind' to surrender fully to the Spirit of God and walk in the spirit. The enemy, who had been evicted, also strives with the will through the "spirit of the mind" to cater to the works of the flesh. He knows that the average believer will not commit adultery, murder, drunkenness or such like. That would be coming on them as a "roaring lion" and too easily identifiable, so he comes as an "angel of light". "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (II Cor. 11:14-15).

When he comes as an "angel of light" he comes as he did to Eve. "You will not surely die – you will become as gods." "You will be a somebody. God is holding out on you. You have a potential of being a god to be worshipped instead of worshipping God. Don't be God-centered – become self-centered. Follow me and I will give you pleasure, fulfillment, thrills, recognition. You will be a somebody, people will worship at your feet, your name and face will be on the marquee of the world. Look what Jesus offers you – a cross. He wants you to lay self on the altar. He wants you to be a bond-slave. I offer you popularity and life". The spirit of the mind absorbs such propaganda from the arch-deceiver and offers the will a choice. Satan does not tell the mind that life comes through death. Such reasoning is foreign to him because he knows nothing of death to self. He knows not the truth that: "Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it" (Luke 17:33).

So Satan comes as an "angel of light" and says, "Think of yourself. Forget about God and others. Become self-centered, become self-preoccupied, be pickled in the juice of self-indulgence. No, you don't have to renounce Christ, just don't be so Christ-centered and others-centered". In this barrage of temptations he never gives up. To the mature pastor he says, "You have worked for Christ, neglected your family, failed to develop a retirement program. Come on, get that cross off your shoulders and look after yourself for a change".

To the minister's wife he whispers, "All your married life you have been a slave to your husband and God. You come second in his life, commitment and time. When others have gone on vacation and traveled you have stayed with the stuff. You have catered to people, to evangelists and preachers. Your home has been a half-way house to everyone and not your private sanctuary. You



couldn't dress as you wanted to, use jewellery or make-up as others do because you have always had to be an example. Come on now. You don't know what you are missing. Your husband is out of town. Have a good time in town, everyone else is doing it. Think of yourself for a change." Sometimes he strikes a temporary victory.

Of course if that old devil, that cunning snake, an "angel of light" that is darkness, cannot get at the preacher or his wife he must get at his children. He makes them resent their "be an example" position. "Why should you be different than other kids? It is not your fault that your parents chose such a narrow, unnatural way of life. You have been deprived of a fun way of living. They are so bigoted, limited and strict. There are more "don'ts" than "do's" in their vocabulary. Other kids are not confined to a glass bowl as a gold fish for everyone to gaze at. Other kids are not constantly told they have to be an example. They are not constantly under scrutiny. And remember how your parents are called all hours of the night? They have no life of their own. Remember the abuse that your father takes from the people and other leaders? Do you want to sacrifice yourself to such thoughtless people? Leave it, forget going to Bible School and this outreach stuff. Get away from your restrictive parental guidelines. Their standards and rules are totally out-dated. Don't miss out like they have. Think of yourself. Have fun while you are young".

Harassed by the enemy, not relying on the written Word they are deceived. Sow to the wind and reap a whirlwind (Hosea 8:7). When it's time to pick up the pieces, the parents in love are still there. But so is Satan laughing at a well publicized spectacle. Come see Samson (Judges 16:21) grinding at the mill. Blind and bound, burdened and resentful but grinding and a public object of disgrace. No, Satan never lets them see the end result of an un-surrendered will. The prodigal is disgraced but as long as there is life there is hope of restoration to full sonship. The prodigal is a vivid picture of the price of an un-surrendered will and of the result of surrender. A son, an inheritance, a self and a will – the future is in the will. He had to decide whether he would treasure his inheritance, be faithful to father and live to his fullest potential or squander the inheritance. He chose the latter. The pleasures of sin lasted but for a season. Soon the world came crashing down on him. Neither his earthly father or Father in heaven could help him until he exercised his will and said:

"And when he came to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before you, and am no more worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight, and am no more worthy to be called your son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring here the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry." (Luke 15:17-24).

If one has missed the boat by catering to self as the prodigal did what great news is given to such? It is, that the Father waits, ready to restore such as "will" to be restored. An un-surrendered will may lead a son to the pig's sty. A fully surrendered "will" will lead one to the "throne" in heavenly places. Yes, the way to the throne is carrying your cross, though life, through Gethsemane, to the cross, through death into the glorious resurrection and throne rights and power.

The success of the Christian walk asks no more and no less than the full surrender of one's will to the will of the Master. The success or the failure to walk as Jesus did (I John 2:6) lies at this crucial point. The enabling power and the success of such a walk starts here. It is the embryo of a "full stature" realization, the key to a fully "self – actualized Christian life". Self realization and self-actualization cults always spell "self" with a capital "SELF". Self-actualized believers in Christ always spell Christ with a capital "C". "For me to live is Christ, to die (to self) is gain." Self can only be acceptable to God and one's self if it is hid with Christ in God.

The Christian says, "love yourself" because you are living to the full potential to your Maker. Love yourself because you have not allowed Satan to rob you of your inheritance. You have chosen to

walk the straight and narrow path. You have not allowed Satan to plant evil imaginations In your mind. You have kept your mind on the Spirit and have not walked after the flesh but after the Spirit. (Gal. 5: 16-18). You have kept your virginity for the marriage bed. You have kept your will and emotions from wrath, strife, and hatred. You have abstained from lies, idols, drunkenness and murder. You have turned your members to righteousness and your Master has been the Holy Spirit. You look back on life, you have let Jesus rule your spirit and you can love yourself for having Him live His life through you!

If we do not surrender all to Him and explicitly obey His commandments, we will constantly face divided loyalties. Happiness, peace, tranquility and accomplishments are not found in those whose loyalties are divided. Jesus had no divided loyalties. He was committed to the Father unto death. "I came to do Your will" There was no wavering even in the face of death. Nor did John the Baptist waver facing death!

Surrender is just what it says it is-Surrender! Surrender is not struggle, suppression, strain, exhaustive attempts to give up or put to death something. It means an unconditional yielding. We surrender to a loving God who has only our best interests at heart. It should not be difficult to make such a surrender to the Source of our lives!

When Jesus set His face to Jerusalem and there to face crucifixion, He knew that He was going to die in His Father's will. Yet here is Peter strongly objecting to the will of God being accomplished in His life. He had the nerve to take Jesus aside and say: "Be it far from You, Lord: this shall not be unto You." (Matt 16:22). Peter must have meant well but it was not Peter saying this as much as the enemy. "But he turned and said unto Peter, Get you behind me, Satan: you are an offence unto me: for you favour not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Mat.16:23). It was on such an occasion that Jesus gave the recipe for real meaningful living. "Either live for self and lose the real purpose of life, or lose yourself-life, turn it over entirely to Me so that I can live through you and you will find the real meaning to life." "Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it. For what does it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." (Matt. 16:24-27). We so often quote this text to sinners and its truth is applicable to them. It should be remembered, however, that these words were spoken to His disciples in privacy.

How contrary such teaching is to that of the world. The world says, "Don't lose your life. Life will come as you assert self. You will only come into self-realization by self-assertion. Be a self-assertive person. You will never be recognized and take the place of leadership unless you push your way to the forefront. The same world that tells you it is the survival of the fittest so you must get out there and battle your way to the top, in doing so they become pushy and make enemies. They hurt people, lose compassion and lose respect of others and self-respect for having done so. They must go elsewhere to be recognized because while they climbed to the top they hurt too many people getting there. How different the example of our Lord is from that of the world. "Turn the other cheek, go the second mile, surrender the cloak and coat. Take the lower seat at the feast, wash the disciples' feet. Put God and others before yourself. They way up is by way of the road down".

This theory does not appeal to the natural man. "I will not be a doormat for anyone." "I will not submit to my husband, to my parents or to those who are in authority over me". This, of course, is the natural man speaking because the spiritual self knows the Word and it says, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God" (Eph. 5:21). Submission is not hard or burdensome if one recognizes that they are submitting to Christ in the process of submission to others. When I submit to authority, structured of the Lord, I am submitting unto God. God places rulers and authorities in everyday life, in church and in the home. The extent and measure of happiness there is in the home, is the extent that a husband, wife and children are able to surrender "self" to the other. This is only possible as self is surrendered to the Lordship of Christ.

Why do we find it so difficult to surrender self? It is understandable in the natural realm of life. I can understand a wife's problem when she has reason to question his best interests on her behalf. If he has shown disrespect, if he has abused her, taken her for granted, or been unfaithful. But why should we be hesitant to surrender our self, our will, our all to Him who so loved us He died for us, to One who by supreme Example surrendered His all to the Father?

How do we surrender to someone else? And I should say that surrender is a very delicate matter. God does not ask us to surrender as a general principle. Surrender of self to God is expected and necessary to usefulness, happiness and fulfillment. Apart from that there is very little teaching on surrender to anyone else. Submission in structure, yes, but a surrender of the will of the total self, No!

God has created us unto Himself. The self that He gave us at our new birth is predestined to be conformed to His image. (Rom. 8: 29-30). If it is given to someone else how can it be developed by the Holy Spirit through our will into His likeness? Our self and will form a co-partnership responding to the Holy Spirit to be over-comers and mature into His likeness. Therefore, that self must be yielded unto Him only. It is not to yield to the enemy or even given over to another.

Young people get carried away into dreamland. They visualize happiness at the end of surrender so they say meaningless things such as, "I give you all my heart." "I surrender, darling, to you my total self". They soon discover that there is no such thing. The first grievance or argument reveals that their heart and self is much in their own possession. Even submission is a delicate process. They still have their self and will but they want to become submissive to another, so the process starts.

Note the steps that are taken to effect submission:

There is a process of developing relationship.

Boy meets girl. The senses of sight – hearing are involved. If the eyes say, "No", that is the end of it. If the eyes like what they see, the ears agree, then the touch, the handshake, the relationship may start.

The waiting process.

The boy and girl are feeling the need of someone special in their lives. They weigh the consequences. "Yes – No. I'm not sure I should allow this. It may lead to something serious. I want to be special in his/her life. I'm not sure this is the person". There is a mental process going on that matures into a decision to submit to another; to share your life with another for life; to love that person in a special way exclusively; to wash his clothes, cook his meals, bear his children is a big decision. To care for her, to exclusively keep yourself unto her, to support her and make such a commitment for life is a big decision. To develop relationship and make such a commitment there is time that is invested.

You make the decision – it is voluntary.

You take the leap. For better or for worse, you do it. You feel that you have given self totally to that person. But it is a fallacy. No such thing happens. You find you and he / she are still their own person. You get a real shock sometimes how much they are their own self. It shows when they feel hurt, sit in another room complaining.

But why should we expect them to surrender self? We fell in love and decided to love them, we married them because they were themselves. Why try to change them and make them like ourselves? What we should expect is a submission of our wills to the other in the interest of their happiness and fulfillment. The measure of this submission will determine the depth and extent of happiness. But the surrender of self to another – No! That belongs to God who gave it. As we yield and surrender self to Him, He refines, sanctifies and lets us use it for His glory. Only then can there be 'self-esteem'. Only then can a person be happy with themselves. Christ lives His life through us, makes us a success and we are happy with ourselves. We can have His mind, His love, His care, concern and compassion manifest through us. He does not make us rude and inconsiderate. We are happy for what we are in Christ. That makes me a better husband, wife, employer or employee. Only in Christ, then, can self become actualized. Seeing the good that is happening to me, I give my self, my will over to His direction.

I discover an inter-penetration of self with God and others.

My will becomes the will of God because God's will is my will. My spouse's will is also God's will and so the will of God inter-penetrates ourselves and a beautiful function result. We still have a self but it is not functioning in the interest of self but of the other. It is not the surrender of self to another but a surrender of self to the Lord which transforms it into functioning on behalf of the other.

That is in harmony with the principles of the Godhead. That is why Jesus did not His own will but fully surrendered it to the will of the Father. His self was still intact. Satan tried to get to it through the trauma of Gethsemane, through the taunts upon the cross and unto death. It was not a sinful self. It was a holy self in a human vessel with a will.

The surrender of self can only be made to one authority. He who created it wants it to be used for His glory and our good. Submit yourselves one to the other – surrender yourselves unto the Lord. Don't be fearful to make a sacrifice of self unto the Lord. He loves you and knows happiness and fulfillment cannot come until that is done. Isaac cannot be fruitful until he is laid upon the altar. He went on to personal fulfillment and happiness. The purposes of God are realized through lives who have been laid upon the altar. This is the earthly end result of man and holiness realized. Such holy lives are being built into a habitation of God (Eph. 2:21). It must become a reality personally before it can become reality corporately (Rev. 21:3).

Finally, "Take time to be holy". Waiting upon God, drawing nigh unto Him is an indispensable element in holiness. As with relationship, one must take time to develop it. People who spend little or no time together never really develop a relationship. So it is with holiness. Prayer, communion and fellowship with the Lord is of utmost importance. The Bible says that "...the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards Him" (II Chron. 16:9).

The type of man that God looks for is a holy man. One who has made an unconditional surrender of self and will. One who is equipped to serve God, who is not beset with so called excusable sinning and failure, but one who waits upon the Lord and says, "Here am I, send me, Lord". How God must long for such men through whom He seeks to manifest His power and glory. God is not calling for improved methods, trained psychologists in the pulpit and high technical officers but He is calling for holy living, prayerful, readily-available men and women who do not care who gets the glory as long as the glory of God is manifest upon the earth. Before we can transfigure nations we must have transfigured men – men such as Moses whose face shone with the glory of God. He had spent time with God in the mountain. How God must yearn for such men today through whom He could deal with the modern Pharaohs. This kind of man does not just happen. God makes this kind of man. Years in the desert with nothing but sheep to distract him. Days in the mountain with no one but God to talk to. Taking time to be holy for a holy God to manifest Himself through.

Dear preacher, you can get a crowd by having good music, good facilities, an active program, a good polished short sermon and appear successful. But success is transforming lives into the image and likeness of Christ. The extent of your success in this most noble of efforts is the extent of such a transformation in your own life. You can only successfully minister that which you have experienced. We all know that preaching is not the performance of a half-our but the outflow of a life that is saturated by His life. Holy sermons come out of holy lives.

The High Priest heralded clearly, conspicuously and experientially "Holiness unto the Lord." Having been made holy by sacrifice, anointing and setting apart, he immediately retired into the exclusive presence of God for seven days. He who ministers holiness must take time with the Lord to be holy. As the High Priest was unique among men, so the preacher must be unique in holiness among men.

I am convinced that this world could be transformed if God could find a transformed army of men and women – an army that would be totally surrendered in self and will unto the Lord – an army that refused to be men-pleasers and men-fearers but who feared God and sought to do His will on earth – a compassionate, loving army, committed unto martyrdom, who loved souls yet possessed a holy hatred for sin, unrighteousness, the devil and all his works. Such an army could rise up and

flood the land with righteousness and establish the Kingdom of God on earth. “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). Such an army is trained in the barrenness of the desert, in the closest of prayer, on the pathway of persecution, in the prisons of the land, in the Gethsemanes. It carries the cross to its death before it ascends to the throne of authority and power. It will wait for its Pentecost and remain in prayer till the place is shaken. To such prison gates are open. Before such, empires collapse. Righteousness follows their steps because holiness is their banner. “Righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people.” (Prov. 14:34). Such an army has a Holy General. He calls for holy captains of the hosts. Paul said: “Be you followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” (I Cor. 11:1). He knew that the root was holy, therefore the branches must be holy (Rom. 11:6). He knew that the church was chosen to be holy from the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), and he intended to present it holy and without blame. That he might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). “.....to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight:” (Col. 1:22b).

In exhorting the believers to purity of life he believed they would be:

“....perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (II Cor. 7:1). He endured chastening knowing that through it he would be a partaker of His holiness (Heb.12:10) and knew that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Verse 14). It seems that holiness and prayer were equally predominant in the Apostle’s life. “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands” (I Tim. 2:8). James expressed the same thought when he wrote in James 5:16, “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

We must not only talk to men for God, we must talk to God for men. Talking to God for ourselves will make us effective both talking to men for God and to God for men. It is drawing near to God that causes Him to draw near unto us (James 4:8). The Psalmist said “it is good for me to draw near to God” (Ps. 73:28). Take time to be holy! Great holy men of God were all men of prayer. Robert Murray McCheyne devoted four to five A.M. and five to six P.M. for private prayer. William Bramwell, in pursuit for personal holiness and preaching success, would spend four hours daily in personal communion. John Welch, the great Scottish preacher, often spent eight to ten hours daily in prayer. Brainerd would spend days in the cottage in prayer but maintain a walking and travelling prayer dialogue. All these were early risers to get alone with God before they had to get with men. Prayer is the food of maturing holiness. The prayerless man does not appreciate holiness. The holy man depends upon prayer as lungs do upon clean air.

Yes, the eyes of the Lord going to and fro upon the earth found Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the Baptist, Paul, Luther, Wesley, Knox, Finney, Brainerd and a host of others. Have we individually caught His eye because we have been drawing nigh unto Him? The future of the kingdom of God on earth is, of course, in the hands of God, but it is also in the holy hands of holy saints of God. Holy knees give strength to holy feet to walk a holy walk before a holy God. God grant a holy nation walking on the highway of holiness to the Holy City wherein dwells the thrice - Holy God! AMEN!

## **GOSSIP – It’s destruction and how to overcome**

### **A study on how to keep ourselves from being defiled by hearing and passing gossip**

#### **What is an Evil Report**

Passing of false facts and truths or even genuine facts and truths with the intention of hurting and damaging the image of someone. The layman’s term is: gossip.

“A worthless person, a wicked man is the one who walks with a false mouth, who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, who points with his fingers, who with perversity in his heart devises evil continually, who spreads strife. Therefore, his calamity will come suddenly. Instantly he will be broken and there will be no healing” (Prov. 6:12-15, 16-17).

#### **What Motivates an Evil Report**

The story of how Absalom staged a coup against his father, King David. (2 Sam. 15:1-6,11).

##### **a) Bitterness**

This is a malicious spirit; vindictive at everyone that stands in his way, ambition, philosophy or style of doing things. Absalom was bitter against his own father, King David, over the years. (Hebr. 12: 15)

##### **b) Rebellious spirit**

It is also an independent spirit. This is a very serious sin – comparable to witchcraft (1 Sam. 15:23).

#### **Deception**

The people were deceived by David’s son, Absalom, into staging a coup against King David. Absalom was able to alienate people from the authority by giving an evil report or half truths. Absalom was a thief. He stole the hearts of the people from being loyal to the king. Bitter people know how to seek out those who have grievances with the authorities.

##### **d) Pride**

It was not Absalom’s calling to be king, yet he yearned for that position. (Cf. Acts 20: 29-30).

#### **Envy**

It is to desire what others have and to feel bitter that he does not have it. (Jas. 3:14).

#### **Satan’s purpose in passing Evil Reports**

The “gossiper” does the work of the devil unconsciously. In Greek, the word “devil” means a “slanderer”. So if you gossip or tell tales, you are actually doing the devil’s work! (Rev. 12:10b).

##### **a) To discredit leaders**

Moses constantly had to face a rebellious people as well as individuals who consciously or unconsciously had been used by Satan to spread evil reports.

Some naïve individuals even think that they are called by God to expose the weakness of different ministries. We must realize, however, that God Himself does not expose. He only convicts – but with the aim to cause us to repent! (John 16: 8-9). There is a big difference between condemnation and conviction; a critical spirit and a constructive spirit; a spirit to humiliate and a spirit to restore. (Gal. 6:1).

##### **b) To cause Christians to close their spirit to each other**

Result: Conflicts, strifes and ungodliness. “Where there is no whisperer, quarrelling ceases”. (Prov. 26:20-22).

#### **To poison the mind of the rest**

Number 14:1-4. Evil reports can be like a deadly cancerous disease they can poison the minds of people and hinder them from inheriting God’s promises. It takes only one or

two evil reporters with a negative spirit to poison the mind of the whole group. If any one continues to listen to them, he will do the same – passing evil reports.

**To cause the world to mock at Christians and reject Christ  
To stop the flow of God’s anointing (Ps. 133:1-2).**

### **How to detect someone who is attempting to pass you an Evil Report**

The evil reporter will:

#### **Test your spirit before he will give you an evil report**

If you are generally a negative person, you will attract negative people to you. Bitter people tend to gather bitter people.

#### **b) He will check your acceptance before giving the report**

He may ask you for an opinion on a certain person. He will observe your responses.

#### **He will try to arouse your curiosity**

So eventually, you will be the one asking for the information.(Prov. 17:4; 18: 8).

#### **d) Some disguise the gossip by appearing to be asking for counsel prayer.**

Beware of someone coming to you with an evil report of a previous counselor. He will do the same against you later on!

### **How to handle the Evil Reporter Ask him seven questions lovingly:**

What is your reason for telling me?

Widening the circle of the gossip only compounds the problem.

Where did you get your information?

The refusal to identify the source is an indication of an evil report.

Have you gone to those directly involved?

Have you personally checked all the facts?

Is it necessary for me to hear?

Can talking about it solve the problem?

Can I contact the person spiritually responsible for the situation?

Can I quote you?

### **What happens when I receive an Evil Report**

“A worthless man digs up evil while his words are as a scorching fire” (Prov. 16:27) “A perverse man spreads strife and a slanderer separates intimate friends” (Prov. 16:28)

“A worthless person, a wicked man is the one who walks with a false mouth, who winks with his eyes who signals with his feet, who points with his fingers, who with perversity in his heart devises evil continually who spreads strife. Therefore, his calamity will come suddenly. Instantly he will be broken and there will be no healing” (Prov. 6:12-15)

### **It is sin not only to start a gossip. It is also a sin to hear a gossip without putting a stop to it!**

The hearer will –

#### **Defile his soul**

The act of rebellion and passing of evil reports cost Absalom his life! The compulsive need to pass evil reports is a very self destructive disease.

“An evildoer listens to wicked lips and a liar gives heed to a mischievous tongue” (Prov. 17:4)

How does the Bible describe the one who listens to wicked lips and gives heed to mischievous tongue?

#### **Be controlled by the spirit of bitterness**

The hearer can develop a bitterness against another, though he may not have been directly offended.

#### **Set himself up as judge, talking the place of God**

“Therefore you have no excuse, o man, whoever you are, when you judge another, for in passing judgement upon him you condemn yourself.” (Rom. 2:1)

### **Become the object of God's hatred**

“There are six things which the Lord hates, even which are an abomination to Him;...a lying tongue, a false witness who breathes out lies, and a man who sows discord among brothers.” (Prov. 6:16-19)

### **How to cleanse our mind from an Evil Report**

Ask God to cleanse us from the defilement

Do not assume or take things to be true.

Principle: A person is not guilty until proven wrong. “The simple believes everything, but the prudent looks where he is going.” (Prov. 14:15)

Check: Has the evil report affected the way you view the victim of the slander? Ask God to remove the prejudice. (Ps. 19:13)

Put on love.

“Above all, have fervent love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8)

Stop the urge to pass the report to others

When you hear an evil report, you should feel a holy grief in your heart. Evil reports grieve the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:30). Remember Eph. 4:29, "Do not speak unwholesome words. Only speak that which is good for **edification** and that which **imparts grace to** those who hear it.

Avoid the company of negative people

Their negative spirit can be easily transferred to you. (Ps. 1:1-3)

“He who goes around gossiping reveals secrets, therefore do not associate with one who speaks foolishly.” (Prov. 20:19)

“Keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us...Do not look on him as an enemy, but warm him as a brother” (2 Thess. 3:6,15)

You can also help to stop the evil reports by asking the seven questions listed in Section 5. (Ps. 19:14)

Pray this prayer often: Psalm 141: 3.

Principle to life by: James 1: 19.

Remember: James 1: 26.

Practice: Phil 4: 8.



# WHISPERING TONGUES

**Heard any juicy gossip lately? Passed on any fascinating rumours "for your ears only"?  
Read the antidote to slander and loose talk.**

A lot of problems arise in churches because of something said to someone about someone else. The mistakes that come out of our mouths can cause devastation. They separate people in the church. They cause people to lose zeal for the Lord and vision for the church. We need to work towards prevention rather than having to deal with the cure.

*"Well, then he said...he saw the Pastor...I am saying this to keep this in Your prayers.."*

The tongue is an unruly member and destroys churches and families. We use it against each other for two reasons. First, we're incredibly insecure. We think that if we can make someone look bad, we're making ourselves look good. But Jesus said if you want to be great in the Kingdom of God, be a servant.

The second reason is that often we're guilty of the very same crime and corruption we see in other people. The Bible identifies four types of people who misuse the tongue:

## **Whisperer:**

This is a person who privately passes on information about someone without their knowing it. They like to work their way in among people and share something about someone.

## **Gossip:**

A gossip likes to magnify and dramatise rumours or suggestions. You might say he(or she) feels like it's part of his work in the body to move information along in the church. And he doesn't want to fail in this ministry.

## **Slanderer:**

The slanderer seeks to destroy another person's credibility or reputation with damaging facts. Though some of the facts may be true, they may be distorted or simply assumptions and the intention is to hurt, not to heal.

When the circle of gossip keeps getting larger you can count on its bringing trouble to the church. As the information gets around, there's always a process of adding and taking away, usually to the detriment of the person being talked about.

The misuse of the tongue can have devastating effects for people who have been close friends for years. Proverbs 16:28 says: 'perverse man spreads strife and a slanderer separates intimate friends'

## **Busybody:**

This is the last and probably the worst classification in Scripture. The busybody somehow feels that it's his calling to dig up negative information about others. In 1 Peter 4:15 busybodies are listed alongside murderers and thieves.

The problem is, once we enter into conversation with such people who are exposed to the latest germs they have to spread around and we become contaminated. These people think they're God's private investigators. They search out things and then want to share the results of their work with someone.

**Here are five key questions that can stop the epidemic of whispering, gossip, slander and busybody activity from infecting your church!**

## **KEY 1 - Why are you telling me this?**

I've made some big mistakes as a pastor by listening to someone supposedly in a counselling situation when all that person wanted was to share something negative with someone in a position of authority. What I should have asked is 'why are you telling me this?' The truthful answer would be 'I've got something against this person'. If you've got something against someone the Bible

doesn't say go and tell your pastor. It says go and tell that person. (Matt. 18: 15-17). All that happens otherwise is that the circle of gossip just gets wider and wider and further and further from the people who need to deal with the issue.

**KEY 2 - Where did you get your information?**

Some people would respond, 'I'm sorry, I can't tell you that.' I say something like, 'What do you mean you can't tell me? What are you? A government official or something?' When someone doesn't want to give you their source, they're gossiping.

**KEY 3 - Have you asked those directly involved?**

When you start talking to other people about someone else's information that may not even be true – then it's going to injure that person and his or her reputation. When you say something negative about someone, the first thing your listener will think of when they see that person is the bad report you gave.

**KEY 4 - Have you checked the facts?**

A mistake we can easily make is to listen to only one side of the story. We listen to a husband, wife or family member who says that this person is terrible and we never even speak to that person. Perceptions can be distorted and it's easy to make wrong judgements based on second hand information. Check the facts.

**KEY 5 - Can I quote you on this?**

'Oh no! I'm just telling you so you can pray about it!' If you're with people who answer this question like this and you stay around them, the germs will spread to you.

So how do we get rid of this plague? We need divine healing. We need to ask God to cleanse our sick mouths and minds. (Is. 6: 5-7). We also need to make ourselves accountable. Maybe there are two or three people in the church to whom you can say, 'I've got a problem with my mouth. Please feel free to rebuke and correct me if I need it'. You'll know you're free of this disease when you hear negative things and instead of exciting you they grieve you.

If talking about people is a problem for you face the fact that your habit breeds a deadly, contagious disease in the church. Pray that God will show you what's wrong with them. And if you're tempted to gossip stay away from people who will draw you into sin, i.e. other gossips!

## TEN COMMANDMENTS FOR THE TONGUE

**THOU SHALT NOT GOSSIP.** (Proverbs 18:8). Before any evil story whispered in the ear is passed on, it should be treated as the housewife treats apples – first peeled, then quartered, then the core removed: then what remains is liberally sugared.

**THOU SHALT NOT USE A MULTITUDE OF EMPTY WORDS.** (Proverbs 10:19). Your tongue reveals the nature of your thinking and of your character. Someone said: “By examining the tongue of a patient, physicians find out the diseases of the body, and philosophers the disease of the mind”. The Divine Master Himself admonishes the children of men to “Let what you say be simply "Yes" or "No"; anything more than this comes from the evil one." (Matt. 5: 37).

**THOU SHALT NOT BOAST.** (Proverbs 27:2). A small man makes long, loud boastings in order to center the spotlight of attention upon himself; the great man works quietly, silently polishing the beacon that it may guide the ship safely into the desired haven.

**THOU SHALT NOT FLATTER.** (Proverbs 26:28). Some one has said that “Flattery is like soft soap: it is 90% lye” – and you can count on this ratio as being just about a 100% correct. The words of a man or woman who would flatter you, according to the Psalmist, who had a great deal of experience with that sort of thing, are “Softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords.” (Ps. 55:21).

**THOU SHALT NOT GRUMBLE.** (Philippians 2:14). The prescription for this malady is to saturate you life with loving-kindness. Let it enter every pore, and the process will make you stronger, more sympathetic, more beautiful, more constant, more helpful, and absolutely fail–proof against the gnawing frets and worries that are worse than termites, to eat out the soul of you.

**THOU SHALT NOT BACKBITE OR SLANDER.** (Psalm 64:3). The tongue that backbites or slanders is the weapon that empties churches, pour streams of bickering humans into divorce court separators, fills our jails with wretched humanity and lashes men and women into Satan’s Kingdom.

**THOU SHALT NOT MOCK OR MAKE FUN.** (Job 11:3). Let us learn sympathy and give our fellows a helping hand instead of mockery, no matter how peculiar or odd they may be remember, angels visit the earth in all kinds of guises.

**THOU SHALT NOT LIE.** (Exodus 20:16). A deceiver told the first lie in the Garden of Eden. Since then, the practice has spread like a plague throughout the whole earth. Everyone hates a lying tongue even you yourself. Scientists have invented a machine to detect it, but it will continue to flourish until the dreadful Day of the Lord, when all lying tongues are silenced forever. (Rev. 21: 27).

**THOU SHALT NOT SWEAR.** (Exodus 20:7). Profanity is the official language of the devil’s kingdom. Have no part in it, for it will disqualify you for heaven.

**THOU SHALT NOT ARGUE IN ANGER.** (Hosea 7:16). Whatever the provocation is remember that “silence is golden” and that “A soft answer turns away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger” (Proverbs 15:1).

## **PRAYER DIRECTIVES FROM THE WORD**

The Harvest. Matt. 9:38; Luke 10:2

"Pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest."

Pray for National and local leaders of Government. 1 Tim. 2:2.

For kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceful life in all godliness and honesty."

Pray that God will open doors for ministry of the Word. Col. 4:3

"With all praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds."

Pray for those who have mistreated you. Luke 6:28

Pray that you enter not into temptation. Luke 22:40

Luke 6:28, "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to them who hate you. Bless them that curse you, and pray for them who spitefully use you."

Pray that you may do not evil. 2 Cor. 13:7

"Now I pray to God that you do not evil; not that we would appear approved, but that you should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates."

Pray that your love may abound towards all people. Phil 1:9

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment."

"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly and I pray your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" 1 Thess. 5:23 Pray for the fullness of the Holy Spirit. Luke 11:13

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him."

Pray that you may be able to interpret what you speak in tongues.

"Therefore let him that speaks in an unknown tongue pray that he may interpret. I Cor 14:13

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love you. Psalm 122:6.

# **P R A Y E R   G U I D E**

## **OUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BY YOUR NAME**

PICTURE CALVARY AND THANK GOD YOU CAN CALL HIM “FATHER” BY VIRTUE OF THE BLOOD OF JESUS

HALLOW THE NAMES OF GOD CORRESPONDING WITH THE FIVE BENEFITS IN THE NEW COVENANT, AND MAKE YOUR FAITH DECLARATIONS.

<b><u>BENEFIT</u></b>	<b><u>NAME</u></b>	<b><u>MEANING</u></b>
SALVATION	JEHOVAH-TSIDKENU JEHOVAH-MKADDESH	“Jehovah our righteousness” “Jehovah who sanctifies”
SPIRIT	JEHOVAH-SHALOM JEHOVAH-SHAMMAH	“Jehovah is peace” “Jehovah is there”
SOUNDNESS	JEHOVAH-ROPHE	“Jehovah heals”
SUCCESS	JEHOVAH-JIREH	“Jehovah’s provision shall be seen”
SECURITY	JEHOVAH-NISSI JEHOVAH-ROHI	“Jehovah my banner” “Jehovah my shepherd”

## **YOUR KINGDOM COME YOUR WILL BE DONE**

YOURSELF

YOUR FAMILY (SPOUSE, CHILDREN, OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS)

YOUR CHURCH (PASTOR, LEADERSHIP, FAITHFULNESS OF PEOPLE)

NATION (CITY, STATE, AND NATIONAL POLITICAL AND SPIRITUAL LEADERS, HARVEST)

## **GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BRED**

BE IN THE WILL OF GOD (PRAYER LIFE, CHURCH, WORK HABIT, OBEDIENCE IN GIVING)

BELIEVE IT IS GOD’S WILL TO PROSPER YOU.

BE SPECIFIC AND TENACIOUS

## **IV. AND FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS**

ASK GOD TO FORGIVE YOU

FORGIVE AND RELEASE OTHERS

SET YOUR WILL TO FORGIVE THOSE WHO SIN AGAINST YOU

## **V. AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL.**

PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD (PUT ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST)

Loins girt about with TRUTH

Breastplate of RIGHTEOUSNESS

Feet shod with the PREPARATION (READINESS) of the gospel PEACE

Shield of FAITH

Helmet of SALVATION

Sword of the Spirit which is the WORD OF GOD

PRAY A HEDGE OF PROTECTION (YOU ARE MY REFUGE, MY FORTRESS, MY GOD) (Psalm 91: 9, 14)

## **VI. FOR YOURS IS THE KINGDOM, AND THE POWER, AND THE GLORY FOREVER**

MAKE YOUR FAITH DECLARATIONS AND RETURN TO PRAISE.

## WAYS TO PRAY FOR PEOPLE OF INFLUENCE

The life of every citizen is impacted by a vast multitude of individuals who wield significant influence each day. Consider: tens of thousands elected officials, appointed judges, lawyers, police officers, bureaucrats, military officers, media elite, news anchors, publishers and editors, talk show-hosts, business executives and managers, theologians, ministers, priests, chaplains, elders, pastors, deacons, lay-workers, para-church ministry heads, educators, professors, teachers, medical practitioners and hospital administrators, scientists, researchers, inventors and engineers, artists and designers, athletes, musicians, actors and entertainment figures. How might we pray for these individuals?

That they be God fearing and recognize that they are accountable to Him for each decision and act (Prov. 9:10).

That they be granted wisdom, knowledge and understanding (Jas. 1:5).

That they be presented with the Gospel and loving Christian witness (Rom. 10:14).

That they, if unsaved, be drawn to a saving encounter with Christ; if born-again, that they be strengthened and encouraged in their faith (1 Tim. 2:4; Eph. 1:17-23).

That they recognize their own inadequacy and pray and seek the will of God (Prov. 3:5-8; Luke. 11:9-13).

That they be convicted of sin, transgression and iniquity (Ps. 51:17, John. 8:9).

That they heed their conscience, confess their sins and repent (Prov. 28:13; Js 4:8).

That they read the Bible and attend prayer meetings and Bible studies. (Ps. 119:11; Col. 3:2).

That they value and regard the Ten Commandments and the teachings of Christ (Ps. 19:7-11; John 8:31- 32).

That they respect and honor their own parents if living (Eph. 6:2-3).

That they respect authority and practice accountability (Rom. 13:1-7).

That they be given godly counsel and God fearing advisors (Prov. 24:6).

That they be honest and faithful to spouses and children (Mal. 2:15-16).

That they be practicing members of local congregations (Heb. 10:25).

That they desire purity and avoid debauchery, pornography, perversion and drunkenness (1 Cor. 6:9-20; Titus 2:12)

That they be timely, reliable and dependable (Matt. 21:28-31).

That they be honest in financial, tax and ethical matters (1 Cor. 6:10; 1 Tim 6:6-10).

That they seek pastoral care and counsel when needed (Heb. 13:7).

That they seek out and nurture godly friendships (Ps. 1:1-3).

That they have thankful and teachable spirits (Rom. 1:21).

That they be generous and have compassionate hearts for the poor and needy (Ps. 112:9, Luke. 10:33-37)

That they redeem their time and know priorities (Eph. 5:15-17).

That they desire honesty, integrity and loyalty (Ps. 26; Prov. 11:3).

That they have courage to resist manipulation, pressure and the fear of man (Prov. 29:25; 2 Tim 1:7).

That they be shielded from occultism, New Age cults, false religious and secret societies (Is. 1:29; 2:6).

That they be presented with Biblical word views and principles (Eph. 3:10).

That they endeavor to restore the sanctity of life, families, divine order and morality in our nation (Eph. 5:22-6:1).

That they would work to reverse the trends of humanism, socialism, communism and regionalism in our nation (1 Chron. 12:32; Is. 59:19).

That they desire humility and meekness and be willing to serve and cooperate (John 13:14; Titus 3:1-2).

That they be prepared to give account to Almighty God (Heb. 9:27).

## **31 Biblical Virtues to PRAY for your CHILDREN**

Salvation. “Lord, let salvation spring up within my children, that they may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory” (Is. 45:8; 2 Tim. 2: 10).

Growth in grace. “I pray that my children may grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18).

Love. “Grant, Lord, that my children may learn to live a life of love, through the Spirit who dwells in them” (Gal. 5:25; Eph. 5:2).

Honesty and integrity. “Many integrity and honesty be their virtue and their protection” (Ps. 25: 21).

Self-control. “Father, help my children not to be like many others around them, but let them be alert and self-controlled in all they do” (1 Thess. 5:6).

Love for God’s Word. “May my children grow to find your Word more precious than much pure gold and sweeter than honey from the comb” (Ps. 19:10).

Justice. “God, help my children to love justice as you do and act justly in all they do” (Ps. 19:10).

Mercy. “May my children always be merciful, just as their Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36).

Respect (for self, others, authority). “Father, grant that my children may show proper respect to everyone, as your Word commands” (1 Pet. 2:17).

Biblical self-esteem. “Help my children develop a strong self-esteem that is rooted in the realization that they are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:10).

Faithfulness. “Let love and faithfulness never leave my children, but bind these twin virtues around their necks and write them on the tablet of their hearts” (Prov. 3:3).

Courage. “May my children always be strong and courageous in their character and in their actions” (Deut. 1:6).

Purity. “Create in them a pure heart, O God, and let that purity of heart be shown in their actions” (Deut. 31:6).

Kindness. “Lord, may my children always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else” (1 Thess. 5:15).

Generosity. “Grant that my children may be generous and willing to share, and so lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age” (1 Tim. 6:18-19).

Peace-loving. “Father, let my children make every effort to do what leads to peace” (Rom. 14:19).

Joy. “May my children be filled with the joy given by the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 1:6).

Perseverance. “Lord, teach my children perseverance in all they do, and help them especially to run with perseverance the race marked out for them” (Heb. 12:1).

Humility. “God, please cultivate in my children the ability to show true humility towards all” (Titus 3:2).

Compassion. ‘Lord, please clothe my children with the virtue of compassion” (Col. 3:12).

Responsibility. “Grant that my children may learn responsibility for each one should carry his own load” (Gal. 6:5).

Contentment. “Father, teach my children the secret of being content in any and every situation, through Him who gives them strength” (Phil. 4:12-13).

Faith. “I pray that faith will find root and grow in my children’s hearts, that they may serve wholeheartedly, as if they were serving the Lord, not men” (Eph. 6:7).

A servant’s heart. “God, please help my children develop servant’s hearts, that they may serve wholeheartedly, as if they were serving the Lord, not men” (Eph. 6:7).

Hope. “May the God of hope grant that my children may overflow with hope and hopefulness by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 15:13).

Willingness and ability to work. “Teach my children, Lord, to value work and to work at it with all their heart, as working for the Lord, not for men” (Col. 3:23).

Passion for God. “Lord, please instill in my children a soul that ‘follows hard after You’ (Ps. 63:8), one that clings passionately to you.”

Self-discipline. “Father, I pray that my children may acquire a disciplined and prudent life, doing what is right and just and fair” (Prov. 1:3).

Prayerfulness. “Grant, Lord, that my children’s lives may be marked my prayerfulness, that they may learn to pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds or prayers and requests” (Eph. 6:18).

Gratitude. “Help my children to live lives that are always overflowing with thankfulness and always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20; Col. 2:7).

A heart for missions. “Lord, please help my children to develop a desire to see your glory declared among the nations, your marvelous deeds among all peoples” (Ps. 96:3).



## PRAYING THROUGH THE SO-CALLED 10 – 40 WINDOW:

### THE 100 GATEWAY CITIES OF TODAY TO BE COVERED IN PRAYER EACH DAY OF THE MONTH AS GIVEN BELOW:

#### Day – 1, TODAY’S GATEWAY CITIES:

	CASABLANCA	EL AAIUN	NOUAKCHOIT	DAKAR
Country	Morocco	Western Sahara	Mauritania	Senegal
Population	3,858,000	186,000	650,000	1,847,000
Location	N. Africa	NW Africa	NW Africa	NW Africa
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam

#### Day – 2, TODAY’S GATEWAY CITIES:

	BANJUL	BISSAU	CONAKRY	BAMAKO
Country	Gambia	Guinea-Bissau	Guinea	Mali
Population	560,000	130,000	1,734,000	680,000
Location	NW Africa	NW Africa	NW Africa	NW Africa
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam

#### Day – 3, TODAY’S GATEWAY CITIES:

	OUAGADOUGOU	ALGIERS	TUNIS	TRIPOLI
Country	Burkina Faso	Algeria	Tunisia	Libya
Population	437,000	3,722,000	1,935,000	1,828,000
Location	NW Africa	N Africa	N Africa	N Africa
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam

#### Day – 4, TODAY’S GATEWAY CITIES:

	COTONOU	NIAMEY	KANO	N’DJAMENA
Country	Benin	Niger	Nigeria	Chad
Population	501,000	430,000	660,000	729,000
Location	NC Africa	NW Africa	WC Africa	NC Africa
Religion	Animism	Islam	Islam	Islam

#### Day – 5, TODAY’S GATEWAY CITIES:

	KHARTOUM	DIJBOUTI	ADDIS ABABA	ASMARA
Country	Sudan	Djibouti	Ethiopia	Eritrea
Population	2,477,000	137,000	2,419,000	1,069,000
Location	NE Africa	NE Africa	NE Africa	NE Africa
Religion	Islam	Islam	Christianity	Islam/Christian

#### Day - 6, TODAY’S GATEWAY CITIES:

	MOGADISHU	MECCA	RIYADH	SANA’A
Country	Somalia	Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arabia	Yemen
Population	849,000	884,000	2,664,000	503,600
Location	E Africa	Mid East	Mid East	Mid East
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam

#### Day - 7, TODAY’S GATEWAY CITIES

	MUSCAT	ABU DHABI	DOHA	MANAMA
Country	Oman	United Arab Emir	Qatar	Bahrain
Population	177,000	730,000	340,000	270,000
Location	Mild East	Mid East	Mild East	Mid East
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam	Islam

**Day - 8, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	KUWAI CITY	BEIRUT	TIRANA
Country	Kuwait	Lebanon	Albania
Population	231,000	1,543,000	427,000
Location	Mid East	Mid East	SE Europe
Religion	Islam	Islam/Christianity	Islam

**Day - 9, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	CAIRO	AMMAN	DAMASCUS
Country	Egypt	Jordan	Syria
Population	10,361,000	1,273,000	2,511,000
Location	NE Africa	Mid East	Mid East
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam

**Day - 10, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	GAZA	JERUSALEM	TELAVIV
Country	Gaza Strip	Israel	Israel
Population	1,073,000	518,000	2,092,000
Location	Mid East	Mid East	Mid East
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam

**Day - 11, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	ISTANBUL	ANKARA	IZMIR
Country	Turkey	Turkey	Turkey
Population	8,143,000	3,071,000	2,169,000
Location	Mid East	Mid East	Mid East
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam

**Day - 12, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	BAGHDAD	TEHRAN	MASHHAD
Country	Iraq	Iran	Iran
Population	4,511,000	7,509,000	2,450,000
Location	Mid East	Mid East	Mid East
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam

**Day - 13, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	BAKU	SHAKHABAD	ASHKENT
Country	Azerbaijan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Population	1,808,000	407,000	2,037,000
Location	C Asia	C Asia	C Asia
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam

**Day - 14, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	DUSHANBE	BISHKEK	ALMATY
Country	Tajikistan	Kyrgyzstan	Kazakhstan
Population	620,000	710,000	1,197,000
Location	C Asia	C Asia	C Asia
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam

**Day - 15, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	KABUL	KARACHI	LAHORE
Country	Afghanistan	Pakistan	Pakistan
Population	2,051,000	9,506,000	4,926,000
Location	C Asia	SC Asia	SC Asia
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam

**Day - 16, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	MALE	AHMEDABAD	JAIPUT
Country	Maldives	India	India
Population	50,000	4,396,000	1,969,000
Location	SC Asia	SC Africa	SC Africa
Religion	Islam	Hinduism	Hinduism

**Day - 17, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	AMRITSAR	DELHI	PUNE
Country	India	India	India
Population	837,000	10,857,000	2,971,000
Location	SC Asia	SC Asia	SC Asia
Religion	Sikhism	Hinduism	Hinduism

**Day - 18, TODAY'S GATEWAT CITIES:**

	HYDERABAD	CALCUTTA	KANPUR
Country	India	India	India
Population	4,208,000	13,604,000	2,378,000
Location	SC Asia	SC Asia	SC Asia
Religion	Hinduism	Hinduism	Hinduism

**Day - 19, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	VARANASI	LUCKNOW	PATNA
Country	India	India	India
Population	1,193,000	1,391,000	2,209,000
Location	SC Asia	SC Asia	SC Asia
Religion	Hinduism	Hinduism/Islam	Hinduism

**Day - 20, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	KATHMANDU	THIMPHU	COLOMBO
Country	Nepal	Bhutan	Sri Lanka
Population	372,000	121,400	2,345,000
Location	SC Asia	SC Asia	SC Asia
Religion	Hinduism	Buddhism	Buddhism

**Day - 21, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	TAIPEI	SHENYANG	CHANGCHUN
Country	Taiwan	China	China
Population	3,561,000	5,493,000	2,620,000
Location	E Asia	EC Asia	EC Asia
Religion	Buddhism	Atheism	Atheism

**Day - 22, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	URUMQI	LHASA	LANZHOU
Country	China	China	China
Population	1,724,000	120,000	1,803,000
Location	C Asia	SC Asia	EC Asia
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam

**Day - 23, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	BEIJING	HOHHOT	TIANJIN
Country	China	China	China
Population	12,232,000	1,312,000	10,995,000
Location	EC Asia	EC Asia	EC Asia
Religion	Atheism	Buddhism/Islam	Atheism

**Day - 24, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	TAIYUAN	JINAN	NANJING
Country	China	China	China
Population	2,596,000	3,208,000	3,073,000
Location	EC Asia	EC Asia	EC Asia
Religion	Atheism	Atheism	Atheism

**Day - 25, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	XIAN	CHENGDU	CHONGQING
Country	China	China	China
Population	3,417,000	3,528,000	3,646,000
Location	EC Asia	EC Asia	EC Asia
Religion	Atheism	Atheism	Atheism

**Day - 26, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	SHANGHAI	WUHAN	GUANGZHOU
Country	China	China	China
Population	15,112,000	4,556,000	4,184,000
Location	EC Asia	EC Asia	EC Asia
Religion	Atheism	Atheism	theism

**Day - 27, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	HANOI	VIENTIANE	PHNOM PENH
Country	Vietnam	Laos	Cambodia
Population	1,260,000	491,000	2,827,000
Location	SE Asia	SE Asia	SE Asia
Religion	Buddhism	Buddhism	Buddhism

**Day - 28, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	BANGKOK	YANGON	DHAKA
Country	Thailand	Myanmar	Bangladesh
Population	8,627,000	3,905,000	9,105,000
Location	SE Asia	SE Asia	SE Asia
Religion	Buddhism	Buddhism	Islam

**Day - 29, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	KUALA LUMPUR	JAKARTA	BANDARSERI BEGAWAN
Country	Malaysia	Indonesia	Brunei
Population	2,183,000	11,401,000	110,000
Location	SE Asia	SE Asia	SE Asia
Religion	Islam	Islam	Islam

**Day - 30, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	<b>ULAANBAATAR</b>	<b>PYONGYANG</b>	<b>SAPPORO</b>
Country	Mongolia	North Korea	Japan
Population	600,000	2,471,000	2,300,000
Location	C Asia	E Asia	E Asia
Religion	Animism/Buddhism	Atheism	Shintoism

**Day - 31, TODAY'S GATEWAY CITIES:**

	<b>TOKYO/ YOKOHMA</b>	<b>OSAKA/KOBE/KYOTO</b>	<b>FUKUOKO/KITA/ KYUSHU</b>
Country	Japan	Japan	Japan
Population	18,527,000	8,563,000	4,164,000
Location	E Asia	E Asia	E Asia
Religion	Shintoism	Shintoism	Shintoism

# **PERSONALISED PRAYERS FROM THE WORD**

## **(1) PRAYERS FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND MEDITATION**

God of my Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, I pray that You may continue to give me the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of You, the eyes of my understanding being enlightened; that I may continue to know what is the hope of Your calling, what are the riches of Your inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of Your power toward me who believe, according to the working of Your mighty power which You worked in Christ when You raised Him from the dead and seated Him at Your own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And You put all things under Your feet, and gave Jesus to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Eph. 1:17-21).

Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, I pray that You would continue to grant me, according to the riches of Your glory, to be strengthened with might by Your Holy Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may continue to dwell in my heart through faith; that I being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge: that I may continue to be filled with the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly above all we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Eph. 3:16-21).

Father I pray that my love may continue to abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that I may approve things that are excellent, that I may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:9-11).

Father I pray that I may continue to be filled with the knowledge of Your will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding: that I may continue to have a walk worthy of You, Lord, fully pleasing You, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to Your glorious power, for all patience and long – suffering with You; giving thanks to You, Father, who has qualified me to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. (Col. 1:9-12).

Father, I pray that You may continue to make me to increase and abound in love one for another and for all so that You may establish my heart blameless in holiness before You, God and Father, at the coming of my Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. (1 Thes. 3:12-13).

Father, I pray that You would continue to count me worthy of Your calling and fulfill all the good pleasure of Your goodness and the work of faith with power, that the name of my Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in me and I in Him, according in the grace of You, God, and the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thes. 1:11-12).

I thank You, Father, for Your grace which was given to me by Christ Jesus, that I may continue to be enriched in everything by You, in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in me, so that I come short in no gift; eagerly waiting for the revelation of my Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm me to the end, that I may be blameless in the day of my Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1:4-8).

Father, I pray that You would continue to grant to me, Your servant, that with all boldness I may speak Your Word, by stretching forth Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant, Jesus (Acts 4:29-30).

## **(2) MEDITATIONS ON LOVE**

God shows mercy to those who love Him and keep His commandments. God shows mercy to me for I love Him and keep His commandments (Ex. 20:6).

God loves me and chooses me, and He brings me out of the world with His presence and with His mighty power (Deut. 4:37).

I love the Lord my God with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my might. I keep his Word and His commandments in my heart. (Deut. 6:5-6).

The Lord my God circumcises my heart and the heart of my children to love Him with all our hearts and all our souls, that we may live. (Deut. 30:6).

I love the Lord my God and walk in His ways and keep His commandments, His statutes and His judgements and I live and multiply, and the Lord my God bless me in the land which I go to possess. (Deut. 30:16).

I love the Lord my God and I obey His voice and I cling to Him for He is my life and the length of my days. (Deut. 30:20).

I love the Lord; I am in His hand; I sit at His feet and receive His words. (Deut. 33:3).

I take diligent heed to myself that I love the Lord my God. (Josh. 23:11).

I love the Lord and am like the sun when it comes out in full strength. (Judg. 5:31).

I love the Lord and observe His commandments and He keeps His covenant and mercy with me. (Neh. 1:5).

I love God's name and am joyful in Him (Ps. 5:11).

The Lord is righteous and He loves righteousness. I am righteous in Christ and the Lord loves me. (Ps. 11:7; 2 Cor. 5:21).

I love the habitation of God's house and the place where His glory dwells. (Ps. 26:8).

I will love the Lord who is my strength. (Ps. 18:1).

I love the Lord for He preserves the faithful. (Ps. 31:23).

The Lord loves righteousness and justice. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. I love righteousness and justice. (Ps. 33:5).

I love the Lord's salvation and say continually, 'The Lord be magnified'. (Ps. 40:16; 70:4).

I love the Lord and hate evil. (Ps. 97:10).

I delight myself in God's commandments which I love. My hands do I lift up to God's commandments which I love. I will meditate on His statutes. (Ps. 119:47- 48).

I love God's law and it is my meditation all the day. (Ps. 119:97).

I love God's law and have the double minded. (Ps. 119:113).

I love God's commandments more than gold, yes, than fine gold. (Ps. 119:127).

I love God's name and God looks upon me and is merciful to me. (Ps. 119:132).

God's Word is very pure, therefore I love His Word. (Ps. 119:140).

God considers how I love His precepts and He revives me according to His loving kindness. (Ps. 119: 159).

I love God's law and I hate and abhor lying. (Ps.119:163).

I love God's law and have great peace and nothing can cause me to stumble. (Ps. 119:165).

My soul keeps God's testimonies and I love them exceedingly. (Ps. 119:167).

I am precious in God's sight and He loves me and honors me. (Ps. 43:4).

I love my enemies, bless those who curse me, do good to those who hate me and pray for those who spitefully use me and persecute me. (Matt 5:44).

I love the Lord my God with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my mind. I love my neighbour as myself. (Matt 22:37-39).

God is my Father and I love the Lord Jesus Christ. (John 8:42).

A new commandment Jesus gives me that I love one another as He has loved me. (John 13:34).

I love Jesus and keep His commandments. (John 14:15).

I have the commandments of Jesus and I keep them for I love Him. I love Jesus and am loved by the Father. Jesus loves me and manifests Himself to me. (John 14:21).

I love Jesus and keep Word and my Father loves me; and Jesus and my Father come to me and make their home with me. (John 14:23).

As the Father loved Jesus, so has Jesus loved me and I abide in His love. This is Jesus' commandment that I love one another as He has loved me. (John 15:9,12).

God loves me as He has loved Jesus. God loves Jesus before the foundation of the world. God loves me before the foundation of the world. The love by which the Father has love Jesus with is in me and Jesus is in me. (John 17:23, 26).

I love God and all things work together for good for I am called according to His purpose. (Rom. 8:28)

Nothing in heaven, earth or hell can separate me from the love of God. (Rom. 8:35, 38- 39).

I am more than a conqueror through God who loves me. (Rom. 8:37).

I owe no man anything except to love one another for when I love one another I fulfill the law. (Rom. 13:8).

Eyes have not seen, not ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for me who love Him. (1 Cor. 2:9).

I have the love of God and I suffer long and I am kind. I have the love of God and I do not envy. I have the love of God and do not parade myself nor am I puffed up. I do not behave rudely nor do I seek my own. I am not provoked at all and I think no evil. I do not rejoice in iniquity but rejoice in the truth. I bear all things, believe all things, hope all things and endure all things. I have the love of God and I never fail. (1 Cor. 13:4-8).

I gladly spend myself and am spent for souls for I abundantly love with the love of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 12:15).

The life which I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who loves me and gave Himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

God has chosen me in Christ before the foundation of the world, that I should be holy and without blame before Him in love. (Eph. 1:4)

Because of His great love with which He loved me, God, who is rich in mercy, has raised me up together, and made me sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward me in Christ (Eph. 2:4-7).

I walk in love as Christ also has loved me and given Himself for me, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. (Eph. 5:2).

Grace is with me for love my Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity (Eph. 6:24).

I am taught by God to love one another. (1Thes. 4:9).



My Lord Jesus Christ and God my Father, who has loved me and given me everything consolation and good hope by grace, comforts my heart and establishes me in every good word and work. (2 Thes. 2:16- 17).

I love the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ and there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness. (2 Tim. 4:8).

I have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, my God, has anointed me with the oil of gladness. (Heb. 1:9).

I love the Lord and endure temptations and overcome them and receive the crown of life. (Jam. 1:12).

I love God and He has chosen me to be rich in faith and an heir of the kingdom. (Jas. 2:5).

I fulfill the royal law according to Scripture for I love my neighbour as myself. (Jas. 2:8).

I love Jesus and rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. (1 Pet. 1:8)

I have purified my soul in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren. I love one another fervently with a pure heart. (1 Pet. 1:22)

I love my Christian brethren and I abide in the light and there is no cause of stumbling in me. (1 John 2:10).

I do not love the world nor the things that are in the world because the love of the Father is in me. (1 John 2:15).

I know that I have passed from death to life because I love the brethren. (1 John 3:14)

I do not love in word or tongue only but I also love in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18).

God's commandment to me is that I believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another. (1 John 3:23).

I love one another for love is of God. I love because I am born of God and I know God for God is love. (1 John 4:7- 8).

God abides in me and I love one another and His love is perfected in me. I have known and believed the love that God has for me. God is love and I abide in Him because I abide in love and God abides in me. (1 John 4:12, 16).

My love has been perfected and I have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is so am I in the world. (1 John 4:17).

I have no fear in love because perfect love casts out fear. I love Him because He first loved me. (1 John 4:18- 19).

I love Jesus and those who are begotten of Him. By this I know that I love the children of God, when I love God and keep His commandments. (1 John 5:1- 2).

God makes satan and all his cohorts to bow down before my feet and to know that God has love me. (Rev. 3:9).

### **(3) MEDITATIONS ON THE THOUGHT LIFE**

God knows my sitting down and my rising up. God understands my thought afar off. God's thoughts are precious to me. (Ps. 139:2, 17).

The thoughts of the righteous are right. I am righteous in Christ and my thought are right. (Prov. 12:5; 2 Cor. 5:21).

I commit my works to the Lord and my thoughts are established. (Prov. 16:3).

God's thoughts toward me are thought of peace that give me a future and a hope. (Jer. 29:11).

I cast down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. (2 Cor. 10:5)

The word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the hearts. (Heb. 4:12).

I think only of those things which are true, noble, just, pure, lovely and of good report. I think of those things which have virtue and are praiseworthy. (Phil. 4:8)

God keeps me in perfect peace because my mind is stayed on Him and I trust Him. (Is. 26:3).

God puts His laws in my mind and writes them on my heart. He is my God and I am His child. (Heb. 8:10).

God puts His laws in my hearts and writes them on my mind. (Heb. 10:16).

I gird up the loins of my mind. (I Pet. 1: 13).

I arm myself with the mind of Christ. (1 Pet. 4:1).

The peace of God which passes all understanding guards my heart and my mind through Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:7).

My mind serves the law of God. (Rom. 7:25).

I am not conformed to this world but I am transformed by the renewing of my mind, that I may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom. 12:2).

I live according to the Spirit and mind the things of the Spirit. I am spiritually-minded and have life and peace. (Rom. 8:5-6).

I know the mind of the Lord for I have the mind of Christ. (Rom. 11:34; 1 Cor. 2:16).

I am renewed in the spirit of my mind. (Eph. 4:23).

I let the humble mind of Christ be in me. (Phil. 2:5).

I am mindful of the words spoken by the servants of God. (2 Pet. 3:2).

God has not given me the spirit of fear but He has given me the Spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind. (2 Tim. 1:7).

I set my mind on the things above and not on the things on this earth. I set my mind on the things of God. (Col. 3:2).

#### **(4) MEDITATIONS FOR HEALTH AND FOR HEALING**

I diligently heed the voice of the Lord my God and do what is right in His sight, and give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes; and God will not allow any disease to come on me which is present in the world for He is the Lord who heals me. (Ex. 15:26).

I serve the Lord my God, and He blesses my bread and my water; and He takes sickness away from the midst of me. (Ex. 23:25).

I walk in all the ways which the Lord my God has commanded me, and I live and it is well with me, and I prolong my days in the inheritance which I possess in Christ. (Deut. 5:33).

The Lord loves me and blesses me and multiplies me. He blesses my children and all my possessions. The Lord takes away from me all sicknesses and will not allow any disease to come on me which is present in the world. (Deut. 7:13-15).

I diligently obey the voice of the Lord my God, to observe carefully all His commandments which He commands me and He sets me high above all the nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon me and overtake me, because I obey the voice of the Lord

my God. I am blessed in the city and I am blessed in the country. The fruit of my body is blessed. The produce of my ground and the increase of my herds, the increase of my cattle and the offerings of my flocks are blessed. My basket and my store are blessed. I am blessed when I come in and I am blessed when I go out. The Lord causes my enemies who rise against me to be defeated before my face; they shall come against me one way and flee before me seven ways. The Lord commands the blessing on me in my store-houses and in all to which I set my hand and He blesses me in the inheritance which the Lord has given me in Christ. The Lord establishes me a holy person to Himself just as He has sworn to me as I keep the commandments of the Lord my God and walk in His ways. All people of the earth see that I am called by the name of the Lord and the fear of the Lord is on them. The Lord grants me plenty of goods, in the fruit of my body, in the increase of my livestock and in the produce of my ground in the inheritance which the Lord has given me in Christ. The Lord opens to me His good treasure, the heavens, to give rain to my land in its season, and to bless all the work of my hand. I lend to others but I shall never need to borrow at all. The Lord makes me the head and not the tail. I am above only and not beneath for I heed the commandments of the Lord my God which He commands me and I am careful to observe them. I will not turn aside from any of the words which God commands me, to the right hand or to the left, not go after other gods to serve them. I only obey the Lord's commandments. The Lord takes away from me the curse of sickness, poverty and death. I have perfect health for Christ has redeemed me from the curse of the law. (Deut. 28:1-14; Gal. 3:13).

God guards all my bones and not one of them is broken. (Ps. 34:20).

I praise the Lord my God for He is the help of my countenance and my God. (Ps. 42:11).

God redeems my soul from the power of the grave and I love eternally for I have eternal life in Christ. (Ps. 42:11).

God's loving-kindness is better than life. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness and my mouth shall praise God with joyful lips. (Ps. 63:3,5).

My soul blesses the Lord and does not forget all His benefits for God forgives all my iniquities and heals all my diseases. God daily loads me with benefits. (Ps. 103:2-3; 68:19).

There is not a feeble person in my family. (Ps. 105:37).

Pleasant words are always in my mouth and they are as honeycomb, they are sweetness to my soul and health to my bones. (Prov. 16:24).

I dwell in the secret place of the Most High God and abide under the shadow of the Almighty, I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God and in Him do I trust. He delivers me from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence. He covers me with His feathers and under His wings I do take refuge. His truth is my shield and buckler. I am not afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday. A thousand may fall at my side and ten thousand at my right hand but it shall not come near me. With my eyes I shall look and see the reward of the wicked. Because I have made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High God, my habitation no evil shall befall me nor any plague come near my dwelling; for He gives His angels charge over me to keep me in all my ways. They bear me up in their hands lest I dash my foot against a stone. I tread upon the lion and the cobra, the young lion and the serpent I trample under foot. I trample upon Satan and all his demonic forces under my feet. I have set my love upon God and He delivers me. He sets me on high because I have known His name. I call upon God and He answers me. He is with me in trouble; He delivers me and honours me. With long life He satisfies me and shows me His salvation. (Ps. 91).

God sends His Word and heals me and He delivers me from destruction. (Ps.107: 20).

God saves me and heals me and sends me prosperity. (Ps. 118:25).

God revives me according to His Word. God strengthens me according to His Word. (Ps. 119:25,28).

God revives me according to His loving-kindness and I keep the testimonies of His mouth. (Ps. 119:88).

God upholds me according to His Word and I live. (Ps. 119:116).

My heart keeps God's commands and length of days and long life and peace are added to me. I fear the Lord and depart from evil. God's Word is health to my flesh and strength to my bones. When I lie down, I am not afraid, I keep God's Word and when I lie down, my sleep is sweet. (Prov. 3:1- 2,7- 8, 24).

I hear God's Word and receive them and the years of life are many. I take a firm hold of God's Word and will not let it go. I keep them for they are my life. (Prov. 4:10, 13).

I give attention to God's Word and incline my ear to His sayings. I do not let them depart from my eyes but keep them in the midst of my heart; for they are life to me and health to all me flesh. (Prov. 4:20-22).

I fear the Lord and I prolong my days. I keep my heart with all diligence for out of it springs the issues of life. (Prov. 10:27; 4:23).

My fruit is a tree of life and my tongue promotes health. I walk the way of righteousness and I have life. In my pathway there is no death. (Prov. 11:30;12:18, 28).

My desire is only for the Lord and it is a tree of life. I fear the Lord and I am a fountain of life. I have a sound heart and it is the life of my body. (Prov. 13:12; 14:27, 30).

I have a merry heart and it does good like medicine, I am satisfied from the fruit of my mouth and from the produce of my lips I am filled. (Prov. 17:22; 18:20- 21)

I follow after righteousness and mercy and find life, righteousness and honor. (Prov. 21:21).

Jesus Christ has borne my griefs and carried my sorrows. He was stricken, smitten and afflicted for me. He was wounded for my transgressions. He was bruised for my iniquities. The chastisement for my peace was upon Him and by His stripes I am healed. (Is. 53:4- 5).

Jesus Himself took my infirmities and bore my sickness and I am now healthy and have no sickness or bodily infirmities. Jesus destroyed the works of the devil which were diseases, sicknesses and bodily infirmities; therefore all the works of the devil upon my body are destroyed and I have perfect health in Jesus Christ. (Matt. 8:17; 1 John 3: 8; Acts 10:38).

The will of God is done on earth as it is done in heaven. There is no sickness in heaven; therefore I am not sick at all upon this earth. Jesus was never sick at all upon this earth. Jesus is in me and His life flows in me. As He is in the world so am I in this world. I am healthy as Jesus, even as Jesus was healthy upon this earth. (Matt. 6:10; Gal. 2:20; 1 John 4:17).

I am justified by my words. I have the faith of Jesus Christ in me for Jesus is in me and He is the Author and Finisher of my faith. I speak to the mountains of sickness and diseases and they obey my words and leave. I have authority and power over all diseases and sicknesses; I command them to leave and they obey my words. I lay hands on the sick and they recover. (Matt. 12:37; Heb. 12:2; 2 Pet. 1:1, 4; Matt. 17:20; 10:1; Mark 16:18).

I believe in God and all things are possible to me. All the promises of God are 'Yes' to me for Christ has paid the price for all of them. (Matt. 9:23; 2 Cor. 1:19-20).

I believe that all those things which I say come to pass and I have everything which I say. All things which I desire, when I pray, I believe that I have received them and I have them. (Mark 11:23- 24).

I believe in Jesus Christ and the works that Jesus Christ did I will do also and I do greater works because Jesus Christ has gone to the Father and has sent His Holy Spirit who now lives in me. Whatever I ask in the name of Jesus, Jesus Himself does it that the Father may be glorified in the Son. When I ask for anything in the name of Jesus, Jesus says He will do it. (John 14:12-14).

I abide in Jesus Christ and I let His words abide in me by meditating upon them everyday. I ask what I will and Jesus says that it is done for me. (John 15:7).

Whatever I ask of the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, He gives it to me. The Father loves Jesus Christ and gives Him all that He asks. The Father loves me as much as He loves Jesus and gives me everything that I ask. (John 16:23, 26-27; 17:23).

All authority in heaven and earth is given to Jesus Christ. I have faith in the power and authority of the name of Jesus Christ and through His name I am made perfectly well. (Matt. 28:18; Acts 3:16).

The Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in me and He who raised Jesus Christ from the dead gives life to my body through the Spirit who dwells in me. (Rom. 8:11).

I confess with my mouth the Lord Jesus Christ and believe in my heart that God has raised Him from the dead and I am healed. For with my heart I believe into righteousness and with my mouth confession is made to my healing and health. (Rom. 10:9-10 – ‘save’ comes from the Greek word ‘sozo’ which means: ‘to heal’, ‘to save’, e.g. Mark 5:23; Acts 14:19).

My light breaks forth like the morning. My healing springs forth speedily and my righteousness goes before me. The glory of the Lord is my rearguard. (Is. 58:8).

The Lord brings me health and healing. He heals me and reveals to me the abundance of peace and truth. (Jer. 33:6).

I sow to the Spirit and reap of the Spirit eternal life. I sow words of health and healing everyday and daily reap health in my physical body. (Gal. 6:8-9).

Jesus has destroyed him that has the power of death that is the devil. I am released from the bondage of the fear of death. Jesus has disarmed the demonic principalities and powers and made a public spectacle of them triumphing over them in the cross. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ I have power over all demons and sicknesses and I cast them out. (Heb. 2:14; Col. 2:14-15; Mark 16:17-18).

My prayer and words of faith heal the sick and if they have committed sins, they are forgiven them. The word is near me, even in my heart and in my mouth, that is the word of faith which I speak. (Jas. 5:15; Rom. 10:8).

Jesus bore my sins upon the cross and by His stripes I was healed. (1 Pet. 2:24).

It is the will of God that I should prosper and be in perfect health even as my soul prospers. (3 John 2).

My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and all the fullness of God dwells in me. I glorify God in my body and in my spirit. (1 Cor. 6:19-20; Eph. 1:23; 3:19).

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Phil. 4:13).

It is no longer I who live but Christ who now lives in me. (Gal. 2:20).

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

## **(5) MEDITATIONS ON YOUTHFULNESS**

Just as Moses' eyes were not dim nor his natural vigor abated, my eyes are not dim nor my natural vigor abated. (Deut. 34:7).

God satisfies me with long life and shows me His salvation. (Ps. 91:16).

My eyes will not be dim at all. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening my eyes.  
(Is. 32:3; Ps. 19:8).

My teeth are like a flock of shorn sheep which have come out from the washing, every one of which bears twins, and none is barren among them. (Songs of Sol. 4:2).

God gives power to me and He increases my strength. Even the youth shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but I wait on the Lord and renew my strength; I mount up with wings like eagles. I run and I am not weary, I walk and do not faint. (Is. 40:29-31).

My youth is renewed like the eagle's. (Ps. 103:5).

The Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in me, and God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead gives life to my body through His Spirit who dwells in me. (Rom. 8:11).

My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. I glorify God in my body and in my spirit, which are God's. (1 Cor. 6:19- 20).

Christ is magnified in my body. (Phil. 1:20).

I behold the glory of God and am transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 3:18).

I am without spot or wrinkle or any such thing but I am holy and without blemish. My body is a member of Christ's body, of His flesh and of His bones. (Eph. 5:27, 30; 1 Cor. 6:15).

My whole spirit, soul and body are preserved blameless at the coming of my Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Thes. 5:25).

## **(6) OUR POSITION IN CHRIST**

In Christ I am freely justified by His grace through His redemption. (Rom. 3:24).

In Christ I have no condemnation because I walk according to the Spirit and not according to the flesh. (Rom. 8:1).

In Christ the law of the Spirit of life has made me free from the law of sin and death. (Rom. 8:2).

In Christ I am one body with all born-again believers and individually a member of one another. (Rom. 12:5).

In Christ I am sanctified and called to be a saint with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ my Lord. (1 Cor. 1:2).

In Christ I have wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. (1 Cor. 1:30).

In Christ I shall be made alive. (context means resurrection) (1 Cor. 15:22).

In Christ I am established and anointed. (2 Cor. 1:2).

In Christ God always leads me in triumph and through me diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. (2 Cor. 2:14).

In Christ the veil over my heart and mind that prevents me from understanding the Word of God has been taken away. (2 Cor. 3:14-16).

In Christ I am a new creation; old things have passed away and all things have become new. (2 Cor. 5:17).

In Christ I am reconciled to God the Father who does not impute my trespasses to me anymore but has committed to me the word of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:19).

In Christ I have liberty. (Gal. 2:4).

In Christ I have been given the promise of life and righteousness by faith because I believe. (Gal. 3: 21- 22).

In Christ I am a son of God through faith. (Gal. 3:28).

In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female but I am one with all believers. (Gal. 3:28).

In Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything but faith working by love. (Gal. 5:6).

In Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything but a new creation. (Gal. 6:15).

In Christ I have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places by my God and Father of my Lord Jesus Christ. (Eph. 1:3).

In Christ I am God's workmanship created for good works, which God prepared beforehand that I should walk in them. (Eph. 2:10).

In Christ I am gathered together in one with all things in Christ both which are in heaven and which are on earth in the dispensation of the fullness of the times. (Eph. 1:10).

In Christ I am raised up together and made to sit together in the heavenly places. (Eph. 2:6).

In Christ I who was once far away from God have been made near by the blood of Christ. (Eph. 2:12- 13).

In Christ I am a fellow heir and I am partaker of God's promise through the gospel. (Eph. 3:6).

In Christ I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God. (Phil. 3:14).

In Christ I preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that I may present every man perfect. (Col. 1:28).

In Christ I will be resurrected when the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. (1 Thes. 4:16).

In Christ I give thanks in everything for this is the will of God for me. (1 Thes. 5:18).

In Christ the grace of my Lord is exceedingly abundant with faith and love. (1 Tim. 1:14).

In Christ I am saved and am called with a holy calling, not according to my works but according to His purpose and grace which has been given to me. (2 Tim. 1:9)

In Christ I hold fast the pattern of sound words which I hear in faith and love. (2 Tim. 1:13).

In Christ I am strong in the grace of God. (2 Tim. 2:1).

In Christ I know the Holy Scriptures which are able to make me wise for salvation through faith. (2 Tim. 3:15).

In Christ the sharing of my faith becomes effective by the acknowledgement of every good thing which is in me. (Philemon 6).

In Christ I am neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of my Lord Jesus Christ but I have and do abound in faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. (2 Pet. 1:5-8).

In Christ I abide in the doctrine of Christ and have both the Father and the Son. (2 John 9).

In Christ I live and move and have my being. (Acts. 17:28).

In Christ I have the life of God which is the light of men. (John 1:4)

In Christ I do not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:15).

In Christ all the promises of God are Yes and Amen to the glory of God through me. (2Cor. 1:20).

In Christ I have become the righteousness of God because God has made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin for me. (2 Cor. 5:21).

In Christ I am chosen before the foundation of the world that I should be holy and without blame before Him in love. (Eph. 1:4).

In Christ I have the righteousness which is from God by faith. (Phil. 3:9).

In Christ I walk in Him as I have received Him. (Col. 2: 6).

In Christ I am rooted and built up and established in the faith as I have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. (Col. 2:10).

In Christ I am complete in Him who is the head of every principality and power. (Col. 2:10).

In Christ I keep God's Word and the love of God is perfected in me. (1 John 2:5).

In Christ I abide in Him and walk just as He walked. (1 John 2:6)

In Christ the new commandment of love is realized in me as it was in Him because the darkness has passed away and the true light is already shining. (1 John 2:8; John 13:34).

In Christ I have the propitiation for my sins and the sins of the world. (1 John 2:2).

In Christ I have the hope of Christ's coming and I purify myself just as He is pure. (1 John 3:2- 3).

In Christ there is no sin. (1 John 3:5).

In Christ I abide in Him and I do not sin for I see Him and know Him. (1 John 3:6; 2 Cor. 3:18).

In Christ I abide in Him and He abides in me for I keep His commandments. (1 John 3:24).

In Christ I abide in Him and He abides in me and I know this because He has given me of His Spirit. (1 John 4:13).

In Christ I have this confidence that if I ask anything according to His will, He hears me. (1 John 5:14).

In Christ I know that He has given me an understanding that I may know Him who is true. (1 John 5:20).

In Christ my Beloved I have been made accepted by God the Father. (Eph. 1:6).

In Christ I, who was once darkness, am now a light in the Lord and walk as a child of light. (Eph. 5:8).

In Christ I am strong in the power of His might. (Eph. 6:10).

In Christ I have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace. (Eph. 1:7).

In Christ I have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will. (Eph. 1:11).

In Christ I was sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise having believed in Him. (Eph. 1:13).

In Christ I am joined together with the church, which as a whole building grows into a holy temple in the Lord. (Eph. 2:21).

In Christ I am built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit. (Eph. 2:22).

In Christ I have boldness and access with confidence through faith. (Eph. 3:12).

In Christ I have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. (Col. 1:14).

In Christ I have all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col. 2:3).



In Christ I am circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ. (Col. 2:11).

In Christ I love Him and rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory. (1 Pet. 1:8)

In Christ the righteousness of God which is through faith is revealed in me. (Rom. 3:21- 22)

In Christ the grace of God and the gift of righteousness do abound in my life by the grace of Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:15, 17).

In Christ I reign in life. (Rom. 5:17b).

In Christ I am dead to the law through the body of Jesus Christ that I am now in union to Jesus Christ who was raised from the dead and I do now bear fruit to God. (Rom. 7:4).

In Christ I am always thankful to God for the grace of God which has been given to me by Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 1:4).

In Christ God has reconciled me to Himself and has given me the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:18).

In Christ I have been justified not by the works of the law but by faith. (Gal. 2:16).

In Christ I have been predestined to sonship according to the good pleasure of His will. (Eph. 1:5).

In Christ I am filled with the fruits of righteousness to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:11).

In Christ God supplies all my needs according to His riches in glory. (Phil. 4:19).

In Christ I have been be gotten to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead according to His abundant mercy. (1 Pet. 1:3).

In Christ I am a living stone built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God. (1 Pet. 2:5).

In Christ I am called to God's eternal glory to be perfected, established, strengthened and settled. (1 Pet. 5:10).

In Christ I am enriched in everything, in all utterance and all knowledge. (1 Cor. 1:5).

In Christ I live, for through Him all things were made. (1 Cor. 8:6).

In Christ all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible or invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. I am created through Him and for Him. (Col. 1:16).

In Christ all things are held together for He existed before all things. Christ is my head and in everything He stands first. (Col. 1:17-18).

In Christ I am reconciled to Himself for He has made peace through the blood of His cross. (Col. 1:20).

In Christ whatever I do in word or deed, I do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. (Col. 3:17).

In Christ God is able to save me to the uttermost for I come to God through Him, and He ever lives to make intercession for me. (Heb. 7:25).

In Christ I continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of my lips, giving thanks to His Name. (Heb. 13:15).

In Christ I believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that my faith and hope are in God. (1 Pet. 1:21).

In Christ I have received purification from sins which Jesus Himself has made for me. (Heb. 1:3)

In Christ my sin has been done away by the sacrifice of Jesus, Himself. (Heb. 9:26).

In Christ I have obtained an eternal redemption by the blood of Jesus Christ. (Heb. 9:12).

In Christ my conscience is purged from dead works by the blood of Jesus Christ so that I do now serve the living God. (Heb. 9:14).

In Christ I am called and I have received the promise of the eternal inheritance through Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant. (Heb. 9:15).

In Christ I have boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus Christ, by a new and living way which He consecrated for me, through the veil, that is, His flesh. (Heb. 10:19-20).

In Christ I walk in the light as He is in the light, and I have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses me from all sin. (1 John 1:7).

In Christ I have access by faith into His grace in which I stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (Rom. 5:2).

In Christ I have received reconciliation to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:10-11).

In Christ the world has been crucified to me and I to the world. (Gal. 6:14).

In Christ the whole body (the Church of Christ), joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph. 4:16).

In Christ I hold fast to Jesus Christ who is my Head, and I am nourished and knit together and grow with the increase which is from God. (Col. 2:19).

In Christ I am the fragrance of Jesus Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. (2 Cor. 2:15).

In Christ I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. (Phil. 3:12).

In Christ my body belongs to Him and my substance is of Christ. (Col. 2:17).

In Christ I will receive the reward of the inheritance for I serve the Lord Jesus Christ. (Col. 3:24).

In Christ there is no darkness at all for God is light. (1 John 1:5).

In Christ I have received an anointing from Him and it abides in me, and the same anointing teaches me concerning all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught me, I abide in Him. (1 John 2:27).

In Christ I have been justified by faith, and I have peace with God through my Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:1).

In Christ I rejoice in God through my Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom. 5:11).

In Christ I reckon myself to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus my Lord. (Rom. 6:11).

In Christ I have received the gift of God, which is eternal life in Christ Jesus my Lord. (Rom. 6:11).

In Christ I give thanks to God who gives me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 15:57).

In Christ I have been redeemed from the curse of the law and the blessing of Abraham now comes upon me in Christ Jesus for I have received the promise of the Spirit through faith. (Gal. 3:13-14).

In Christ I am no longer a slave but I am a son of God, and being a son, I am an heir of God through Christ. (Gal. 4:7).

In Christ God shows in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward me in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:7).

In Christ I am not anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let my requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard my heart and mind through Christ Jesus. (Phil. 4:6-7).

In Christ I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Phil. 4:13).

In Christ I have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all by the will of God. (Heb. 10:10).

In Christ I am made complete in every good work to do His will through the blood of the everlasting covenant, the blood of Jesus Christ. (Heb. 13:20- 21).

In Christ the world is saved through Him. (John 3:17).

In Christ I have been justified by His blood and I am saved from wrath through Him. (Rom. 5:9).

In Christ I am more than a conqueror through Him who loves me. (Rom. 8:37).

In Christ God's love for me has been shown when He sent His only Son into the world that through Him I might have life. (1 John 4:9).

In Christ I have died with Him and I do now live with Him. (Rom. 6:8).

In Christ I have been crucified and it is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.(Gal. 2:20).

In Christ I, who was once dead in trespasses, have been made alive together with Christ. (Eph. 2:5).

In Christ I am no longer subjected to the things of this world for I have died with Christ from the basic principles of the world. (Col. 2:20).

In Christ I seek those things which are above for I have been raised and seated together with Christ at the right hand of God. (Col. 3:1; Eph. 2: 6).

In Christ I have died to this world and my life is now hidden with Christ in God. (Col. 3:3; Gal. 6:16).

In Christ I have been crucified through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so I walk in the newness of life. (Rom. 6:4).

In Christ my old man was crucified that the body of sin might be done away with, so that I should no longer be a slave of sin. (Rom. 6:6).

In Christ I have been given freely all things by God who spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for me. (Rom. 8:32).

In Christ I live by the power of God. (2 Cor. 13:4).

In Christ I was buried in baptism and raised together with Him through faith in the power of God who raised Jesus from the dead. (Col. 2:12).

In Christ I have been forgiven of all trespasses and made alive together with Him. (Col. 2:13).

In Christ I will appear with Him in glory when Christ who is my life appears. (Col. 3:4).

In Christ I live and reign with Him. (2 Tim. 2:11- 12).

In Christ I live and I feed on Him just as Jesus was sent of the Father and loved by the Father. (John 6:37).

In Christ I come to the Father for He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. (John 14:6).

In Christ I feed on His words which are spirit and life and He abides in me and I in Him. (John 6:56, 63).

In Christ I know that He is in the Father, and I am in Him and He is in me. (John 14:20).

In Christ I bear much fruit for I am a branch in Him and He is the Vine; I abide in Him and He abides in me for without Him I can do nothing. (John 15:4- 5).

In Christ I ask what I desire and it is done for me because I abide in Him and His words abide in me. (John 15:7).

In Christ I have peace and I am of good cheer in tribulation for He has overcome the world. (John 16: 33).

In Christ I am loved in the same manner as the Father loves Jesus and I abide in His love. (John 15:9).

In Christ I am washed, sanctified and I am justified in the Name of my Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. 6:11).

In Christ I do the works of Jesus and greater works because Jesus has gone to the Father and has sent me the Holy Spirit of Truth who abides in me forever. (John 14:12, 16- 17).

## **(7) MEDITATIONS ON PROSPERITY**

God blesses me and makes His Name great through me. I am a blessing to others. I am a child of Abraham and the blessings of Abraham are upon me. (Gen. 12:2-3; Gal. 3:7, 14).

I am blessed of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth. (Gen. 14:19).

God is my shield and my exceedingly great reward. (Gen. 15:1).

The Lord is with me and He makes me successful. The Lord makes all I do to prosper. (Gen. 39:2- 3).

God's Word does not depart out of my mouth but I meditate in it day and night, that I may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then I will make my way prosperous and I will have good success. (Josh. 1:8).

My delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law do I meditate day and night. I am like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither. Whatever I do shall prosper. (Ps. 1:2- 3).

The Lord is my Shepherd and I shall not want. (Ps. 23:1).

I fear the Lord and I have no want. The young lions lack and suffer hunger but I seek the Lord and shall not lack any good things. (Ps. 34:9- 10).

I am the Lord's servant and He has pleasure in my prosperity. (Ps. 35:27).

I delight myself in the Lord and He gives me the desires of my heart. (Ps. 37:4).

This is the day that Lord has made. I will rejoice and be glad in it. The Lord saves me rejoice and be glad in it. The Lord saves me and sends me prosperity. (Ps. 118:24-25).

I fear the Lord and delight greatly in His commandments; wealth and riches are in my house. (Ps. 112:1,3).

I honor the Lord with my possessions, and with the first-fruits of all my increase and my barns are filled with plenty. (Prov. 3:9- 10).

I love the wisdom of God and I have riches and honor, enduring riches and righteousness. I inherit wealth and all my treasures are filled. (Prov. 8:12, 18, 21).

The Lord does not allow my soul to famish. I am diligent and He makes me rich. (Prov. 10:3- 4).

In all my labor there is profit. I am wise in the Lord and He crowns me with riches. (Prov. 14:23-24).

By humility and the fear of the Lord I receive riches, honor and life. (Prov. 22:4).

I am willing and obedient and I eat the good of the land. (Is. 1:19).

I bring all the tithes into God's storehouse so that there is food in God's house. I praise the Lord and He opens for me the windows of heaven and pours out for me such blessing that there is not enough room to receive it but it overflows through me to others. And God rebukes the devourer for my sake. (Mal. 3:10-11).

I seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things are added to me. (Matt. 6:33).

I give and it will be given back to me: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into my bosom. For with the same measure that I use, it will be measured back to me. (Luke 6:38).

I surrender everything to Jesus and for the gospel and I receive a hundredfold now in this time, with persecutions, and in the age to come, eternal life. (Mark 10:30).

Jesus for my sake became poor that I through His poverty might become rich. (2 Cor. 8:9).

I sow bountifully and I reap bountifully. I give cheerfully and not grudgingly or of necessity, and God loves me and makes all grace abound toward me, that I, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work. (2 Cor. 9:6-8).

Christ has redeemed me from the curse of poverty. (Gal. 3:13; Deut. 28).

I share in the ministry of giving and my God shall supply all my needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:15-16, 18-19).

It is the will of God that I prosper in all things and be in health, just as my soul prospers. (3 John 2).

## **(8) MEDITATIONS FOR CHILDREN**

I honor my father and my mother, as the Lord my God has commanded me and my days are long and it is well with me. (Deut. 5:16).

I grow and the Lord blesses me and the Spirit of the Lord moves in my life. (Judg. 13:24-25).

I minister to the Lord and grow before the Lord. (1 Sam. 2:11, 21).

I grow in stature, and in favor both with the Lord and men. (1 Sam. 2:26).

I hear the instruction of my father and do not forsake the law of my mother; for they are graceful ornaments on my head and chains about my neck. (Prov. 1:8-9).

I hear the instruction of my father, and give attention to gain and to know intelligent discernment, comprehension and interpretation of spiritual matters. (Prov. 4:1 Amplified Version.)

I am wise and I make my parents glad. I love wisdom and my parents rejoice. (Prov. 15:20; 29:3).

I am known by my deeds, be whether what I do is pure and right. (Prov. 20:11).

I am trained up in the way that I should go in the Lord; and when I am old, I will not depart from it. (Prov. 22:6).

I listen to my father who begot me and do not despise my mother when she is old. (Ps. 23:22).

I grow and become strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God is upon me. (Luke 2:40).

I increase in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:52).

I obey my parents in the Lord for it is right and it is well with me, and I live long on the earth. (Eph. 6:1, 3).

I am brought up in the training and admonition of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4).

I obey my parents in all things in the Lord for this is well pleasing to the Lord. (Col. 3:20).

I do not let anyone despise my youth, but I am an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith and in purity. (1 Tim. 4:12).

I seek to know the Holy Scriptures from childhood that I may grow wise in my faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 3:15).

## THE PROPHET AT PRAYER

May this prayer challenge us even today!!!!

This is the prayer of A.W. Tozer – a man called to be a witness to the nations. This is what he said to his Lord on the day of his ordination. After the elders and ministers had prayed and laid their hands on him, he withdrew to meet his Saviour in the secret place and in silence, farther than his well-meaning brothers could take him. And he said:

"O Lord, I have heard Your voice and was afraid. You have called me to an awesome task in a grave and perilous hour. You are about to shake all nations and the earth and also heaven, that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.

O Lord, my Lord, You have stooped to honour me to be Your servant. No man takes this honour upon himself except he that is called of God as was Aaron. You have ordained me Your messenger to them that are stubborn of heart and hard of hearing. They have rejected You, the Master, and it is not to be expected that they will receive me, the servant.

My God, I shall not waste time deploring my weakness nor my being unfit for the work. The responsibility is not mine, but Yours. Thou have said, I knew you—I ordained you—I sanctified you, and You have also said, you shall go to all that I shall send you, and whatsoever I command you you shall speak. Who am I to argue with You or to call into question Your sovereign choice? The decision is not mine, but Yours. So be it, Lord. Your will, not mine, be done.

Well do I know, God of the prophets and the apostles, that as long as I honour You You wilt honour me. Help me therefore to take this solemn vow to honour You in all my future life and labours, whether by gain or by loss, by life or by death, and then to keep that vow unbroken while I live.

It is time, O God, for You to work, for the enemy has entered into Your pastures and the sheep are torn and scattered. And false shepherds abound who deny the danger and laugh at the perils which surround Your flock. The sheep are deceived by these hirelings and follow them with touching loyalty while the wolf closes in to kill and destroy. I beseech You, give me sharp eyes to detect the presence of the enemy; give me understanding to distinguish the false friend from the true. Give me vision to see and courage faithfully to report what I see. Make my voice so like Your own that even the sick sheep will recognise it and follow You.

Lord Jesus, I come to You for spiritual preparation, lay Your hand upon me. Anoint me with the oil of the New Testament prophet. Forbid that I should become a religious scribe and thus lose my prophetic calling. Save me from the curse that lies dark across the face of the modern clergy, the curse of compromise, of imitation, of professionalism. Save me from the error of judging a church by its size, its popularity or the amount of its yearly offerings.

Help me to remember that I am a prophet-not a promoter, not a religious manager, but a prophet. Let me never become a slave to crowds. Heal my soul of carnal ambitions and deliver me from the itch for publicity. Save me from bondage to things. Let me not waste my days puttering around the house. Lay Your terror upon me, O God, and drive me to the place of prayer where I may wrestle with principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this world. Deliver me from over-eating and late sleeping. Teach me self-discipline that I may be a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

I accept hard work and small rewards in this life. I ask for no easy place. I shall try to be blind to the little ways that could make life easier. If others seek the smoother path, I shall try to take the hard way without judging them too harshly. I shall expect opposition and try to take it quietly when it comes. If, as sometimes it happens to Your servants, I should have grateful gifts pressed upon me by Your kind people, stand by me then and save me from the blight that often follows. Teach me to use whatever I receive in such manner that it will not injure my soul nor diminish my spiritual power.

And if in Your permissive Providence honour should come to me from Your church, let me not forget in that hour that I am unworthy of the least of Your mercies, and that if men knew me as intimately as I know myself they would withhold their honours or bestow them upon others more worthy to receive them.

And now, O Lord of heaven and earth, I consecrate my remaining days to You; let them be many or few, as You will. Let me stand before the great or minister to the poor and lowly; that choice is not mine, and I would not influence it if I could. I am Your servant to do Your will. That will is sweeter to me than position or riches or fame, and I choose it above all things on earth or in heaven.

Though I am chosen of You and honoured by a high and holy calling, let me never forget that I am but a man of dust and ashes, a man with all the natural faults and passions that plague the race of men. I pray You, therefore, my Lord and Redeemer, save me from myself and from all the injuries I may do myself while trying to be a blessing to others.

Fill me, with Your power by the Holy Spirit, and I will go in Your strength and tell of Your righteousness, even Yours only. I will spread abroad the message of Your redeeming love while my normal powers endure.

Then, dear Lord, when I am old and weary and too tired to go on, have a place ready for me above, and make me to be numbered with Your saints in glory everlasting. Amen.



## **FASTING - A BIBLICAL WAY OF LIFE**

FASTING is the deliberate abstinence from food for the purpose of concentrating on deeper fellowship with the Lord and the renewal of spiritual power. If prayer is the rail on which God's locomotive moves, then fasting is the lubricating (smoothing) oil that makes it easier for the train to move on the rails at great speed. Fasting accelerates (increases the speed) the movement of the train of God.

There are some things that God will not do unless the prayer of His children is accompanied by fasting. In fasting, the individual feels as if he has done all that is possible and, therefore God must act in a supernatural way. Examples of fasting people abound in the Word of God. We shall look at some of them.

### **FASTING AS AN ACT OF REPENTANCE**

"Now on the twenty-fourth day of this month the people of Israel were assembled with fasting and in sackcloth and with earth upon their heads. And the Israelites separated themselves from all foreigners, and stood and confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers. And they stood up in their place and read from the book of the law of the Lord their God for a fourth of the day; for another fourth of it, they made confession and worshipped the Lord their God" (Nehemiah 9:1-3).

"Gird on sackcloth and lament, O priests, wail O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because cereal offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God; and cry to the Lord" (Joel 1:13-14).

"Yet even now, 'says the Lord', return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord, your God for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil. Who knows whether He will not turn and repent and leave a blessing behind Him, a cereal offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God? Blow the trumpet in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Sanctify the congregation; assemble the elders, gather the children even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber. Between the vestibule and the altar let the priests, the ministers of the altar, weep and say, "Spare Your people, O Lord, and make not Your heritage a reproach, a byword among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, Where is their God?" (Joel 2:12-17).

So, here we see fasting as an act of mourning – sackcloth, heart-rending, wailing, and crying to the Lord. It is saying to the Lord, "God, I am sorry for my personal sin and failure", or "I am sorry for the sins and failure of my people." Fasting is like saying to God, "Lord, behold my repentance! I hate what I have done. Forgive me." When Israel fought with Benjamin, in one day Israel lost twenty-two thousand men, but the Bible says, "Then all the people of Israel, the whole army, went up and came to Bethel and wept; they sat before the Lord, AND FASTED that day until evening and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord." (Judges 20:26). This led to the great victory of Israel against Benjamin.

### **FASTING FOR SELF – HUMILIATION**

Ezra was amongst the Jews that returned from Babylon. The king had allowed him to carry enormous wealth for the construction of the house of the Lord. In his dealing with the king, he made the king understand that his God was the God of all the earth. Now he was faced with the task of transporting enormous wealth. Should he go back to the king and ask for protection? No. This would weaken his testimony, so he thought. And so he decided that he must have safety, but that it must be by a means that would show God as able. What then did he do? He himself puts it clearly, "Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river Ahava, that WE MIGHT HUMBLE OURSELVES BEFORE GOD to seek from Him a straight way for ourselves, our children, and all our goods. For I was ashamed to ask the king for a band of soldiers and horsemen to protect us against the enemy on our way, once we had told the king, 'The hand of our God is good upon all

that seek Him, and the power of His wrath is against all that forsake Him'. SO WE FASTED AND BESOUGHT OUR GOD FOR THIS and He listened to our entreaty" (Ezra 8:21-23).

Ezra did not choose the easier way. He did not choose dependence on man. He rather chose the lonely way of depending on God. He, however, knew that the way of total dependency on God was a lonely way with a price to pay – fasting and seeking God. But Ezra knew that way was ultimately the safer way, for one with God is a majority and whereas man may fail, God never fails. God never failed him, for He listened to the entreaty. Yes, God will not turn a deaf ear to the prayers of His children, especially the prayers that are soaked in humble fasting. May the Lord help us to so fast and pray.

### **FASTING FOR BATTLE - 2 Chronicles 20:1-30**

The Moabites and Ammonites and some Meunites came against Jehoshaphat for battle. The multitude was great for him and he feared. In his fear he could have turned to other kings for help, but the Bible says that he “set himself to seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. And Judah assembled to seek help from the Lord; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord.” (2 Chronicles 20:3-4). He proclaimed a fast, not only for himself, but for ALL Judah. He sought the Lord, not alone but Judah assembled and people from ALL the cities came to SEEK THE LORD. As they fasted and sought the Lord, Jehoshaphat said publicly, “O Lord, God of our fathers, are You not God in heaven? Do You not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? In Your hand is power and might, so that none is able to withstand You. Did You not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before Your people Israel, and gave it forever to the descendants of Abraham Your friend? And they have dwelt in it, and have built in it a sanctuary for Your name, saying, If evil comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house, and before You, and cry to You in our affliction, and You will hear and save!’ And now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom You would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt and whom they avoided and did not destroy, behold they reward us by coming to drive us out of Your possession, which You have given us to inherit. O Lord our God, will You not execute judgment upon them? FOR WE ARE POWERLESS AGAINST THIS GREAT MULTITUDE THAT IS COMING AGAINST US WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO, BUT OUR EYES ARE UPON YOU.” (2 Chronicles 20:6-12). This is, indeed, a deep prayer, the type of prayer that normally proceeds from a fasting heart.

**In fact the fasting, seeking, praying disciple is confessing human inability and God’s ability.**

It was, indeed, the prayer of fasting man, a man in great difficulty. He said that they were powerless. Only people who are powerless on their own will fast and seek God. He said that they did not know what to do. He had come to the end of himself. Only people who have come to the end of themselves can fast and pray. Those who are strong in the energy of the flesh have no place for fasting, seeking God, and praying. He said though they were powerless and confused, and their eyes were upon the Lord. That is faith. A fasting, praying man is one who sees hopeless situation, sees his own powerlessness, but knows that God is able and sets his eyes upon the Lord. In fact the fasting, seeking, praying disciple is confessing human inability and God’s ability. May God raise many such in the church as we see the Day approaching.

As the people sought the Lord, they were in dead earnest. Everyone was involved: their wives, their children and their little ones also stood before the Lord. It was a massive prayer, seeking and fasting action. When one person fasts and prays, the devil is disturbed; when a few saints fast and pray, the whole of hell is shaken; but God waits for the day when the whole Church will fast, seek, and pray, and then all of hell will be brought to nothing. May all who lead various segments of the Body of Christ labour and work for the dawn of that day.

The fasting, seeking, praying by a multitude caused the Spirit of the Lord to come upon Jahaziel and then he prophesied, “Fear not and do not be dismayed at this great multitude; for THE BATTLE IS NOT YOURS BUT GOD’S.” (2 Chronicles 20:15). The battle had now changed hands. Before, it was the battle of Jehoshaphat and the people of Judah. Now it was God’s battle. What caused the change? FASTING!!!! SEEKING!!!! PRAYING!!!! I want to suggest that fasting,

seeking, praying will change the battle facing any individual or group of individuals in the Lord's battle; and when the battle has changed hands, we can relax, for God is able. "You will not need to fight in this battle; take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the Lord on your behalf." (2 Chronicles 20:17). And, indeed, they did not need to fight. God fought and the battle was won. The Bible says, "And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush against the men of Ammon, Moab, Mount Seir, who had come against Judah so that they were routed. For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir destroying them utterly and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir they all helped to destroy one another. When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked towards the multitude; and behold they were dead bodies lying on the ground; none had escaped." (2 Chronicles 20:22-24). God had won the battle! He can still win battle today if we will pay the price.

### **FASTING PREPARATION TO MEET GOD (1 Kings 10)**

Elijah had stood against Jezebel, Ahab, and the prophets of Baal and triumphed. This was, however, followed by a time of discouragement when he wanted to die. God miraculously fed him and then he went on a forty days fast as he journeyed towards Horeb. His fast prepared him for his fresh encounter with God. At Horeb, he met God afresh, was encouraged by the Lord, and given fresh instructions for ministry. And in the strength received from that encounter, he came again into the battle against godlessness.

We suggest from personal experience that fasting and prayer are helpful in preparing the man of God for a fresh encounter with God or for a fresh infilling with the Spirit of God. During this fast, it is as if we are saying to the Lord, "I need to meet You afresh. My hunger for You is intense enough to cause me to lay aside the normal needs of the body." God always answers such prayers. How can He leave a fasting soul to depart unblessed?

### **FASTING TO CHANGE GOD'S MIND (Jonah Chapters 3 and 4)**

Nineveh was a wicked city whose wickedness had come up before the Lord. (Jonah 1:2). God decided to judge Nineveh. In fact, Nineveh was only forty days removed from judgement (Jonah 3:4). What did the people do when the message of their impending doom reached them? First of all, the people on their own proclaimed a fast. The Bible says, "And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them to the least of them." (Jonah 3:5). Secondly, the bad news reached the king. He acted, "He arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes." (Jonah 3:6). This was personal humiliation on the part of the king. So the people and the king were involved in the humiliation. He, however, did not leave it there. The Bible says, "And he made proclamation and published it through Nineveh. By the decree of the king and his nobles; Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not eat, or drink water, but let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and let them cry mightily to God." (Jonah 3:7-8).

The king passed a decree. It was an official act. We know that many religious leaders pass their own decrees. The contents of these leave much to be desired. However, it was the king of Nineveh. His decree insisted that there be humiliation, mourning, and fasting by all human beings and all animals in his kingdom. It was a very far-reaching decree—babies, suckling, the sick, etc. and all animals were involved. No one was allowed to go away from the decree under the excuse or pretext that he was sick. No baby was too young to be involved. Even animals were fasting! Not only did they not eat, but they did not drink water. Pregnant women and all were involved. This is perhaps the most far-reaching fast in all of history.

But they did not only fast. They were to cry to the Lord, and cry they did, all of them. It must have been very noisy, too noisy for the well-organized, quiet religious corpses of our day! They did not only cry, but they were told, "Let everyone turn from his evil way and from the violence which is in his hands." (Jonah 3:8). They repented. They turned from their evil ways—all of them and no one was allowed to default.

Their humiliation, fasting and repentance was not purposeless. They had one goal in mind – to plead for mercy. They wanted God to repent and turn from His fierce anger. All humiliation,

fasting, repentance must be goal directed. No believer or local assembly dares go about these things without specific goals in mind. The apostle Paul said, “I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air.” (1 Corinthians 9:26). How did God react to this fast? The Bible says, “When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way GOD REPENTED of the evil which He had said He would do to them; AND HE DID NOT DO IT” (Jonah 3:10).

We know that normally God does not repent. The Bible says, “God is not man the He should lie, or a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do it? Or has He spoken, and will He not fulfill it?” (Numbers 23:19). However, there are special circumstances like those He faced with the people of Nineveh when a whole nation, man, beast, and all repented with sackcloth and fasting. Under such circumstances, God, in his limitless mercy allows Himself to be moved by their sackcloth, fasting, tears, and repentance and REPENTS. In thus repenting, God does not show weakness but great strength – the strength of unlimited love and mercy. “The Lord is not slow about His promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, BUT THAT ALL SHOULD REACH REPENTANCE” (2 Peter 3:9).

The prevailing conditions in the world today are not different from those in Nineveh. There is sin in everyone and people are looking for new ways of committing sin. This generation has outclassed Sodom and Gomorrah in sin, and it is getting accepted. We stand at the brink of God’s judgement. It is not the world alone that is ripe for judgement. The Church of the Lord Jesus is everything but healthy. It’s here where sin abounds; there is lukewarmness all around. Worldliness is the order of the day. Doctrinal confusion, compromise, and indifference are winning each day. God has promised to judge. Must He keep His Word? Can He not be forced to repent?

Where are Church leaders who, like the king of Nineveh, will send out a decree proclaim sackcloth, fasting, tears, and repentance? Why is not the normal order even in those systems that claim to be contending for the whole counsel of God? Could it be that those who ought to call for fasting and weeping are themselves caught up as worshippers at the shrine of the “god of food”? Will someone rise to the challenge and help turn the tide? Nineveh was saved. Shall we let our world perish or shall we do something about it?

### **FASTING TO BREAK SPIRITUAL INTERFERENCE (Daniel 10:2-15)**

When Daniel was reading the prophet Jeremiah, he came to the passage which says, “For thus said the Lord, when seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfil to you my promise and bring you back to this place.” (Jeremiah 29:10). Daniel consulted a calendar and saw that the time was up. So he turned his face “to the Lord God, seeking Him by prayer and supplication with fasting and sackcloth and ashes.” (Daniel 9:3). He prayed, confessing his sins and those of his people. He pleaded with God saying, “Now therefore, O Lord our God, listen to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplication and for Your own sake, O Lord, cause Your face to shine upon Your sanctuary, which is desolated...” (Daniel 9:17-19).

In answer to his fasting and supplication, the angel Gabriel was sent to him assure him that God would indeed fulfill His promise. Gabriel said, “O Daniel, I have now come out to give you wisdom and understanding. At the beginning of your supplications a word went forth, and I have come to tell it to you, for you are greatly beloved... Seventy weeks of years are decreed concerning your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness...” (Daniel 9:22-24).

However, with the assurance of the fulfillment of God’s promise came the prophecy by Gabriel, that the city and the sanctuary would be destroyed and his people cut off. This was bad news for Daniel, and he did not take it lightly. He went on a partial fast for three weeks. The Bible says, “In those days I, Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth, nor did I anoint myself at all, for the full three weeks.” (Daniel 10:2-3). He wanted to know more about the future of his people. The answer did not come at once. It needed three weeks of fasting to bring the answer through. Why? Because of spiritual interference. The Bible says, “And behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. And he said to me, O Daniel, man greatly beloved, give heed to the words that I speak to you, and stand upright, for now I have been sent to you.” While he was speaking this word to me, I stood up trembling. Then

he said to me, “Fear not Daniel, for from the first day that you set your mind to understand and humble yourself before God, your words have been heard, and I have come because of your words. The prince of Persia withstood me twenty-one days; but Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, so I left him there with the prince of the kingdom of Persia and came to make you understand what is to befall your people in the latter days.” (Daniel 10:11-14). So we see the issues:

A man discovers that God’s promise needs to be fulfilled.

He fasts and prays.

God sends an answer but part of it spells doom for His people.

He goes on a partial fast and pray of three weeks.

From the first days of his fasting prayer, God sends an angel to bring him an answer.

The satanic angel (prince of Persia) interferes and prevents the angel from coming to Daniel

The fasting and praying moved God to send Michael to help the angel.

Michael takes over the battle with the prince of Persia, and the angel is released to bring the answer to Daniel.

#### What of Daniel had not fasted and prayed?

Well, the answer given by God from the first day on which Daniel prayed might never have reached him, even though God had given it, or it might have come very late. As we see, the evil spirit called the prince of Persia was quite a strong spirit. He held God’s messenger for twenty-one days, and even when Michael, one of the mighty princes arrived, he could not deal with him at once. He only took over the fight so that the messenger might be free to take the answer to Daniel. So we can conclude that if the reinforcement that was given in answer to fasting and prayer was never sent, no answer would have got to Daniel.

Does this explain why so many prayers, prayed in the will of God are apparently unanswered? God has answered, but the answers are not getting to the right persons because of satanic interference and because there are so few who fast, the reinforcement for final release is absent!

May God open our eyes to see the unseen world! May we be granted a revelation of the unseen powers at work! May God open our eyes to see why some people accept only part of the Word of God, why they obey only partially. There are unseen powers at work. The devil is prepared to hinder. The apostle Paul said, “We would have come to you, even I, Paul, once again but Satan hindered us.” (1 Thessalonians 2:18). He again said, “For a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.” (I Corinthians 16:9).

My prayer is that these truths will burn their way into the hearts of all God’s children and transform them into fasting praying people. May the Lord begin this work in me in a new and greater measure.

#### **FASTING AS A MEANS TO BUILD SPIRITUAL RESERVES (Luke 4:1-14)**

After the Lord Jesus was baptized into water and anointed with the Holy Spirit, He was led to the wilderness by the Holy Spirit first of all to fast; secondly, to face and overcome temptation; and thirdly, to return in power into Galilee for His life’s work.

The Holy Spirit first led Jesus into forty days of fasting. The Holy Spirit knew that the Lord needed it if He was to overcome the temptations that would come His way. So the Lord subjected Himself to forty days of fasting. He fasted during the forty days “and when they were ended, he was hungry.” (Luke 4:2). He was hungry and the Enemy thought that he could now assault and defeat Him. One thing that Satan did not know was that the fasting had only made Him stronger spiritually, to overcome him. The body was weaker than it was before the fast, but His spirit was stronger and He defeated the Enemy in three mighty clashes from which hell suffered a terrible defeat. Had Jesus not fasted, we wonder whether the devil would have been defeated so thoroughly and so quickly.

The fasting did not only enable Him to outclass the Enemy in the conflict of ages, it brought Jesus to a new place of spiritual power, for the Bible says, “And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee.” (Luke 4:14). The fasting, as it were, brought Him into a fresh experience of the power of the spirit, and He moved in the fullness of that power of the rest of His ministry.

Why are some believers so weak that even before the devil has said two words of temptation, they are already crawling at his feet in surrender? One reason is that such people have refused to appropriate the spiritual power that is so necessary for overcoming temptation. That power comes partly through fasting. The apostle Paul, at the onset of his spiritual pilgrimage and ministry spent the first days in a fast (Acts 9:9). Do we, knowing this, wonder why he went further with God than most people in his ministry for the Lord?

### **FASTING AS A MINISTRY TO THE LORD (Luke 2:36-40) (Acts 13:1-3)**

The Bible, talking of Anna the prophetess, says, “She did not depart from the temple, worshipping with fasting and prayer night and day.” She spent at least fifty years in the temple, worshipping the Lord night and day. How did she worship? She worshipped by fasting and prayer. She was not fasting to get one thing or the other from God. She was worshipping the Lord by fasting. She did not do it once. She did it all the time – night and day.

And the early Church? In Antioch, the leaders of the Church were MINISTERING TO THE LORD AND FASTING (Acts 13:2). As they ministered with fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” (Acts 13:2). God speaks more to ministering and fasting people. Is that why He has not spoken to you? Is it because you are a lover of food?

Although the Lord spoke to them asking for the separation of Saul and Barnabas, they did not rush to send them off. They further fasted and prayed, and then sent them off. It was all a spiritual affair. No wonder the Bible could talk of these two as being sent out by the Holy Spirit. How are modern missionaries sent out? Are they sent out with fasting and prayer or are they sent out with gluttonous parties? A careful look at modern missionary zeal, depth, spiritually, commitment, spiritual authority, ambition, and fruit would leave one to think that for most of them, fasting and prayer was not part of their preparation and send off. The average Christian produced from average missionary effort has hardly any fibre for fasting, as if to seal the proverb that says, “Like father, like son.” May God deliver the Church from this! It does not matter whether the missionaries are from the East or West. One thing is certain and I say it with humility, too few are students in the school of fasting and prayer.

### **FASTING AS A FEAST OF JOY, GLADNESS, AND CHEERFULNESS (Zechariah 8:18-19)**

The Bible says, “And the Word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying. “Thus says the Lord of hosts: the fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the fifth month, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore, love truth and peace” (Zechariah 8:18-19). Fasting should be a time of rejoicing. If we fast to minister to the Lord, should we not rejoice at the privilege of ministering to Him? If we fast as a means of humbling ourselves before Him, ought we not to rejoice at the privilege of renewed and deeper fellowship with Him?

Fasting, therefore, as a feast of joy, gladness, and cheerfulness should be considered normal; for all real fellowship with God is a feast; and who can remain long enough in God’s presence without being caught up in the joy and gladness that comes from Him?

### **THE LORD’S TEACHING ON FASTING**

The biggest lesson that the Lord gave to us on the subject of fasting is His example. He fasted for forty days. By that act He sanctified fasting and set it as a ministry to the glory of His holy name. He did not only set the example, He taught on fasting. He said that His disciples would fast when He was gone. He is not yet back. Therefore this is the time to fast. He said, “When you fast” and not “If you fast” (Matthew 6:16). The Lord expected that His followers would fast as part of their normal walk with Him.

### **WRONG FASTS (Isaiah 58)**

There is a kind of fast that is not acceptable to the Lord. It is that which the Lord rebuked when He said, “Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure and oppress all your workers.

Behold you fast to quarrel and to fight and to hit with wicked fists. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.... Is not this the fast that I choose; to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?" (Isaiah 58:3-7).

Fasting can never take the place of righteousness. Fasting must be solely unto the Lord. The person fasting should make sure that he is in vital fellowship with the Lord. To harbour unconfessed sin and then to fast is a waste of time, for such fasting cannot satisfy the heart of God. Fasting should not be used to run away from basic practical issues of this life. If there is some work to be done, I must not run away under the pretext that I am fasting! I must be in right relationship with man for my fast to move the heart of God.

Fasting must neither be undertaken for show, nor must it be undertaken to glorify the flesh in one way or the other. Fasting must be for the glory of the Lord and His glory alone. May the Lord lead us into much of the right fasts, and may He deliver us from wrong ones.

### **KINDS OF FASTING**

There are three kind of fasts discernable in the Word. First of all, there is the ABSOLUTE FAST. In the absolute fast, neither food nor water is taken. Nineveh underwent such a fast, so did Moses. This fast (without water) should normally not exceed seventy - two hours (or three days).

Secondly, there is the COMPLETE FAST. During a complete fast, one may drink water but nothing else - no milk, no tea, no fruits, just nothing apart from water. This is the normal fast for most believers. This can go on for forty days.

Thirdly, there is the PARTIAL FAST. This is the type that Daniel undertook for three weeks. He says, "I Daniel, was mourning for three weeks. I ate no delicacies, no meat or wine entered my mouth." (Daniel 10:2). A partial fast could also mean that one takes one light meal a day instead of his normal three meals a day. Partial fasting has the advantage that the fast can go on for weeks, that the person fasting has strength for all normal activities, and that the weakness often associated with complete fasts, which sometimes makes prayer difficult, is absent. The great problem is the discipline required to have one light meal and not a heavy meal that includes the two meals skipped. Personally, I encourage all the lovers of Christ to use the three types of fast regularly so that they are comfortable with any of them as need dictates.

### **BEGINNING TO FAST**

Every believer should be fasting on a regular basis. In our assembly most believers fast twice a week. One day is the corporate, national fast, the second is a private, personal fast either for self – edification, ministry to the Lord, or victory in one battle or the other.

The problem is how to begin a fast. We recommend that you start on a small scale. Fast for twelve hours to begin with and as you get that discipline in your life, you will be able to go on for weeks and perhaps months. At the beginning, your whole system may seem to rebel, and you may feel that if you do not break your fast, your entire being will break. Do not give in. Even acute pangs of hunger may not be real hunger but a psychological response to an in-built love of food in your system. Resist. The more you resist, the easier it will be to overcome next time. I want to assure you that you will not die from starvation because you have fasted. Prove it by not eating and you will be happier for the experience.

### **PREPARING FOR A FAST**

The primary preparation for a fast is spiritual prayer. Below are some items to be considered and prayed about with regards to a fast.

Purpose of the fast. Prayerfully sort out with the Lord what the purpose of the fast is. Receive from Him very clear goals which you will pursue in prayer during the fast.

Length of the fast: Prayerfully receive from the Lord when to start the fast and when to stop it. He has promised to guide you and He will surely do so if you ask Him.

Prayer during the fast:

Ask and receive from the Lord a deep burden that needs very deep prayer to discharge.

Ask and receive from the Lord a spirit of perseverance in prayer even when the body does not want to co-operate with the spirit.

Stand victorious in prayer and

Build spiritual reserves for yourself.

Minister unto the Lord.

Minister to the Body of Christ.

Claim the lost into the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

Receive from the Lord something specially from Him to you as you wait on Him.

Receive from Him a spirit of rejoicing throughout the fast.

Ask the Lord to:

Grant you physical strength throughout the fast.

Take away all desire for food while the fast is on.

Give you the ability to sleep on an empty stomach.

Give you wisdom to break the fast at the end in a way that does not hurt the body.

Enable you to conserve the gains from the fast.

## **BREAKING A FAST**

A long fast, and in fact any fast, should be broken prayerfully and carefully. I suggest the following:

Have a special session of thanksgiving and praise to the Lord for the fast. Do not rush to eat without this special prayer time. The temptation to rush on to food will be there, but please overcome it.

Be careful what you eat. A glass of juice will be the best way to break a fast. Do not follow immediately with heavy food. It will be good to wait for three to four hours and then eat something fluid and soft like light porridge (quaker oats, custard, or the like). You will feel much better if you wait until the next day before you start eating solid food. You may best start with boiled soft vegetables, eating them in small portions.

Do not overeat after a fast. Gluttony is a deadly sin. It can cause serious physical damages after the longer fasts. Use the period after the fast to set new eating patterns that will glorify God and give you a healthier body.

Maintain the spirit of prayer that you developed during the fast for the rest of your walk with God.

## **THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR NATIONAL FASTING INTERCESSORS**

In our nation, believers fast and pray every Wednesday for all aspects of nation life-her leader, her prosperity and development, her spiritual life and progress and all that pertains to the interests of the Lord Jesus. Although this ministry was by direct revelation from the Lord, it is clearly rooted in the Bible. The Lord said, “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, THEN I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:13-14).

Our nation has sinned. Our nation has been judged. We do not expect that everyone in the nation should at the present time be believers in the Lord Jesus. However, the believers are called by God to humble themselves (with fasting) and call on God’s name; to humble themselves (with fasting) and seek God’s face and repent. We have done this and we are continuing to do it. We will continue until there is forgiveness for all the sinners in our land and until the land is healed of all her spiritual, physical, social, economic, financial, educational, etc. maladies (diseases). We



believe that fasting intercession should become a ministry in all countries where there are believers and where there is still sin and the forces of darkness still prevail.

### **PROCLAIMING A FAST**

We live in dark days. We live at the close of the age. We must have God's visitation in love and blessing or in judgement. It is wonderful when one person fasts and seeks God. However, individual fasting will not do. We must have something else in addition. We must proclaim a fast. We must call the whole Church to fast and pray. In difficult days in the Old Testament, the leaders proclaimed a fast. In fact, there are commands to proclaim a fast. The Bible says, "Gird on sackcloth and lament O priests, wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in, pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God! Because cereal offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God. SANCTIFY A FAST, CALL A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY. GATHER THE ELDERS AND ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND to the house of the Lord your God; and cry to the Lord." (Joel 1:13-14). We too, leaders of the Church of the Lord Jesus, are called to do the same.

Fasting should be arranged at the level of local assemblies, towns, cities, districts, provinces, states, nations and by God's grace globally. This responsibility rests on the shoulders of spiritual leaders. May the Lord grant them grace to discharge it.

### **THE DAYS OF IGNORANCE ARE OVER**

In the past, little was known about fasting, and so we could go on eating, forgetting that we were living in enemy land. However, now, such days are over. We know what we should do, what we must do. The days of ignorance are over, and God calls all the lovers of food, all the gluttons, to repent, give up the love of food, and commit themselves to fasting and prayer. Will you repent? Will you repent now?

### **A FINAL WORD**

When you fast, you feel that you have done the last thing that you could, that there is nothing more you can do which you have not done. Fasting at the deepest level gives you a claim on God for the supernatural to happen, and it does happen!

## Why memorize Scripture?

Several years ago, while visiting a relative in the hospital, I told him of my goal for the New Year to memorize a chapter from the Bible each month.

"Why do you want to do that?" he asked. "What good would it do?"

Just as I was starting to explain, a nurse came in and wheeled him off to the lab for testes.

Later, I wrote to him and explained my reasons.

The primary motive, I pointed out, was obedience. God has commanded us to hide His Word in our hearts, to write it on the tablets of our hearts, to treasure it, and to "let the word of Christ richly dwell within you." (Col 3:16)

God didn't command this just so we could become puffed up with head knowledge, but "so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." (Joshua 1:8).

It has been said that we are what we eat. Even more importantly, we are what we think. (Prov. 23: 7a-K.J.V.) As we put God's Word through our mind, it sinks into our innermost being. It is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. (Ps. 119:105).

The answer his second question, "What good would it do?" I listed some of the benefits of hiding God's Word in our heart. Because His Word is living and powerful, it works in a very practical way in our daily life.

### **It keeps us from sin**

"Your Word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You." (Ps.119: 11).

One young woman told how memorizing the Ten Commandments as a child kept her from a disastrous sin that could have doomed her marriage. As she was waiting between planes in the airport of a large city, she became engrossed in conversation with an attractive man sitting next to her in the lounge. For two hours they enjoyed a delightful talk over coffee. When her flight was called, she got up to leave. He took her hand and, looking deeply into her eyes, said, "Don't go. Stay here with me". For a fleeting second, temptation beckoned. "But instantly", she said, "a commandment I had learned as a child flashed into my mind, "you shall not commit adultery." With a smile and a gentle handshake, she did him good-bye.

### **It gives great peace of mind**

"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You; because he trusts in You." (Is. 26:3).

The world seems committed to searching for peace, personal peace as well as international peace. God promises great peace to those whose minds are focused on Him.

### **It chains our fears and strengthens us**

"Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God, I will strengthen you, surely I will help you. Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."(Is. 41:10).

### **It gives freedom from worry:**

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Phil 4:6,7).

### **It cleanses our mind**

"You are already clean because of the Word which I have spoken to you." (John 15:3).

I read once about a dock worker who became a Christian. Working on the docks he heard swearing and foul language all day. At night when he got home from work, one of the first things he did after washing up was to sit down and read his Bible. Putting the Word of God through his mind had a cleaning effect, he stated.

**It is always available in times of great need**

"For He Himself has said, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you", so that we may confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?" (Heb. 13:5-6).

**It is available for guidance (Ps. 32:8)**

**It is available for help in time of temptation (1 Cor. 10:13)**

**It brings encouragement to "great and mighty things" (Jer. 33:3)**

**It comforts us in our sorrow (Ps.23)**

**It cheers us when we are discouraged (Gal. 6:9)**

**It fills the emptiness of our soul (Ps. 107:8-9)**

"But," you may say, "I just can't memorize," or "I'm too old."

I won't say that it's easy: it takes time, effort and commitment just as anything worthwhile does.

But there are some techniques that help.

Repeat the verse out loud so that you get used to the sound and rhythm of it. The people who developed the "Memorize the Word" system, have three rules: repeat, repeat, repeat! When we read silently, we use our eyes and our mind. But when we repeat them out loud, we bring other faculties into play: our lips, our tongue, our vocal cords and ears.

In memorizing a section or a chapter, always use the same translation and the same edition. We think in pictures, so visualize it in your mind as it appears on the page.

Since we are so blessed to have God's Word freely available today, may we say with Job, "I have treasured the words of His mouth more than my necessary food." (Job 23:12), and joyfully echo Jeremiah's declaration: "Your words were found and I ate them, "And Your words became for me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I have been called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts." (Jer. 15:16).

# THE BIBLE AND FAMILY

## How the Family Began

Genesis 1:27-30 makes the simple statement that God created man in His own image to head up the order of creation on earth. The account adds that male and female species were created and Genesis 2:18-20 amplifies the reason. The following observations can be made on these two passages that will help us understand how the family began.

There were conditions and responsibilities placed on Adam as head over all creation in the Edenic covenant God made with him. They can be summarised as follows:

to populate the earth (Gen. 1:28)

to subdue the produce of the earth and exercise dominion over the animal kingdom (Gen. 1:28)

to care for the garden of Eden in particular and enjoy its fruit (Gen. 1:29; 2:15)

to refrain from eating the fruit of the tree of good and evil which was located in Eden; the penalty for failure was death (Gen. 2:16-17).

This Edenic covenant with Adam was terminated when Adam and his wife ate of the forbidden tree which resulted in their spiritual (Gen. 3:23-24) and physical deaths (Gen. 5:5). A further covenant known as the Adamic Covenant was then established (Gen. 3:14-21).

The need for woman (Gen. 2:18-20).

Women are absolutely essential in God's plan. Note it was He who observed, "...it is not good for man to be alone" (Verse 18) and determined to make a helper who would be suitable and complementary in every mental, spiritual, emotional, social and physical need. Note the orientation programme arranged by God to demonstrate to Adam his need for a helper as He brought all the birds and beasts to Adam to be recognised and named, but there was no "helper" comparable to himself (v.19-20).

The provision of woman for man (Gen. 2:21-24).

God caused Adam to go to sleep and then removed one of his ribs. He took from Adam what was sufficient for His purpose. Adam recognised his "helper" as his equal... "bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh" (v.22-23). The result is now the universal law of marriage viz....

the responsibility for marriage is on the man's shoulders

he is to leave his parents (v.24)

the responsibility of keeping the union also rests with the man; he is joined to his wife (v.24); should cling/cleave to his wife (Eph. 5:31)

the union is indissoluble; become one flesh (v.24)

N.B. Both Adam and his wife still retained their free will and therefore the option of disobeying God.

The Word of God as a rule for conduct of life is laid down for us to follow and not accept by compulsion, but God has only promised to bless, if obedience is pursued (Ex. 19:5-6).

The state of the first man and woman (v.25).

Both were naked and not ashamed. There is no shame in nudity occurring within this context of husband and wife relationship. This teaches that.....

sex was God's plan and therefore not sinful.

sex occurred before the "Fall" and would have continued even if the fall had never taken place.

propagation of species was planned, but not the only reason for sex. The Bible outlines two more – promote love between husband and wife (Heb. 13:4), and prevent fornication (1 Cor. 7:2).

## **The Essentials for a Christian Home**

The new generation of Israel heard a review of the law before they entered into their land of promise (Deut. 6:1-3). The instruction directly influenced the home and became the central theme of the nation .....

There must be a revelation of God (Deut. 6:4) – His eternity, His plurality in the Godhead, His unity within the Godhead.

There must be a response to God’s revelation (Deut. 6:5) – a total commitment of love in being, heart, soul, will and mind. This is the only fitting response to an eternal God who has revealed Himself.

There must be responsibility (v. 6-9) .....

to have God’s truth govern his heart (v.6), i.e. heart reality, not conformity or ceremony.

to have God’s truth govern his home (v.7), i.e. teach formally by instruction and informally by discussion and example (Prov. 22:6)

to have God’s truth govern his personal conduct and habits, both privately and publicly (v.8-9).

The home is to be regarded as the “Divine school” in which the father is the teacher under Christ, as Headmaster.

### **The Role of the Wife** (1 Pet. 3:1-6)

The wife’s only responsibility in the family is to “be in subjection to her husband” – not to mankind in general. This does not imply any kind of natural inferiority since through marriage husband and wife have become one. It means that two intellects, emotions and wills have become one identity, but to keep the union from fracturing and destroying itself one is charged with leadership and the other with submission. Jesus Christ demonstrated this same submission to His Father even though co-equal with God in power (1 Cor. 11:3; John 14:10-11).

The wife’s submission to her husband is her “adorning” which makes her truly beautiful. The inner beauty is of great value to God (1 Pet. 3:3-4). The O.T. women who hoped to be a channel of the Messiah made themselves beautiful by being in subjection to their husbands (v.5) – Sarah is the example given (v.6). Similarly wives reveal the beauty of Jesus as members of His body through subjection to their husbands (v.1-2). Note also I Pet. 2:23-25 ... and I Pet.3:1.

God promises to use the submission as a channel to bring the husband into a proper relationship with Himself whether he is saved or unsaved (1 Cor. 7:10-16; 1 Pet. 3:1-2).

### **The Role of the Husband** (Col. 3:19)

Husbands are required to love their wives even as Christ loved the Church (Eph 5:25).

The husband is required “to dwell together” by showing respect and care for his wife (1 Pet. 3:7).

This love is not primarily sexual or emotional (although both concepts are involved) but a love that remains in spite of any response (or lack of it) from his spouse. It is termed agape love – unconditional and sacrificial yet promotional. It is the kind of love God had for the world (see John 3:16) and is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22; I Cor. 13: 4-8a).

A husband can only love his wife properly if he is a Christian under the control of the Holy Spirit.

The two responsibilities the husband has in the family are to dwell with his wife according to knowledge and render to her the honour due her as his wife. “To dwell” means the husband should take the wife into every aspect of his life. There cannot be any private “corners or rooms”. This dual requirement has a spiritual purpose – “that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Pet. 3:7). The husband who fails to draw his wife into every aspect of his life cannot communicate with her as God intended and therefore cannot communicate with God either in many instances. To make sure that the channel of communication with God is fully open the husband has to ensure the channel of communication with his wife is open. Only by this method can a man truly love his wife as God intended and properly exercise his God given headship.

### **The Role of Children** (Prov. 1:8)

Both old and New Testaments agree that children have only one responsibility in the family – to obey their parents.

God has twice intervened in family affairs and given specific instruction regarding children ....

..... to Moses ..... Honour your father and mother (Ex. 20:12)

..... to Paul ..... Children obey your parents in the Lord (Eph. 6:1-3)

God's will for children is that they are to obey and honour their parents. The expression "in the Lord" does not limit the responsibility to Christian parents. Colossians 3:20 clearly points out that children are to obey parents "in all things". The term "in the Lord" means it is the Lord's directive. The term "For this is right" indicates that it is righteous or godly; Christ is the supreme example of parental obedience (Phil 2:6-8).

Children who follow this instruction are promised a happy and long life and it will be well with them, which are the two things really wanted most. Usually they are pursued from other angles, i.e. fame, fortune, etc., but God's Word states these can only be achieved through obedience to parents. Children who have not learnt to obey their parents as God's representatives in the family will not learn to obey God. Many who only find this to be true later in life, go through tremendous struggles when trying to regain divine order.

### **The Role of Parents** (Eph. 6:4)

Discipline is the central theme of a fulfilling family life. Although many things help to bring satisfaction, the Word of God emphasises discipline above all else. The father is the parent responsible for setting the pattern for the child's obedience in the family. Any discipline by the mother can be successfully achieved as an extension of the father's authority. The husband and father must take leadership in this area with the wife and mother in submission.

The father's leadership involves two basic points ....

he is not to provoke his children to wrath, i.e. not to over-discipline or reign in terror with the result that the child can only react in blind outrage.

he should bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

#### This involves 3 things:

It continuous as long as the child is dependent. The father should provide for the child so that he becomes what God wants him to be.

It is a labour of love. To "bring up" literally means to nourish tenderly. Children need to be the objects of tender loving care.

It is a twofold job involving nurture, i.e. training – all that a child needs for his / her development .... physically, mentally, spiritually and in admonition (corrective discipline) of the Lord.

The father is God's constituted home authority who should discipline the child when he / she does not obey as God intends. Furthermore, lack of discipline of children usually reflects a similar lack in the father's life. A child's disobedience is not to be tolerated.

Note: Ex. 21:15 ..... He who strikes his father or mother shall surely be put to death.

Deut. 21:18-21 ..... If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son ..... all Israel shall hear and fear.

See also Prov. 13:24; 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; 29:15-17.

### **The Prescription for Rearing Children** (Prov. 22:6)

The verse reveals two ingredients – a command and a promise.

The command involves 3 parts:

The concept of training ..... "train up". This does not denote corporal punishment but rather .....

dedication where the parents realise that the child really belongs to God. They are stewards of God's gift (Ps. 127:3-5).

instruction as information by the parents. Children should learn about God from their parents (Deut. 6:7).

The recipient of training is a "child" or dependant. As long as the child is dependent on his parents he is to be the recipient of training, regardless of age.

The content of training ... "in the way that he should go". This implies that at each stage of development the parents or guardians are to dedicate, instruct and motivate the child to do what God has best equipped the child to do for Him.

Joshua stated, "..... As for me and my house we will serve the Lord (Josh.25:15).  
If this command has been kept – the promise can be claimed.

The promise also involves the time of realisation .... "when he is old", viz. independent of parents. The promise includes the certainty of realisation .... "he will not depart from it". If the command has been kept the promise is a surety. Rearing children is not an overnight occurrence. It takes careful forethought and conscious obedience on the part of the parents.

Footnote: Families living outside the divine will of God should pray that they will be led into His will ....step by step. God cannot bless disobedience and unrighteousness. The "day of grace" is a divine blessing to give time for families to find righteousness and fulfill it....not to continue in sin because there is no immediate judgement from God as in O.T. days (Rom. 6:1).

## AVOIDING THE PITFALLS OF SEXUAL SINS

Every counselor has seen the sad consequences of sexual sins. All too often sexual sins lead to emotional problems, such as self-condemnation, loss of self-respect, guilt, anxiety, inferiority, confusion and fear. Sexual sins can create deep emotional wounds which scar a person for life. The guilt of sexual offences can haunt a person for life. The present so-called “sexual freedom”, does not produce freedom at all, but leaves many people emotionally and mentally enslaved by various passions which distort God’s beautiful plan for genuine sexual fulfillment and pleasure. This sin has destroyed many great people, like king Solomon.

1 Corinthians 6:8, “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits immorality sins against his own body.”

Proverbs 6:32-33, “Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; he who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonor he will get, and his reproach shall not be wiped away.”

### GOD, NOT MAN, CREATED SEX

God created marriage (i.e. the sexual relationship in marriage) for His children. It should therefore be received with thanksgiving (1 Timothy 4:3-5). Christian couples have the potential of enjoying their sexual relationship more than non-believers. This is because Christians have experienced God’s love in their lives, and therefore can truly love one another. They also have the supreme example after which they can pattern their marriage-relationship, viz. Christ and His church (1 John 4:10-12; Ephesians 5:22-23; Romans 5:5; etc.). It is interesting that both counselors and extensive statistics indeed prove that Christian couples generally do enjoy their sexual relationship more than non-believers. God provided in the sexual marriage-relationship life’s most exciting experience on a repeatable basis, and this experience only grows richer as the years of marriage continue. But God has also ordained that man only expresses sexual relationship within God’s ordained boundary of the marriage-covenant. The only other alternative is self-control. It is self-control which builds greater self-respect and strong character. Lack of it so often leads to a low self-esteem and inferiority, which in turn create problems in the marriage-relationship (1 Corinthians 7:9).

### VARIOUS SEXUAL SINS:

**ADULTERY** – is defined as “sexual intercourse between a married person and someone other than his or her mate”. The Bible strongly condemns this sin because it violates the sanctity of the marriage-covenant. Throughout the Bible, the requirement of faithfulness to God, His Word and to marriage is emphatically stressed. Sanity, character and emotional stability depend on faithfulness. Because God is faithful, He wants man to be faithful. Faithfulness is a mark of strength and character in any person, whereas unfaithfulness in any realm is a mark of weakness and sin. Although Malachi 2:13-16 primarily deals with divorce, it does also show the seriousness of breaking the marriage-covenant. Adultery is the sexual sin so clearly stated in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:20; Deuteronomy 22:22; Proverbs 6:29; Romans 13:9; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Hebrews 13:4).

**FORNICATION** – is defined as “sexual intercourse between unmarried individuals of the opposite sex”. It is mentioned 47 times in the New Testament and is strongly denounced as a deviation from God’s ordained pattern for sexual fulfillment. In a broader sense fornication also covers sins such as incest, rape, prostitution, bisexuality, bestiality, etc. (1 Corinthians 6:9,13,18; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:3).

**HOMOSEXUALITY** – is defined as “sexual activity between members of the same sex”.

In spite of present aggressive attempts to legitimise homosexuality as a normal sexual alternative and accepted life style, the Bible remains unwavering in its denunciation of homosexuality as sexual perversion and a blatant violation of God’s ordained pattern for sexual fulfillment (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9; 1 Timothy 1:10-11).



**PORNOGRAPHY** – is defined as “materials, such as books, photographs, films, videos, and web-sites which depict erotic behaviour intended to stimulate sexual arousal” (1 Peter 2:11). Pornographic involvement is a sexual sin, because it pollutes the mind with sensual fantasies, without providing godly sexual fulfilment. It often overwhelms the person with temptation and only too often leads to other sexual sins such as masturbation, incest, prostitution, rape, child-molesting, etc... The Bible places sexual lusting with the eyes on the same level as adultery! (Matthew 5:28).

**MASTURBATION** – Conflicting opinions exist among Christian counselors concerning the subject. A few see it as an accepted means of releasing sexual tension and thereby averting sexual abuse, while others see it as a sexual sin. As the Bible is silent on the matter we must turn to broad Biblical principles for understanding.

1 Corinthians 6:12b, “All things are lawful to me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”

Note: Even things that are right must not be allowed to get such a hold over a Christian that he or she becomes its servant. Anyone who has counselled teenagers and adults who regularly practice masturbation and for whom it has become a habit knows that it does get a strong hold upon a person.

Matthew 5:27-28, “Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Note: God considers the inward thought and consent of the heart to be adultery. Those involved in masturbation often cannot avoid becoming involved in the sin of sexual fantasy as well.

1 Corinthians 7:9, “...but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”

Note: God gives the alternatives: self control or marriage. There is no third option. Paul did not say that masturbation is a proper relief for sexual desire (burning), because he knew that masturbation does not stop the ‘burning’, but only adds fuel to it! It could never be set over against ‘burning’ as an alternative!

1 Corinthians 7:3-4, “Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to the husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.”

Note: One thing is very clear; God provided one’s sexual capacity not for himself, but for the benefit of the lawful partner. In sex, as elsewhere, it is always true that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Luke 6:38; Act 20:35). Self-directed sex therefore constitutes an unlawful use of one’s sexuality. God ordained sex to be used as a gift of love given to one’s lawful married partner.

From the above stated Biblical principles it is very clear that masturbation is a sin, and must be dealt with as such.

**OTHER SEXUAL SINS**, such as transvestism (dressing and acting like the opposite sex), sadomasochism (obtaining sexual pleasure by inflicting pain on others or self), exhibitionism (undressing in order to excite others), voyeurism (peeping to see people undress or peeping to see other people involved in sexual acts), etc., could be mentioned. Because the sexual sins mentioned are the most common, we will limit ourselves to these only.

## **PROBLEMS IN MARRIAGE**

Few couples who seek counseling because they have problems relating sexually, will have these problems because of ‘mechanical’ or ‘organic’(biological) problems. Most who have problems

relating sexually do so because of fear, anger, resentment, worry, guilt, jealousy, suspicion and often simply because of fatigue. In most counselors' experience, problems caused by anger and resentment top the list! The first probing should therefore be in this area!

It is also possible that the sexual relationship never develops, or deteriorates because of guilt over sexual sins, committed either prior or during marriage. If this is so, then this must be dealt with before God, and it must be confessed to each other. Forgiveness to each other must be expressed in order to have a clear conscience towards each other. Sometimes the 'truth' may hurt initially, but continual covering up and lying hurts more! Some people had sexual relationship before marriage, thinking it was all right since they were going to marry anyway. Yet often after marriage problems develop. Their sexual involvement together before marriage brought the same defilement and bondage as if they would have had sexual experiences with others. Such sexual relationship is still fornication-unmarried people having sex. The principle remains unchanged, any deviation from God's order brings guilt. It must therefore be confessed to God in real repentance which is the only way to be restored to God and to each other.

### **THE FORGOTTEN FACTS IN SEXUAL SINS**

Some seem to think that God is against the sexual experience (orgasm) itself. That of course is not so, as God created man with the capacity of having that experience. Although God is against sex outside the marriage covenant, it is not the sexual act by itself He wants to get at, but He is specially out to get at the bigger wrongs so often associated with sexual sins. Most people who have committed sexual sins, SELDOM GET BEYOND confessing the lustfulness and impurity of these sins. God, however, wants to get at something much deeper than that – the wrongs inflicted upon others through sexual sins; the lies, cheating, hypocrisy, duplicity and deception which is invariably involved in such misadventures, the wrongs done to one's body, but above all, the wrongs done to a loving God. These are the facts that so often are NOT TOUCHED when someone has committed sexual sins. It leaves the offender with an incomplete repentance and lingering guilt. Many have never experienced repentance to the level God wants it to be! It is the great responsibility of the counselor to lead the offender to such repentance!

### **THE FORGOTTEN FACTORS IN ADULTERY**

The Biblical law "You shall not commit adultery" was primarily to protect the family, which is God's basic unit of society. Adultery destroys the family life. On the part of the husband it is unfaithfulness, which undermines his own moral authority. A morally clean husband is confident of his God-given authority and exercises it. On the part of the wife it is also unfaithfulness as she introduces an alien loyalty into the home. But adultery is not only a sin against the family, it is also a breaking of the law of love for one's neighbour. The marriage of one's neighbour will never be the same after one has stolen his most intimate happiness! But sadly, adultery brings many other serious wrongs with it. Second Samuel 11 and 12 describes the tragic story of king David's sin with Bathsheba, and the consequently arranged murder of her husband Uriah. Most people, when speaking about this incident, tend to mention only David's actual sin with Bathsheba, but when God confronted David through the prophet, He first of all touched other issues before touching the actual adultery. David had lied, covered up, deceived and finally arranged for the murder of an innocent man! These were the wrongs God was first of all getting at.

King David was guilty of having ruined the most intimate happiness of one of his soldiers. Even if the sin would never have been repeated, and David would not have arranged for the murder of the husband, it is quite certain that Bathsheba would never have felt the same toward her husband. Her sin may well have set in motion other sins. God was convicting David, not only of his lustfulness, but of the great wrong he had inflicted upon another man by stealing his most intimate happiness. Stolen goods can be restored, but adultery is irreparable!

If adultery results in divorce, then there is the great wrong done to the children, and not to be forgotten, the grandparents, who are deprived of the happy home of their children, etc... It is so easy for the offender to forget the terrible wrongs the other person suffers, as 'his or her new love is

enjoyed'. But when the feelings of those others are considered it cannot be called love! God does not forget those wrongs done to others, and He is out to get at those wrongs!

These factors are so often forgotten and overlooked, and are not repented of before God and those offended. This leaves the offender partly forgiven (if such a thing is possible, James 2:10), partly restored, and usually the offender's Christian life becomes questionable after all this.

### **THE FORGOTTEN FACTORS IN OTHER SEXUAL SINS**

Because fornication does not violate the marriage-covenant, many treat it as a lighter sin, and because of this it is so often not really repented of. Sin always sets in motion the process of defilement. First of all there is the wrong done to one's own and another person's conscience. Then fornication so often leads to more fornication and / or other sexual sins. The sex drive in a person is like a smoldering fire, and arousing it is like pouring kerosine on it. Fornication can inflict upon an unmarried girl the cruel wrong of bearing a child outside wedlock. Who thinks of the pain and shame that child will suffer, the parents of the girl, etc? Or fornication can lead to the sin of abortion which equals murder! These are the things that so often are not repented of!

In the case of homosexuality it is not only the serious sin done to one's own conscience and body-which God ordained to be His temple, but the wrongs done to others. The lying, covering up, deceiving, etc. And the possibility of steering someone on this road through which that person could be deprived of a future happy home, etc., etc.

Much more could be said, but the principle is clear. God wants sexual offenders to deal not only with the lustfulness of their sin, but also with the great wrongs which so often are associated with it. True love, sanctified by God, does not produce the unhappiness that lust always produces!

### **THE WAY BACK TO GOD AND OTHERS**

Many New Testament believers had lived in sexual sins before they became Christians, but God forgave them and gave them a brand new life (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17). These are the steps which must be taken in order to receive forgiveness from God.

#### **REPENTANCE WITH GODLY SORROW OVER SIN.**

Repentance is first of all to God. When confessing sexual sins, one takes side with God against oneself. The offender must not deal with the actual lustfulness only, but with all other connected sins as well. The offender's life must come fully under Jesus' Lordship, otherwise repentance and forgiveness may be temporal. Through undealt sin the door will be left open for Satan to attack. Repentance must be followed with a total break and renunciation of this sin (Psalm 51:4; John 8:11; 2 Corinthians 7:10-11; Ephesians 4:27; James 2:10, etc).

#### **WHERE NEEDED, FORGIVENESS FROM OTHERS MUST BE SOUGHT**

If others have been hurt, and it is possible to ask for forgiveness, then this must be done. Failure to do so makes one to persist in sin (Luke 17:4; James 4:17; etc.).

#### **THERE MUST BE A DEDICATION OF ONE'S BODY TO GOD.**

The believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. In order not to fall into sexual temptation and sin again, one's body must be dedicated to God (Romans 6:19; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:13).

#### **FLEE SEXUAL TEMPTATION**

Some see running away as a sign of weakness. According to God it is wisdom and it is His own advice. Avoid places and situations which can lead to trouble. Joseph ran away and had to spend years in jail as a result. It was still the best solution and one which God honored (Genesis 39:7-12; 1 Corinthians 6:18; 2 Timothy 2:22).

### **IF THE OFFENDER WAS A CHRISTIAN, A TIME OF RESTORATION IS NEEDED.**

In the Old Testament many sexual sins carried the death penalty, showing their seriousness before God. Civil Judgment is not given to the church, but if the church takes sexual offenses lightly, she is guilty before God, who took these offences very seriously, (1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11; 1 Timothy 5:22).

### **WE REAP WHAT WE SOW.**

There are consequences to one's sin which still carry on, even though they have been repented of and God's forgiveness has been secured. For example, a girl, who became pregnant after fornication will be totally forgiven by God when she repents, but the child will still be born. God does not take that consequence away. These consequences must be handled courageously, like king David did. One only reaps what has been sown to the flesh, but there comes an end to that reaping. From the moment of repentance onward, one must deliberately sow to the Spirit, so that in due time one will begin to reap from the Spirit, which may be the completeness of the time of restoration. (Gal. 6: 7-8).

### **CONCLUSION**

Sex, which is one of God's most beautiful gifts to men, and when rightly used, one of the greatest sources of happiness, has become one of man's greatest battlegrounds with sin. It is only in Jesus Christ where total forgiveness and freedom from guilt over past sexual sins can be found.

In dealing with people who have fallen into sexual sins, the counselor must deal gently and kindly, not condoning sexual sins, but neither condemning them too harshly. The way the lord Jesus dealt with the woman taken in adultery is maybe the counselor's best example (John 8:1-12, Galatians 6:1).

## UNITY - LOVE IN ACTION

There is nothing more painful than a church split. Nothing is more damaging than a congregation torn apart by mistrust, backbiting and factions. Many Christians carry the memory of at least one such split; a memory that lingers on, even after many years. I well remember one church that was divided after the pastor's adulterous involvement with several of the elder's wives. Two of the elders had committed suicide, and strife reigned throughout the church. The newspapers picked up the story, and for months Christ's name was dragged through the mud. Non-Christians just shook their heads and vowed never to attend church again, anywhere. In another church situation I encountered, theology was the prime reason for a split. The issue was so minor that I cannot even remember what it was. However, I still have vivid recollections of the bitterness it generated. Perhaps you've heard the saying, "if you have one believer you have a Christian, if you have two believers you have a church, and if you have three believers you have two churches." Perhaps it's too close to the truth to be funny.

### **Unity in all our relationships**

If you have never been involved in such a split, you may be thinking, "what has unity got to do with me?" Love and unity form the basis on which God wants us to relate in every situation, and His name is at stake whenever there is disunity in the Church. You and I are His Church. Jesus tells us that, "where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them." (Matthew 18:20). Even when we are outside the "church setting" at home with our family, or with Christian friends and acquaintances, we are still Church. Are all our various relationships marked by love and unity, or do strife and division creep in? Do we love and encourage our children, or are we often at odds with them? Are we genuinely concerned about the well-being of other Christians at work, or are we only concerned about ourselves—our vindication in a matter, our happiness and fulfillment?

Love and unity should be at the heart of every relationship in which we Christians are involved. The Bible tells us we are to love all men and live in unity with our fellow believers. As a husband I must love my wife, and actively seek to live in unity with her. We are the Church in our home, and Christ has promised to dwell in our midst. Unity is not something that comes automatically when two people are married, it has to be worked at. My wife and I share the responsibility to seek unity in every area of our marriage. When we were first married I thought it would be simple. After all, we knew each other so well. How wrong I was! I soon discovered that we had each married an idealized version of who the other really was. Not surprisingly, our first two years of marriage were at times stormy, as we learned to adjust and relate to each other on the basis of who we really were, and not some idealized view. Part of the problem was our pride. We did not want to admit we had married someone who was less than perfect (though it must have been obvious to others).

As Christians we often idealize fellow believers in the same way, putting them on pedestals, only to be hurt and embittered when they fail to live up to our expectations. We must come to the place where, in an attitude of love, we can embrace one another while still acknowledging one another's faults. Refusing to accept each other in this way may well lead us to becoming the policemen of the church: judgmental and critical. In our marriage I had to learn that I could not act as the Holy Spirit, bringing conviction to my wife when and where I thought necessary. That is God's job. God has charged me to love and cherish my wife and be a living example of His character for her (Ephesians 5:25). I am not called to be her judge. If there are areas of weakness in her life, then I am to pray for her and allow God to bring conviction to her heart – and she must do the same for me. In our relationships with other Christians, we often lose sight of this principle. We are busy trying to bring conviction to those with whom we do not agree, or to those who have some obvious fault that we feel needs correcting. But instead of helping, we bring disharmony.

It is essential that love takes prime place in our relationships. Where there are differences, we must reach out in love to our brothers and allow the Holy Spirit to do His convicting work in both our lives. He, after all, is the only one who is able to do this justly, since He knows the thoughts and intents of our heart.

As a father, I also need to seek unity with my two children. Just because they are my children, living in my home, does not permit me to dispense with the principles of love and unity. I cannot burst out in anger at them, belittle their feelings and ideas, or do anything that makes them feel less significant or worthwhile than I. They may belong to a different generation than mine, but they are my brother and sister in Christ. One day we will stand as equals in Christ's presence. I am expected to live in unity with them as fellow believers. This is not always easy, but I have to release them from my expectations and allow them to be themselves a principle that holds true for every relationship.

This concept of love and its relationship to unity affects every area of a Christian's life. We know from scripture that Jesus intercedes for us (Hebrews 7:25), but there is only one record of exactly what He prays for us, His church: "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one.... May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me." (John 17:20-21,23). Disunity and division in any part of the Body of Christ is a scandal that non-Christians are eager to take up as a reason for not taking the Gospel seriously. Every time we participate in a church quarrel, practice disunity, are unloving towards each other, or in any way participate in actions and attitudes that lead to division or mistrust, we raise a barrier that can keep relatives, friends and business associates from faith in Christ. Involvement in this way only confirms to them what they already suspect: Christianity is a religion of hypocrites.

### **Divorce – the ultimate form of disunity**

In some Western nations one in every three couples getting married are heading for divorce, while in others it is even worse with one in every two. What tragic statistics! In Malachi 2:16, God expresses His hatred of divorce – the breaking of unity between two people who have made a binding commitment (covenant) to each other. How he must grieve over the consequence of this disunity. Divorce is like throwing a stone into a pond – the ripples get wider and wider. It's not only the husband and wife who suffer, but also the children. Psychologists tell us that despite much reassurance to the contrary, many children carry with them the guilt that they are in some way responsible for the break-up of their parents' marriage. Society at large also suffers. Other statistics showed that most of all spontaneous violent crimes – rape, murder, assault, etc.- were committed by people raised in single parent homes. No wonder God hates divorce. Although the ripples of divorce are felt throughout society, I believe the opposite also holds true. Christian families, churches and organizations that dwell in unity have a positive, stabilizing effect on society. This should challenge each of us to love one another more deeply and seek unity more actively.

I believe that disunity in the Body of Christ is similar to spiritual divorce from our brother. We have broken the commitment to love and accept one another – the commitment God expects us to live by. In breaking this commitment we fall prey to hurt, bitterness, mistrust, alienation and many other things that sap(drain out) our spiritual life and wreak havoc in the Body of Christ. Many of us, because of personal disappointments, no longer believe that Biblical unity is possible. Consequently, our perception of God's Word is blurred, causing us to focus on our hurts and frustrations. But God is greater than our hurtful experiences. We must not allow unbelief to rule our hearts. Unbelief is the darkroom of our life, where doubts and fears develop into negatives. While reading these words, perhaps some painful memories have been stirred up. If so, do not just read on without taking time to talk to God about your hurts. Confess them to the Lord, asking for His healing, then forgive those who have hurt you. As you do so over a period of time, God will release hope and love into your heart.

### **Jesus prayed for what was possible**

Biblical unity is not easy to achieve. I am the first to admit that it is no simple task to love others and build unity. Unity is possible. Would Jesus bother to pray for something that was not possible? Would He be so cruel as to raise our hopes and give us the expectation that we, as His church, can live in deep love, fellowship and trust, only to disappoint and disillusion us? Jesus prays for unity despite political, social and age differences, and despite the cultural and racial barriers behind

which we hide. He prays for a unity that will transcend denominationalism and, in some cases, our thick-walled “non-denominationalism!” Relationship conflicts, independence, demanding our rights, leading or participating in church arguments, and taking part in church splits are all sins that are in direct opposition to the prayer Jesus prayed in John 17.

Many people are concerned about who is right if there is division in the church. It is not a matter of who is right, but who is obedient to God’s Word. The issues that divide us may be important, but there is something higher on God’s list of priorities and that is unity. You may have to leave a church because of division that is simply beyond your control. Division is sometimes the result of stubbornness on the part of an offending person; if there is no heartfelt repentance, a split may result over which you have no control. You may also be forced to distance yourself from a situation simply because it is so bad. Whenever such a situation arises, we must be certain that our motives are pure and that we are not using the wrongs of others as an excuse to release anger and resentment in the name of righteous indignation.

### **Love one another!**

Unity is only possible if we love one another. The implication in Jesus’ prayer for unity is that love is absolutely essential if we are to please Him. In John 17:23, Jesus prays that we will be one so that the world will know the Father has loved us in the same way as He has loved the Son. The Father loves you and me as much as He loves His own Son! What amazing love! Our love for one another can enable people to see and experience the Father’s love. Some wonder why so many lonely, hurting people are attracted to Christians. We should never be ashamed of the fact that the lonely and unlovely want to be around us; they are attracted to the love of the Father they see manifested in us.

What is referred to in John 17 is clearly spelled out in John 15. There, Jesus commands us to love one another. Some may dismiss their obligation to love others outlined in John 17, because it is set out in the form of a prayer. But two chapters earlier, Jesus says that there is no other option for the Christian. It’s a command. We must love one another. Whether we make excuses or not, Jesus makes it very clear how He expects us to relate to one another.

Unity is not only possible, it is absolutely essential. If we believe that what Jesus prays for us is possible, and that He will accept nothing less than our total, heart felt obedience, then we are cornered. No more excuses or rationalizations. If we choose to follow Jesus, we must do so on His terms, not ours.

### **The nature of love**

There is a lot of confusion about the nature of love. Is it some mushy feeling that comes over us, making us starry-eyed as so many films portray? A closer study of John 15 gives more understanding of the world love.

In verses 13 to 17 of John 15, Jesus defines the true nature of love:

It is sacrificial.

We are to die to what we want for the sake of others. Sometimes I think it would actually be easier to die for someone than to live for them. But Jesus requires us to die to our rights, preferences and desires and to live for others.

It is choosing to do what is right.

“You are my friends if you obey me,” Jesus says. Love is much more than a feeling. It is choosing to do and think what is right, even when we don’t feel like it.

It is openness to freely share our thoughts and feelings

Jesus told His disciples that they were not servants but friends, because He shared everything with them.

It is commitment.

Jesus told the disciples that He chose them not because they chose Him, but because He wanted them to be His friends and fellow workers.

It is trust.

Jesus trusted the disciples and sent them out to represent Him and the Father.

**It is obedience to a higher purpose in life: that living for the Lord and others first.**

We are commanded to love one another, but the idea of being told what to do runs against our natural grain. The sinful part of man, what the Bible calls our “flesh”, fights for every opportunity to avoid dealing with the idea of living our lives for others first. We look for every chance to avoid loving people that, from our small perspective, are unlovely.

Until we accept the fact that the Lord Jesus demands our unconditional obedience, we will continue to come up with all kinds of rationalizations to avoid obeying Him. Not until we believe with all our hearts that we must obey Him, will we do it. And then only with His help.

We must bow our hearts before Him and acknowledge how selfish we are at the very core of our being. When we see that it's strange to love others in the way Jesus prayed for in John 17 and commanded in John 15, the Holy Spirit can begin to work in us and enable us do it. This kind of honesty with God allows us to receive into our hearts the love He wants us to have for others.

**The supreme example of love**

Did you notice that in John 17, Jesus prayed that the love we have for one another would be like the love He and the Father have for each other? How do they love each other? Understanding the love between the Father and the Son will help us to understand further the true nature of love.

When Jesus came to earth He gave up all His heavenly privileges and rights (Phil. 2:6-8). He submitted to the will of the Father (Matthew 26:36-46). He was open with the Father, sharing His feelings honestly and yet without any manipulation (Matt. 26:39). He honored the Father in everything He did (John 8:28-29). The Father loved the Son, honoring Him publicly as His beloved Son (Mark 1:11). He trusted the Son with the greatest responsibility of all time: the redemption of mankind (John 3:16). He shared everything with Him (John 17:6-26).

This same relationship of love, trust and honor is offered to us. Jesus prays that we will love each other in the same manner as He and the Father love one another. The question remains, “How does this work out in reality?” Jesus said it was possible, but are there are steps we can follow to help us love one another in our daily life?

**Rules For Relationships**

Many people are waiting for those around them to become perfect, while others look for a perfect church. But expecting perfection in a fallen world will only set us up for disappointment and heartache. Unity in a fallen world does not imply the total absence of evil and sin, nor does it mean absolute doctrinal purity. What unity does mean is that we have a Christ-like attitude towards others when they do sin or when they are wrong, since we have placed our faith in Christ for the forgiveness of our own sins.

In Ephesians, chapter 4 and 5, Paul describes the principles and attitudes we must have to guard the unity given to us through Jesus death on the cross. In chapter 4 he tells us to be, “eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” (Ephesians 4:3, 13). Paul compares unity of the Spirit (having the right attitude of heart and mind towards one another in spite of weakness or sin) with unity of the faith (absolute maturity and doctrinal perfection). He challenges the Church to be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit until we attain the unity of the faith.

This implies three things. First, unity of the Spirit must be our priority until God brings His church to the unity of the faith. Secondly, we must be eager to maintain the unity of Spirit. And thirdly, we must not insist on unity of the faith (spiritual maturity and doctrinal purity) as the basis for loving others. To do so is a work of the flesh, and, as such, sin.

Are we eager to forgive those who hurt us, accept those who are different from us, prefer those who disagree with us, love those who attack us, submit to those over us, trust those who lead us, go to those who hurt us, and be patient with those who disagree with us? If not, we need to repent. We need to ask God for a deeper revelation of our heart, of the sin that keeps us from wanting that



degree of love and unity. We're not talking about a feeling, but a basic attitude. Unity begins with an attitude of heart that is the fruit of brokenness in our lives. God does not want us to be the judge of other people's hearts and lives. He wants us to judge our own. It's when we lose that brokenness and become hard and judgmental that we lose our eagerness for unity.

### **Practical rules for building relationships**

We should not wonder why other people are wrong or have sinned. We should consider how we're going to respond to them. Will we demand unreasonable conditions before they are restored to fellowship, or will we respond with quick and joyful forgiveness?

The following checklist will help test our motives in this area. Please read this list prayerfully, and ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you as you do so.

Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:2 that we must maintain an attitude of humility, meekness, patience and forbearance. Such an attitude, maintained in our everyday life, gives the greatest power.

Humility means we are willing to be known for who we are and for what we have done, rather than building relationships on a superficial level. It means we are prepared to do anything necessary to make matters right with others when we have sinned against them or hurt them.

Meekness means we will not insist on doing things our way or pushing ourselves forward.

Patience means we wait for others lovingly, even when they are wrong.

Forbearance means we help others when they are weak.

We are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15, 25, 26, 29-31). Paul gives a great deal of attention to the tongue, telling us several things about our speech which we need to note carefully.

Do you want to keep your friendships? Do you want your relationships to glorify Christ? Then: Speak the truth. We are to be direct, forthright and honest.

Speak the truth in love. We are not to speak in anger, bitterness or an unkind manner, but in God's timing, waiting for Him to prepare the hearts of those to whom we are going to speak. It also implies we should be selective about what we do say; a wise person does not say everything he knows.

Only speak that which edifies. In other words, only say things which are positive and helpful. It is not enough to excuse ourselves by saying, "I was only being honest". You can completely devastate someone by being ruthlessly honest with them at the wrong time. The issue is greater than honesty; the Bible teaches that we should only say those things that will help a person. Honesty without wisdom can be sin.

Get rid of a critical spirit. "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you," Paul exhorts the Ephesians (Ephesians 4:31). The root of all these is a critical spirit, one of the great enemies of unity. Do you find it easier to criticize someone than to encourage him? Repeating people's faults and sins to others is classified as a sin in the Bible, as it spreads mistrust and encourage division. It is poison that can quickly infect the whole body.

Slander, if it goes unchecked, breeds disunity. Even if something is true, it is not necessary to say it publicly, unless it has to do with moral compromise or serious doctrinal error. God calls us to be accountable for what we say, to be loyal to one another, and to promote reconciliation, forgiveness and unity. This is not an optional extra for "mature" Christians. We are all commanded to do it.

Paul exhorts believers to forgive those who sin and to discipline those who do not repent of their sin (Ephesians 4:32; 5:1,5-7). There can be no unity without forgiveness and church discipline. There is no problem of disunity that cannot be solved by greater humility or

forgiveness. When there is no humility evident on the part of a brother who has sinned, there should be gentle but firm discipline. Whether men repent or not, we are to forgive them. But when they fail to repent, even though we forgive them, church leaders should lovingly bring discipline into their lives.

We must acknowledge that we belong to one another. Everyone who belongs to Jesus is a member of our family, a co-heir of His grace. Just as in a normal family, there are some members who get along better and have more in common with each other. So it is in God's family. In our earthly families we don't deny someone is our brother or sister simply because he or she is different from us. Neither should we do that in the Church, for we are members of one another (Ephesians 4:25).

There is only one Church. However, judging from our behavior one would think that we seriously believe that when we get to heaven God will divide us into different sections so we can huddle together within our little group or denomination. Worse still, some behave as if their group will be the only one up there. But when we do get to heaven we will all be one, so why not get a head start and begin getting to know Christians of other denominations and groups right now? Let's lay aside our sectarianism fear, for we all belong to one another.

God does not reveal all His truth to any one person or Christian group. God had distributed knowledge of Biblical truth to all groups so that we would be dependent upon one another for balance and protection. If we could really grasp this insight especially those of us who are leaders our attitude towards one another would be very different.

Lastly, Paul exhorts us to be filled with the Spirit, worshipping the Lord, encouraging one another, and always giving thanks in everything to God the Father. (Eph. 5: 17-20). Gratefulness. Encouragement. Thanksgiving. Such qualities are not accidentally acquired. They need to be deliberately cultivated until they become part of our daily thought patterns and actions. We need to spend time in God's presence, asking Him how to encourage those around us. We need to also ask Him for a fresh revelation of all He has done, and provided for us; then our hearts will be full of thankfulness.

When we finally come to a place of dwelling in unity, what a blessing that is! It makes everything worth while.

"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!

It is like precious oil poured on the head,

Running down on the beard, running down on Aaron's beard,  
down upon the collar of his robes.

It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion.

For there the Lord bestows His blessing.

Even life forevermore." (Psalm 133).

**THIS IS BOOK NO:**

<b>4</b>
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