

DR DIRK H

# MINISTRY LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE

A  
PRACTICAL  
GUIDE TO  
BECOMING  
A WORLD  
CHANGER

BOOK - 7  
LEVEL  
CELL LEADER

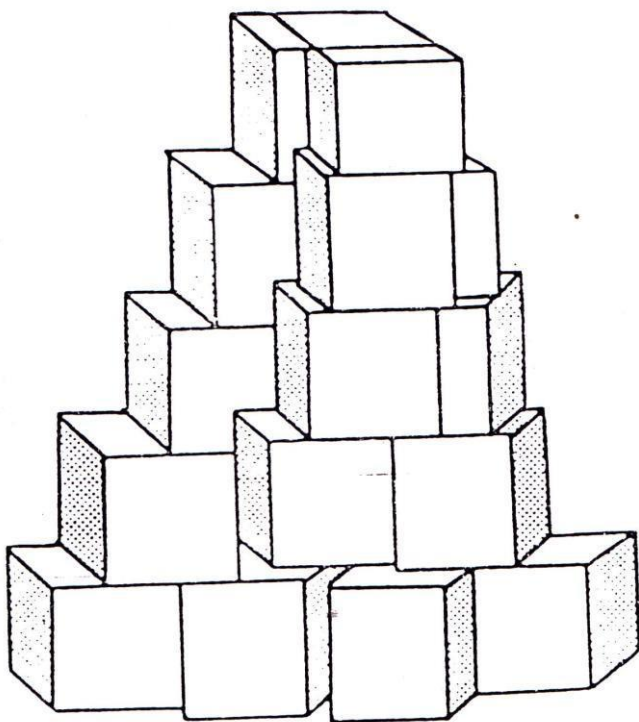
ENGLISH

# MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE

Level: **CELL LEADER**

Study book no: 7

## LEVELS:



5. Minister

4. Leader / Pastor

3. **[REDACTED]**

2. Disciple

1. Beginner

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

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

# MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE

## PURPOSE:

### - TO KNOW HIM, THE ONLY TRUE GOD

(Growing / Maturing)

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

### - AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN TO OTHERS!

(Multiplying / Reproducing)

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

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

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

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# CHRISTIAN COUNSELING - A first introduction

**Motto: Ps. 33: 11 (KJV); Job 12: 13; Prov. 19: 21**

## Lesson 1 Introduction to Christian Counseling

### A. Need for counseling:

When God had created man, He said it was very good! There was beautiful harmony and fellowship between God and man, being created in His image, relating to his Creator and fellowman. Due to man's disobedience and fall, sin and depravity set in, we violated God's original design and became self-centered. Because of this, all kinds of problems arose as the needs began to manifest and be felt.

Today, when we look around us, we see a broken world because of sin. Everybody has problems and needs, and that not only the unbelievers.

Jesus came to minister to his fallen creation. He took time to talk about people's problems and desired to solve them, (e.g. the women of Samaria; John 4), as He came to minister wholeness to the total person.

Even so today people are looking for help, for answers, for wholeness, for healing as they are broken and hurting. And we, in Jesus, when we make ourselves available can be instruments in the hands of our Lord to minister to the people around us.

### B. What is Christian Counseling?

Christian or better Biblical Counseling is: The ministry of helping people resolve their problems or difficulties with the principles of the Word of God. In other words, the capacity to listen to people's problems with the help of the Holy Spirit and comprehend where they are going through and share the answers which is relevant to the matter.

Biblical Counseling is counseling according TO the Word of God and then WITH the Word of God. It is a ministry of comfort, bring people to wholeness, usually on a personal level.

Key Scriptures: Ps.33: 11; 1 Tim. 3: 16; Luke 4: 18 – 19.

### C. What is the ultimate purpose of Counseling?

To restore a person to the image of God, or in N.T. terms, to make a person more Christ like. Rom. 8:28-29.

In the Bible the Holy Spirit is called the Counselor; in Greek: "*Parakletis*", which means: one who is called alongside to help. But then, what is our ministry in counseling? We, as a believer who counsel someone, become a temporary assistant to the Holy Spirit, as we come alongside someone whose personal functioning is impaired and seek to help that person being restored in God's image. In other words, we help a person to begin to function in the way God has originally designed it.

### D. Understanding man's make-up

It's clear that even before we can help other people, we need to understand man's functioning in general. And the Bible gives us the only right frame-work to understand people.

I Thes. 5:23 gives us man's make-up as: spirit, soul and body. It makes clear that man functions in total as one being, and that he cannot separate the different areas of his make up.

### E. Areas of the Human personality

In order to understand how problems develop within the personality, we will look at the five areas of the personality, in order to see the inter-relation of one part of human functioning with the other. In this way we will be able to understand and explain problems we come across.

1. Man is a spiritual being (has longings): spiritual needs which can only be met by God Ps.63:1.

2. Man is rational, thinking being: thinking twisted as a result of sin. ("For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he." Prov. 23:7a (K.J.V.)).
3. Man is a choosing / volitional being: has a will and makes choices and decisions. Prov. 19:21a
4. Man is an emotional / feeling being: feelings may rule much of his life (resentment, guilt and anxiety from undermined, unreachable or uncertain goals). Ps. 42: 3.
5. Man is a physical being: when out of order can contribute to spiritual and psychological problems (moods, thinking, and behaviour). Gen. 2:7.

Problems that might be observed in the various areas of the human personality are:

Ad.1. Problems in this area may be related to: temptation, lust, doubt, back-sliding, lethargy, etc.

Ad.2. Problems in this area may be: mental depression, inferiority complex, nervous breakdown, etc.

Ad.3. Problems may involve: choice of life partner, job, college, managing finance, etc.

Ad.4. Problems include: loneliness, guilt, anxiety, resentment, etc.

Ad.5. Problems related to: sickness, incurable disease, etc.

How this frame-work is to be used in counseling will be further explained in lesson III.

## **Lesson 2 Qualifications for the Christian Counselor**

### **Introduction:**

A counselor is a leader or mature believer who helps individuals handle their problems that they are not able to face up themselves. A counselor has an awesome responsibility:

- to rely totally on the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to do His work through us. (Ps. 16: 7).
- to keep studying the Word in order to show himself approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed rightly dividing the Word of Truth. II Tim. 2:15.
- the responsibility of the counselor is to determine (as best as we can) how far the Holy Spirit has brought the person till now.

Challenge: Where there is no counsel, the people fall, but in the multitude of counselors there is safety. Prov. 11:4.

### **Qualifications for Counselors:**

1. Must be a man of faith, spiritually mature, walking with God, mentally and emotionally stable, maintaining a close walk with the Lord, filled with the Holy Spirit and in constant fellowship with God, able to hear His voice, depending on Him. Able to pray in times of crises. To move in the gifts of the Spirits. He has to be free from problems himself, otherwise it would be impossible to help others. Prayer is one of the basic foundations in counseling.
2. Most have Scriptural knowledge of the will of God, knowing how to handle God's Word. Since the basis of all counseling is the Word of God, he must be well acquainted with the Scriptures in order to know where to find the answer. ("Tailor-cut approach"; don't rely on previous solutions and experiences). Col. 3:16; II Tim. 2:15; Rom.15:14, "I am satisfied about you, my brethren, that you are rich in goodness, amply filled with all knowledge and competent to counsel one another." (Amplified Bible).

3. Must have a genuine love and concern for people. The counselor must be one who is kind, considerate and approachable, so people feel free to come and share their deepest problems. He must have shepherd's heart and be able to let the counselee (the person who is being counseled) know: "I accept you for who you are and for how you are!" This love and concern must cause people to put their confidence in him and his judgement. He must be able to relate to people's problems and needs. He must be able to identify with their problems and feel with them whatever they experience. (Rom. 12:25; Gal 6:2). In other words, being able to put yourself in the person's shoes with their problem situations without becoming emotionally involved. The counselor is a temporary support and the counselee should not depend on him, but is being helped to solve his own problems!
4. Must be equipped with divine or heavenly wisdom. (Jas. 3:17; Jas. 1:5). Elements in the divine wisdom that govern our relationships are:
  - Pure motives; must be clean and unselfish.
  - Peaceable, our attitudes must be right.
  - Gentle or considerate, this will cause you to be tender in dealing with the counselee.
  - Submissive or easily to be entreated; don't be stubbornly dogmatic, but understanding and willing to yield to reason and the Word of God.
  - Merciful or full of good fruits, compassionate (example: John 8:1-11); in other words, through our wisdom people must touch God's heart in and through us.
  - Impartial. Don't let your counsel be influenced by natural considerations, personal friendships, position, wealth, attraction, etc.
  - Sincere, in other words, be genuine in your counsel.
5. Must be a patient and understanding listener. This is a very important requirement. (Jas. 1:19). Listen attentively. Don't be in a hurry, neither try to control the situation, but be willing to give time to listen. A major part of the counseling process is getting a person to unburden himself and to give a patient listening ear.
6. Must be able to keep matters in strict personal confidence, in other words: sealed lips! As a counselee shares his problems with the counselor because he trusts him, the counselor should not betray his trust and confidence.
7. We must be ready and able to direct others to the promises to the Bible with assurance. The counselor must be confident, clear and definite in the counsel he gives to people in need. Some people are confused and need to hear a clear direction. Others may be going in the wrong direction and may require a stern admonition and warning which needs to come with authority in the tone of the counselor.

NOTE: - Highly advisable to counsel together  
 - Ideal counselors team: husband and wife, especially since men and women relate and think differently

**In closing:**

The role and ministry of the Christian counselor is clearly illustrated in the story of Lazarus (John 11:1-44).

Key thoughts in this passage of Scripture:

- If God delays things, He is waiting for greater opportunities.
- Lazarus got to the mouth of the tomb by the power of Holy Spirit, but the disciples were told to loose him. If Jesus could raise Lazarus, surely He could release Him. So although we cannot give life, we can give liberty.

God uses people to help people. Therefore, as a counselor, you are a vital link between God and those in need for help. It is a privilege to help remove the bandages and bondages that inhabit and prevent God's people from being spiritually effective.

## **Lesson 3 Practical Guidelines on How to Counsel**

### **A. Personal Attitude**

In counseling others it is essential to have the right attitude. Our desire should always be to help and build up the other person, and not to find fault or pull him down. (II Cor. 13:10).

In the counseling process the following points should be considered:

- Prayer: Be in an attitude of prayer.
- Listen patiently without condemning or reacting.
- Listen sympathetically; try to place yourself in the other persons place. Make the counselee feel at ease to unburden himself and to share his problems.
- Be open to what they say; don't draw your conclusions too soon.
- At times you may need to ask questions to draw the person out of himself.
- Stick to facts mentioned by the counselee.
- Be objective; i.e., look at the problem from the outside in order to help the person solve his own problems.
- Avoid getting over-emotional with the person; otherwise the counselee may get emotionally attached to you
- Try to identify with the person; E.g. May be you had similar problem before, share it and how God solved it.

### **B. The Counseling Strategy**

#### **1. Diagnose**

Our purpose in counseling is helping people to solve their problem. And just as in a physical disease there are symptoms and root causes of the sickness, even so in man's problems. In every counseling situation our goal must not be to merely deal with the symptoms, but to determine and to root out the real cause of the problem. This requires dependence on the Holy Spirit, discernment, wisdom and a basic understanding of human behaviour.

E.g.1. Mr. X. has an alcohol problem since a few years, but can't get freed from it. He says he likes to be with his friends in the bar. The counselor needs to find out the reason for this behaviour: did it become a habit? Or does he have marriage problems which he tries to escape? If the latter, why? How did the problems start? Maybe it is to be traced to an inferiority complex.

E.g.2. Mrs. Y. gets every month sick since last one and a half year and is worried about it. Counselor needs to find out: Similar pattern of sickness in family line? Or due to being over-worked or living an unhealthy life-style? Or did it start after a religious pilgrimage to a certain place? Or, as believer, perhaps taking the Lord's supper lightly? Physical or psychological reasons?

#### **2. Resolving the Problem**

After having made a clear diagnose, we first begin to present God's counsel from His Word. Often the first step needed in the resolution phase is: repentance and starting a relationship with God through Christ. Repentance means: A change of mind and turning towards God. (Hos. 14:1-3). Developing a new dependency on Christ, including a turning from sin.



Secondly, we need to point out the Biblical solution. We need to show the counselee in what area of his life he needs to conform to God's Word. (II Tim. 4:2b).

Note: - Here we need to depend on the Holy Spirit since every person and every situation is different. We need a contingency approach with a tailor cut solution. See also the variety of approach recommended by Paul in 1 Thess. 5:14. (Eccl. 8:5-6).

Thirdly, having shown from the Bible God's solution or principle, we now need to personify that. In other words, tell the counselee what to do. Recommend certain definite and practical steps he needs to take in order to apply the Scriptural solution in his own life. E.g., The counselee may be suffering from demonic oppression. You may need to tell him the following:

- Destroy any charms, fetishes, occult books, etc
- Repent of your sin and accept the Lord Jesus
- Pray for his deliverance
- Stay in close fellowship with believers and attend regular worship meetings
- Begin to read daily God's Word (E.g. Start with the gospel of Luke)

Fourthly, be committed to follow-up, i.e. see to it that the person really comes through. When you meet the counselee again, check whether he followed your advice or at least made an effort to do so. (This will show how fruitful it is to continue counseling the person). Keeping in touch with the counselee, encourage him in the faith and walk with the Lord.

Finally, remember to pray at every counseling meeting with the counselee, especially encourage the counselee to learn to trust the Lord and begin to commit himself and his problem to the Lord at every stage. (Prov. 3: 5-6).

## **Lesson 4 Counseling the Unsaved**

When leading a person to the Lord, it is our responsibility to make a seeker understand salvation and commitment plus to guide him into the assurance of salvation. If the latter is not done properly the person will be left in doubt, insecurity and confusion. In counseling the unsaved seeker do follow the next steps.

### **I. Introduction**

- Introduce yourself and be personal
- Ask some questions about the counselee's doing
- Ask the three following vital questions:
  1. Are you absolutely sure you will go to heaven when you die?
  2. Suppose you want to go to heaven why do you think God should allow you to go?
  3. Do you think that before you can go to heaven, God would have to change some aspects about the way you live right now?
- Proceed to give your testimony.

Be brief, share short your past life, explain the positive change and emphasize how you live now.

### **II. Explain man's problem**

- Man created in God's image, having life from God.
- Abused their free will and disobeyed God which brought sin into the world, and therefore all have become sinners (Rom. 3:23).
- Due to sin man is separated from a holy God and worthy of death and eternal damnation. (Is. 59:2; Rom. 6:23).

### **III. God's answer to man's problem: the cross**

Explain:

- That God's love made Him send His only Son, Jesus Christ, to this earth to redeem mankind. (John 3:16).
- Because Christ was born of the Holy Spirit, He had no sin, and therefore He alone could be the perfect sacrifice as He paid the penalty for our sins (as a substitute) when He died on the cross. (Heb. 4:15; I Pet. 2:24).
- Subsequently, death could not hold Christ as He was perfect, and on the third day He rose again, now being seated at the right hand of God the Father in glory and power in heaven. (Heb. 10:12).
- Today, Jesus is alive, loves you and wants to change and save you.
- When you repent and accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour of your life He will give you a new inner, spiritual life which is eternal. (John 3:3,5-6).
- Yet, following Christ is not cheap. There is a price to pay; the cost of commitment and obeying His Word. (Mark 8:34).

When the person wants to accept Christ, the following four steps need to be part of his

#### **commitment IV. Receiving Christ and Committing yourself to Him**

1. Admit your spiritual need and confess your sins to God to receive His forgiveness. (I John 1:9).
2. Repent and turn away from your sins to obey and follow God's Word. (Hos. 14:1-3).
3. Believe the Jesus Christ died for you on the cross and entrust (totally commit) your life in His hands for your eternal salvation. (Acts 16:31, II Cor.5:15).
4. Ask and receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and life as your personal Lord and Saviour and start building your relationship with Him. (Rev. 3:20; John 1:12).

#### **IV. Minister assurance of salvation**

Salvation is not based on feelings, but on the truth of God's Word. Therefore, assure the counselee of his forgiveness and salvation with the following Scriptures:

- Rom. 10:9-11,13.
- John 5:24; 6:47.
- 1 John 5:12.
- Micah 7:19.

#### **V. Follow-up responsibilities**

- Encourage him to take a stand for Christ and to share his faith with others.
- Give a Bible / New Testament and explain the need to read daily and how.
- Emphasize the importance of daily prayer.
- Bring him into the fellowship of believers.
- Pray for him to be filled with the Holy Spirit.
- Keep in touch with him and keep praying for his spiritual growth.

## **Lesson 5 Counseling the Backslider**

### **1. What is backsliding?**

It means: to lose one's fellowship with the Lord, to grow cold and indifferent to spiritual matters, or even to fall away (apostasy).

The Bible gives various descriptions of backsliding:

- turning from God, 1 Kings 11:9.

- turning back to the world, II Tim 4:10.
- turning from first love, Rev 2:4.
- turning from the Gospel, Gal 3:1-5.

## 2. **Degrees of backsliding:**

- Apostasy: A falling away because of conscious rejection of God's truth as revealed in His Word and in His Son.
- Sins of flesh: Being "drawn away by his own lust and enticed" to sin. (e.g. drunkenness, immorality).
- Sins of spirit: A spiritual indifference that is a lack of responsibility before God and the church.

## 3. **Things that lead to backsliding:**

- a) disappointment in the inconsistencies seen or imagined in other believers.
- b) an indifferent relationship to Christ or 'following afar off' and ignoring the place of God's Word, prayer and witnessing in a believer's life.
- c) disobedience to God's revealed will.
- d) willful sin which remains un-confessed.

## 4. **Some of the root causes of backsliding:**

- unbelief (Heb.3:12)
- a haughty spirit (Prov. 16:18)
- lusting after material things (I Tim. 6:10)
- forgetting God in prosperity (Deut. 8:11-14)
- tribulation and persecution (Matt.13:20-21)

## 5. **The results of backsliding are:**

- Broken fellowship with the Lord and with-held blessings (Is 59:2).
- Unfit for service of God (Luke 9:62).

## 6. **How to counsel those who have back-sliden?**

First of all, we need to realise that there are two types of backsliders and each type should be dealt with, differently.

### I. The careless backslider

This person has no real desire to return to the Lord or repent, even though he realises his emptiness in honest moments. He will usually blame God or other believers for his conditions. He may have been hurt by unkindness or hypocrisy in others.

This person needs to see that his relationship with God is not dependent on the behaviour of others. In other words, if others choose to behave in a non-Biblical way, this is no valid reason for him to turn away from God. Encourage him to take responsibility for his own choices and then look at the faithfulness of God.

The following Scriptures could be used:

- a) Psalm 119:90 and Psalm 89:33 to establish the point of God's faithfulness.
- b) Take the person to Jer. 2:5 and ask him, "what injustice have you found in the Lord?" Turn to verse 13 and show him the folly of turning from the fountain of living waters to broken cisterns. Then move to verse 19 and ask him if he hasn't found it "evil and bitter" to forsake the Lord?
- c) Also Prov. 14:14 could be shared.

Deal with this person firmly and honestly in love, sow the Word in his heart and trust that God's grace will draw him back and restore fellowship.

## II. The convicted backslider

This person has already been convicted by the Holy Spirit, has been enough of his sin and wanderings, and desires to come back to the Lord. He will be easy to deal with as he will be ready to take good counsel because of his repentant state. The best Scripture to be used is:

# The story of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). This will show him clearly:

- The ruined state of the prodigal son
- His repentance
- His decision to return and humble himself -

His resolve to confess his sin

- His father's response of joy and forgiveness
- His restoration to his place in the family

If the person is willing to re-dedicate his life to the Lord, then follow the steps IV-VI in the previous lesson (IV).

## Lesson 6 Counseling the Sick

### 1. Introduction:

Even a sin entered the world because of man's disobedience, so did sickness and death as results of it as well. Around the world today millions of people are sick. Some are suffering from disease. Others brought illness upon themselves as a result of smoking and / or drinking of alcohol and other vices. And others are sick and having physical pains due to emotional causes like tension, fear, envy or resentment.

### 2. Biblical perspective on sickness and disease:

\* They are called a curse, Deut.28.

\* Came upon the human race because of Adam's disobedience. (Rom. 5:12).

Note: Sickness is not always or necessarily a result of direct personal sin. See John 9:3 – "neither has this man sinned, nor his parents."

We can be healed because Christ redeemed us from the curse at Calvary. Gal 3:13.

### 3. Sources of healing are:

A. Natural healing (Prov. 17:22)

B. Medical healing (Matt. 9:12)

C. Divine healing (Ps. 103:3-4)

P.S.- God often releases His healing power after the confession of sin! (Ps.103:3-4; Jas. 5:16).

### 4. What is divine healing?

It is a definite act of God through faith in Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the precious blood of Christ, whereby the whole human body is cured, healed, repaired and delivered from sickness and its power, and made as whole, sound and healthy as it was before the attack. In other words, it is healing where God over rules both nature and man to bring it forth.

### 5. What is the source / basis for divine healing?

A. God's covenant of healing.

In Ex. 15:26, God reveals Himself as Jehovah "Rapha" (The Lord your Healer) as He made a covenant of healing with His people. Please notice that the promise for healing and health is conditional upon the four conditions mentioned in the same verse.

B. The atonement.

Prophecied in: Is. 53:3-5.

Fulfilled in: Matt. 8:16-17.

By healing in the atonement is meant: that Jesus Christ not only took our sins, but also our sickness in His body on the cross. I Pet. 2: 24.

6. **In the New Testament we see the will of God** shown forth by Christ as He was healing all the sick who came to Him during His ministry on earth. (Matt. 4:23-24; Matt 8:3). Even in the great commission we see God's promise for healing. (Mark 16:15-20).
7. **Possible hindrance to healing:**
  - A. Improper instructions before or after healing. (E.g. John 5:1-16).
  - B. Sin (Is. 59:2, Matt. 13:15).
  - C. Unbelief (Mark 6:5-6).
  - D. An unforgiving spirit (Matt. 6:14-15).
8. **Healing may be received through one of the following ways:**
  - A. Faith in Christ, Heb. 11:6.
  - B. Prayer of faith and anointing with oil, Jas. 5:14-15.
  - C. Laying on of believing hands, Mark 16:18.
  - D. Sending the word, Ps. 107:20; Matt. 8:8.
  - E. Gifts of the Spirit, I Cor. 12:9-10.
  - F. The Lord's Table, I Cor. 11:23-32.
  - G. Prayer Cloths, Acts 19:12.

## **COUNSELLING THOSE WHO WANT TO GET MARRIED - How can I know whom to marry?**

A popular musical depicted three young girls who were afraid of becoming the unwilling partners in arranged marriages to men in their small village. They sang of hope that the matchmaker would make them “a perfect match,” but later in the same song they told the matchmaker not to rush, please! In the story the fathers were a powerful force in the family, but one of the daughters managed to talk her father into giving them permission to marry the boys they loved except for one daughter who insisted on marrying a young man outside of the family’s faith.

Attitudes toward marriage continue to change. In highly mobile, urbanized cultures where family clans are not the chief forces (and fathers do not reign like kings), the decision-making process of bride and groom selection has sifted to the individual preference of the single people themselves. But this has not always meant that the single person has made better decisions.

Single young people or widowed older people are all capable of getting married for the wrong reasons. A young person might enter marriage on the basis of romantic feelings alone or only based on cold facts. A widowed person who feels desperately alone might rush into a new relationship and marry-only to regret it later.

The Bible offers helpful principles that apply to all those desiring to be married. Whoever does the deciding should consider the issues that will be discussed in this study.

### **How can I know whom to marry?**

Show was young and beautiful, and had grown up in a small town. He was wealthy, an only child, 40 years old, and worked his father’s livestock business. They were raised miles apart and their eyes had never met before the day they became man and wife. An old man, a long-time employee of the groom’s father, acted as a matchmaker. On the day he arrived at the young woman’s town, he walked up to her, asked her a few questions, talked to her relatives, and then knew that she was the one to marry his employer’s son. This old man “popped the question” to her father and then made arrangements to take her back for the marriage – and she willingly went!

This bride and groom were Rebecca and Isaac. The Genesis 24 account of what led up to their marriage offers an unusual example of how God could lead two people together. Although it would probably be inappropriate to try to follow every detail of their example today, the fascinating account of Abraham’s matchmaking activity presents several sound principles that can be applied to how we decide whom to marry in our day and in our culture.

In this study, therefore, we will refer to the story of Isaac and Rebecca. In fact, before you read any further, it would be well for you to open your Bible and read Genesis Chapter 24 in full, looking for principles that could be applied today.

In order to get a complete picture of how we are to know whom to marry, we will look to other parts of the Bible as well, and we will organize our findings under the following headings: (1) Choose a Believer, (2) Trust God, (3) Consider Character, (4) Use wisdom, and (5) Think Ahead.

#### **(1) Choose a Believer**

Oil and water do not mix. A mouse and a boa constrictor would not make the best of friends. A person with a paralyzing fear of heights would not be a wise choice as climbing partner to scale the slopes of Mount Everest. And a follower of Christ would not make a good marriage match with a non-believer.

Why the fuss over whether or not my spouse is a believer? Nothing should be more important to you or to the person you marry than your spiritual well-being. Abraham knew that. He had his servant travel a great distance (over 400 miles) to find a spiritually compatible bride for his son. It wasn’t simply that he was a protective and controlling father – he knew the lasting significance of marriage. Genesis 24 helps us to understand why. Abraham gave his servant (probably his faithful old servant, Eliezer, mentioned in Gen. 15:2) these strict orders: “... you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell; but you shall go to my country and

to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac.” (verses 3-4). The Canaanites were notorious idolaters of the basest kind. Their gods and the goddesses promoted worship that included human sacrifices and fertility rites with perverse sex. What could go wrong if I don’t marry someone who is my spiritual equal? Plenty! If you could talk to Moses or to king Solomon, they could tell you of the dangers to both the family and to the community of believers. Moses got the word about this directly from the Lord, and Solomon knew from firsthand experience the terrible results of marrying outside the faith. The law God gave to Moses contained prohibitions against intermarrying with the pagans of the surrounding nations. Deuteronomy 7:3-4 states, “Nor shall you make marriages with them.... For they will turn your sons away from following me, to serve other

gods.” Even though Solomon knew better, he misused his prerogatives and married all sorts of foreign wives who served idols. As a result, “...when Solomon was old, ...his wives who served idols turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God.”(1 Kings 11:4). Both Solomon and the whole nation suffered (vv. 11-13).

Throughout Israel’s history, when the people married unbelieving pagans, there was a profound negative influence on the Israelites. Even after their punishment at the hands of foreign armies, the Jews who returned to Jerusalem had to be rebuked by both Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 9,10; Neh. 13:23-27), and later by Malachi (2:11-12). Love, lust and circumstances blinded them to what they knew was right and wrong.

We must be on guard against the temptations to overlook this most basic issue of spiritual compatibility. Just because the other person is “gorgeous”, “a hunk”, “kind and considerate,” or seems to be “genuinely in love with me,” is no foundation to enter into a lasting covenant of marriage! Never allow feelings to lead you to trample on your relationship with the Lord!

Even though the apostles Paul and Peter spoke of the possibility of winning an unbelieving spouse to the Lord (1 Cor.7: 12-16; I Pet. 3: 1-2), that does not mean we should go into marriage knowing we are spiritually incompatible. A believer who marries an unbeliever may be facing a lifetime of spiritual unrest in the marriage and a battle for the spiritual well-being of their children.

Thinking It Over. Why do some Christians choose to marry an unbeliever even though they know it’s not right? II Cor. 6: 14- 17. What areas of conflict could develop in a marriage if the two are not believers? How can two truly be united when there is no spiritual unity or agreement on what is right? What effect could this type of marriage have on the faith of their children and their convictions as they grow up?

## **(2) Trust God**

It’s not easy to wait for someone else to give you what you desperately long for. Its silly, I know, because I don’t enjoy waiting in a long line at a fast food place where the smell of ready made hot items only makes me hungrier. I don’t enjoy financial crunches when bills come in faster than paychecks, and I’m left wondering when and if the account balance will ever be in the black again. Our entire life seems to be a process of learning to wait in dependence on others. It all begins when we are infants- we wanted our milk, our “blankie”, our favorite stuffed animal, or a clean diaper. We have to learn again and again that we can’t have everything now. We have to wait for Mom and Dad or others to provide what we need.

As Christians we have to learn over and over that we must wait on the Lord, the One who provides all we need. It’s not an easy lesson for any of us. We have to discover that His timing is best, that He has everything under control. That’s easier said than done. For a man or woman who has an aching heart and longs to get married, the waiting can be very, very hard.

What does the story of Isaac and Rebecca tell us about trusting God to provide? Abraham and his servant Eliezer (rather than Isaac and Rebecca give us the example to follow. (Gen. 15:2-6; 24:2-4). In verse 7 Abraham expressed his trust in God’s ability to lead Eliezer to the right woman for his son. Abraham said, “The Lord ...will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there.” This statement of faith was not wishful thinking. Rather, those words grew out of a long-term relationship that Abraham had with the Lord. He could look back and see how the Lord had met every need and led him in the past. He knew that the Lord could be trusted to guide him in this crucial choice for his son Isaac.

Abraham was a living, breathing example of the truth of Proverbs 3:5-6. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean on not your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.” As Abraham lived by faith, the Lord blessed him and guided his life. His servant Eliezer displayed the same kind of faith when he prayed, “O Lord, God of my master Abraham, please give me success this day, and show kindness to my master Abraham.” (Gen.24:12).

Today we can have the same confidence and quite assurance that our lives are under God’s control. As long as we walk humbly, submissively, and obediently, we need worry that we’ll somehow miss God’s direction about which way to turn. Just as Abraham humbled himself before the King of the universe, so we too are to seek first the Kingdom of God and He will take care of what we need (Matt. 6: 33); and that includes helping us to find a spouse or to live for Him as a single person!

### **Why is God taking so long?**

You can be sure that any delay you may encounter is for your good, not His attempt to torture you! It can seem as if God is leaving you hanging when you want nothing more than to get married and settle down.

Many young and old people experience “senior panic.” A young person can begin to panic when he or she hits the senior year of college or the age when all of his or her friends are getting married. And some senior citizens can become panicky when they are widowed or come to a time in life when they really need companionship. Whether young or old, people can end up looking for a quick fix to their longing for a marriage partner. That needless to say, is very dangerous.

Whether young or old, God wants you to call on Him, and wait on Him (Ps. 27:13-14; Is. 30:18). Be honest with the Lord about your desire to be married. Those feelings right and good! But don’t lose patience and wander away from God in your attempt to find someone to marry.

### **How is your personal walk with God?**

Are you trusting Him with the small day-to-day decisions? Are you living in continual dependence on Him? Are you in the place and attitude where He can get your attention?

When the servant of Abraham spoke to Rebecca about his purpose for being in Nahor, he said, “As for me being on the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master’s brethren.” (Gen. 24:27). Eliezer had followed instructions and was in the place where God could give further direction. We too must be “on the way,” walking in obedience to God, if we expect Him to lead us in the future.

Are you in the place where God can lead you? You can’t expect Him to direct you to a fine Christian mate if you are hanging around with people who don’t have a good reputation, if you are engaging in premarital sex, if you are neglecting times of personal prayer and worship, or if you are harbouring sinful attitudes. We can’t expect God’s help in choosing a mate if we are living in disobedience to all that we know is His will as revealed in His Word.

### **Will God provide a marriage partner for everyone?**

No. Some people are designed and gifted for the single life while others are designed for married life (1 Cor. 7). Ideally, in a Garden of Eden type of existence, every man and every woman would find the perfect mate. But this is an imperfect world, where the ideal no longer is operative. In the present situation, God’s will for some people is a life of singleness—and for them, that is exactly how He is most glorified in their lives.

### **Why do I need God’s help in choosing a mate?**

Deciding to marry can be a mind boggling, life-altering choice, and it has deep and lasting spiritual impact. And quite frankly, most of us don’t realize what we are getting ourselves into. We need God’s help to prepare us for marriage and to help us to select the person who will be best for us.

James 1:5 states, “If any of you lack wisdom let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” In this verse, James was writing about the wisdom we need to help us deal with trials in our lives. And certainly, trying to cope with singleness and determining if God wants you to marry a certain person or not could be considered a serious trial!



According to the book of Proverbs, we take a giant step towards being wise when we choose to fear the Lord by showing Him the reverence and honour that is due Him (Prov. 1:7; 2:1-11).

### **How does the Holy Spirit guide my choices, thinking, and feelings?**

This is a tricky subject simply because we are talking less-than-objective information. Even though the New Testament contains several examples of how the Holy Spirit can lead through inner impressions (Acts 8:29; 11:28; 13:2; 21:11; I Cor. 14:30), separating our subjective feelings or urges from the voice of the Spirit is not always an easy thing to do. We can be sure that the Spirit would never violate the clear commands of the Bible. The Spirit would never tell us to choose to marry an unbeliever, nor would He lead us to marry for money, nor would He guide us to marry in conflict with the principles of wisdom.

The Holy Spirit will guide you as you study the Bible, and He will give you sensitivity to what is right or wrong about a relationship. The inner promptings of the Spirit will be consistent with the truth and godly wisdom.

### **How should we pray for God to lead us to a husband or a wife?**

Often and long! God is intimately interested in hearing your requests concerning this matter. As you bring your requests before Him and submit yourself to His direction, you can be sure that He will give you nothing but what He wants for you. (Ps.37: 4; Matt. 7:7-12).

**Thinking it over.** On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you rate your level of trust in the Lord? Have you spent time praying about whom you will marry? Are you living in obedience to God and growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ? Have you learnt the secret of contentment, whether you are married or not? (Phil. 4:11-13).

### **(3) Consider Character**

What kind of person would you want to perform heart surgery on you? Would you want someone who was a regular user of cocaine, a psychopathic killer, or a medical intern who had cheated his way through medical school? Probably none of the ones mentioned above, right? You would want someone who is a qualified and a competent doctor, someone who is prepared for the surgery he was to perform on you.

### **What character traits were important in the case of Isaac and Rebekah?**

As Eliezer came into the town of Nahor, he prayed and asked the Lord to point out a certain kind of young woman; and I don't think he was just asking for some arbitrary signs. Eliezer asked the Lord to bring to him a young woman whose actions would display a submissive, humble, servant attitude. Those character traits would be revealed by her willingness to give a drink to Eliezer and his camels (Gen. 24:13- 14). When Rebecca fulfilled those requirements, the account says that Eliezer watched her closely to confirm if she was the one for Isaac (v.21). As the situation unfolded, she displayed sensitivity to the Lord by her willingness to go with Abraham's servant – even after she heard his amazing story.

In verse 16, Rebecca is described as being very beautiful and a virgin. I'm sure that her natural beauty didn't hurt her chances, though we can't be sure that her beauty was a determining factor. We can be fairly sure, however, that her virginity was an important issue. The Old Testament law was very strict about sexual behavior (Deut. 5:18; 22:13-21). Deception at the time of marriage about one's sexual purity could even lead to the death penalty. (Verse 21).

### **What character qualities are important for people entering marriage today?**

Here are some traits you should look for in others and develop in yourself:

1. Willingness to serve; humility. He or she should be able to live in harmony with others, be willing to associate with people of low position, not be conceited (John 13:1-7; Rom.12: 16). Above all, he or she should be willing to serve you.

2. Sexual purity. Sex was designed for marriage. You should be saving yourself for someone who has been saving himself or herself for you. (Rom. 13:13-14; Heb. 13:4).

But what if you or the person you are interested in was sexually active in the past? Have you forfeited the privilege of a happy marriage? No, you will have to deal with the emotional scars of those previous sexual activities, but by God's grace and mercy any person can be completely forgiven and purified by Christ (2 Sam. 12:13; 1 John 1:9).

According to recent surveys, the odds are that many singles who read this study will have already engaged in sexual activity. So do you throw the standards out the window? Of course not! Sin never makes lawlessness okay. Our sin only makes us need God's mercy and forgiveness more desperately.

The problems in your sexual past or your future marriage partner's sexual past could be deep-seated personality issues. You would be wise to make sure that the past has been properly dealt with and that sinful sexual behavior patterns have truly been broken and left behind. Otherwise, those same character weaknesses will reappear in the future and threaten your marital sexual relationship. It would be wise to talk over these issues with your pastor or a Christian counselor and make sure that you and your future partner have truly put the past behind and are committed to sexual purity.

3. Devotion to Christ. You should settle for no less than a believer who is spiritually sensitive to the Lord and desires to live for Christ! (2 Cor. 6:14-18; Eph. 4:17-5:20; Phil. 3:7-16; 1 John 2:15 - 17).
4. Right Priorities. The one you chose to commit your life to as husband or wife should not be committed to money, pleasure, or popularity. (Eccl. 2:1 - 11; 5:8 - 17; 6:1 - 12; Matt. 6:33; Rom. 12:2; 1 Tim. 6:10; Heb. 13:5).
5. Right beliefs. Don't marry a heretic! You don't have to agree on every minor issue, but make sure that you agree on the Biblical basics of sound doctrine (1 John 4:1 - 6).
6. Commitment to the local church. God did not intend the Christian life to be a game of solitaire. He designed the church to meet our needs and for us to serve others. You should agree on this issue with your future mate (Eph. 4:1 - 16; Heb. 10:24- 25).
7. Loving attitude. This is the most basic characteristic that every believer should possess (John 13:15; Gal. 5:22; 1 John 3:11 - 20). Don't marry a persistent grumbler! @ I can't imagine why such people would attract any prospects, but they do - by hiding their true character and by luring with other qualities. The wisdom of Proverbs warns us that being married to an irritable and contentious person can be torture! (Prov. 19:13; 21:9,19). Examine your relationship and see how you get along. Are you always bickering? Do you feel verbally or emotionally abused?
8. Self-control. Does the potential mate show restraint when angered or is the person hot-headed and hot-tempered? Is he or she addicted to alcohol, drugs, food, sex, work, sports, or impulse buying? (Prov. 23:20- 21; 25:28; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:15 - 18).
9. Honesty. The writer of Proverbs said that, "an honest answer is like a kiss on the lips." (Prov. 24:26). If a person truly loves you, he or she will show that affection with honest words.
10. Beauty below the skin. The Lord looks for attractive inner qualities in a man and a woman; should we do any less? (1 Sam. 17:7; Prov. 11:22; 31:13; 1 Pet. 3:2-5). Beauty is only skin deep, but character goes right to the bone. You should find your mate to be physically attractive to you (remember: beauty is in the eye of the beholder!), but that's not as important as inner attraction.
11. Responsibility. Don't marry a selfish, lazy person who lacks the desire or the means to fulfill certain responsibilities. Rebecca and her father could tell from Eliezer's gifts and his description of Isaac that he would be able to take care of her needs (Gen. 24:22, 35, 53). That sounds coldly practical, doesn't it? But contrary to some popular opinion, you can't

pay bills with promises of love. And as said in some places: “When poverty enters the back door, love leaves from the front door!”

In I Timothy 5, the apostle Paul said, “... if anyone does not provide for his own and especially for those of his house-hold, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (I Tim. 5: 8). Paul didn’t mince words, did he? If you shouldn’t marry an unbeliever, you certainly should not marry a person whose financial irresponsibility and laziness make him “worse than an unbeliever.” The “sluggard” who is mentioned so often in Proverbs is a person to be avoided as a mate (Prov. 24:30 – 34).

12. Good relationship with parents. How a person relates to his parents will tell you a lot about his character. God places great value on showing respect and honor for parents (Eph.6:1– 3)

How can expectations be too high or too low? Some people may expect perfection while others don’t expect enough. The problem with any kind of list (like the one above) is that we can make impossible demands on another person. Certainly the basic spiritual and character qualities should be there, but we cannot expect a person to be perfect. There’s no such creature on this planet! If you’re not sure, then please look realistically in the mirror! So be reasonable. Don’t budge on the major issues, but allow room for growth of character. The important matter is whether or not the person you marry is devoted to Christ, is being controlled and led by the Holy Spirit, and is allowing God to work in his or her life to become more like Jesus Christ.

And one other practical note: Don’t choose someone with the idea that you will be able to drastically alter his or her character after the wedding ceremony. Be prepared to live with that person even if he or she never changes. Rather the opposite holds: the way you accept a person before your marriage is the way he will be after! Through you consenting to the marriage this is what you effectively are saying!!

Thinking it over. What area of your life needs some prayerful attention? Would you be a good “catch” for someone looking for a marriage partner? If you are thinking about marrying someone, do you know that person well enough to conclude that he or she would help your relationship with Christ grow and develop?

#### **(4) Use Wisdom**

If your were looking for a car to buy, would it be wise to open the newspaper to the auto section in the classified ads, close your eyes, put your finger down randomly on the page, and then purchase that car? Would it be any better if you prayed and asked God to help you to point your finger to the right ad? Or is the whole scene a bit ridiculous and far-fetched? God wants us to use wisdom, whether we’re buying a car, selecting a place to live, choosing a college to attend, or looking for the right person to marry. Some decisions in life can be settled by flipping a coin – like trying to decide whether to have peanut butter or cheese on your sandwich for lunch. But most other choices demand more brain power.

A choice of a spouse, for instance, takes a lot of thought, a lot of prayer, and a lot of dependence on God for His leading. After all, it is a decision that will affect you (and your spouse) for the rest of your life. It’s not something you can afford to take lightly.

What does the story of Isaac and Rebecca show us about how to use wisdom? Genesis 24 holds several bits of practical wisdom. When we combine it with the teaching of the whole Bible, we can get a good collection of practical tips.

At the first reading, it may sound as if Abraham’s servant did something like opening the classified ads and putting his finger to the page.

But lets look a little closer for some sound principles that we can apply to our situations today:

- Look in the appropriate place. To find a compatible, spiritual wife, Abraham sent Eliezer to the logical place – his home town (Gen. 24:3- 4,10). Eliezer didn’t go into a pagan Canaanite village to look for a wife for Isaac, just as it wouldn’t make sense for us to go to a religious shrine, an atheists’ club, or a singles’ bar to find a person who loves his Lord Jesus Christ.
- Ask the Lord for help. Eliezer prayed about the marriage he was arranging (Gen. 24:12) and he saw the Lord lead. Nothing could have been more practical or wise. Proverbs tells over and over

again that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom (Prov. 1:7; 9: 10). The most logical move you can make is to put your searching heart into God's hands.

- Don't base your decision on one "sign". Even though you may believe the sign is from the Lord, don't throw out wisdom. One part of the story of Isaac and Rebecca is often misunderstood. When Eliezer asked the Lord for a sign (a young woman who would offer water to him and his camels), he didn't jump to the conclusion that Rebecca was the right one when she offered water. The text tells us that even after she passed the initial test, Eliezer quietly observed her and wondered if she truly was the one who was right for Isaac (v.21). Eliezer had observed Rebecca's character as she humbly brought water for him and his camels (which was a very heavy job when you consider how much water a camel really drinks!) And when he talked with her, he learned that she was from the right family (vv. 24 – 27). Then, as he talked to her father and her brother, Eliezer received added confirmation when they were quick to give their approval. And the final indication was Rebecca's own declaration that she was willing to go (v. 58). The combination of all these factors helped to verify and confirm the choice.

- Seek advice. Do you realize how much Isaac must have trusted Eliezer's judgment? I like to imagine that Isaac had a long talk with Eliezer before he left on his wife hunt, telling his long time friend and servant what he wanted in a wife. What do we know for sure is that Abraham trusted his servant's judgment, and Eliezer didn't make an arbitrary decision. Genesis 24 tells us that Eliezer carefully explained the purpose of his journey to Rebecca's father and submitted to his counsel (v.49). And Rebecca humbly followed the direction of her brother and her father (vv.51, 58 – 61). Our thinking process is not always as objective as it should be. Emotions can blind us to serious character flaws in the person we are interested in marrying. The proverbs remind us of the need to double check our judgment with the counsel of people we can trust (Prov. 12:15; 20:18).

### **What other practical items should we consider today?**

In addition to the four guidelines just mentioned, we should consider the following: Study the family. How a person gets along with parents and brothers and sisters will tell you volumes about his character. A son who, "mistreats his father and chases away his mother is a son who causes shame and brings reproach" (Prov. 19:26). A person who honors his father and mother (Eph. 6:2-3) enjoys the favor of the Lord. How do his or her parents relate to one another? You can be sure that their example has left a deep impression on your future mate.

And by the way, don't forget to study your own family life and your parents' marriage example. What you've observed may or may not be the type of marriage that God wants you to imitate. Don't rush! Make sure you know yourself and the other person well enough to be certain that you are right for each other and ready for a life-time relationship (Prov. 19:2; 29:29). Love at first sight is a myth. The only thing you can catch at first sight is a superficial attraction. Love takes time to grow and develop. The true Christ-like love calls for serving and commitment to the other!

### **Summary of Practical Considerations:**

1. Look in the appropriate place.
2. Ask the Lord for help.
3. Don't base your decision on one "sign."
4. Seek advice.
5. Study the family.
6. Don't rush!

# Should I consider marrying someone from another race? The Old Testament regulations that Jews were to marry only within the Jewish race were intended to keep Israel from close associations with their idolatrous neighbors whom the Lord wanted destroyed. The purity of the race was also important because of God's plan for Israel as a unique nation, the race through whom the promised Redeemer would come. The racial distinctions, therefore, were primarily a spiritual distinction. And the New Testament does not promote a separation of the races.

So, no Biblical reason exists for prohibiting marriages across racial lines today. But a word of caution is needed. From a practical standpoint, you must consider the differences not merely of skin

color, but, more important, cultural backgrounds and even social acceptability. You and your marriage partner need to be able to relate to one another on many levels. Be sure that you can overcome whatever cultural barriers may be there, and be sure that you are ready and willing to endure any social stigma that you or your children may face. Prejudice against interracial marriages is an ugly reality we all have to come to grips with. So, caution and careful evaluation are needed.

# What if my parents don't approve? Do you have to follow their wishes? If you want to keep peace in the family you do! But if you are old enough to make mature and responsible decisions, and you think that you are making the right choice, what then? Whatever you do, don't neglect to show honor for your parents (Eph. 6:2-3), even when you disagree with them. Give them time to see your perspective. Talk it out with them. Find out exactly why they don't want you to marry so – and so. It could be that they sense a serious character flaw or some other problem that you are not aware of. Give them the benefit of the doubt for a while. Don't over-react. Ask the Lord to help you and your parents to see the issues clearly. Affirm your love and respect for them.

Your pastor and others may be able to give you objective counsel about what to do. It could be that your parents are being unreasonable, but do all you can to preserve your relationship with them.

Try to win their approval, but don't try to force it out of them. The person you want to marry should be able to understand and wait for a while.

Only as a last resort, after you have carefully and prayerfully examined your motives, your readiness for marriage, your compatibility, and your love, should you ever bypass your parents' wishes.

# How much freedom do I have to choose? Is there only one person in the world who is right for you, or do you have several options that would please God? This is another issue that isn't so easy to answer because we get into the matter of God's sovereignty and our free will – and that's beyond human comprehension.

We can be sure, however, that God is in control and that He has given us freedom. That freedom includes the ability to make mistakes – both innocent ones and sinful ones. Instead of sitting around and fretting about whether or not we are selecting the one person in the world God planned for you to marry, we would be better off living in continual dependence on the Lord trusting Him to bring us to the person who is right for us.

# Thinking it over. What can keep us from using our heads before getting married? What practical issues mentioned in this chapter are essential to a happy marriage? What makes your practical choice for someone to want to marry you? What practical reasons would a person have for not wanting to marry you?

### **(5) Thinking Ahead**

Would you dive headfirst into a lake without learning first how deep and how warm (or cold) the water was? Would you buy a house or agree to rent an apartment without checking it out first? Would you accept a job if you didn't know what you would be doing, how much would be paid, what kinds of benefits you would receive, or what the working conditions were? Only if you tended to act on impulse or if you were very desperate, right?

The same is true in marriage. Few people decide to get married without some idea of what they are getting into. The problem, though, is that too often they have less than a Biblical view of marriage in mind, or they naively expect the romance to continue without a hurdle, or they merely continue to duplicate the less-than-ideal marriage patterns they observed as they grew up. As a result, when problems arise in marriage, they fail to address the issues properly and live in conflict, ignore the problem and hope it goes away, or else, they decide to end the marriage. That's why it's so important for those who are contemplating marriage to think ahead of what they're getting into.

What did Rebecca and Isaac think they were getting into? Genesis 24 doesn't tell us much about this. We have to assume that they, like Abraham, knew what had been passed to them from the first marriage in the Garden of Eden. And they had watched their God-fearing parents respect the Lord's plan for marriage. Isaac must have known, for example, that marriage had strong spiritual

implications – he knew that his wife was not to be a pagan idolater but someone who was spiritually compatible and who would join him in preserving the faith and passing it on to the next generation (24:1-7). For the 37 years before his mother had died, Isaac had observed his parents' relationship.

What is God's view of marriage? God designed marriage to be the closest and best of all human relationships. A man and woman were created to complement one another's physical, spiritual, emotional, and social needs and abilities in the special relationship we call marriage (Gen. 2:18-25). Their union was to be more than merely a sexual act; it was to be union of purpose, hearts, and souls. Your selection of a marriage partner must be someone who will complement your needs, and someone whose needs you can joyfully fulfill, as together you pursue God's purpose for your lives. God conducted the first marriage ceremony, and He has been involved in every ceremony since then. Jesus referred to the creation account of Adam and Eve and the one-flesh union of man and wife, and then He said, "Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matt. 19:6). God clearly has made known His hatred for divorce (Mal.2: 16). New Testament passages like Ephesians 5 extol the sacredness of the marriage relationship and the need for husband and wife to give each other their all.

What are the responsibilities of the husband and the wife? Contrary to some opinions, marriage is not a master-slave relationship. And contrary to the pattern of some existing marriages, it is not supposed to be an adversarial relationship either.

### **The following are two marital responsibilities:**

\* Sexual faithfulness (Ex.20: 14; Gal.5: 19). This is faithfulness in both action and attitude (Matt.5: 27-28). Husband and wife are to have eyes and thoughts only for each other.

\* Distinctive roles (1 Cor.11: 13-16; Eph.5: 22-33; Col.3: 18-19; 1 Tim. 3:4,12; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-7). Just as within the Trinity, the Father, Son and Spirit are equal but have different roles, so too the husband and wife are given different roles by God to fulfil. These are:

= The husband is to provide loving leadership (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23,25,28; Col.3: 19). He is to love (as Christ-sacrificially giving) and to lead. He is to do all he can to understand his wife's needs and treat her with tender respect (1 Pet. 3:7).

= The wife is to provide loving help to the husband and to the family (Gen.2:18;Eph.5: 22;Col. 3:18; Titus 2:4-5; 1 Pet. 3:1). She is to respect and submit as his help-made.

God created men and women with different biological and relational roles. And the Bible gives no indication that God's created distinctives should be ignored or glossed over.

No one said it would be easy! Love takes a lot of work. A person who goes into marriage with the notion that life will be total romantic bliss has a rude awakening ahead. Most people are more realistic, but their expectations still exceed the reality that they encounter.

How important should sex be? Your sexual relationship is an expression of the intimate relationship of body and soul that you and your spouse will share. The sex drive is a powerful force; because of that, God designed marriage as the place where that drive is fulfilled (Heb.13: 4). First Corinthians 7:2 and 9 tell us that the desire for sexual fulfillment is one good reason to get married. Granted, more ought to be involved (sex should really be an overflow of expressing true love to one another), but the sexual relationship should be enjoyed unreservedly (Prov. 5: 15-19). A husband and wife are to recognize that they have a duty of providing sexual satisfaction to their mate (1 Cor. 7:3-5) which becomes easy and enjoyable when their sexual relationship is based on true love and sacrificial commitment to each other.

### **Is pre-marital counseling necessary?**

Maybe not necessary, but couples have found it to be very helpful. Some people have gotten enough good, sound Biblical counsel from their parents as they have grown up, and they've seen good marriages in action, so for them extensive counseling probably isn't necessary. Many pastors insist on counseling sessions with every couple they marry and that's a good idea. At the very least, a couple needs to understand what marriage is all about, how to handle disagreements, how to handle their roles, how to relate each other sexually, and how to build one another up spiritually.

And good premarital counseling paves the way for later counseling if problems arise in the marriage.

### **Thinking it over**

Why do the responsibilities of marriage scare some people? How does society today view commitment in marriage? What kind of good and bad marriages did you observe in your family and friends as you grew up? How will you make sure that your marriage honors the Lord?

### **“ I Do”**

“ I do” – two little words with awesome implications. In a wedding ceremony, the words “ I do” represent a man and woman’s willingness to enter into a special relationship and to promise their love and devotion to each other – for a lifetime. It’s not a relationship to be taken lightly or to be entered into hastily. The man and the woman need to be convinced that they are spiritually compatible, right and good for each other, and ready for the challenges of married life.

Before a person says, “ I do” to the Lord? Have you recognized that God has offered you a proposal of forgiveness of sin and the enjoyment of life with Him for now and eternity? The conditions of this marriage are quite simple. Just say, “I do” to God – tell Him that you admit your need of forgiveness (Rom. 3:23) and accept the free gift of eternal life that Jesus Christ died on the cross to buy for you. If you’ve done that, you have taken the first all-important step in finding the person who will walk with you always: the Lord Jesus Christ.

# RELEASE OF THE CURSE

## Introduction:

Gal 3:13-14. Exchange of curse for blessing!

The nature of curses and blessings (more than 600 references in the Bible)

Definition of blessings and curses: both are vehicles of supernatural power for good responses or evil.

Characteristic: they pass on from one generation to another generation. They are usually words spoken or written. They can also be transferred by objects (E.g. the cup of the Lord's blessing). Old Testament example: the test of a woman's faithfulness.

To enter into freedom first break the curse, in order that God's blessing might come and be released. Often when the curse is broken, healing will flow in many cases.

## Forms that blessings and curses take:

Deut. 28 (summarised):

### **BLESSINGS: -**

- 1) Exaltation (being lifted up)
- 2) Re-productiveness (fruitfulness in every area of life)
- 3) Health
- 4) Prosperity and Success
- 5) Victory
- 6) Head and not the tail (head makes decision, in control of the circumstances)
- 7) Above and not beneath

### **CURSES: -**

- 1) Humiliation
- 2) Barrenness / Failure to reproduce
- 3) Sickness of every kind
- 4) Poverty / Failure
- 5) Defeat
- 6) Tail not Head
- 7) Beneath, not above

## Indicators of curses operating in a person's life: - (General)

- 1) Mental and/or emotional breakdown (falling apart)
- 2) Repeated or chronic sickness (hereditary)
- 3) Female problems: barrenness, miscarriage, menstrual problems
- 4) Breakdown of marriage and family alienation
- 5) Financial insufficiency (over long times)
- 6) Accident prone (always accidents)
- 7) A history of suicides or unnatural deaths in a certain family, or a dark shadow of the past / a long evil "arm" from the past. Continuous failures.

Prov. 26:2, "there is a cause for every curse." So find out the cause of the curse. (Deut. 23:5).

## The Biblical causes for curses: -

Deut. 28. Primary causes:

- 1) Deut. 28:15 - not listening to the voice of the Lord and disobedience – curses  
If released from curse, keep obeying God.
- 2) The cure for curses is God Himself. God curses the disobedient. Curses that proceed from God – Ex. 20:3-5:
  - \* Other false gods - curse (breaking first and second commandment)
  - \* Idolatry - curseCurse goes and effects for three and four generations!



- 3) People piled up under curses because of idolatry.
- \* Occultism (other gods) – curse, e.g. fortune teller, ouja boards – making a god who is not the real God. Many people involved in the occult one way or the other. Therefore, confess your sin of the occult and release yourself from the curse. (Four generations = 70 ancestors).

### **Deut. 27:15-26. – Summary of curses: (General)**

- 1) Idolatry
- 2) Disrespect for parents. (Eph. 6:1); not honouring father and mother.
- 3) Treachery against weak and helpless.
- 4) Injustice against weak and helpless.
- 5) Illicit or unnatural sex (incest) – curse. (abortion brings a curse)
  - \* Gen 12:3; 27:29 – extended in father’s blessing. Anti-Semitism – cursing Jews – became cursed
- 6) Depending on flesh: - Zech. 5:1-4.
  - \* Jer. 17:5-6 (description of a cursed person) trusting in man, having departed from the Lord and the grace of God! (having left the super natural power and grace of God)
- 7) Robbing God: Be honest in giving to God what is due to Him.
  - \* Mal. 3:8-10, stinginess towards God brings a curse. (God doesn’t need your tips!). Be generous (grace is greater than law). Giving tithes and offerings is a part of our worship.
- 8) Perverting the gospel:
  - \* Gal 18:9 – Preaching false truths (perverting the gospel). Faith is taking God and his Word seriously!

### **Other sources of curses:** (more specific)

- Men who speak on behalf of God. Josh. 6:26. Compare this with I Kings 16:34 which happened 500 years later! (Curses continue to be in effect until they are cut off and dealt with; they are self-perpetuating).
- II Sam.1:21. Today, some 3000 years later, Gilboa is still barren.
- II Kings 5:26-27; Gehazi became a leper and his descendents forever.
- Jesus cursed the fig tree.

### **Other sources of curses:**

(Persons with whom you have a relationship of authority, like: husband-wife, pastor-congregation)  
 Words spoken to people by a person with authority to those under his authority carry supernatural power (e.g. pastor – congregation; husband-wife).

- \* Honour your parents and receive their blessing.
- \* Gen. 31:30-32, Jacob pronounced a curse on Rachel unknowingly. Rachel died a few years later at child birth.
  - e.g. - husband curses his wife.
    - fathers tell their sons, you’ll always be a failure, you’ll never succeed.
    - mother curses daughter.
    - teacher–pupil: "you’re stupid", "failure".

Usually there is a demonic element in the pronouncing of curses. James 3:14-15. When you’re getting angry leave the situation otherwise cursing may come out of your mouth.

### **Self-imposed curses**

Gen. 27:11-13, 46.

In verse 13 of Gen. 27, Rebecca accursed herself. (Cf. verse 46). Don’t make negative statements about yourself. If you’re cursing yourself, you’re inviting the spirit of death. Ps. 118:17. Revoke the curse / the negative by the positive. (e.g. Jesus and Peter: three time denied – three times re-affirmed). Matt.27:24-25.

God had protected Abraham from curses, but could not protect the Jews from themselves. God can protect you from everything, but not from your self-imposed curses.

## **Unscriptural Covenants**

- Ex. 23:32 (people and their gods). e.g. free masonry—very demonic, mixture of Baal plus one other deity and Jehovah.
- Tribal rites – innate rituals, etc.
- Witch-doctors – Satan’s servants having supernatural power and not to underestimate; it is real, but in Christ we have great power and greater authority.
- Numb. 22:4 – 6, if you can get your enemy cursed, you will win the battle. 1 Sam. 17:43 (a fight between gods).
- Deut. 7:25-26, if you bring the occult in your house, it open the door for the occult. (e.g. small children can’t sleep, then search your house for demonic objects and remove them).

## **How to break and cut off the curse:-**

- Recognise  
Repent (James 4:7)  
Renounce  
Resist – on going process.
- Establish a Biblical basis for the release: Gal. 3:13 – 14.  
Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:12 – 14; I John 3:8b; Luke 10: 19.
- Confess your faith in Christ.
- Confess any known sins (own and ancestors).
- Forgive all other persons, Matt. 6:25; forgive to be forgiven (forgiveness is not an emotion but a decision).
- Renounce all contact with the occult (own or ancestors).
- Get rid of occult objects

### **⇒ Then release yourself in the name of Jesus!**

Then confess and expect the blessing of Abraham. The Holy Spirit administers the blessing.

Be blessed in all things!

Keep hearing and doing what God says!

# THE MINISTRY OF COUNSELING

- The under-shepherd must be able to talk to people individually about salvation and about their personal problems. At times he must point out discrepancies in their testimony – Matt.18:15– 17.
- He must learn to comfort the bereaved and the sorrowing.
- He should enter the personal lives of his people and becomes a part of the family – Rom. 12:15.
- He must remember that he is in a very special way the representative of the Lord Jesus here on earth at all times.

## ENCOURAGING FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship is based on an intimate family relationship to Christ and His family. Christians need to be together, to talk together, to pray together, to sing together, to laugh together, to weep together, just to be together, 1 John 1:7; 1:3.

### 1. The purpose of fellowship.

1. To strengthen one another, both in services and in happy times of meal sharing. The men should be brought together for a meal, the women for an evening of sharing, the young people for games – and all of these around the Word of God. Christians will be strengthened and outsiders attracted.
2. To encourage one another in the hard places of life. We can't tell when a heart is aching – we can make the burden lighter.
3. To share experiences for the benefit of all; our testimony may prevent someone from making a similar error.
4. To share the thrill of answered prayer – Ps. 50:15. This will surely encourage others to pray.
5. To weep with them who weep – Rom. 12:15. Those bereaved should be given the fellowship of tears, of sorrow, of suffering.
6. To exhort the backslider to return to God.

### 2. Results of Christian fellowship.

1. We learn to walk in the light – 1 John 1:7.
2. We learn to suffer together – Phil. 3:10.
3. We learn to serve together – Col. 4:7.
4. We learn to comfort one another – 1 Thes. 4:18.
5. We learn to pray for one another – 1 Thes. 5:25.
6. We learn to bear one another's burdens – Gal. 6:2.
7. We learn to rejoice with the joyful – Rom. 12:15. Joy is contagious.
8. We grow and glow for the Lord – 2 Pet. 3:18.

## HOW TO EXHORT

God graciously provided a way of cleansing from the attack of sin. When we confess, 1 John 1:9, He cleanses. But there is a danger of hardening, if sin is not confessed. Heb.3:13 says, "Exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Keeping sin away by exhortation is essential for fellowship.

When the leader notices a shortcoming in a brother, he should be moved with concern, and he should not shrink from exhorting the brother. How should he do it?

1. There must be a gentle spirit – Luke 9:54 – 56; 1 Thes. 2:11; Matt. 12:20.
2. We must speak in all humility – Rom. 12:10; Eph. 4:2.
3. We must use the Word – 2 Tim. 3:16-4:2; Col. 3:15.
4. It should be under the Spirit's guidance – Eph. 5:18- 19.
5. The Scriptural way to correct is privately – Matt. 18:15.

For three years Paul ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. – Act 20:31.

Discussion – What will be the result of exhorting a person harshly? Publicly? How can you prevent this?

## **HOW TO DEAL WITH SIN IN THE CHURCH**

1. The Biblical procedure – Matt. 18:15-17.
  1. Go to the erring one alone to exhort him to repent.
  2. If he resists, take two or three others as witnesses.
  3. If he continues to harden his heart, inform the church.
  4. If he continues to resist, he will be considered a sinning heathen man.
2. Reasons for discipline.
  1. False doctrine – Titus 1:13. The false teaching of cults sometimes deceives believers. This must be guarded against.
  2. Open sin – 1 Tim. 5:20.
  3. Immorality – 1 Cor. 5:1 – 5.
3. How to correct a sinning brother.
  1. In humility – 1 Cor. 10:12.
  2. Insincerity – Matt. 7:3 – 5.
  3. In love – 1 Cor. 13:4.
  4. By Scripture.
  5. By testimony and by experience.

## **DEALING WITH BACKSLIDING**

Often we find someone who was a strong Christian but now is back-sliden. Remember the solemn warning of 1 Cor. 10:12 and Prov. 16:18. No one backslides suddenly. Many little things enter in slowly and undermine the life.

1. The true causes of backsliding:
  1. Failure to pray.
  2. Failure to read the Bible – 2 Tim. 2:15.
  3. Failure to attend church – Heb. 10:25.
  4. Failure to obey the Holy Spirit – Eph. 4:30.
  5. Failure to confess Christ – Matt. 10:33.
  6. Failure to walk in the light – 1 John 1:7.
2. The result of backsliding.
  1. A loss of power, of peace, of joy and happiness.
  2. Murmuring and darkness will cloud the daily pathway.
  3. The loss of rewards, and the person will “suffer loss.”
  4. Some teach that it may even lead to the loss of soul.
3. God’s invitation to return – Jer.3: 22; Hosea 14:4.

The true Christian hates backsliding – Ps. 101:3, “I will set no wicked thing before my eyes.”  
The true object to set the gaze on is Jesus. Heb. 12:2. Paul's goal was Christ – Phil. 3:14.

## **DIVORCE**

What if a home in your church or fellowship is threatened by the plague of divorce? Through all the world divorce represents one of the major problems of family living. It is a tragedy because it undermines the home, the basis of society. It is doubly tragic in the Church, for the Christian home is a sacred institution inaugurated by God and the symbol of Christ’s union with His church. There lies the reason for Satan’s attack upon marriage.

Only misery follows in its wake: broken homes, bruised and broken hearts, homeless children, delinquent youth, loneliness and tears.

There is basically only one Scriptural ground permitting divorce, and that is: fornication. Matt. 19:9. That means: illicit sexual relations, probably habitual, with a third party. Even then, divorce is not commanded, it is permitted only in unusual and extreme cases.

Do all you can to reconcile the partners having difficulties. Here are some suggestions:

1. Clearly instruct that a marriage covenant is for life, “till death breaks it.” Matt. 19:6. In marriage God performs a miracle when two individual become one person. Only God is permitted to break that union by taking one of the partners in death.
2. If there are children, their welfare should be considered, for they suffer most.
3. Point out that divorce is public admission of utter failure.
4. Plead with each partner to get right with the Lord, and then with one another. Confession and repentance with mutual sharing will restore any marriage.

If a reconciliation takes place, let both husband and wife solemnly renew their vow for “better or worse, till death do us part”. Encourage them to continually woo each other; each needs a great deal of affection. Assure them that they must continually ask God for a holy love for each other.

### **COUNSELING ENGAGED COUPLES**

An engagement is the announcement to the community that the couple plans to marry soon – likely within the year. For the couple it is a time of getting better acquainted and ascertaining whether or not they are prepared and really meant for each other. But they must not take liberties one with the other, for they are not married. It is important for future happiness that both be virgins at marriage. Marriage privileges MUST be reserved until after marriage, lest love turn to hate and mutual respect be lost completely. (See 2 Sam. 13:15).

This is the ideal time for the church leader to instruct the couple on establishing a Christian home, referring to Eph. 5 and Titus 2. Let both learn to pray together over every problem and misunderstanding. Encourage them to express their love for each other throughout life, both by act and word.

Marriage is the oldest human institution. Next to salvation, the choice of a partner may be the greatest decision a young person has to make. The spiritual leader must give strong counsel and support in this crucial period.

### **Principles for a happy marriage:**

1. Christian may only marry Christians – 2 Cor. 6:14 – 17.
2. Pray (and fast) much and seek God’s will.
3. Wait to marry until you know the other person thoroughly, both good points and bad points. Hasty marriages are dangerous.
4. Wait for love. Infatuation is not sufficient. Marriage is for life, and it will take godly love to make a happy home.
5. Wait until you are old and mature enough to marry. Marriage is for adults, not children, for it carries heavy responsibilities.
6. Wait until moral problems are settled. Never marry a man to reform him.
7. Wait for the approval of the girl’s parents along with the pastor’s. This is very important.
8. Wait for a measure of financial stability, not wealth, but some security. (Prov. 24: 27).
9. Insist on a public Christian wedding. Never for a moment consider elopement or a secret marriage. Marriage is far too sacred for this.

# Counseling

Counseling seeks to help people deal with the present by resolving conflicts from the past. Many of these conflicts relate to areas of bondage where Satan-induced strongholds have been erected in the mind. People cannot grow and mature because they are not free. The goal of Christian counseling – whether done by a pastor, a professional counselor – or a friend – is to help experience freedom in Christ so they can move on to maturity and fruitfulness in their walk with Him.

In the meantime, allow me to give you five practical tips for the formal or informal counseling you may do within your Christian relationships.

## 1. Help People Identify Root Issues

Psalm 1:1–3, compares the mature Christian to a fruitful tree. The fruitfulness of the branches above the ground is the result of the fertility of the soil and the health of the root system which spreads into it. Ideally, the believer is planted in the fertile soil of his identity in Christ, spreads out his roots of maturity and flourishes with a productive walk.

People usually seek counseling because something is wrong with their daily walk. Instead of being fruitful, their lives are barren. As with a tree, more times than not the surface problem is only the symptom of a deeper issue. Their branches are dry and barren because there is something wrong with the root system and they are not feeding on the nourishment in the soil.

The first goal in counseling is to help the counselee (the person receiving the counsel or advice) identify the root cause for his unfruitful walk. To do this, it is helpful to determine which of his needs are not being met and how he is trying to meet those needs. His comments to you will tip off his unmet needs. For example, if he says, “I feel out of place everywhere; nobody loves me,” he needs acceptance and belonging. If he says, “I’m just a loser; I’m no good,” his needs for identity and worth are going unmet. If he says, “My life is falling apart; I’m depressed,” he needs security and hope. If he says, “I can’t do anything right,” he feels incompetent. If he says, “I can’t stop what I’m doing,” he needs freedom.

In order to expose his root problem, you need to help him work through several critical questions. The questions below, which are by no means exhaustive, should not be asked the counselee directly because he may not know the answers. But they are questions you need to keep in mind as you talk with him.

At the emotional dimension, which is a good place to start because his negative feelings are probably what brought him to you, try to discern: When did he begin to feel this way? What events surrounded that experience? How did he interpret this event? What unfulfilled “goals” do his feelings reveal?

## 2. Encourage Emotional Honesty

Counselees are generally willing to share what has happened to them, but are less willing to share their failure or complicity in the event and downright unwilling to share how they feel about it. Unless you can prompt them to emotional honesty, their chances of resolving their inner conflicts and being set free from the past are low. You cannot be right with God and not be real emotionally.

When a Christian keeps his emotions in the dark by not sharing them honestly, he gives Satan, the prince of darkness, a foothold. God does everything in the light (1 John 1:5-7). When a person honestly admits how he feels in an attempt to resolve his conflicts, he exposes his soul to God’s light. Satan and his demons are like cockroaches. When the light invades their territory, they run for the shadows. If people are going to be free from the past and live in freedom in the present, they must walk in the light. Emotional honesty keeps the devil on the run.

### **3. Share the Truth**

When your fellow Christians come to you for counseling, it's usually because life has dealt them a hard blow which has caused them to think there is something wrong with them. Their perception of God has been distorted; they feel that He can't possibly love them

What a privilege to share with them the truth of their identity in Christ and help them repair their faulty belief system. When you talk to someone who reveals a distorted self-perception, give him some of the Bible Scriptures that state who we are in Christ. Ask him to read through these Scriptures aloud. The transformations you may see in people are incredible – from disbelief to tearful joy. Why? Because when we lovingly share with people who they are in Christ, we are applying the truth of God's Word to the ailing root structure of their lives, being their faulty belief system. Only when they begin to affirm the truth of their identity in Christ can they resolve the root issues of spiritual, rational, emotional, volitional and relational immaturity.

### **4. Call for Response**

Your role in counseling is to share the truth in love and pray that the counselee will choose to accept it. But you cannot choose for him. Christian counseling is dependent on the faith response of the counselee. Our Lord said to those seeking His healing touch: "Your faith has made you well." (Mark 5:34); "Let it be done to you as you have believed." (Matt. 8:13). If those you share with don't respond personally, there isn't much you can do about helping them. The essential response we desire to our counseling is that of repentance, which means changing of the mind and turning towards God. The counselee needs to change his mind about what he will believe about God and himself. Only after he changes his mind and changes his beliefs can he change his walk!

## SUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN LIVING

The Christian, however, has far greater potential for success in life because of the power of positive believing. Belief incorporates the mind but is not limited by it. Faith actually transcends the limitations of the mind and incorporates the real but unseen world. The believer's faith is as valid as its object, which is the living (Christ) and the written Word of God (Bible). With the infinite God of the universe as the object of Christian faith, there is virtually no limit to the spiritual heights that positive believing can take you.

Someone has said that success comes in "cans" and failure in "can'ts". Believing that you can succeed at Christian growth and maturity takes no more effort than believing you cannot succeed. So why not believe that you can walk in faith and in the Spirit, that you can resist the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil, and that you can grow to maturity as a Christian. The following "Twenty Cans of Success," taken from God's Word, will expand your knowledge of our faith-object, the Almighty God. Building your faith by internalizing these truths will lift you from the miry clay of the cannot's to sit with Christ in the heavenlies.

### **Twenty Cans of Success:**

1. Why should I say I can't when the Bible says, I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength (Phil. 4:13)?
2. Why should I lack when I know that, God shall supply all my needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19)?
3. Why should I fear when the Bible says, God has not given me a spirit of fear; but of power, love and a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7)?
4. Why should I lack faith to fulfill my calling knowing that, God has allotted to me a measure of faith (Rom. 12:3)?
5. Why should I be weak when the Bible says that, the Lord is the strength of my life and that I will display strength and take action because I know God (Ps. 27:1; Dan. 11:32)?
6. Why should I allow Satan's supremacy over my life when, He that is in me is greater than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4)?
7. Why should I accept defeat when the Bible says, that God always leads me in triumph (2 Cor. 2:14)?
8. Why should I lack wisdom when, Christ became wisdom to me from God and God gives wisdom to me generously when I ask Him for it (1 Cor. 1: 30; Jas. 1:5)?
9. Why should I be depressed when, I can recall to mind God's loving kindness, compassion and faithfulness and have hope (Lam. 3:21-23)?
10. Why should I worry and fret when, I can cast all my anxiety on Christ who cares for me (1 Pet. 5:7).
11. Why should I ever be in bondage knowing that, there is liberty where the Spirit of the Lord is (Gal 5:1)?
12. Why should I feel condemned when the Bible says, I am not condemned because I am in Christ (Rom. 8:1)?
13. Why should I feel alone when Jesus said, He is with me always and He will never leave me nor forsake me (Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5)?
14. Why should I feel accursed or that I am the victim of bad luck when the Bible says that, Christ redeemed me from the curse of the law that I might receive His Spirit (Gal. 3:13- 14)?



15. Why should I be discontented when I, like Paul, can learn to be content in all my circumstances (Phil. 4:11)?
16. Why should I feel worthless when, Christ became sin on my behalf that I might become the righteousness of God in Him (2 Cor. 5:21)?
17. Why should I have a persecution complex knowing that, nobody can be against me when God is for me (Rom. 8:31)?
18. Why should I be confused when, God is the author of peace and He gives me knowledge through His indwelling Spirit (1 Cor.14: 33; 2:12)?
19. Why should I feel like a failure when, I am a conqueror in all things through Christ (Rom. 8:37)?
20. Why should I let the pressures of life bother me when, I can take courage knowing that Jesus has overcome the world and its tribulations (John 16:33)?

**You Can't Live Beyond What You Believe!!!**

**Personal Worth Appraisal Checklist:**

	Low				High
1. How successful am I? I would be more successful if....	1	2	3	4	5
2. How significant am I? I would be more significant if.....	1	2	3	4	5
3. How fulfilled am I? I would be more fulfilled if.....	1	2	3	4	5
4. How satisfied am I? I would be satisfied if....	1	2	3	4	5
5. How happy am I? I would be happier if.....	1	2	3	4	5
6. How much fun am I having? I would have more fun if....	1	2	3	4	5
7. How secure am I? I would be more secure if.....	1	2	3	4	5
8. How peaceful am I? I would have more peace if.....	1	2	3	4	5

Whatever you believe is the answer to “I would be more successful if....” “I would be more significant if .....", etc. constitutes your present belief system. Assuming that your basic physiological needs (food, shelter, safety, etc.) are met, you will be motivated in life by what you believe will bring you success, significance, fulfillment, satisfaction, happiness, fun, security and peace. And if what you believe about these eight values does not line up with what God says about them, your walk of faith will be off to the same degree that your belief is off.

# LIVING BY FAITH

When you base your self-worth on the success of your own personal plans, your life will be one long, emotional roller coaster ride. And the only way to get off the roller coaster is to walk by faith according to the truth of God's Word!

## **Proper Guidelines Lead to a Proper Walk**

As far as the devil is concerned, the next best thing to keeping you chained in spiritual darkness or having you live as an emotional wreck is confusing your belief system. He lost you in the eternal sense when you became a child of God. But if he can muddy your mind and weaken your faith with partial truths, he can neutralize your effectiveness for God and stunt your growth as a Christian.

We know that God wants you to be successful, fulfilled, happy, etc. But it is imperative for your spiritual maturity that your beliefs about success, significance, fulfillment, satisfaction, happiness, fun, security and peace are anchored in the Scriptures. In this study I want to review each of these belief areas from the foundation of God's Word. Compare these eight descriptions with the eight statements you wrote on the Personal Worth Appraisal Checklist above. These descriptions may help you make some vital adjustments that will steer you back to the middle of the fairway.

### **1. Success. Key Concept: Goals**

A few years ago a young woman came to spend a Saturday with me in counseling. Mrs. A. was a Christian, but her life was in a mess. She was hearing demonic voices and was plagued with numerous problems. Mrs. A told me that she had taken the first part of 3 John 2 as a personal promise: "Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health." "If God has promised prosperity, success and health to me, why is my life all screwed up?" She complained. "There's a more to that verse," I said. "Finish reading it." "Just as your soul prospers," she continued. I asked her pointedly, "How is your soul doing?" Mrs. A then told me her sad story. She had submitted to three abortions as a result of illicit sexual affairs and she was presently living with another man outside of marriage. But Mrs. A clung desperately to a misquoted promise and her life was out of bounds as a result. She lacked success in her life because she held wrong beliefs about her goals in life.

Success is directly related to goals. If you ranked yourself low in the success category, you are probably having difficulty reaching your goals in life. And if you aren't reaching your goals, it's probably because you're working on the wrong goals.

A good summary of God's goal for us is found in 2 Peter 1:3-10:

"His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, Christian love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. Therefore, brethren be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble."

Notice that God's goal begins with who you are on the basis of what God has already done for you. He has given you "life and godliness"; justification has already happened and sanctification has already begun. You are already a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped – that's past tense – sin's corruption. What a great start!

Your primary job now is to diligently adopt God's character goals – moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and Christian love – and apply them to

your life. Focusing on God's goals will lead to ultimate success: success in God's terms. Peter promises that, as these qualities increase in your life through practice, you will be useful and fruitful, and you will never stumble. That's success!

Notice also that there is no mention in this list of talents, intelligence or gifts that are not equally distributed to all believers. Your self-worth isn't determined by those qualities. Your self-worth is based on your identity in Christ and your growth in His character, both of which are equally accessible to every Christian. Those Christians who are not committed to God's goals for character are sad stories of failure like Mrs. A. According to Peter, they have forgotten who they are. They are out of touch with their true identity and purpose in Christ.

**If you want to increase your significance, focus  
your energies on significant activities : those  
which will remain for eternity.**

Another helpful perspective of success is seen in Joshua's experience of leading Israel into the Promised Land. God said to him: "Be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, 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 success." (Josh 1:7-8).

Was Joshua's success dependent on other people or circumstances? Absolutely not. Success hinged entirely on his obedience. If Joshua believed what God said and did what God told him to do, he would succeed. Sounds simple enough, but God immediately put Joshua to the test by giving him a rather unorthodox battle plan for conquering Jericho. Marching around the city for seven days, then blowing a horn, wasn't exactly an approved military tactic in Joshua's day!

But Joshua's success was conditional on obeying God regardless of how foolish His plan seemed. As Joshua 6 records, Joshua's success had nothing to do with the circumstances of the battle and everything to do with obedience. That should be your pattern too. Accept God's goal for your life and follow it obediently. You'll soar straight down the center of the fairway to success.

## **2. Significance. Key Concept: Time**

Significance is a time issue. What is forgotten in time is of little significance. What is remembered for eternity is of great significance. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "If any man's work...remains, he shall receive a reward." (I Cor. 3:14). He instructed Timothy: "Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness... since it holds a promise for the present life and also for the life to come." (1 Tim. 4:7-8). If you want to increase your significance, focus your energies on significant activities: those which will remain for eternity.

Mr. B. was a pastor of a small church who attended one of my classes. He was in his mid-30s and married when he found out he had cancer. The doctors gave him less than two years to live. One day Mr. B. came to talk to me. "Ten years ago somebody gave a prophecy about me in church", he began. "They said I was going to do a great work for God. I've led a few hundred people to Christ, but I haven't had a great work for God yet. Do you think God is going to heal me so the prophecy can be fulfilled. My mouth dropped open in shock. "You've led a few hundred people to Christ and don't think you have accomplished a great work for God? Mr. B., I know some big name pastors in large churches who can't make that claim. I know some great theologians who have probably never led anyone to Christ. If a few hundred people are believers today because of you, and they have influenced who knows how many other people for Christ, I'd call that a great work for God." (Mr. B. is now with the Lord, having completed his significant ministry of reaching hundreds of Christ.)

One of the few heroes of my life is Dr. Billy Graham. He's been shot at from the right and from the left, but he has remained true to his calling to preach the Gospel. One day a number of years ago I happened to see him walking through the lobby of the Hotel. I had never met him before and I couldn't pass by the opportunity. I caught up with him and said, "I wanted to meet you, Dr.

Graham, even though I'm just a lowly pastor." He warmly returned my greeting, then brought me up short by saying, "There's no such thing as a lowly pastor." He was right. There's no such thing as a lowly pastor or a lowly child of God. We are in the significant business of collecting treasures for eternity! What we do and say for Christ, no matter how insignificant it seems in this world, will last forever.

### **3. Fulfillment. Key Concept: Role Preference**

For the Christian, true fulfillment in life can be summarized by the popular sticker slogan: "Bloom where you're planted." Peter said it this way: "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another." (1 Pet. 4:10). Your greatest fulfillment in life will come when you discover your unique gift and abilities and use them to edify others and glorify the Lord.

God allowed me to understand this vital principle before entering the ministry. I knew God wanted me to be an ambassador for Him at my work-place, so I started a breakfast Bible study in the office. My announcement about the Bible study had only been posted in our office about an hour before someone pulled it off the wall and brought it to me. "You can't bring Jesus in here," he objected. "I can't do otherwise," I said. "Every day I walk in here Jesus comes in with me." He was not impressed with my response! One of the men who found Christ through the Bible study became a flaming evangelist. He passed out tracts everywhere he went. When I left the company to enter the ministry, he took over the Bible study. A few months later I went back to visit my friends in the Bible study. "Do you remember the opposing fellow?" the leader asked. "Sure, I remember him," I said, recalling his brash opposition to our Bible study. "Well, he got sick and almost died. I went to the hospital and visited him every night. Finally I led him to Christ." I was ecstatic (greatly excited) at the realization that I had become a spiritual grandparent. The sense of fulfillment was exhilarating. And it all happened because I started a simple little Bible study where I worked in order to do what Paul said: "Do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry." (2 Tim. 4:5).

God has a unique place of ministry for each of us. It is important to your sense of fulfillment that you realize exactly where that place is. The key is to discover the roles you occupy in which you cannot be replaced, and then decide to be what God wants you to be in those roles. For example, of the five billion people in the world, you are the only one who occupies your unique role as husband, father, wife, mother, parent or child in your home. God has specially planted you to serve Him by serving your family in that environment.

Further more, you are the only who knows your neighbours as you do. You occupy a unique role as an ambassador for Christ where you work. These are your work fields and you are the worker God has appointed for the harvest there. Your greatest fulfillment will come from accepting and occupying God's unique place for you to the best of your ability. Sadly, so many miss their calling in life by looking for fulfillment in the world. Find your fulfillment in the kingdom of God by deciding to be an ambassador for Christ in the world! (2 Cor. 5:20).

### **4. Satisfaction. Key Concept: Quality**

Satisfaction comes from living righteously and seeking to raise the level of quality in the relationships, services and products you are involved with. Your goal should be to duplicate Paul's statement of personal satisfaction in what God called him to do: "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course, I have kept the faith." (2 Tim. 4:7).

What causes you to become dissatisfied with someone or something? It's usually because the quality of the relationship, service or product has diminished. I often ask people when they become dissatisfied. Inevitably they identify the time when the quality of a relationship, the service tendered or the product produced diminished.

Satisfaction is a quality issue, not a quantity issue. You will achieve greater satisfaction from doing a few things well than from doing many things in a haphazard or hasty manner. The key to personal satisfaction is not in broadening your responsibilities but in deepening them through a commitment to quality.

The same is true in relationships. If you are dissatisfied in your relationships, perhaps you have spread yourself too thin. Solomon wrote: "A man of many friends comes to ruin, but there is a

friend who sticks closer than a brother.” (Prov. 18:24). It may be nice to know a lot of people on the surface, but you need a few real good friends who are committed to a quality relationship with each other.

That’s what our Lord modeled for us. He taught the multitudes and He equipped 70 for ministry, but He invested most of His time in the 12 disciples. Out of those 12, He selected three – Peter, James and John – to be with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, on the Mount of Olives and in the Garden of Gethsemane. And while suffering on the cross, Jesus committed to John, perhaps His closest friend the care of His mother. That’s a quality relationship, and we all need the satisfaction which quality relationships bring.

### **5. Happiness. Key Concept: Wanting What You Have**

The world’s concept of happiness is having what we want. Popular magazines tell us we need a flashier car, a sexier cologne or any number of items that are better, faster or easier to use than what we already have. We watch the commercials and read the ads, and we become eager to get all the latest fashions, fads and fancies. We’re not really happy until we get what we want.

God’s concept of happiness is summed up in the simple proverb: “Happy is the man who wants what he has.” As long as you are focusing on what you don’t have, you’ll be unhappy. But when you begin to appreciate what you already have, you’ll be happy all your life! Paul wrote to Timothy: “Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.” (1 Tim. 6:6-8).

Actually, you already have everything you need to make you happy forever. You have Christ. You have eternal life. You are loved by a heavenly Father who has promised to supply all your needs. No wonder the Bible repeatedly commands us to be thankful (1 Thess. 5:18). If you really want to be happy, learn to be thankful for what you have, not greedy for what you don’t have.

### **6. Fun. Key Concept: Uninhibited Spontaneity.**

How much fun are you having as a Christian? Some people think fun is a trip to an entertainment park. Yes, there’s a lot of fun to be had at these, but a day out there leaves you tired and purse empty.

Fun is uninhibited spontaneity. Chances are the last time you really had fun it was a spontaneous, spur-of-the-moment activity or event. Big events and expensive outings can be fun, but sometimes we plan and spend all the fun right out of them. I’ve often had a lot more fun in a spontaneous pillow fight with my children.

The secret to enjoying uninhibited spontaneity as a Christian is in removing the inhibitors. Chief among the inhibitors of Christian fun is our fleshly tendency to keep up appearances. We don’t want to look out of place or be thought less of by others, so we stifle our spontaneity with a form of false decorum. That’s people pleasing, and Paul suggested that anybody who lives to please people isn’t serving Christ. (Gal. 1:10).

I really like the uninhibited joy I see in King David, who knew the joy of being in the presence of the Lord. He was so happy about returning the ark to Jerusalem that he leaped and danced before the Lord in celebration. He knew there was joy in the presence of God. But Michal, his watching wife, thought his behavior was unbecoming to the king, and she told him so in no uncertain terms. David said, “I’m dancing to please the Lord, not you or anybody else. And I’m going to keep dancing whether you like it or not.” (my paraphrase of 2 Sam. 6:21). As it turned out, Michal was the person God judged in the incident, not David (2 Sam. 6:23). You’ll find a lot more fun pleasing the Lord than in trying to please people.

### **7. Security. Key Concept: Relating to the Eternal**

The key to experiencing security in your life is to depend on things that are eternal, not temporal. Christians often feel insecure because they are depending on temporal things over which they have no control. For example, some people rely on their money for material security instead of relying on God’s promise to supply all our needs. Where was the safest place to keep money a few years

ago? The saving and loan institutions. But many have failed and the false security people had placed in them was shattered.

Security only comes from relating to that which is anchored in eternity. Jesus said that we have eternal life and that no one can snatch us out of His hand (John 10:27-29). Paul declared that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ (Rom. 8:35-39) and that we are sealed in Him by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:13-14). How much more secure can you get than that? When you trust in temporal values and relationships, you are always subject to insecurity because these things are subject to failure. The greatest sense of security you can experience is the by-product of taking a firm grip on values and relationships which will endure as long as God Himself.

## **8. Peace. Key Concept: Resolving the Internal Conflict**

Peace on earth, good will toward men; that's what everybody wants. But nobody can guarantee external peace because nobody can control other people or circumstances. Nations sign and break peace treaties with frightening regularity. One group of peace marchers confronts another group of marchers and they end up beating each other over the head with their placards. Couples lament that there would be peace in their home, "If only he or she would shape up."

The key to experiencing peace is in understanding that it is primarily an internal issue. Peace with God is something you already have (Rom. 5:1). It's not something you strive for; it's something you received when you were born again. The rebellion against God is over and your inner world is eternally at peace with God.

The peace of God is something you need to appropriate daily in your world in the midst of the storms which rage in the external world (John 14:27). There are a lot of things that can disrupt your external world because you can't control all your circumstances and relationships. But you can control the inner world of your thoughts, emotions and will by allowing the peace of God to rule in your heart on a daily basis. There may be chaos all around you, but God is bigger than any storm. I keep a little plaque on my desk which reminds me: "Nothing will happen to me today that God and I cannot resolve." Personal worship, prayer and interaction with God's Word provide access to the peace of God (Col. 3:15-16; Phil. 4:6-7).

Often when I share these eight critical points of the Christian's belief system, I hear people say, "Well, that's true, but I still believe ...." Which will they live by: What they acknowledge as true or what they "still believe"? Always the latter – always! What we believe determines how we walk. It's like a golfer saying, "I know I should change my grip to keep from hooking the ball." But until he actually attempts to correct his grip, he doesn't really believe what he is saying. Actions will always reveal what people really believe. . . . . .

As you have examined your walk of faith by comparing your belief system in these eight categories, have you discovered some reasons why your actions have been off the mark? Are you ready to change your belief system in order to put your walk of faith back in the center of the fairway?

# **THE BALANCED CHRISTIAN -HIS LIFE, FAITH AND PERSPECTIVE**

One of the greatest needs in Christian life and ministry is BALANCE. "Truth is like a bird; it cannot fly on one wing!" Truth is parallel. The whole truth does not lie in "It-is-written", but "It-is-written and it-is-written-again" (See Matt. Chapters 6 and 7). The second text must be placed over against the first to balance it and give it symmetry. Error need not be untruth. Many times it is partial truth or one aspect of the truth. Ministries often have various emphasis but emphasis should not lead to eccentricity. We must not emphasize one truth at the cost of the other. Eccentricity has been the root cause for many cults. Eccentricity or extremism leads to seclusion and superiority complex. The victim begins to think he or his group has a revelation of a particular truth which no one else has.

Jesus was a very balanced person as we meet him in the Gospels. For example, look at His growth in Luke 2:52. He grew physically—"in stature" as well as intellectually—"in wisdom" and spiritually—"in favour with God" as well as socially—"in favour with men." He is the Son of God as well as the Son of man.

## **Here are ten vital areas where we need balance:**

### **1. Love of God and Wrath of God**

Someone said, "God is too loving to send anyone to eternal hell." The other person answered, "At the same time God is too holy to allow a sinner into Heaven!" For a broken and repentant sinner the love of God must be presented. For a stiff-necked person the wrath of God must be stressed. Apostle Paul balances this twin characters of God beautifully in Romans 2:22.

"Consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you goodness, if you continue in His goodness." Jesus spoke about the love of God in John 3:16, but about condemnation in verse 18. He preached both about Heaven and Hell. Even in His Great Commission He included both. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16). There are simply too many pictures portraying Christ as the gentle Shepherd with a rod of comfort. But the picture of Christ driving out traders from the temple with a whip is uncommon. When the wrath and holiness of God are not sufficiently stressed there will be no fear of God. This explains why there are all kinds of atrocities in churches and ministries. The love of God and the wrath of God are inseparable on the Cross. There God manifested His maximum love and maximum wrath. A minister who speaks only about the love of God will produce superficial believers and the one who speaks only about the wrath of God sad Christians.

### **2. Old Testament and New Testament**

Both the Testaments together make the Word of God. The two Testaments are the two lips of God. The New Testament is concealed in the Old and the Old is revealed in the New. Jesus said, "Every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things new and old." (Matt. 13:52). All the doctrines in the Bible have their origin in the Old Testament but they are fully developed in the New. That's why Paul wrote to Timothy, "All Scripture is profitable." (2 Tim. 3:16). It is true that the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament are no more binding on us but we have rich lessons from the OT examples. Referring to this Paul wrote, "Now all these things happened to them (Israelites) as example, and they were written for our admission, on whom the ends of the ages have come." (1 Cor. 10:11). At the same time we should understand the extent of application of any OT passage. Otherwise legalism will set in. We must, "rightly divide the Word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). Reading through both the Testaments once a year or once in two years is a healthy practice. A basic study of Dispensation is a must, but we should avoid extreme dispensationalism.

### 3. Life and Ministry

Life first ministry next – is a good slogan. But both are equally important. John the Baptist was a “burning and shining” lamp (John 5:35). “Burning” is what happens within a person and “shining” is what goes to others from a person. One is life and the other is ministry. We should both live the Gospel and proclaim the Gospel. Being a witness means both being and speaking, life an lip. One is not complete without the other. Sanctification that does not lead to service has missed the whole purpose. “Sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” (2 Tim. 2:21). The disciples had not been perfected when Jesus commissioned them to go. They had unbelief, disunity, inquisitiveness into other people’s matters and all that kind.

They had to wait only for anointing and not for perfecting. This does not mean we should overlook sin in the ministry. No, but we should not hesitate to minister for the Lord saying we are weak and imperfect. Please go through the Bible to find one perfect minister. God is our Potter and we are just clay and we are still in the making, until Christ comes. If we miss this truth, we will go about wearing the perfectionist glasses and every active minister of the Gospel will look an awful sinner to us! At the same time, neglecting one’s life and running about with ministry will have disastrous results. Both ourselves and the Kingdom of God will suffer heavy loss. Paul rightly said, “I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” (1 Cor. 9: 27).

### 4. Fruit and Gifts

Christians can be broadly classified as charismatic and non-charismatic. The first group emphasizes the gifts of the Spirit and the other the fruit of the Spirit. But both are important and necessary. There was immorality and carnality in the Corinthian Church but they came short of no gift (1 Cor. 1:7; 3:3; 5:1). Paul did not immediately decry their gifts. On the other hand he said, “Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts.” (1 Cor. 14:1). When Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit, He did both deeds of love and acts of power (Acts 10: 38). Spiritual gifts are not a barometer of one’s spirituality! It is possible to speak in tongues or prophesy or perform miracles without love (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Therefore those through whom God manifests His gifts must diligently search their lives and walk in all godliness. Otherwise the Name of the Lord will be blasphemed. God does not quickly withdraw His gifts when we go astray. But this should not be mistaken as God’s approval or overlooking of sin in our life. He is patient. “Do you despise the riches of His ....longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4). Again, the observation of misuse of gifts has driven many to turn totally against gifts. But the remedy for misuse is not non-use, but proper use. “Let all things be done – decently and in order”. (1 Cor. 14:40). Galatians 5:22-23 speaks of the virtues of the Spirit-filled life and I Corinthians 12:7-10 of the gifts of the Spirit. Jesus said every tree shall be known by its “fruit.” Here the word “fruit” means outcome or benefit, which included both virtues and the gifts.

### 5. Bible meditation and Prayer

We speak to God in prayer and He speaks to us through His Word. A balanced devotional life must thus be a conversational relationship with God. In the whole armour passage in Ephesians, the Word of God is presented as the Sword of the Spirit and prayer as the sharpener of all the armour (Eph. 6:13-20). Both are equally important. People who spend a lot of time in prayer but neglect Bible meditation are prone to deception. Several false and funny doctrines have followed forty days of fasting by some leader or preacher. What was wrong? While fasting the man didn’t spend sufficient time with the Word and so he was caught up in some deception in the spirit world. When the devil suggested to Jesus to turn the stones into bread to satisfy His hunger, Jesus said: “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God!” (Matt. 4:4). In other words, “During my days of fasting I was feasting on the Word of God!” At the same time anyone who neglects prayer but spends all his time in mere Bible study will be puffed up ending in spiritual dryness. “Knowledge puffs up” (1 Cor. 8:1). The purpose of Bible study is to know God and worship Him duly. (Ps.



138:2). The meditation of the Word enhances our prayer and worship and vice versa. Extra-Biblical revelations are dangerous and so kneeling before God in prayer and worship with our Bibles open is the safest devotional pattern.

## **6. Prosperity and Adversity.**

Sometime ago it was thought the deeper the poverty the greater the spirituality. Now the pendulum has swung to the other side! Radio, television, magazines and pulpits flood us with the prosperity message. Some prosperity preachers have gone to the extent to say: "If you are saved you must be healed and prosperous!" Well, both the extremes are wrong. God balances the life of His children with times of prosperity as well as adversity. No man of God in the Scripture was otherwise. But in all situations they learnt to be content and praising the Almighty. Paul said, "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everyone and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!" (Phil. 4:12-13). Faith is not to be thought as a magic power to get whatever we need, or living in want and suffering an indication of poor faith. Hebrews chapter 11 strikes a good balance. By faith they "received" as well as "offered." "By faith they "prospered" as well as "suffered." Please read the entire chapter. "Night and day" continue to be God's original plan (Gen. 1:5). Job had a balanced theology: "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity? In all this Job did not sin with his lips." (Job 2:10). Hear what Solomon the wise said, "In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider; Surely God had appointed the one as well as the other!" (Eccl. 7:14).

## **7. Discipline and Liberty**

During a particular period in Israel's history, "there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (Judge 17:6). God has placed leaders in the New Testament Church for the growth and well being of the saints. "Obey those who rule over you, and be sensitive, for they watch out for your souls." (Heb. 13:17). At the same time leadership should not become dictatorship. Paul was right when he wrote, "Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand." (2 Cor. 1:24). In the New Testament church there is neither democracy nor dictatorship. It is a joyful blend of accountability and personal freedom. People don't grow or blossom when there is not freedom. Some Christians are afraid to do anything without the permission of their pastor or leader. The New Testament does not teach this kind of leadership. Children will grow wholesome only when there is both discipline and freedom at home. The Boy Jesus was submissive to His parents and at the same time free to be about His Father's business (Luke 2: 49-52). The spiritual life of many believers is stunted and they suffocate because of their "popish" (singular controlling) leaders.

"Stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free.....For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." (Gal. 5:1,13).

## **8. Local Church and Frontier Mission**

God has placed Evangelists and Pastors side by side in the ministers' list of Ephesians 4:11. But there is always a tension and friction between these two ministers. The Evangelist's slogan is "Go!" and that of the Pastor is "Come!" One is a tensile force and the other compressive. Both must work in cooperation for smooth functioning. When we fold the hand the biceps contracts and the triceps stretches, and when we stretch the hand it vice-versa. What a beautiful picture of operation in cooperation! This is how the members in the Body of Christian must function. The mission of the church is missions, and the mission of the missions is church planting. One exists for the other. They are not competitive but complementary. The mobile ministers, namely Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists, are mentioned first and then follow the residential ministers, Pastors and Teachers. What does this mean? The evangelist is a quarryman and unless he blasts the rocks and brings in the boulders the pastor will not have raw

material to work with – for his fine chiseling work! Paul was a frontier minister and his team was an outreach organization. They were supported by the local churches (Phil. 4:15-16). Pastors should not be afraid that their income will decrease if people are exposed to missions. This is simply an unfounded fear. God loves and blesses the missionary-minded churches. Also missions should not think of themselves as independent bodies but an extension of the local churches. Jesus predicted two things: “I will build My Church” and “The Gospel shall be preached to all Nations!”

## 9. **Evangelism and Social Concern**

Jesus fed the people both spiritually and physically. He forgave their sins and healed their diseases. But the order is important. First, “preach the Gospel,” and then, “heal the sick” (Matt. 10:7-8). The Gospel is both spiritual and social. It is “glory to God” and “good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). The Cross means: reconciliation with God and with man.

Reconciliation includes love, concern and care. Apostle James wrote, “Faith without works is dead.” (Jas. 2:17). By works he meant acts of charity. “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them: “Depart in peace.” (Evangelistic blessing), be warmed and filled, but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?” (Jas. 2:15-16). While the Apostles in Jerusalem sent forth Paul and Barnabas as missionaries to the Gentiles, they told them to “remember the poor” (Gal. 2:9-10). We will be judged not only for the sins of commission but also the sins of omission. The sin of omission is generally what we fail to do to the needy and suffering. (Matt. 25:41-46). A leper can go to heaven but not a sinner. Therefore the priority is always preaching the gospel. But the other should not be neglected. In the words of Jesus, “These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” (Matt. 23: 23). Medical evangelism and literacy evangelism should not be decried by direct or pulpit evangelism. All should function in harmony with mutual recognition and appreciation.

## 10. **Present and Future**

There are some who insist on the fulfillment of several eschatological promises right today. Others are content to be hoping for a glorious future at the Second Coming of Christ. The first group calls the second as futurists. I believe most of the New Testament promises have both a present and a future fulfillment. For example, take the subject of holiness. We can be “purified” today but will be “perfected” only at the coming of the Lord (1 John 3:2-3; 1 Thes. 5:23). Similarly the question of healing. We can enjoy the benefits of Calvary only to a certain extent in our bodies today. But the full benefit will be enjoyed at the redemption of our body which we await (Rom. 8:23). Disease or death is not eradicated today. The “last” enemy that will be destroyed is death (1 Cor. 15:26). Then the day will dawn when there will be, “no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying” (Rev. 21:4). Another subject of interest is the kingdom of God. The spiritual kingdom is already “within us,” but the literal one is still in the future (Luke 17:21; Rom. 14:17; Matt. 6:10; 2 Tim 2:12). This balanced understanding of the present and future fulfillment of the Scripture prophecies and promises will keep us from many doctrine errors prevalent today.

Here’s a promise of God for a balanced Christian life. Is. 30:21, “Your ears shall, hear a word behind you, saying. This is the way, walk in it, whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left!”

# REIGNING IN LIFE THROUGH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

Christ's purpose in coming to earth was to deliver us from Satan's bondage, and restore us to rulership over this earth. God always intended that Adam's descendants would fulfill this role. He said "and let 'them' have dominion," (Gen. 1:26) referring not only to Adam and Eve, but to their descendants also. If Adam and Eve had not fallen, they and all their descendants would have exercised rule and authority over the earth forever under the government of God.

Because of Adam's transgression God had to postpone His plan, but He never abandoned it. He gave Israel opportunity to take over this role. "Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall you be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine: and you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak unto the children of Israel." (Ex 19:5-6). Tragically they failed to walk in obedience too. They also forfeited their right to reign. All the earth is Mine, God said. I can deed it to you. I can make you a kingdom of priests to rule this world in My Name. But they broke His covenant and failed the test.

Finally God determined to fulfill His purpose through the Church.

## **The mission of Christ was:**

- To overthrow the rule of Satan.
- To deliver mankind from his bondage.
- To recruit a new company of people.
- Break the mastery of Satan over their lives.
- Give them authority over all Satan's works.
- Teach them to reign in life through their new authority.
- To ultimately establish the rule of God once more on the earth.

This is the eternal purpose of God for earth and for mankind. It was conceived in God's mind in ages past. Long before the foundation of earth in its present form. It will always be His intention and He will never allow it to be frustrated.

## **JESUS REIGNED IN LIFE**

The life of Jesus Christ was one of constant victory. He truly reigned over life, triumphant in every area.

### **A. HE REIGNED OVER SATAN.**

Immediately after Christ was baptized in Jordan and filled with the Spirit, He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13). There He fasted for forty days and nights and became very weak physically. Satan took advantage of His weakened condition to test and try Him. If ever there would be a moment when it might be possible to successfully trap Christ, this was it. He was hungry, thirsty, tired and depleted. Satan came against Him with every device he knew. He bombarded Christ with powerful temptations, but every time Jesus defeated him. He overcame him with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. The very same weapon that is at our disposal, with which we also are able to successfully overcome every attack of Satan upon our life.

### **B. HE REIGNED OVER TEMPTATION.**

The issue of whether or not it was possible for Christ to sin has been debated for centuries. It is not our purpose to enter that debate here. Nevertheless, we must state that the temptation of Christ was very real. He was really tested. Otherwise the whole episode in the wilderness (Matt. 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13) was a farce. The great comfort we have is to know that Christ, "through tempted in all points, even as we are," (Heb. 4:15) remained untainted by sin. Perhaps even more wonderful is the knowledge that, since He was tempted in all areas as we are, we have a High Priest who is acquainted with the reality of our testings. (Heb. 4:15). "For in that He Himself has suffered being

tempted, He is able to help those that are tempted.” (Heb. 2:18). There were obviously many more times in His life when Christ was sorely tempted and tested, but He came through them all triumphantly.

### **C. HE REIGNED OVER SIN.**

The Christ who came to this earth, was the Lamb of God, spotless and blameless, a perfect fulfillment of the Passover Lamb. Though subjected to a lifetime of testing which touched every area of His life, “Yet was He without sin.” (Heb. 4:15). When He approached the conclusion of His earthly life He said, “The prince of this world comes, but has nothing in me.” (John 14:30). Despite every attack Satan had made on Christ, he had not been able to establish a breach-head. He had failed to discover a loop-hole, a breach in Christ’s defenses through which he could gain a victory. Christ was gloriously victorious over every temptation, never once falling into any sin, in thought, word or deed.

### **D. HE REIGNED OVER DEMONS.**

Every time Jesus cast out a demon, He inflicted a defeat on Satan’s kingdom. Satan controlled his kingdom through the army of demon spirits under his control. They are arrayed as an army in ranks of authority. (Eph. 6:12). They are obedient and subservient to him, under his command and performing his will. In order to accomplish Satan’s will on earth they must work through human beings, so they seek to possess people. Jesus was frequently confronted by persons oppressed or possessed by them.

Whenever this happened He manifested the superior authority of the Kingdom of God over the lesser power of Satan’s kingdom. He demonstrated His supreme authority over all the powers of Satan by exercising dominion over Satan’s demonic subjects. When confronted by demon controlled persons, Jesus never failed in one instance to take authority over the demons and command them to depart. He “went about doing good and healing ALL who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.” (Acts 10:38).

### **E. CHRIST REIGNED OVER NATURE.**

Adam forfeited his God-given authority to rule over nature, but when the second Adam came, He (Christ) resumed that authority again. He exercised authority over the raging storm and turbulent sea, when He commanded the element, “Peace, be still.” Even the wind and the waves obeyed His voice (Mark 4:39).

He demonstrated His reign over nature when He turned the water into wine. (John 2:1-11). Someone has said, “The water blushed when it saw the face of its Maker.” The feeding of the multitude with just a handful of loaves and fishes was just another demonstration of His authority over natural elements.

### **F. HE REIGNED OVER CIRCUMSTANCES.**

A beautiful example of this ability is found in the story told in Luke 4:28-30. Having spoken in the synagogue at Nazareth, Jesus was suddenly confronted by His listeners who were now ‘filled with wrath’. Imagine this angry crowd converging upon Him from every angle, determined to vent their anger upon Him. They rose up as one man, to thrust Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill, intending to cast Him headlong over it. Then we read, “But He, passing through the midst of them, went His way.” Consider the implication of that. The angry mob was bearing down on Him determined to destroy Him and He calmly made His way through the middle of the crowd and went on His way. Such glorious control over this circumstance which threatened to destroy Him! A similar situation occurred in John 8:57-59. In reply to the question “How old are you,” Jesus said “Before Abraham was, I am.” This time the mob took up stones to injure Him, but again He ‘made His way through the midst of them, and so passed by.’

## **G. HE REIGNED OVER SICKNESS**

I am sure that Satan tried many times to afflict Christ with sickness, but he was never able to do so. Christ was immune to such attacks, for the law of sin and death was not operative in Him. It is only the “soul that sins, that shall die”, and Christ was wholly without sin. Therefore He was master over sickness in His own life. But He was also its master when it appeared in the lives of others.

Approximately two-thirds of Christ's ministry seems to be concerned with healing the sick and casting out devils. In doing this He not only alleviated the suffering of those persons, revealing His rule and authority over sickness, but He also liberated those captives from the power of Satan, destroying the devil's rule over them. It is said of Jesus, He “healed all manner of sickness and disease.” (Matt 4:23). His mastery and reign over sickness was absolute.

## **CALAVARY WAS HIS GREATEST VICTORY**

Just as Samson achieved his greatest victory at the end of his life when he destroyed the Temple and killed 3,000 Philistines, so Jesus also achieved His greatest triumph in what appeared to be the end of His life. Calvary was God's secret weapon. This was His greatest strategy. Jesus would take the death penalty passed upon all mankind, pay it in full, and then rise triumphant over death and the grave since neither had any legal power over His sinless life.

Christ's death and resurrection broke the lordship of Satan. From that moment Satan was ruined. Since that time he has been a pathetic defeated figure, spoiled and robbed of all his former power. Christ has triumphed over him through His cross. (Col. 2:14-15). He has made an open spectacle of him, revealing the extent of his defeat to all the universe. All that Satan has left now are tricks and devices. (II Cor. 2:11). He must resort to deception, he has to work in the darkness, in order to have any influence at all. If he came to the light his weakness and inability would be clearly evident to all and nobody would be influenced by him. This is precisely why we Christians must always walk in the light, as Christ is in the light. (1 John 1:7). Satan hates the light and when we walk in it he will leave us alone.

## **WE ARE MEANT TO REIGN IN LIFE TOO**

The victories that Christ won were not for Himself, He won them for us. In the mind of God, we were already identified with Christ. When Jesus inflicted those great defeats on Satan, we were in Christ. His victories are ours too. “They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ!” (Rom. 5:17). Notice that our reigning is not restricted to reigning with Christ in the millennium. It is not a reign in the distant future, it is a dominion to be exercised in this life. The exercise of such authority and rule in this life prepares and equips us for our future rule.

## **WE ARE TO REIGN OVER SIN**

God has given the new creation dominion over sin. Dominion is: the power to conquer, defeat, subjugate and rule over something. This is exactly what He has given us over sin. This is why Paul says, “For sin shall not have dominion over you”. (Rom. 6:14). Sin shall not rule you, but you shall rule sin. “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lust thereof.” (Rom. 6:12). Sin is not to reign over us. We are to reign over sin. That is our right and privilege. Not only has our past been forgiven, God has given us the gift of righteousness to rule over sin. We are more than conquerors. The law of sin and death is still active in the world but the spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets us free from it and causes us to triumph over it! (Rom. 8:2).

## **WE ARE TO REIGN OVER DEMONS**

Just as Christ exercised authority over demonic forces and all the principalities and powers of Satan, we have been given authority over them too. Once they were our masters, but now we are their masters. “Greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.” (1 John 4:4). “Behold I give you authority, over all the power of the enemy, nothing shall be any means hurt you.” (Luke 10:19). “In my Name you shall cast our devils.” (Mark 16:17).

## **WE CAN REIGN OVER CIRCUMSTANCES**

We Christians are not victims of fate. We are not at the mercy of circumstances. Our lives are not ruled by chance; they are ordained by God. Satan would seek to hinder the fulfillment of God's purposes for us, but ultimately he has not the power to do so. Paul was often temporarily hindered from fulfilling God's purposes in his life, but he ultimately triumphed over Satan's devices and schemes. Life is not always an easy pathway.

Many times there are problems and hindrances which would threaten to discourage and hinder us. But the power of the King within us is greater than every power that can ever oppose us. God wants you to rise up in faith and begin to take authority over your circumstances. The problems which confront you are opportunities for you to exercise your God given authority to rule. Every time you conquer a situation you enhance your ability to rule. The whole of life is a challenge. Do not sit down in defeat and despair. Do not allow the enemy to whisper, "life is too much for you, you will never make it." Remember that you are "MORE than conquerors, through Him that loved you and gave Himself for you." (Rom. 8:37). Rise up and reign, in Jesus Name!

## **WE CAN REIGN OVER SICKNESS**

The incidence of sickness is so high today that many people, including Christians, resign themselves to the inevitability of it. This is a level far beneath where God wants you to live. Do not capitulate to sickness. Don't surrender to the inevitability of it saying, "well I suppose everyone has to be sick sometime." Christ has borne your sickness, therefore you do not have to bear it. Take a position of positive faith. Make a stand against the threatened invasion of some sicknesses. Rebuke it in the Name of Jesus. Accept the challenge to rule over it instead of allowing it to rule over you.

## **WE ARE THE HEAD, AND NOT THE TAIL**

"And the Lord shall make you the head, and not the tail; and you shall be above only and not beneath; if that you hear unto the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day, to observe and to do them." (Deut. 28:13). This is an interesting Biblical phrase which means that God has ordained His people to be victorious, not defeated!

In order to enjoy this victory, you must hear the Word of the Lord and walk in it, to do His commandments. The Word of God declares: "The Lord is the strength of my life." (Ps. 27:1). "Greater is He that is in me, than he that is in the world." (1 John 4: 4). "God always causes me to triumph in Christ Jesus." (II Cor. 2:14). You see, God has made you the head and not the tail. You are fashioned for victory and not defeat. You are ordained to rule, not be ruled over.

## **HOW WE REIGN IN LIFE**

**Our reign is established by certain principles to which we must adhere. The Bible sets forth those principles clearly so that we can walk in them. We reign in life through:**

### **# THE WORD OF GOD**

A right attitude towards God's Word is the key to our reigning in life. God's Word is the only truly reliable source of knowledge concerning our life and its real purpose. There are many philosophies that seek to explain the true purpose of life, some of them contain elements of truth, but the Bible is the only book that contains the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

God established the universe by the power of His Word. Ten times in Genesis chapter one we read, "and God said." Each time there was a specific result. God also continues to sustain the worlds by that same Word. (Col. 1:17). When God created the universe, that creative act also established His Lordship over it. It is God's universe because He brought it into being and because it is fully dependent on Him for its continuing existence.

God 'decreed' the various functions of everything He created. He set the stars on the appointed courses, from which they have never deviated. (Ps. 8:3). He decreed the boundaries which the oceans must obey. (Prov. 8:29). He rules the universe by His spoken Word. His sovereign authority is expressed through His spoken Word.

Jesus confirmed this principle. He also used the Word of God to rule. Christ said, "The words that you hear are not mine but the Father's who sent me." (John 14:24). When confronted by Satan in the wilderness, Jesus defeated him by quoting the Word of God. The Word is the sword of the Spirit, our weapon of victory by which we overcome the authorities of darkness and establish the Kingdom of light.

We must also learn to rule by the authority of God's Word. The Bible is the only trustworthy source on how to reign in life. In it God presents the principles relating to every aspect of Kingdom living. We must feed upon the Word, meditating upon it day and night. It will govern our thoughts, attitudes and conversations and establish the rule of the Kingdom within us. It will teach us the principles on which the reigning life functions. It will release within us the power for Kingdom living.

### **# DELEGATED AUTHORITY**

When Christ rose triumphant from the grave He made this dramatic statement, "All power (Greek: *exousia*) is given unto me in heaven and on earth." (Matt 28:18). Supreme authority was now His', over the heavens and the earth. How meaningful this statement is in the light of Christ's words in Luke 10:19, "Behold I give you power (*exousia*-authority) over all the power of the enemy." The very same authority that the Father conferred on Christ, Jesus has given to His followers/disciples. It is an authority delegated to us by the spoken Word of God.

It is also the same authority to which Satan referred in Luke 4:6. He offered to give this authority to Christ, but our Lord refused to receive it under those conditions. To do so He would have had to compromise Himself before Satan. Instead He defeated the devil legally at the Cross, stripping him of his title and authority. Now that power and authority belongs to Christ, and He has shared it with His joint heirs (Rom. 8:17) so they can also reign with Him.

### **# OUR WORD OF AUTHORITY**

In conferring this dynamic authority on the believer, Christ has made it possible for us to share His rule by allowing us to speak with the voice of His authority. Jesus spoke with the voice of authority, and He wants us to do the same. He commanded the fig tree to wither, (Mark 11:12-24) and it did. How sad that when the disciples saw the results the next day, they were amazed.

We are introduced to a unique and wonderful possibility in Job 22:21-30. Firstly, Job encourages us to develop a deeper acquaintance with God, and then proceeds to enumerate the possibilities inherent in such an intimate relationship (verses 23-30). One of those privileges is that of Spiritual Authority. "You shall decree a thing and it shall be established for you." (Job 21:28). A decree is: a commandment or edict spoken by a person of great authority. This is the privilege God affords us, to command a certain thing in God's Name and authority, and it will be established for us. "He shall have whatsoever he says." (Mark 11:23).

Too many Christians equate 'confession', with the confession of sin, weakness and inadequacy. God wants us to discover the power of positive confession through which we are enabled to reign in life. One of the Biblical words translated 'confession', is the Greek: "*Homologeo*", which basically means: "to say the same thing." When we cause our confession to agree with what God has spoken, we release a tremendous force of authority. This is the expression of our delegated authority by which we reign in life with Christ. God has 'spoken upon us', every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus, (Eph. Chapter 1), but we must 'speak the same thing' ("*homologeo*") for those blessings to become operative and effective in our lives.

### **# FAITH**

"Without faith it is impossible to please God." (Heb. 11:6). "The just shall live by faith." (Heb. 10:38). Without the exercise of faith, all that God has said about us in His Word is ineffectual. It lies dormant until we activate it by faith. We must not only speak words of faith which agree with what God has said, we must also act in faith in harmony with what God has spoken. Faith is that quality that accepts God's Word as final and absolute and therefore speaks and acts as though it is already accomplished.

Our assurance of ultimate victory is dependent on the exercise of faith. “This is the victory that overcomes the world even our faith”. (1 John 5:4). It is men and women of faith who reign in this life with Christ and it is men and women of faith who will reign in His manifest Kingdom when it is unveiled in the Kingdom Age.

## **WE WILL REIGN WITH CHRIST**

“For as by one man’s offence death reigned through that one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life through One, Jesus Christ.” (Rom. 5:17). “Then the Kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom shall be an everlasting Kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.” (Dan. 7:27). “And (He) has made us a Kingdom of priests to our God, and we shall reign on the earth.” (Rev. 5:10).

The reason why God has given authority and power to the saints is to prepare us for that time when we shall reign with Messiah Jesus in the everlasting Kingdom which will one day rule the earth. The exercise of our faith and authority in this present time is to prepare us for our future eternal role in the government of God by which He will rule the nations on earth. This is also the reason why God is so interested in the development of our character and spiritual maturity.

## **SUFFERING WITH CHRIST PREPARES US TO REIGN WITH HIM**

“For if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him.” (2 Tim. 2:12). For many years this Scripture puzzled me. I could not understand how suffering with Christ would actually qualify one to reign with Him. I thought that perhaps it was some kind of compensation factor. That because someone had suffered with and for Christ, He would reward him by having them reign with Him. But still this did not seem to explain the matter. It remained something of a puzzle to me until one day I noticed another Scripture. I had read it many times previously but somehow had failed to see the significance. It was the verse in Heb. 5: 8 - “Though He were (the) Son, yet learned He obedience through the things which He suffered.” Suddenly I felt that the Holy Spirit said, “this is the suffering spoken of in 2 Tim. 2:12 – “the suffering which teaches us obedience.” Then I saw the principle. It is not the suffering which qualifies us to reign, it is the obedience we learn through suffering, because **the Kingdom of God will be based on two principles:**

1. God’s authority.
2. Our obedience.

It was disobedience which caused Adam to forfeit his right to rule. It was Christ’s obedience which enabled Him to conquer Satan and regain the Kingdom, and it will be our obedience which will qualify us to reign with Christ in the coming Kingdom.

## **THE PRINCIPLES OF THE KINGDOM**

Every Kingdom must have laws by which its citizens are governed.

The basic principles which constitute a Kingdom are:

- A. A King, or sovereign head.
- B. The people, or realm over which he rules.
- C. The principles, or laws, by which he rules.

The Kingdom of God also has its laws. To live by them is to enjoy Kingdom living. The laws of this kingdom are not legalistically enforced with a death penalty to invoke for breaking them, as was the law of Moses. They are principles for living which the Word of God will build into every submissive citizen of the Kingdom. Paul calls this walking in the Spirit, and says that if we do this we will not fulfill the desires of the flesh. (Gal. 5:16). He further adds that walking in the Spirit will cause us to inherit the Kingdom (Gal. 5:21). If we do not obey these laws, we suffer spiritually. We experience a loss of peace, joy and blessing, in our daily walk with God. We therefore need to study the laws of the kingdom to discover just how God would have us live. The law of the Lord, “is perfect transforming the soul, and in the keeping of them there is great reward.” (Ps. 18:7).



King Jesus announced the laws of the Kingdom in Matthew Chapters 5, 6 and 7. May I suggest that you read these chapters again to familiarize yourself with them. We will not be giving a full examination of them here, but we shall look at them briefly.

1. **THE LAW AGAINST UNJUSTIFIED ANGER.** (MAT. 5:21-26).

There is an anger which is justifiable. For example the Bible mentions several times that God was angry with various people. This kind of anger is often called righteous indignation. It is the controlled expression of annoyance or displeasure. That anger which the Kingdom law prohibits is that of enragement, fuming, bitterness, recrimination and vexation. The anger that is vented against someone with venom and nastiness. God is particularly displeased with anger that causes one to lose control of oneself.

2. **THE LAW OF INNER PURITY.** (Matt. 5:27-32).

The law of Moses forbade the act of adultery. (Ex. 20:24). The law of the Kingdom is a higher law. It does not break the law of Moses, it supercedes it. Jesus said, "I say unto you whosoever looks upon a woman, to lust after her, has committed adultery with her already in his heart."

The cure for such a problem lies firstly in making a determined vow against all moral impurity and then fulfilling it with resolute action.

Jesus is not advocating the literal amputation of the hand, or the physical gouging out of the eye. Neither the hand nor the eye are the real source of the trouble. There is a motivation behind both the hand and the eye which needs to be dealt with. Christ is saying, "Whatever is needful to keep your heart pure, DO IT, with determination, for if you play with sin it will destroy you."

3. **THE LAW OF HONESTY AND INTEGRITY.** (Matt. 5:33-37).

The Kingdom citizen must be faithful to his word. His yes must be yes and his no must be no. He must be a man of his word so that people will learn to put confidence and trust in what he says. He must be reliable and consistent. This applies to such matters as keeping appointments and being on time for them. Keeping promises even when it becomes inconvenient to do so.

4. **THE LAW OF NON-RETALIATION.** (Matt. 5:38-42).

The spirit of retaliation was part of our fallen nature, from which Christ has delivered us. Jesus set the supreme example. "Who when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously." (1 Peter 2:23). Christ encourages us not to try to justify ourselves, but allow God to do so. "Vengeance is mine, says the Lord, I will repay." (Rom. 12:19). Our role is to love our enemies, do good to them, and allow God to deal with them. The Kingdom citizen never retaliates. He never goes to law against his neighbours. Always seeks how he may bless his enemies.

5. **THE LAW OF PERFECT LOVE.** (Matt. 5:43-48).

The fulfillment of the law is expressed in one word—"love" (Rom. 13: 8-10). Kingdom love goes far beyond any human love. It triumphs where human love has expired. It enables one to, "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you." (Matt. 5:44). Love makes a man like God, for God is love. (1 John 4:8).

6. **THE LAW OF RIGHT MOTIVATION.** (Matt. 6:1-18).

Religion is concerned largely with right acts and deeds, but the King is interested in inner motives. What is the reason for my doing this? Is my motive pure? Am I doing it for the right reason? The Scribes and Pharisees specialized in religious acts. They did all the right things, but often with an imperfect motive. Our righteousness must exceed theirs (Matt.5: 20). In the Kingdom of God we are to do the right thing, from a pure, right and just motive.

7. **THE LAW OF RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP.** (Matt. 6:19-34).

As citizens of the Kingdom we have relinquished all our “rights” to the King. As His “love-slaves”, we no longer own anything. All we have and are belongs to Christ. Now we are stewards of what we have, on behalf of the King. Verse 21 is a key to responsible stewardship. “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” What we invest our finance in reveals where our hearts’ affections really lie. If we invest in earthly things moth, rust and thieves will destroy our investment. Treasures invested in the eternal Kingdom will produce eternal dividends.

8. **THE LAW OF RIGHT PRIORITIES.** (Matt. 6:24-34).

Successful Kingdom living depends largely on getting our priorities right – that is giving our attention to the most important things first. Jesus clearly defines our first priority. “Seek you FIRST the Kingdom of God, and all these “things”-food, drink, clothes, etc., which the gentiles seek after (strive for ) will be added unto you.” Give the Kingdom of God and righteousness the first place in your thoughts, desires and actions. Make it the number one priority in your life. Let everything else take second place to it. Love the Kingdom, more than anyone else. Serve His purposes with dedication and commitment. He will supply the needful things of life.

9. **THE LAW OF TOLERANCE TOWARDS YOUR BROTHER.** (Matt. 7:16).

The worldly man judges and criticizes others regardless of how great his own weaknesses and failings are. He often tries to remove a speck from the eye of another, when there is a log in his own eye. This is not so in the Kingdom. Jesus says we are not to criticize or condemn our brother. Moffatt's translation of Rom. 14:13 says, “...So let us stop criticizing one another.”

This does not mean that we should be blind to, or ignore the faults of a brother. We are not to disregard such faults. It means that instead of criticizing him or condemning him, we should minister to him in love, with compassion, seeking to help him overcome those weaknesses. Our action should be positive, not negative. How we treat such a person will determine how we ourselves are treated. “For with what measure you judge, you shall be judged.” (Matt. 7:2).

10. **THE LAW OF DISCRIMINATE TEACHING.** (Matt. 7:6).

(The Principle of Pearls and Pigs.) The pearls, to which Jesus refers, are the truths of the Kingdom which are found in our lives, as a pearl formed in the oyster. These truths are sacred and precious. God has gone to great lengths to build these truths into you. They are holy things, sacred and personal. Do not go around sharing them indiscriminately, as one who would feed holy things to dogs, or pearls to swine. Treat such precious truths with respect. Treasure them in your heart.

We are to share the message of the Kingdom with the whosoever. But the mysteries of the Kingdom are for the committed. Do not try to impose mature truth on immature people. Let the Holy Spirit guide you about whom, when and how to share the deeper truth of the Kingdom. Remember that the unregenerate man cannot even ‘see’ the Kingdom. He does not even know that it exists.

11. **THE PRINCIPLE OF PRAYER.** (Matt. 7:7-12).

There is a definite sequence and progression involved in the principle of prayer. Jesus outlined it like this:

1. “ASK”, and it shall be given you.” This is the simplest form of prayer. Making our requests known to God, with thanksgiving.
2. “SEEK”, and you shall find.” Here is a deeper level of prayer which goes far beyond making our requests of God. Seeking God is the earnest pursuit of God in prayer. “You shall find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart.” David called it, “Seeking the face of God.” (Ps. 27:8). It demands more time, dedication, sacrifice than the simpler

kind of prayer. It also results in greater rewards not simply in the attaining of things we may desire but the development of our deeper spiritual life.

3. “KNOCK”, and the door shall be opened”. This introduces a deeper level of maturity in spiritual things. This is not the pounding upon the door, insisting that it shall be opened to you. It is not the frenzy of purpose which would almost break down the door. Rather, it is the gentle knocking of request, which understands that God will not willingly open the door to any situation which we are too immature to cope with. There is an aggressive faith which may insist on an answer which is harmful or injurious. For example, Israel insisted on having a king to rule them. God unwillingly gave them their requests but it brought leanness into their soul. How much wiser they would have been to “knock gently” and see how God would respond.

## 12. **PRINCIPLE OF SOLD FOUNDATIONS.** (Matt. 7:24-27).

Jesus teaches the necessity of ‘living the Word’ rather than merely ‘hearing’ it. Christ said that those who heard His sayings, but did not practice them, were like fools who built a house on sand. Without a firm foundation it would be destroyed by the storms of life. In complete contrast, those who “do” the words of Jesus, practice them and live by them, are wise, like those who build on a rock. The storms of life will fall on them also, but the structure of their life will withstand every storm.

Too many Christians are content to “hear the sayings of Jesus”. They store them in their mind and memory. They give intellectual assent to them but never practice the principles. It would be better to know one truth and practice it than know hundreds of truths and never put any of them into practice.

Living by these principles of the Kingdom builds a firm foundation for our Kingdom role. Through the practice of the principles, God is preparing us for our function in the coming manifestation of the Kingdom of God which will exercise its government over all the nations.

## HOW TO RECEIVE A WORD OF PROPHECY?

It can be very exciting to have a prophet lay hands on you, and give you a word of prophecy. It is even more exciting when the prophecy has something to do with God using your life in a powerful way in the future.

But how should you respond to such words? And what do you do when nothing seems to happen? Or when everything in your life seems to get worse instead of better? When you begin to have trials and tribulations, instead of victories and release?

There are guidelines you should follow after receiving a word of prophecy to determine:

- If the word is from the Lord, and
- What you should do in response.

### Examine The Prophetic Word

All prophetic words should first be compared to THE Word of God – THE BIBLE. A true prophetic word must NEVER disagree with the Bible. The Bible is the SUPREME AUTHORITY. The Bible is UNCHANGING.

If someone gives you a “prophetic” word that would lead you away from God, or tell you disobey the Scriptures in any way, DO NOT ACCEPT THAT WORD! “If there arises among you a prophet...and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder of which he spoke comes to pass, saying “Let us go after gods...and serve them” YOU SHALL NOT LISTEN TO THE WORDS OF THAT PROPHET.” (Deut. 13:1-3).

### Evaluate The Source

We must first determine the following:

- Does the prophet’s character match the character of Jesus?
- Are the prophet’s words loving and edifying, or critical and harsh? The word of prophecy may be a “hard word” to hear. It may challenge some action or behavior on your part that might not be easy to admit. But the prophetic word should always be given in love, and with the grace of the Lord Jesus in it.
- Is the prophet known and proven among you?
- Does the prophet have a reputation of honesty, humility and submission to God and those in spiritual authority?

These will not guarantee that the prophecy is correct, for even those who are followers of Christ can succumb to speaking in the flesh (see Matthew 16:21-23). ALWAYS BE CAUTIOUS about those who claim to be speaking the word of the Lord. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1). Regardless of the vessel speaking the prophecy, a true word from God should bring a sense a confirmation to your spirit. Even if you never thought of the word before in your mind, God has already been preparing your spirit to receive it.

### Humble Yourself

Whenever you receive a prophecy about a great work the Lord will do through you, the first place you should go is to your knees! If the prophecy is from the Lord, He will begin a work of preparation in your life and heart. He will test you and humble you, in order to cleanse you of whatever would defile the new things He wants to do through you. He will purify your life so that nothing is left that can hinder or prevent what He intends to do.

God’s first concern is always with what we are becoming. When we reflect the character of Christ, and understand our need to rely completely upon Him, then He will release more of what we are to do for Him. The more our hearts are yielded and our lives are conformed to His image, the more He can do with us and through us! (see 2 Chronicles 16:9).

If you receive a great word of prophecy, and then find yourself suffering or in trial, it doesn’t mean that the word was false, or that you have missed the will of God. It very well may mean that the

Lord has chosen you (1 Pet. 5:10). He trusts you enough to let the difficult circumstances work the full weight of glory in you (2 Cor. 4:17). He is doing a work in you so you will be prepared for Him to do a work through you.

### **Wait Upon The Lord**

“By the mouth of two or three witness every word shall be established.” (2 Cor. 13:1b). WAIT FOR WORDS OF CONFIRMATION about any word of prophecy you receive. DO NOT act until the word has been confirmed. The Lord may bring a quick confirmation, but often He makes us wait a long time. Our waiting gives the Lord time to show us the weak areas in our lives. We may want to do things in our own strength, or want to be disobedient to the timing or counsel of the Lord. We might resist submitting to proper authority, or we may not be as loving toward others as the Lord wants us to be. Sometimes God will even test our commitment to the thing He has called us to by having us wait for Him to release it. God is always shaping our lives, and will use the times of waiting to work His desire and ways into our hearts.

It requires humility to wait for the confirming word of the Lord. Let your heart wait humbly; this will keep you from being deceived by the misleading tactics of the devil. Our adversary, Satan, loves to appeal to our pride and our flesh, and cause us to step out in the wrong direction or in the wrong timing. Humility helps us wait until we are sure God has confirmed His desire.

### **How Do I Know?**

How do you know if you are being presumptuous and trying to fulfill a word of prophecy in your own way? The most important thing to remember is that it is a word from the Lord, and it declares His desires. So it is not our knowing that will fulfill the word; it is the faithfulness of God to accomplish the thing for which He sent that word (Is. 55:11). “Has He said and will He not do it? Has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” (Num. 23:19). If you reverence and fear the Lord, and humbly desire His will, you are at the beginning place of wisdom (see Psalm 111:10). And if you humbly ask the Lord for more wisdom, He promises to give it (Jas. 1:5).

A word of prophecy will not usually give details about personal guidance, or a step-by-step plan to fulfill God’s desire. That kind of wisdom comes directly from the Lord Himself. We should ask for His guidance in prayer, and seek it through the Word of God. If a prophecy comes with instructions, it should only confirm what we already know God wants us to do.

We can also go to trusted, godly leaders for counsel about what to do, but that is different than receiving direction through a word of prophecy. (See Psalm 1:1; Proverbs 11:14). Godly leaders may receive a word of wisdom, or a word of knowledge, that will help you better understand how to respond to the prophetic word you have received. The prophet who gave the word may also operate in the gifts of a word of wisdom or a word of knowledge.

The important thing to remember is that most day-to-day direction that involves the details of our lives comes from the Lord as we seek Him in prayer and read and obey His Word.

### **THE DANGER SIGNS**

When you are about to go the wrong way on a road, or turn onto an unsafe street, there are signs posted to warn you not to do that. In the same way, there are “danger signs” we can watch for to help us know if we are moving out in the flesh, instead of following the Lord.

### **I Will Start Now!**

Our flesh is selfish, impatient and easily stirred up. If you receive a word of prophecy, and you become very excited and joyful, and want to start doing something right now, watch out! That is a danger sign. The prophetic word has probably appealed to your flesh. It is your pride that is rising up and wanting you to jump ahead and become something “great”.

If in your heart you begin to think, “I could do this” or “I will do that”, that is another danger sign, warning you that the flesh is trying to be in control. In your excitement, you may jump into a lot of programs or commitments that are not led of the Lord. Then you may find yourself working too hard at too many things, and doing none of them well. There is no fruit for your labors. Things

beings to fall apart; your family or others may get frustrated; and you begin to complain, “God, where are you?” He is usually right where you left Him, behind you and waiting for you to slow down and ask Him what to do!

Mature leaders will receive a prophetic call with a sense of peace. They will not try to grab or grasp for the ministry, or to push themselves forward. They will be willing to continually lay it all on the altar of prayer, and let God raise up the ministry as He desires. The cry of your heart should always be, “Lord, lead me”, or “Lord, what should I do?”, or “Lord, give me strength and wisdom” – but most importantly, “Lord it is only by Your power”.

The flesh is concerned with what “I” want, or what “I” will accomplish. The Spirit-filled leader gives full room for God to do His will – and humbly participates as God allows.

Be careful about trying to “help” God by making things happen to fulfill the word of prophecy. It’s easy to do too much, and much harder to wait upon the Lord. His timing is usually much different than our own. A good phrase to remember is the one Jesus said so often and to so many: simply, “Follow ME.” We must follow when He leads and where He leads... the important thing is to follow!

### **A Hard Lesson**

A good example of someone wanting to step out too soon into what God had spoken is found in Genesis 37. Here we read about Joseph, and about a prophetic dream that he has. He quickly, and very unwisely, shares this dream with his brothers. Unfortunately, his brothers already envied Joseph because he was unfairly favored by their father. But Joseph’s dream of them bowing down to him was more than they could take! So they conspired to get rid of their youngest brother. They sold him into slavery, and let their father believe that Joseph had been killed by wild animals. Joseph did end up suffering for his own thoughtlessness and lack of wisdom. But God used even that, for He is faithful to use everything for good, if we love Him and will respond to His call and yield to His purpose (see Romans 8:28). Though he was sold into slavery and separated from his family, Joseph’s years of patient and loyal service were used by God to prepare his heart and character for an even greater responsibility.

### **A Better Response**

An example of a better response to a strong prophetic word from the Lord is seen in Marry, the mother of Jesus. Luke 1:26 begins a narrative about an angelic visitation to Mary, and a prophecy about the virgin birth of the Son of God through her. Now that must have been startling and exciting news indeed! But Mary’s immediate response was one of humility. She affirmed her position as a simple handmaiden of the Lord, and expressed her desire to do the will of God above all else (v.38). She received more confirmation from Elizabeth (vv. 39-45), and responded only in humble worship to God (vv.46-55). Even after the Christ child was born, and the shepherds confirmed that truly He was the Messiah, Mary’s response was one of quiet faith. Luke 2:19 reveals that, “Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.”

Mary understood that it was the Lord God alone who could fulfill His word to her. Her place was but to receive the word, declare her willingness and yielded heart, and obey the further directions from the Lord as He gave them.

### **Suffering Unjustly**

Sometimes the Lord allows very difficult circumstances in a leader’s life to help them see what is in their own heart. We can all be deceived, and think our own way is the right way (Prov. 21:2). But God tests our hearts to show us what is really there (Prov. 17:3; 1 Thes. 2:4).

Life is full of tests. You may be given too much money back in a transaction. Do you correct the mistake? You may hear about a weakness or failure in another leader. Do you uncover him and spread the story? God may impress you to give an offering beyond what you think you can afford. Do you give it?

God does not give us these tests in the hopes that we will fail. He loves us enough to test us in order to help us see what is really in our hearts. How we respond to a test can show us where we are lacking, whether we are deceitful, and many other things.

When we see our sin, we can confess it, be forgiven and cleansed, and move forward in what God has for us (1 John 1:9).

Remember that God does not tempt us with sin (see James 1:13-14). Nor does God test us to make us fail, but rather to prepare us to receive the crown of life (Jas.1:12).

Joseph was tested as to whether or not he would give in to adultery (Read Genesis 39). He passed the test, but then his master's wife falsely accused him because she couldn't break his integrity. Incredibly, he was unjustly thrown in prison for doing the right thing! But the Bible tells us that the Lord was with Joseph, and he found mercy and favor (Gen. 39:21). Amazingly, Joseph did not become embittered. He may have wondered about his prophetic dream, and whether it would ever come to pass. He even made an attempt at getting himself out of prison (Gen. 40:14). But we have no record of Joseph accusing the Lord of abandoning him. Joseph remained diligent and faithful in the midst of unjust and difficult circumstances, and the Lord eventually released him into even more responsibility and trust.

### **In A Multitude Of Counselors....**

Be open to the confirmation and counsel of godly friends and trusted leaders. Proverbs 11:14 reveals: "in the multitude of counselors there is safety".

Beware of those who will tell you only what you want to hear! They are usually being selfish, and encouraging you to jump ahead so they can share in glory and success. True friends may give you hard words, but they will be spoken in love and concern for you. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy. (Prov. 27:6). Decide to receive the warnings and rebukes of those who truly are friends, and consider carefully their words and counsel.

One must be careful, however, to not be a "people-pleaser". The Bible says this behavior will become a trap that binds you (Prov. 29:25). If God has given you a clear direction or calling, and it is confirmed and sure, then you must obey it, no matter what others might think. Not all family and friends will agree, especially if they are not submitted in their hearts to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. But never deny the sure voice of God because you are afraid of what others might say or do! Just stay attentive to the leading of the Holy Spirit for what to do and when to do it; this will keep you from stumbling or getting off course.

### **Trust In The Lord**

You have been given a word of prophecy full of great promise. What should you do? Humbly place it on the altar of God in prayer. If it is a true word, then when the time is right, God will release it to you. In the meantime, He will prepare you, test you and perhaps ask you to wait.

None of these are easy, and you may feel like you are spiritually "dying" in the process. But, hopefully, it is just your fleshly desires that are dying! Your spiritual man is actually being strengthened if you are responding correctly to God (Eph. 3:14-21).

When you are tempted to give up, or make things happen in your own strength, remind yourself of this promise in God's Word, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Prov. 3:5-6).

# LEARNING TO JUDGE PROPHECY

## The Biblical View

I have found an increasing interest in the wonderful and powerful operation of one of the gifts of the Spirit: the gift of prophecy-that ecstatic utterance of the Spirit through the mind and lips of a man or woman of God. I feel that a brief "question and answer" study would be beneficial and timely.

### A. IS PROPHECY ALWAYS PERFECT?

I Corinthians 13:9-10 teaches: "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part." The Word teaches that prophecy is in an imperfect state and is "in part." 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21 says: "Despise not prophesying. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." To despise not prophesying is a direct word of command. But the words that follow, "Hold fast that which is good," clearly imply that there will be some which will not be good, and is therefore not to be held fast.

We are not to despise the gift nor its operations; yet we are to recognize the imperfect channels through which it comes. Prophecy, therefore, must be carefully proved and judged before it is accepted as an accurate and true word from the Spirit of God.

### B. WHAT ARE SAFE REALMS OF PROPHECY?

1 Corinthians 14:3 states: "He that prophesies speaks unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort." These are the three usual realms of prophecy in which the learner may practice his gift with all humility and without fear, yet in holy reverence: to edification, exhortation and comfort.

1 Corinthians 14:31 says: "For you all may prophesy one by one, that all may learn. It stands to reason that when one is learning, he will inevitably make some mistakes. These mistakes need not be stumbling blocks to anyone who, in humility and sincerity, desires to follow the Lord.

The learner should remain within the learning realms of:

#### 1. Edification

The building up of the hearer in faith and love and the Holy Spirit;

#### 2. Exhortation

The urging of the hearer to press toward the mark with greater love and spiritual activity;

#### 3. Comfort

The bringing of solace and consolation to the weary, the buffeted, and the afflicted.

### C. IS CONDEMNATION FROM GOD?

John 3:17 teaches that, "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world." Romans 8:1 states: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus and walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." When instead of comfort there is condemnation, it should be rejected. Romans 8:34 asks the self-answering question: "Who is he that condemns? Shall Christ who died?" He bore all our condemnation on the cross.

So the prophecy of condemnation can never be the work of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit may rebuke, exhort and chide; yet He does it with great tenderness, always influencing one into repentance and love, ever showing the way out of the problem. The Holy Spirit never leaves one in deep hole of depression and condemnation, with neither mercy nor hope to lift him out again into the loveliness of His tender forgiveness. Such condemnatory prophetic utterances, which are usually harsh of tone and devastating to the hearer, should be recognized as from another spirit, and not the Spirit of Christ.

### D. WHAT IS THE SOURCE OF PROPHECY?

The Scriptures clearly teach that prophecy may be prompted by one of three sources:

#### 1. The Human Spirit

One speaking out of his own heart (Ezek. 13:2-3).



## **2. A Lying Spirit**

From the evil one (2 Chron. 18:21).

## **3. The Holy Spirit**

The true spirit of prophecy from above, prompted by the Holy Spirit.

## **4. A Mixture Of All Three**

Or a prophecy may be mixture of any of the above three.

There is the classic example of the Apostle Peter speaking the inspired word of knowledge when he said: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." (Matt 16:16). Jesus testified that flesh and blood had not revealed it to him, but the Father. The source of that utterance was the Father. Then, a few minutes later, Jesus turned and rebuked Satan speaking through the lips of the same apostle. Jesus was showing how easily and quickly the wrong spirit could speak through the lips of one who loves the Lord, and the person not even being aware of it. That which Peter spoke was most kind sounding to the unwary ear. Jesus caught its deadly intent to inject self-pity.

### **E. WHEN SHOULD CAUTION BE EXERCISED?**

There are three other realms of prophecy which are more open to deception; and because of their very nature, we should be cautious. These three realms are:

#### **1. When It's A Word Of Knowledge**

"The secrets of the heart made manifest" (1 Cor.14: 25)—an operation of the word of knowledge.

#### **2. When It's Foretelling...**

Things to come – an operation of the word of knowledge.

#### **3. When It's Guidance**

An operation of the word of wisdom.

Because wrong "guidance" can work the most havoc in the lives of God's children, it is the realm which wrong spirits most delight to enter.

1 Samuel 10:1-10 clearly shows the operation of these three prophetic realms.

Samuel first revealed the secret of Saul's heart that he was seeking the lost asses. He then gave a foretelling word – three signs which would shortly come to pass:

- Saul would meet two men who would say, "The asses are found."
- He would then meet three men with three kids, three loaves and a bottle of wine. They would give him two loaves.
- Then Saul would meet a company of prophets coming from the high place with psaltery, tabret, pipe and harp, who would prophesy. The Spirit of the Lord would come upon Saul and he would prophesy.

All the signs were fulfilled. Then came the obedience to the guidance Samuel had given: "Go down to Gilgal; seven days shall you tarry there till I come down to you." Saul obeyed the guidance when all the other signs had come to pass.

### **F. IS PROPHECY ALWAYS HELPFUL?**

Many lives have been injured and brought into confusion by the wrong use of prophecy; yet the Word clearly tells us: "Despise not prophesying." (1 Thes. 5:20). It is up to us to find the right path up this glorious mountain.

I have witnessed some most amazing benefits wrought through the precious gift of prophecy. It is no wonder that through counterfeit utterances the enemy wishes to deceive, and to cause this beautiful operation of God to fall into disrepute.

### **G. WHAT DOES OUR REACTION TO PROPHECY REVEAL?**

If the personal prophecy unveils a future ministry of great importance, and our ego is inflated by it, then there is something wrong in our heart. Pride is there. And "Pride goes before destruction." We should flee to the Lord for deliverance from it.

But where the personal prophecy unveils a future ministry of great importance, and this causes us to fall at the feet of the Lord in deep humility – that prophecy can be a help and blessing. When the Lord spoke a prophetic word to Saul on the road to Damascus, Saul fasted and prayed three days (Acts 9:3-11; 26:13-18). The heart condition of lowliness is ever the safe place. Satan said: “I will ascend.” (Is. 14:13-14). Ascending is ever the direction Satan takes.

Jesus first descended (Eph. 4:9); therefore His Father exalted Him. Jesus always descended. (Phil. 2: 7-8). “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, “He says, for I am meek and lowly in heart.”(Matt. 11:29). Neither the lion nor its whelps have ever walked in that path (Job 28:8).

## **H. WHO SHOULD CONFIRM PROPHECY?**

“In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established.” (2 Cor. 13:1). The law of confirmation is an important “must” in the judging and proving of a prophetic word. God is ever ready to confirm His Word, even with signs and wonders.

No important prophetic word – especially that which deals with guidance, or which would affect our life – should be accepted without full confirmation by:

1. Those Not Acquainted With The Prophecy;
2. The Scriptures;
3. Another Word From God.

The following Scripture illustrates prophecy confirming what God has said: “Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have already (past tense) called them.” This implies that there was a prior word to them. (Acts 13:2).

## **I. WHO SHOULD JUDGE PROPHECY?**

The prophetic word should be open for judgment by those who are established as prophets and men of God. We are solemnly warned: “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). The Scripture says: “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge.” (1 Cor. 14:29). It stands to reason that one who does not have or use the prophetic gift is qualified to judge, save on the basis of the tests already mentioned and the written Word. But the spirit of the utterance had better be left to the judgment of men qualified in the field of prophecy.

## **J. WHEN SHOULD PROPHECY BE REJECTED?**

It is always a sign of warning if someone refuses to have his word of revelation, prophecy or utterance brought to judgement and to confirmation by the written Word of God. It is better to reject it immediately; for regardless of how good the prophecy might sound and how wonderful the ecstasy of the moment, if it be contrary to the Word, then do not receive it under any condition.

The true man of God welcomes judgment. The Spirit of Christ within him makes him, “easy to be entreated.” (Jas. 3:17). He is ever ready to acknowledge that he is imperfect in his flesh and is not at all infallible. At best, we only know “in part” and prophesy “in part.”

## **K. CONCLUSION**

Let us not despise nor shun this tremendous operation of the Spirit of God, but let us be, “wise as serpents.” Let us not enter into controversy or squabbles; yet let us not receive any or all utterances which are supposedly to be God’s infallible Word without proper confirmation.

Let no one take authority over you by saying: “Yea, yea, thus says the Lord.” If God has spoken, then He has spoken; I need not fight to prove it. And if God has not spoken, all my saying, “Thus says the Lord” does not in any way force Him to say what I claimed He said.

So then, brethren, let us be wise and lowly in heart and seek to glorify our God, neither despising prophesyings nor ignoring and shunning them. Let us enjoy their mighty blessing and power in all wisdom of the Holy Spirit. In great humility of mind, let us “go on unto perfection.” (Heb. 6:1).

# THE WORD OF THE LORD FOR OUR DAYS WILL BE FULFILLED

**Read:** Ezek. 12:21-28 and Numbers 23:19.

Prophecy is not to scare us, but to prepare us. Prov. 27:12 says, “A prudent man sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on, and suffer for it.” God wants us to know and be prepared what He’s going to do, so we may stand strong and overcome.

In this study we will discuss the 5 major crises and the 5 waves of the Holy Spirit for the 1990’s onwards as prophesied by one the world’s outstanding prophets.

The 5 Crises that will hit the earth:

- 1) A crises of change.
- 2) Crises in the family.
- 3) Crises in the Church.
- 4) A major worldwide financial crises.
- 5) A crises of satanic confrontation of gigantic proportions.

In response God will send 5 Waves of the Holy Spirit:

- 1) A wave of true holiness.
- 2) A wave of signs and wonders and miracles.
- 3) A wave of true unity.
- 4) A wave of wisdom and discernment.
- 5) A wave of restitution and restoration.

## **THE FIVE CRISES:**

**1) THE CRISIS OF CHANGE:** Luke 21:25-27; Matt. 24:6-8.

We are entering a period of time full of changes. Political, economical, social, ecological, etc. Everybody wants to be free, break away from existing structures and be independent. (See the different countries at war). Break away from existing morals, live with no limitations. Free morals, homosexuality, euthanasia, etc. Global changes in weather patterns result in more natural disasters, destruction, earthquakes and hurricanes. These changes and crises causes people to fear which immobilises them.

As believers: we need to be prepared drawing spiritual power and resources through prayer, abiding in the peace of Jesus (John 16: 33), seeking God's direction and overcome through Christ!

**2) THE CRISIS OF FAMILY:** II Tim 3:1-2.

Selfishness, with its basic root sin, will begin to tear apart family relationships. The last two decades witnessed a tremendous attack on the family world-wide. Just think of the high rates of: divorce, child abuse, abortion, teenage suicides, teenage-promiscuity, incest, drugs and alcohol abuse, physical abuse. Satan is attacking the minds of children, sowing seeds of unforgiveness to destroy marriages and family relationships.

For believers: the main cause for family problems is that some are saved and others unsaved. The root is: a spiritual division. In this crisis we need to arise in faith and claim salvation for unsaved loved ones. (Jer 31:16-17; Mal. 4:6).

**3) THE CRISIS OF THE CHURCH:** Mark 7:6-9,13.

Changes in the traditional church structures will be taking place globally, and the true Body of Christ (believers in all nations) will emerge to mature and become powerful as God intended it to be. The true Body of Christ will begin to function under the leadership of the five-fold ministry. Man-made doctrines, traditions and nominal barriers will be broken. Many traditional churches who haven't patterned after the N.T. principles will face shaking and crisis of leadership.

As believers: we are the church, we are a living organism, composed of many different members. Jesus our Head will continue to establish the five fold ministry as His divine structure so we all may grow up to maturity, be active and fruitful (Eph. 4:11-16). This true church will be separated from the uncommitted and compromising “for name’s sake only”–Christians.

**4) A MAJOR WORLD-WIDE FINANCIAL CRISIS:** Rev. 13:5-7.

A world-wide economic upheaval – collapse of our monetary system will hit. This economic crash will come suddenly, sending shock waves throughout the world. It will be the opening for the establishment of the one-world monetary system under a new one-world government. Economic disaster is at hand.

We believers: keep trusting the Lord and see His supernatural provision (like Elisha at the brook Kidron). God wants us to come out of debt (slavery) and poverty. (Haggai 2:7-8). Limit your expenses and manage within your means. Furthermore, keep honouring God with your tithes and first fruits and offerings, that as you sow, you will reap. (Prov. 3:9-10; Mal. 3: 8-12).

**5) THE CRISIS OF SATANIC CONFRONTATION OF GIGANTIC PROPORTIONS:** Rev 12:7- 12, 1 Tim. 4:1.

Satan knows his time is running out. He will do his utmost best to tempt to sin, deceive, destroy and persecute God’s people. There will be a great increase of occult and demonic activity. (e.g. Russia). The occult is getting popularised and people are doing it “for fun”, but get spell and spirit bound. Sin will increase like violence and crime, as well as immorality. Not only will there be attack from outside ("as a roaring lion"), but also from within as, "an angel of light" (deception).

We, believers: need to depend more on the Holy Spirit to give us the spirit of discernment to know the names of the demons that are attacking us, so we can take authority over them and drive them out in Jesus' mighty Name! (Luke 10:18-19).

**THE FIVE MAJOR WAVES OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:**

1) **A WAVE OF TRUE HOLINESS:** Mal. 3:3; II Cor. 6:17-7:1.

God wants us to be holy and totally committed to Him. He wants us to be like Him; different and holy; continue to break every compromise with sin in your life and walk in the fear of the Lord. Remember that ultimately your sin will find you out. Num. 32:23.

2) **A WAVE OF SIGNS AND WONDERS AND MIRACLES:** Mark 16:17-20; Acts 14:3.

The Lord wants to bring a greater manifestation of His power and His glory to the world. But let’s remember that it is ultimately through the Holy and sanctified vessels that His power will flow. As we begin to live in a greater commitment to God and His Word, it will give us a greater authority to move in power and do the greater works that Jesus said we would do in John 14:12-14. Thus the world may see and believe that Jesus is Lord! This to fulfill the Scriptures that their faith might not only rest on words only, but on the power of God. (I Cor. 2:4-5).

3) **A WAVE OF TRUE UNITY:** Luke 8:21; John 17:11, 20-23.

A greater and true unity will begin to come forth through close covenant relationships as we begin to realise that our true family are those who have been united in the Spirit. It will be a new bond of God’s love in friendship relationships. A unity that is brought about because of the head Jesus Christ, and so, as we relate to Him, we are joined together with one another and become one. We need to get committed to one another with sacrificial love, willing to lay down our lives for the brethren.

4) **A WAVE OF WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT:** Eph. 3:9-11; Cor. 1:9-11.

We believers will begin to experience a manifestation of wisdom, wherein our minds will be anointed and we will know the absolute perfect will of God in every situation and circumstance. During this end time harvest we need to be anointed with God’s wisdom and discernment to enable us to face the coming crisis and fulfil the plan and purposes God has for us. We need to move into revelation knowledge, the supernatural wisdom of God which is pure, peaceable, gentle, full of

mercy, sincere, etc. (Jas. 3:17). Jesus said in Luke 21:15, "For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict." Persecution may / will come, but God will give us great wisdom. This along with the spirit of discernment is required to expose the lies and increasing deception of Satan.

5) **A FINAL WAVE OF RESTITUTION AND RESTORATION:** Acts 3:19-21; Joel 2:23-27  
By the power of the Holy Spirit the Lord wants to restore us and confirm us to the image / character of Christ bringing us to a place of wholeness. (Rom. 8: 29-30). The Holy Spirit, the power of Almighty God within us, is molding and shaping us so we might be a representation of Christ in the fullness of His spirit.

God wants

- to restore our position of power and authority which we have in Christ.
- to restore our mind, so we may have the mind of Christ and be whole in spirit, soul and body.
- to restore our families, bringing salvation to all.
- to restore our health, breaking the oppression of the devil.
- to restore us to a place of abundance and prosperity.

Therefore, in closing let's go forth in faith with a new authority, boldness, fearlessness and divine capability to fulfil God's purpose on the earth, ushering in His kingdom and of His Christ who shall reign forever and ever! Amen.

# SOUL WINNING: OUT WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE

## CHAPTER 1 --- THE GREATEST CALLING – SOUL WINNING

My wife and I are soul winners because Jesus was! The Bible says: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance...” What is this all important saying? “... That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” (1 Tim. 1:15). Luke 19:10 says, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Jesus came to save people. That is His mission.

First and last, **Jesus was a soul winner** – the greatest soul winner the world has ever known! The first group Jesus chose to follow Him received this challenge: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.” (Matt 4:19). The last group who followed Him out to His ascension received this command: “You shall be my witness to the world. Go make disciples of all nations.” (Matt 28: 19-20).

First and foremost, Jesus was a soul winner. That is why He came: **to save people**. That is why He lived, died, rose again, and sent the Holy Spirit to His followers: to make them effective soul winners. The word **Christian** means: "Christ-like." Christ came to save people, to seek out the lost; so to be Christians, we are to be soul winners. Christ is born in us and He wills to do the same things **in and through us** that He did when He walked on earth. Yet, there are hundreds of thousands of Christians who have never known the joy of allowing Christ to win even one soul through them. There are even preachers and Bible teachers who have never won a soul to Christ.

I repeat: **To be a Christian means to be like Christ and to be like Christ is to be a soul-winner.**

Can this be the reason the church has not succeeded in giving the good news to every creature? Have the majority of Christians not yet discovered this truth? Since you are the church, since you are Christ's body in the earth, you can let Him win souls through you. You can be a vital instrument in meeting the spiritual need of your generation.

Jesus took His message **to the people**. He went **wherever the people were** – in the market places, on street corners, on the mountain sides, by the seashores, in the homes. He was criticized by the religious leaders for identifying with people, where they were. “This man receives sinners, and eats with them.” (Luke 15:2). Jesus mixed with people. He witnessed to them, convinced them, and won them. He was not a holier than you type, a religious snob – aloof and sanctimonious. He walked with people. They were His reason for being in this world. It can be that way with every Christian. To be Christ-like means: to win people. His purpose is our purpose. His mission is our mission. His plan is our plan. He came to save people. We are here in his world for the same purpose.

In John 18:37 He said, “For this cause I came into the world, to bear witness of the truth.” That is why we are in this world: to bear witness of the truth that is Jesus Christ. (See John 14:6). He encouraged us to, “.....go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled” (Luke 14:23). He never said, “Go ring a church bell and pray for people to come in.” He said, “Go out and compel them. Win them, bring them in. You go out and get them, that my house may be full.” Every follower of His did just that. After His ascension, Jesus' followers acted just like Him. They were busy witnessing in the markets, on the streets, in houses around the public wells; talking, reasoning, witnessing, persuading, preaching, winning souls, compelling people to believe the gospel – just like Jesus did. In fact, they reminded everyone so much of Christ that critics, with contempt in their voices, called them “CHRIST-ians”. Their critics did not know that Christ was actually reborn in His followers. They imitated His way of life. They taught and lived and acted like Jesus Christ. They were like Him in winning souls. That is why are soul winners: Because Jesus was! The Bible says, “Daily in the temple, and in every house, they never stopped teaching and preaching Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42). In my New Testament, I have circled the world daily. Today, many churches are open no more than twice or three times a week; while sport complexes, cinema halls, casinos, race tracks, bars, amusement parks and discos are doing business daily.

Too often the church building is only opened on Sunday. But the real church **is you and me. We are Christ's body.** Christ can minister and witness through us every day – regardless of whether or not the church building is open. Early Christians were daily in the temple and in every house, teaching and preaching Jesus Christ.

### **Contemporary Witnessing**

Christian who are becoming aware of these principles are recapturing the zeal and passion of the early church, and are sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others. Did you know that the Jehovah's Witnesses (This is a false, so-called "Christian", cult!) have added more converts to their membership during this century than any religious body? While traditional churches were losing members, they were winning. Why? One simple reason: From their inception, they exploited the most strategic secret of the early church and encouraged every convert to be a door-to-door witness.

While traditional Christians were using their Church pews (benches), the Jehovah's Witnesses were using their shoe soles. While church members beat a path to the sanctuary (building), the Jehovah's witnesses beat a path to the people – and there they made converts. When the Jehovah's Witnesses meet in their kingdom halls, it is not to win converts. It is a meeting of those already saved. There they gather to be instructed in witnessing. They master their doctrines. They are trained to be witnesses. When they get ready to make converts, they go out to the streets, carrying a tape or cassette player and loaded with attractive literature. They systematically work each section of town, street by street, knocking on doors, entering homes, witnessing and winning – out where the people are. In a reputed Christian magazine, one writer said, "However one may disagree with Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons, we must admire the dedication and sense of mission that takes them from door to door in the face of ridicule and abuse." Jehovah's Witnesses succeed because they stay at it.

### **A Hungry World**

People are bewildered and confused about spiritual values. They are lost and they search for direction, but they do not trust the church for guidance. Too often they have not received a true witness of the gospel. They are streaming to the psychologists and psychiatrists. They are the human "guinea pigs" (test animals) for every new theory that is conceived by the growing wave of psycho-analysts. Children are confused. Teenagers are adrift. Parents are bickering. Insecurity and it may dominate the home. Drinking and perversion are substituted for stability in family life. Sickness, disease, mental stress, and spiritual emptiness go unattended. Wretched existences constitute the lifestyle behind the doors of many of the affluent appearing homes. Through those doors is in an open world of ministry for Christians, but millions of church members have never approached them.

We pray for people to be saved. Jesus said, "Go out and get them." They will be lost while we pray. Christ can only speak to them through us. We are His legs, His voice, His hands, His body. Today is the opportunity for Holy-Spirit-filled specialists in soul-winning. Tradition has taught us that evangelist are soul-winners, but that everyone else ministers to those already saved!

### **First, A Christian**

A pastor says, "Oh, I'm not a soul-winner. I never could deal with non-Christians. My calling is to pastor, to shepherd the flock." Who was the greatest shepherd? Jesus! He was also the greatest soul-winner. If I were a pastor, I would want to follow His example. Another person told me, "Oh no! I do not make public invitations to accept Christ. That is not my calling. My gift is to teach." Who was the greatest teacher? Jesus! He was also the world's greatest soul-winner. If I were a teacher, I would want to follow Christ's example of teaching in a way that I could convince people about Christ. I am a soul-winner because Jesus was. A preacher said to me "Oh, reaching the unsaved is not my calling at all. My gift is to teach prophecy." Who was the greatest prophet? Jesus!

He was also a soul-winner. A minister friend dared to say, “I teach types and shadows from the Old Testament. I’m not a soul winner. I minister to the church.” Who did that better than Jesus? Yet He won souls when He taught.

What I am saying is: Before you were a pastor, you were a Christian—Christlike.

First, you are called as a Christian to win souls.

Then, you may be called to pastor or shepherd a flock. Every pastor can be a soul-winner because that is what a Christian is – like Christ, and Jesus Christ was a soul winner. Before you were a teacher, you were a Christian. You have a call as a Christian to witness, to be a soul-winner. After that, you may be gifted as a teacher to teach Christians. Before you were gifted to preach or teach prophecy in the Church, you were a Christian. As a Christian, your first call is to win souls and your second call is to prophecy.

First, a Christian – a soul-winner. Then, a pastor.

First, a Christian – a soul-winner. Then, a leader.

First, a Christian – soul-winner. Then a musician, singer, prophecy teacher, whatever your gift is.

**Always first, a Christian – a soul-winner.**

### **Three Witnesses: Soul-winning first.**

This is a principle in the kingdom of God. I will share with you three proofs – three witnesses – of this fact from Luke 15:1-10.

Witness No.1: “There is more joy in heaven over one sinner that repents than over ninety-nine persons who need no repentance.” (v.7). Heaven rejoices when someone lost is found. One person who is won is a greater delight than 99 saved people. In the Kingdom of God, the priority is on the one who is lost.

Witness No. 2: In the kingdom of Heaven, the Good Shepherd is pictured, “leaving the ninety-nine” in the fold and going, “out into the mountains”, out to the dangerous places, out in the world, to seek out the lost sheep. (v.4). The Good Shepherd is not represented as staying in the fold, caring for the flock, but as going out after lost one. He does that through us today. As I said, this is a principle in the kingdom of God: Soul-winning – seeking out the lost person – first!

Witness No.3: The good woman of the house is not pictured by the Master as sitting in her chair, counting and carefully polishing her treasured coins. But rather, she is occupied day and night, seeking, “diligently till she finds the lost coin.” (v.8). She lights her candle and searches patiently in the dark corners until she finds the lost coin, then she rejoices. If the lost coin represents the unsaved, the scene is very different today. Sunday morning, the pastor polishes the “coins” which are safe in the fold – the church members. During the week, they are polished again. The lost “coins” are never sought after. Sunday after Sunday, there is more polishing of the “coins” which are already in the fold. Week after week more ministry is directed to the already saved ones. A teacher arrives who is gifted to expound the Word of God to Christians. Then the polishing is repeated every night during the series of meetings. Still there is no ministry to the non-Christians. Then a prophecy teacher arrives. Still no attention is given to the unsaved. Someone holds a series of special meetings to teach on the spiritual gifts, or on the types and shadows of the Old Testament. Still there is no outreach to non-Christians. Singers entertain the Christians, followed by more “polishing.” The lost coin is still not sought. The lost sheep are still not gone after. Constant attention is given to those safe in the fold. Meanwhile, the unsaved continue to be untouched by Christian, un-reached by soul-winners. Christ cannot reach them because Christians do not go out after them. They will only see Christ and His love through us. He yearns to save them, but He can only do it through us.

God never called anyone to any ministry that was not a soul-winning ministry. The very essence of being a Christian is to have Christ living in you – witnessing and ministering through you. The early church lived with a passion for souls. They were Christ-like. Whatever your talent in the church, you are first of all a soul-winner – first of all, a witness – then a writer, teacher, pastor, prophet, or whatever God has specially gifted you for.

You can be soul-winner – a real CHRIST-ian! Because Jesus was!



## Chapter 2 Out Where The People Are

### **We are soul-winners because the harvest is so great**

No one can look into the faces of the masses bewildered by superstitious religions, as we have done, without doing their utmost to win souls. For over three decades, we have stood on crude platforms out in the open air, before multitudes of underprivileged people, interspersed with lepers, demoniacs, witch doctors, and the hopelessly diseased. We have preached Christ to them when it was all one could do hold back tears of human emotions. Worldwide, there are millions who have not yet been reached. They constitute the vast, ripened harvest of souls waiting to be reaped. This is the second reason why we are soul-winners: Because the harvest is so great. . . .

The Bible says: “When Jesus saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.” (Matt. 9:36). Pondering these needy multitudes, He said, “The harvest truly is plenteous” (v.37). What did He do about it? He called twelve disciples, gave them power to cast out devils and heal the sick, and sent them out to help reap this harvest. Later, He called seventy more. Then before His ascension, He conferred upon all believers the power to witness with miracles in His name. The fact is this: He did something about this ripened harvest. He did not lust sit and ponder it any pray about it. He set about getting labourers out into these harvest fields.

Christ was moved with compassion when He saw the multitude. Since we are like Christ, we also can be MOVED with compassion for those who are untouched by the gospel. If we are like Christ, we will become involved doing something about sharing the gospel with them. A pastor or Christian may say, “Oh yes, we have compassion for the lost. We hold special prayer meetings each week, interceding for sinners to be saved. We dare praying faithfully that people will be drawn into our church and be saved. We are having extra meetings and a special speaker to preach to the unsaved.”

Did Christ tell us to go to Church and ring a bell, to engage a special speaker and pray for sinners to come to our church to be saved? Or did He say, “Go out into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.” (Luke 14:23)?

When we think of soul-winning, there is a principle to remember: Non-Christians do not go to the church-building. We cannot reach them inside the church-building. To communicate the gospel to them, we must go outside the church-building – out where they live, work and play. Certainly, a few can be reached in church meetings. But the rank and file of the unsaved multitudes will never go to a church-building. They will never be contacted inside the church sanctuary. They may never meet Christ or know His love unless they see Him or hear of Him through us – witnessing and sharing Him out where the people are. This truth cannot be over-emphasized: We are Christ’s body; He can only reach people through us. The believers must go to them. That is what Christ told His followers to do. That is what the early church believers did. In busy marketplaces, on street corners, at village well, by the seaside in the homes – these early Christians occupied themselves witnessing and winning souls.

### **Principle of Evangelism**

It was a never God’s plan that evangelism or soul-winning be carried on inside the church building. Evangelism can only be effective out where the people are. The church building is the place where God’s people come together to be nourished in the words of faith, taught in the doctrine of Christ, strengthened as Christians, and taught how to witness. Soul-winning is done out where the people live, work and play.

They early church stayed busy “daily in the temple and in every house; they never stooped preaching and teaching Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42). It is vital that we re-emphasize this basic principle in soul-winning. We do not go fishing in our bath-tubs. If we expect to catch fish, we cast our net away from our house, out in the streams, lakes, and waterways of the wilderness – out where the fish are. We never harvest a crop inside our dining room. To reap the ripened grain, we wield our sickle through the heat of the day, away from the house, out in the broad fields- out where the grain stands ripe and ready to be harvested.

We do not win souls by staying inside our church building. To reap the unsaved, we carry our witness away from our sanctuaries, out into the markets, onto the streets, in jails, hospitals, houses of prostitution, in the homes of people, out among them – out where they live, work and play. This is evangelism. We have dedicated over three decades of our lives to reaching people out where they are. This is why we build our platforms out in parks, on race tracks or stadium grounds, or out on fields. Hindus do not go into a church-building. Moslems do not enter a Christian temple. Shintoists and Buddhists do not attend Christian worship. The Un-churched do not come to church-buildings. But when we go out with the gospel to public places – to sea-sides, parks, stadiums, race tracks or open fields, the unsaved come by the tens of thousands – Moslems, Hindus, Buddhists, NON-Christians. We are out where they live and work and play.

After we have won them out where they are and they have been saved, then they will come into the House of God to learn more of His Word and of the Christian faith. The method of the early church was to go out where the people are. This is where Peter and John shared their testimony when the crippled man was healed – out on the streets. This is where Peter's great mass meeting was held in Jerusalem – out in the streets and busy roadways. This is where Philip preached to all of Samaria – out in the public. This is where he found the eunuch and led him to Christ – out on the trader's roadway. This is where Paul convinced the heathen – out on the island, among their people.

### **A Farmer Reaps Out In the Field**

Being raised on a farm as one of thirteen children I know what a ripened harvest looks like. I know the urgency of the harvest. When the broad field of grain became ripe we toiled relentlessly from early until late, reaping the harvest – out where it grew. Then we would go to the house where a wonderful meal was prepared to nourish our weary bodies. After we had eaten, we went back to the fields to continue reaping until nightfall. We toiled day after day, until the farthest corners of the vast fields were harvested.

Too often Christians are not taught to do this. If a program of soul-winning evangelism is attempted, it usually consists of special prayer meetings for people to be drawn into the church services to be saved. Then a visiting teacher addresses the spiritual needs of the unsaved for a few nights. But if they are not there, how can they be helped? This idea is alright, for the few who may attend and have been won this way.

However, we cannot think of reaching the world this way. The ripened masses of the unsaved cannot be harvested inside our churches because the vast majority of them will never come to our church-buildings. If we really want to reap the harvest of our generation, the secret is to rediscover the passion and zeal of the early church. Those early Christians went out across cities and villages in constant pursuit of lost souls – even at the risk of their lives. This is Christianity in action, being Christ-like. As children on the farm, suppose we had eaten to our fill. Then, with our bodies strengthened and nourished, suppose we had looked out the window and pondered the ripened grain. Suppose ominous storm clouds were gathering, and the rattle of thunder was increasing. What if we had knelt for a long afternoon of prayer, asking God to reap the harvest and to save the grain? Suppose we had earnestly prayed: “Oh, God, save this grain; just send it our way so that we can reap it right here in our dining room.” Would not that sound strange? Yet this is what many congregations have done. Too often they are not outside the church-building reaping this generation's harvest of souls. Instead, they pray. “Oh, God, save lost souls; just draw them in to our lovely church service so that we can get them saved right here.” It seems as though they are saying: “Lord, how can we risk our reputation among un-saintly people. “We dare not be seen witnessing to prostitutes, homosexuals, narcotic or alcohol dependents – out there in hell's half-acre where our reputation and the honor of our members might be at stake. “You have given us this holy sanctuary where our reputation is protected. If You will just send the unsaved to us, we will pray for them in our sanctified environment and help them to be clean like we are.”

### **Convenience Or Compassion**

We have our lovely churches, our beautiful choirs, our comfortable pews. We are well equipped. Is it fair to expect the unsaved to have to come to us to be saved? Would we not reach more of them

by going out where they are? Many Christians pray for the salvation of the unsaved, but never do anything about going out with Christ's love and giving them His message, out where they are. Yet, they call this "compassion for the lost." For hundreds of years, this philosophy has proven ineffective. I wonder if people cling to such ideas because they have not been taught otherwise? In the early church, every believer was a witness, a soul-winner. Today, thousands of church members have never been encouraged to lead a soul to Christ – the idea never occurred to them. Most of them would not know the first step to take in actually leading an unbeliever to Christ on the spot.

The early church method – God's idea – was for every believer to be a witness, a soul-winner then to go out in the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, "so that His house may be filled." We are to win people out where they are. Then they will come to the House of God to be nourished in the faith by the pastor and by teachers. Why? For one reason: So they may return to the ripened fields to join the reapers in saving the lost.

### **What A Church Can Do**

I recommend to you – whether you are a pastor, a teacher, or a church worker – that you determine not only to learn to win souls yourself, but to share with and inspire other Christians around you to do the same. New steps can be taken at once to plant ideas among those under your influence. Think of every possible idea to motivate Christian friends and acquaintances to go out where people are to share Christ. Make copies of this teaching, then make an investment in the lives of other Christians by giving them copies to inspire them. You can motivate people to success, happiness and greater self-esteem by encouraging them to reach out and lift others this way.

There are so many workable, effective ideas for reaching people and for sharing Christ with them. Buy two or three small tents or rent some halls, shops or rooms; then invite a few Christian friends to operate in each location of your area. Equip them with literature and other tools – videos, films, tapes and cassettes. Invest in ten portable audio, videocassette, or CD players. Invite ten qualified Christians to take a machine, equipped with recorded sermons, music and good gospel literature, "Jesus" film or CD and witness out in the streets, homes, play areas, bars, beaches and businesses, of ten different sections of your town.

### **The Ten Towns**

As soon as Jesus cast the demons out of the naked demoniac, and he believed on Christ, they clothed him and Jesus sent him out to witness to the ten towns called the Decapolis. (See Mark 5:19-20). "The man began to tell everyone about the great things Jesus had done for him." He was just a new believer, but what a powerful witness he was for Christ. The Lord may have ten supermarkets for you to reach, or ten convalescent homes, ten blocks, ten countries, ten villages, ten communities or two houses. So – get your idea. Dream your dream. Stock up, then go for it.

Stamp your church name and address on each tract or book and encourage each worker to go out where the people are to win them. Inspire them to witness, to pray for the sick, and to lead souls to Christ on the spot. During the day, they can canvass each area, leading many to Christ right in their own homes. At night, they can preach or teach or use their audio or videocassettes or films and win souls in their public meetings. On Sundays, these Christians workers can bring their newly won families into their own church. There the pastor can nourish them in God's Word and train them until they, too, become soul-winners in their areas.

Some Christians will want to go to jails, others to hospitals (with headsets on their cassette players so they will not disturb other patients), others to convalescent homes and other special areas. Youth groups, supplied with cassettes, books, tracts and musical instruments, can witness on street corners, in residential areas, in shopping centers, in market places – wherever there are people, out where they live, work and play. Christ can only show His love to people through Christians. Remember that each believer is Christ's body today and that He can only reach the lost through believers. A whole new vision will soon grip your Christian friends. They will gain a fresh passion for souls, a zeal for soul-winning. Paint a large banner and hang it inside your church or classroom where everyone can see it: Our Motto: Every Christian, A Witness! Our Mission: Out Where The

People Are! Banners are effective. Just sitting and reading them people will get inspired. It is an old technique, but it always works. Did you ever notice how demonstrators carry banners in their parades?

All week long, engage in a busy program of soul-winning. On Sundays and some mid-week evenings, let the soul-winner gather at the House of God to be nourished and inspired by His Word. But then let them return in their new strength to harvest again, out where the people are. This is the vision of the happy believer. This gives excitement to Christian living. This makes Christian living truly objective. This eliminates depression and loneliness. This adds enthusiasm to your church. This is evangelism as it was practiced by the early church.

Mushrooming all around us, in every city and country, is a generation un-reached by the gospel – religious in many ways, but unaware of the reality of Jesus Christ. This is the ripened harvest. Christ can only reap that harvest through us. We are His body today. This is the second reason we are soul-winners: The harvests truly is great.

## **Chapter 3 Here Am I**

### **We are soul-winners because the laborers are so few?**

“Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.” (Is. 6:8). World population is increasing at the rate of over seventy million people per year. Do you know that less than three million of that increase is being touched by the gospel? It is fair estimate that of the six billion people alive on the earth today, there are about three billion souls who have never heard the gospel. This represents nearly half the world’s population, including tribal people who speak over 3,000 different languages. A lost world is racing toward eternity at a terrifying speed.

On an average, Moslems send 4,000 teachers south of the Sahara desert each year. They have been converting the Africans to Islam at a much faster rate than the Christians have been winning them to Christ. Scientific materialism and atheism are everywhere, opposing the Christian message. The golden opportunity for Christian is to reap this vast human harvest with renewed enthusiasm and dedication.

### **Looking On The Fields**

Jesus said, “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.” (John 4:35). Again He said, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray you therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest.” (Matt. 9:37-38). We have looked and have seen the harvest fields. We have prayed for more laborers. But above all, we are giving our lives, reaping this harvest. That is why we are soul-winners: Because the laborers are so few. While 94% of all ministers of the gospel in the world are preaching in comparative comfort to the 9% English-speaking people, a lonely 6% of them are struggling to meet the spiritual needs of the remaining 91% of the world!

We have chosen to give the best of our lives to sharing Christ where the need is greatest and where the workers are fewest. That is why we have taken every possible step to multiply our lives by producing and providing tools for evangelism for the church of this generation, around the world. By recording our voices on magnetic tape, videocassettes and film (with the help of anointed national interpreters), we can reach hundreds of tribes simultaneously, regardless of the many different dialects they may speak. When a national Christian—perhaps one who has not yet been trained to preach well—switches on a good cassette unit, another proficient soul-winner is in the making. After a few weeks, our message is absorbed by that worker and our manner of evangelism is learned. The unit can then be given to another untrained worker and the process is repeated. In the meantime another preacher is out proclaiming the same gospel messages. This is proving effective worldwide.

Every time a gospel tract is passed from hand to hand, the message of Life is being reproduced.

Why are we soul-winners? Because the laborers are so few.

## Chapter 4 The Choice To Win

### **We are soul-winners because of the Great commission**

The last things Jesus authorized us to do before He went away was: “Go you to all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mark 16:15) This is His authority to each of His followers. This is the greatest opportunity He offered to us. This is every Christian’s privilege, calling, purpose and ministry. When God’s love overflowed to the point that He gave His only begotten Son, it was for “the whole world”, so that “whoever believes in Him will not perish, but will have everlasting life.” (John 3:16).

### **Christ left us no privilege greater than to announce the gospel to every creature**

This is the believer’s guarantee of happiness. This is what the early Christians did day and night. They witnessed from house to house, at markets, village wells, on the busy roadways, on the streets, in meeting places, from jail cells, in dungeons, everywhere. They understood their calling. They did as Christ did. They knew He was living in them, doing through them the same things He had done before He was crucified. That is why they were called CHRIST-ians.

Many churches do not encourage this concept. Most Christians are church members, but few are witnesses. They go to their sanctuaries, but not to the byways, to tell people of Christ. There is a principle to be remembered: Non-Christians do not usually go to church. Therefore, we can never reach them inside the church building. We must go out after them – out where they are – as Jesus authorized us to do. He is in us. We are His body. He can only reach people through us.

The Great Commission of Christ is the reason behind our ministry and its entire design. Our motto is: One Way; One Job. The One Way is Jesus. The One Job is evangelism.

Every phase of each operation is aimed at reaching the unsaved – the un-churched – with the gospel, reaching them out where they are. As Christians, that has been our choice. Christ lives in us. We are His body. We want Him to win souls through us.

### **Only One Purpose**

We live and breathe for one **purpose: to share the gospel with the maximum number of people, by every means possible.**

We use not only our own voices as Christ speaks through us, but also channels of mass media, reproduction, duplication, and every form of dissemination we can utilize. We simply chose to obey Christ’s Great Commission. We accepted it as our life’s work. We chose to invest ourselves completely, sharing the gospel with every person we could reach. We have conducted almost a steady stream of public gospel crusades, preaching face-to-face to literally millions. But this was not enough. These meeting only lasted two or three hours each day. What about the other hours of those days? It dawned on us that we could write the same message that we preached. Giant presses could turn them out by the millions – by the tons – in every written language on earth. This way we could reach hundreds of millions of extra souls who would never hear the sound of our voices.

**Many of us are called to work in a job with our hands and heads but then, when the opportunity comes, to evangelize with our hearts.**

With the world’s masses becoming literate at the rate of three million per week (over 150 million per year) and with their insatiable thirst for reading material, the printing of faith literature opens the door for us to reach every literate person with the gospel message. In addition to our crusade and literature ministries, we still could do more. What about the illiterate millions of people? Most of the underprivileged masses cannot read or write. To reach these, we have utilized the remarkable sounds devices of this modern age – the audio and the video tape, the motion film and CD’s. What fantastic possibilities exist here, for both personal evangelism, as well as TV and radio outreaches to the un-churched. So we began to preach on film and on tape the same good news that we had proclaimed to millions in our audiences, and to create tools for soul-winners as well as for mass media release. Soon the wheels of two additional outreaches were rolling. Our sound production team began duplicating those anointed crusade sermons in sight and sound in scores of languages, with more being added at every opportunity. Jesus said, “Preach the gospel to every creature.”

If one nation is 95% Christian while another is 95% non-Christian, our choice is to reach the non-Christian nation. If a small field of ripened grain had a hundred reapers at work in it, while a large field had only one reaper, which field would you toil in to save the grain? You would choose the field where the need is greatest and where there are the fewest to meet the need. If ten people were lifting a log – nine on the small end one on the large end – it would be not be difficult where you would lift.

### **Opportunities Worldwide**

**You do NOT need a special call to be a soul-winner!** Your golden opportunity as a Christian is to let your light shine, to witness, to share the gospel with the unbelievers. This is your finest purpose in life. This is why it is a good decision for any professional to move to a gospel-neglected nation and operate a business or a profession where he/she can facilitate a ministry of witnessing and soul-winning. Whether you are a mechanic, pharmacist, artist, mason, dentist, photographer, plumber, carpenter, engineer or capable of any other profession or skill – re-situate yourself and your family in an un-evangelized nation. Your profession will be desperately needed and heartily welcomed. While you practice your trade or profession or skill, you can carry out a constant ministry of witnessing to non-Christians. You do not have to be a clergyman to share the gospel. This is the privilege of every believer.

These nations, tribes and areas can only learn of Christ and see His love and compassion, as Christians live and witness among them. Christ can never reach them without a body, and we are His body. He can only be seen in us. His good news can only be heard through us. He can only speak through our lips. For too long, the great business opportunities overseas have been monopolized by unsaved people. Non-Christians with a zest for adventure, rush through these open doors. They establish their businesses or agencies abroad then revel in a non-Christian lifestyle among the people. Meanwhile, Christians of integrity and high moral standards remain at home, assuming that they must have a call before they can go abroad and witness of Christ. They do not comprehend that they are Christ's body, that Christ can only reach these developing nations through human beings in whom He lives. They wait for the church to do the job, forgetting that they are the church.

Christian professionals are the ones who should take advantage of these business and professional opportunities overseas. Their careers will yield fruitful soul-winning ministries and will be instrumental in carrying out Christ's commission. Our Master asks, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? You can answer with Isaiah: "Here am I, Lord. Send me." Go and share the gospel with as many people as you can reach. The call has been given. The opportunities are plentiful. The need is urgent. Success is assured. You, as Christ's ambassador, are authorized to be involved. You need no further calling. As you begin to think about your world and inform yourself about conditions in various areas of the globe, you will be guided by God's Spirit with in you, to where the opportunity is greatest and the need for Christian messengers is the most urgent.

Paul was enroute to Asia on a certain occasion, but was forbidden of the Holy Spirit. Then he tried going into Bithynia: but the Spirit stopped them...then a vision appeared to Paul in the night. In this vision, a man of Macedonia prayed him, saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." (Acts 16:6-9). That is the kind of guidance you may receive, if you stay sensitive and alert in your spirit. Paul was already an apostle, an evangelist, going throughout his world, preaching the gospel. As he was going to yet other regions beyond, he received this guidance to Macedonia.

Often we are guided this way. Usually it happens when we are in action. Our constant understanding with our Father is this: "Lord, if there is any certain field or area or nation where You want us, show us and we will go. But if You do not, we will choose the best opportunity to reap the most fruitful harvest and we will be there reaping until You guide us elsewhere." Jesus said, "Lord, I am with you always." (Matt. 28:20). He is in us. We are His body. We go so that He can reach the people. He speaks and witnesses and ministers through us. He is concerned for the whole world.

Our orders are given: "God to ALL the world. Preach to EVERY creature."

This is our mission. Christ's words are to be acted upon – not analyzed, argued, or theorized.

## **Our Open Doors**

The unsaved world is hurting. They have problems without answers, diseases without remedies, fears without faith, guilt without pardon. Christ's last words to His followers was his authorization to go, help, heal, lift and love them – and to win them. They afford us our golden opportunity and they guarantee our success, self-esteem and total happiness in life. As we lift them, we are lifted. Healing them, we are healed. Loving them, we are loved. In serving them, we are truly serving our Lord. When we stand before Him, He will commend us: "I was hungry and you gave me meat. I was thirsty and you gave me to drink. I was a stranger and you took me in; Naked and you clothed me. I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me ....In as much as you did it unto one of the least of these.... You did it unto me." (Matt. 25:35-40).

### **These are our open doors!**

Jesus Christ died for the whole world. His blood was shed for the remission of the sins of every person on earth who will call upon Him (see Matthew 26:28). "But, how can they call on Him if they have not believed? And how can they believe on Him if they have not heard? ....So then faith (to be saved) comes by hearing .....the Word of God." (Rom. 10:14,17). You and I are the witnesses, the confessors, the testifiers, the voices, the preachers, and the instruments through which this world can hear the gospel. Christ lives and ministers through us. This is the last thing Jesus authorized us to do. It constitutes our finest and most productive lifestyle.

## **Chapter 5 The Forgotten Ones**

### **We are soul-winners because of the unfulfilled prophecies concerning Jesus' return**

It has almost become a tradition for teachers to emphasize the soon return of Christ by declaring, "Every prophecy has been fulfilled which precedes His Second Coming." But is this true? Perhaps the most important sign of all has not been fulfilled. That sign concerns you and me. It involves us as Christians and our ministry as witnesses. Jesus specified several "signs of His coming"; among them false Christ's, wars, nations in conflict, famines, pestilence's, earthquakes, persecutions, deceit, lack of consecration. (See Matthew 24:4-12). Then He added, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matt. 24:14). Christ's last words, before He returned to the Father, were – in essence: "Go now to all nations and proclaim to every creature the good news. As soon as you do this, I shall return." Has this been done yet?

I can imagine impetuous Peter nudging John and saying, "Come on John. Let's hurry. This won't take long. Then He'll come back to us." The early church understood their mission. Not only the apostles, but each believer was a witness.

Day by day – in houses, on streets, at village wells and markets, on roadways – they preached Christ and won souls. Their objective was to reach "every creature and "all nations as rapidly as possible – in spite of deadly opposition –because as soon as they finished, Jesus Christ would return. They knew that Christ was not dead, but lived in them, doing the same things He did before He was crucified. They understood that Christ could only speak and witness through them.

This concept of soul-winning so motivated the early Christians that they spread the gospel testimony across most of their known world. Down across the Mediterranean, the message went until one time North Africa was dotted with Christian places of worship.

Braving storms, dangers at sea, perils of ancient travel, and every conceivable hardship, they spread the message with unequalled bravery. Then instead of charting camel caravans south of the Sahara into the African jungles, or pressing eastward beyond the continental mountain barriers, or northward to the pagan tribes, they became more interested in conserving what they had. **They failed to press on to the uttermost parts.**

Conventions began to replace evangelism. Doctrinal disputes supersede personal witnessing. Soon the church began to lose power and sank into the Dark Ages.

The decline came when Christians lost the basic concept of Christ in you. They no longer considered themselves individually as Christ's body and as His voice. They created religious organizations, calling those entities "the church." Darkness prevailed and Christ was not shared with unbelievers.

It was hundreds of years later when Martin Luther perceived that "the just shall live by faith." (Heb. 10:38) and the Reformation began. The church began her slow rediscovery of early church evangelism. The Wesley's, preaching sanctification, followed by the 20th century revival of the baptism in the Holy Spirit, were further steps in the slow revival of effective Christianity.

From God's viewpoint, these truths were unveiled afresh so that Christians might be empowered to witness in "all the world", among "all nations", "to every creature" – and thus bring back the King.

### **They Left The Forgotten Ones**

**But the church did not hold God's viewpoint.** Tradition concerning Christ's return blinded them to the purpose of Pentecost. Rather than witnessing with power to the unsaved in houses, on streets, in markets – out where the people are – they segregated themselves with innumerable sectarian barriers and denominational labels. They left the forgotten ones to their own pitiful fate while they withdraw into religious communities and councils. They ignored the cry of the un-reached, defending their doctrines, proselytizing members and placating themselves with their own religious ceremonies. As a whole, church members have not skilled themselves in going out where the unsaved world lives.

We can never witness to the world – to the masses of unsaved multitudes – from within our sanctuaries. Non-Christians do not go to church. The church was commissioned to go to the people: "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city. Go out into the highways and hedges. Go into all the world. Go to every creature." Jesus told us to go out where the people are and to win them exactly as He did – not in religious sanctuaries, but out where they live, work and play.

Has this been done? Has this gospel been preached, "as a witness unto all nations" – as Christ said shall be done prior to His return? Over one half of our generation is un-reached by the gospel. They have never heard the good news evens once. They are the forgotten ones of our time.

### **Why should anyone hear the gospel twice before everyone has heard it once?**

Over two thousand tribes have never had a gospel witness. Reaching these people is, therefore, the sign which Christ foretold, but which has not yet been fulfilled. This is the sign which concerns you and me. We are authorized to reach the un-reached with the gospel of Christ. This is why we are doing everything we can to win souls and to encourage every other Christian to be a soul-winner. This is why we have developed a whole arsenal of tools for evangelism. With these, we equip soul-winners around the world to increase their soul harvest as they go out in search of these forgotten ones. These were Christ's last words to us. This was the only thing He left us to do. God will not allow the angels to do what He has planned for you to do. Has the church accomplished this yet?

### **Learn From Revolutionaries**

What an object lesson political revolutionaries are for Christians. Did you ever think of it? They invade and infiltrate developing nations. Their leaders retreat to the hills, the jungles, the swamps, and from there impose controls on local tribes. Once entrenched among these forgotten people where disease and poverty are rampant, they organize guerrilla bands and begin their hit and run harassment. First, villages; then towns and cities; their aim is always a national takeover. These political and self-seeking leaders go to the very people which the church has often neglected. They pay any price and make any sacrifice to live in the most difficult areas.

The modern gospel messenger has not been equipped or encouraged to reach these people. In general, they would scarcely survive in such areas, so these tribes have been left without Christ. Whereas, the insurgents send in their teachers to live completely indigenous and make the utmost sacrifice – the life itself – to organize these tribes into forces for their purposes.



What the church has not done, revolutionaries have done. The very people who have been neglected by the church – have become a hot-bed for enemy seed sowing. What an example they are to the Christian Church. Insurrectionists go where the church has not gone and mobilize the people for their harassment teams and take over nations. Yet Christian teachers take the position: “All signs are fulfilled. Come quickly, Lord Jesus.” Can this be the attitude of a Christian?

### **Our Unfinished Task**

Jesus said in Mark 13:10, “The gospel must first be published among all nations.” There are over 3,000 languages spoken and over a third of them do not yet have single gospel portion published in them. Has the church done what Christ said must first be done? Sometimes it is argued that: “Every nation has had the gospel at one time or another.” Evidently our Lord knew such voices would be raised. In the book of revelation, He showed the Apostle John things to come. John’s words are vital for the soul-winner. He writes: “After this I beheld, and look, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; “And cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God which sits upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” (Rev. 7:9-10). This is the multitude of the redeemed, gathered to worship before God’s throne. And it will be as John saw it. Among this multitude were those from “all nations.” It mentions “nations” first. Some say, “I’m sure that all nations have heard the gospel.” Yes, perhaps, but the vision was more specific than that. The Holy Spirit went on to detail “...all kindreds, and people and tongues.” If Christ returned today, this scene could not be as John saw it. To be included in that multitude, they must hear the gospel, believe it, and be redeemed through the blood of the Lamb.

John said, “I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.” (Rev. 14:6). “But, Paul asks, “how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” (Rom. 10:14) And how can they hear Christ’s gospel if He cannot speak through us? We are His body today – His lips, His voice. We are to go and let Christ speak through us to them. This is the way they can hear and believe.

Over a thousand people-groups or language-groups have not heard the gospel, not even once. Christ has not been able to reach them because Christians have not gone to them; and He will not send angels to do what He wills to do through us. Over a third of the “tongues of the world” have not yet had the gospel published in them. If Christ came today, could those hundreds of “kindreds” be there to cry, ‘Salvation to our God, and unto the Lamb.’”

### **God’s No. 1 Job**

This is why we have encouraged so many thousands of national sons and daughters of the soil – national gospel ministers who have been called to go and live among these un-reached areas and tribes and to preach the gospel to them. This is soul-winning. This is evangelism – what Christ authorized us to do. This is ministering life among the forgotten ones.

We talk of Christ’s Second Coming, while millions have never heard of His first coming. We insist on second blessings, while these forgotten ones have never tested of a first blessing. We argue about a refilling, while multitudes have never experienced a first filling. Is this fair? Should those on the front row receive a second serving before the hungry ones on the back rows have received a first serving? Once these forgotten ones are remembered, as they should be, those prophecies will be fulfilled and Jesus will return for His church. That is why we are soul-winners – to bring back the King.

## **Chapter 6 Top Priority**

**We are soul-winners because we do not want the blood of the unsaved on our hands!**

As a young Christian, one of the Bible portions which impressed me much was Ezekiel 3:17-20.

God specifically speaks to His servants about the purpose of sharing His message with people so they can be blessed. “I have made you a watcher.....give warning from me. “When I say to the wicked, you shall surely die; and you give no warning. ....to save lives; the wicked shall die in their iniquity; But their blood will I require at your hand.”

Again in Ezekiel 33:6, God repeats this message. “If the watcher sees the sword come, and blows not the trumpet, and the people are not warned; if the sword comes and takes any person from among them, they are taken away in their iniquity: “But their blood will I require at the watcher’s hand.”

Then in Ezekiel 33:8, the same idea is re-emphasized.

Here are three witnesses to let us know that we can do something about the unsaved that will cause them to be saved instead of being lost. I am a great believer in applying Scriptures in a personal, practical way. Let’s read one of these verses made applicable to the soul-winner today: “I have made you a watcher. Therefore, hear the word at My mouth and give warning from Me. “When I say to sinners, You shall surely die, and you give them no warnings, nor speak to warn them of their sinful ways, to save their lives; the same sinners shall die in their iniquities. But their blood will I require at your hand! “Yet if you warn sinners and they turn not from their sinfulness, nor from their sinful ways, they shall die in their iniquities. But you have delivered your soul.”

### **This Motivated My life**

“Their blood will I require at your hand.” Each time we read these words, we review our priorities. That Scripture has motivated us since I was a teenager. We do not want the blood of the unsaved required at our hands. This is another reason we are soul-winners. This is why we share the gospel. In the words of the Apostle Paul: “Woe unto me I do not preach the gospel.” (1 Cor. 9:16). We do not want the blood of the unsaved on our hands – either at home or abroad. So we choose to be soul-winners.

### **It’s Up To Us**

We do not pretend that just some of us can win the world to Christ; but we are involved in evangelism as though God’s plan depended on us alone. If we cannot win everyone, we shall certainly win some – and we shall minister as though the reaping depended entirely upon us.

We are soul-winners because we have taken God’s Word seriously. We do not want the blood of the unsaved to ever be required at our hands. It is as simple as that! In my estimation, the most important opportunity in the life of any Christian – not just ministers, but all Christians – is to witness to the unsaved. Christ only reaches them through men and women in whom He lives. Soul-winning is not a pastime or a hobby. Soul-winning is Christianity in action every day.

As soon as we are saved, we can share Christ with others. We are Christ’s voice, His mouthpiece. If we are silent, Christ is silenced. He only speaks through us. This is not something we do when it is convenient. Soul-winning is our number one priority in life – our life’s greatest opportunity.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful if soul-winning became the major theme of every Bible school, every youth group, every Sunday School, every Bible conference and convention?

Christians are successful in every conceivable art, trade or profession. They can also be successful in soul-winning because this is the number one priority of every believer. More of them would succeed at this if more were taught that they, as individuals, are Christ’s body and that Christ only ministers and speaks through the body in which He dwells – the believer.

### **Measure The Vision**

Many people are localized in their vision. They see their community. They think of their church or denomination but have no interest beyond that. Others have a broader vision, spreading out to their state or province or tribe. They are concerned with evangelizing that area, but do not feel responsible beyond those limits. Still others see their whole country and will give and pray for the evangelization of their own nation. But even they are local in their vision. They are what we call nationalistic in their soul-winning interests.

There are others who have an even broader vision that reaches out to their continent. They are interested in continental evangelism and will make any sacrifice to reach their continent. But even they are localized. Then there are those Christians who have God's vision – a world vision, a John 3:16 vision. They see Europe, Asia, Africa, North and South America, Australia, the Island nations – all the world, “every creature”. They have a trans-world vision.

With jet aircraft, TV and satellite communication, we live on a small crowded planet (a global village). As Christians, our vision can be a world vision. Racial and political barriers are as foreign to God's plan as denominational and sectarian walls ever were. Christians no longer ask what church one belongs to or what creed one ascribes to. They ask, “Do you know Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as your personal Savior and Lord?”

### **Probe The Priorities**

We show by our actions what we feel is most important. If trans-world soul-winning is our priority, then we give it first place. World evangelism is top priority for us. It is our number one choice, the ministry nearest to God's heart, the one thing Christ authorized every believer to share in. When it is your top priority, you invest more in it than in anything else. When it is your top priority, you allot more of your time to it than anything else – more of your energies, your plans, your efforts, your thoughts, your money, your very life. World evangelism is top priority for us because it is the one way we can make sure that the blood of the unsaved will not be required at our hands.

I said this is top priority for us because we take it in a personal sense and because Christ includes every Christian, every born-again child of God in His Great Commission. It does no good to outline a fine doctrine or theory or proposition unless it is personally expressed in a lifestyle!

### **The Best Outreach Program**

Our top priority is soul-winning. Soul-winning is not reserved for the so-called full-time ministers. No, you and I can do it. It is our priority, our life, and our passion. Christians have been inadvertently impressed that only professional clergy persons can serve as ministers. But Christ dwells in every believer. Every Christian is His witness. Every believer is His mouthpiece. Christ wants to speak through every believer who can talk or walk. We are His witnesses! Millions who will not listen to the clergy will hear a genuine personal witness from a consecrated lay person or sincere believer. With the tools we have available today, any Christian can be a successful and happy witness for Christ.

### **Just A Tool**

An old man wept as he grasped my hand. Showing me his battered tape recorder, he said, “Doctor, you're my preacher. I carry you with me on tape from house to house, into hospital, jails, and convalescent homes. I put you on that old machine and you preach for me. Then I pray for the listeners and they get saved and healed. Oh, how glad I am to be a soul-winner. Thank God, in my autumn years of life I've learned to win souls.”

Think what could be done if every believer would become a practical soul-winner. We consider it our top priority to do everything we can to win souls. We choose soul-winning. We think soul-winning. We dream about it. It is our passion, our zeal. It motivates us. As we yield our all to Christ Who is in us, we find our greatest joy in witnessing of Him because it is He Who is at work within us. We keep remembering the extent to which God's love for us was proven. “His love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.” (Rom. 5:5). And we are inspired by the same passion that motivated Him. Since our youth, we have dreamed of ways to witness for Christ. Visions inspired us to prayer. Faith put action to those prayers. Soon those dreams became living, pulsating realities.

The starting point, however, is to believe enough in the Scriptures and in the message of our Lord in dedicate oneself to share it with others. This motivates one to think and to dream of ways to win souls. There are innumerable ideas for soul-winning which any believing Christian can implement. I believe that any sincere Christian can do things that can be really effective to win lost souls. All thinkers are creators. All achievers in life are dreamers, thinkers, planners – then doers.

## **Some Criticize – Some Evangelize**

People who get ideas and get things done are usually criticized. Criticism accompanies success. Critics usually dog the trail of achievers. While some criticize, others evangelize. Those who succeed learn to never react to criticism. They adopt a positive attitude towards it. If we are reactionary, we will fight back to justify ourselves. When we do, we are predestined to lose. WE will fail.

All those who are a success in life learn that criticism is really admiration in a subtle form. People usually only criticize the person who is out front. The failing, unsuccessful, non-achieving person commands no attention and therefore draws no opposition. Top priority for the successful person is to get the job done. We have learned that if we set high goals and achieve them, critics may ridicule us outwardly, but inwardly they are challenged to become stronger, more daring themselves.

We have learned that criticism is a cheap commodity, always plentiful, and certainly undeserving of our reaction. There are two classes of people: those with problems and those with solutions. We choose to be people with solutions. The person with solutions is the person in demand. Anybody can create problems, discuss them, analyze them, and categorize them. Only the thinker – the creator, the achiever, the person of action – has solutions.

One of the best bits of advise we ever read was the statement: “Don’t fight the problem; get on with the solution.” We have not spent our time holding conferences on how to win in evangelism. We have been getting on with the solution – spreading the gospel. We have been getting on with the solution – cooperative soul-winning. We have not only talked about the need for Christian literature. We have been supplying it. That is the solution. We have not spent our time analyzing the problems of reaching the un-reached. We have been applying the solution – helped an army of gospel messengers and providing tons of soul-winning tools. The enemies of the gospel have their eyes on the masses; but we do too, and we are doing something about it – something that works!

You can spend your life fighting the problems involved in soul-winning. What the world needs is ACTION. National evangelism is a solution that is working, so we get on with it. The "Jesus"-films are a solution. Millions are being reached through them. Furthermore, we utilise recorded audio and video gospel messages, mobile evangelism units, CD's, and tons of literature. We are getting on with solutions, not analyzing problems.

### **Whose Opinion Counts Most?**

A famous statesman once said: “It is not the critic who counts: not the one who points out how the strong person stumbled, or where the door of deeds could have done better. “The credit belongs to the one who is actually in the arena – in action – whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood, who errs and comes short again and again; but who is spent in a worthy cause, who knows the triumph of high achievement – but who fails while daring greatly.”

Yes, criticism abounds. Critics come and go, rise and fall; but problem solvers are the pillars of society. It is not enough to bewail the sinfulness of the generation: you and I have the solution. We are Christian witnesses. We are soul-winners. You can equip yourself with a supply of good gospel literature. Carrying it with you and distribute it to people. Get some good gospel audio cassettes. Invest a small amount and get yourself cassette players. Go out where the people are. Be a witness for Christ. We are soul-winners because we do not want the blood of sinners required at our hands.

After you discover the joy of soul-winning in your own area or nation, plant some of the money God has entrusted you with to sponsor some tools for soul-winners who do cross-cultural evangelism. That way you will be involved in evangelism abroad and will share the reward for every soul won by that witness. Sponsor a quantity of literature for distribution in neglected villages. Anointed messages on cassettes, books, videos, CD's and tracts will always be effective. They never tire, change their message, argue, become immoral, or compromise. They are among the best gospel messengers in the world. They will go as your substitutes. Whatever has blessed you can bless so many others abroad, and you will share the reward for winning them to Christ.

It is not enough to just think or talk or pray about it. Put action to your convictions. Do something today while the fire is burning. Never let it go out!!!

## EVANGELISM AND CELL GROUP MEETINGS

Cell evangelism is so effective for this very reason: it organizes personal evangelism. The cell structure greatly facilitates the organization of personal evangelism because it provides common interest or a contact point from which to talk to people who don't know Jesus. Since every cell has a theme or vision, it helps rally people together. According to information I have been exposed to, and from my personal experience, I would say that one out of every hundred people will attend a church service after responding to an altar call in a crusade or some other form of Christian mass outreach. Why such a low number? Because they don't have any people they know in the church fellowship. Have you noticed that if a person doesn't make a friend within the first few visits to church, they usually don't return. The Christian Church and fellowship is all about relationships. The more relationships a person has with people in a church, the greater the likelihood that they will stay in that church. The cell fosters and develops relationships so people feel comfortable about being disciplined and thus are more likely to remain in church or fellowship. A cell works from two directions – personal contacts and similar interests. Let's take a look at both of these.

### Evangelization through Personal Contacts

Personal contacts are people that you have relationship with through family and work – people that you already have contact with on a regular basis. These people are always the easiest to reach because they are people that have a relationship with you. They already know you and trust you. Every time someone comes to Jesus there is a whole little community that is affected by that salvation. The testimony of one sinner coming to Jesus has the potential of affecting several hundred people.

According to funeral homes and restaurants, one person has the ability to affect a very large number of people. The Restaurant Association of a certain country says that one bad meal can affect as many as 2500 patrons! Why? The patron who received the bad meal will tell someone, who in turn will tell someone else until the story has reached out into the community. Indeed, it has been known to either make or break a new business. I hope you can begin to see how powerful the cell concept is in terms of affecting large numbers of people.

If "word of mouth" can work that way in offense, it can work that way for good! Imagine this....a man through a friend is invited to a cell group meeting. While at this meeting he receives Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Within a few weeks that man's life starts to make some major changes. He feels a need to be more sensitive to the needs of his wife and children. Selfish habits start to fade away in fervor of acts on behalf of others. Vices or carnal desires start to give way to a greater need to attend church fellowship and get to know God better. He begins to get control over undesirable things in his life. As a result of all of this, those close to the man want to know what is going on his life. Indeed, they begin to wonder if they might be changed for the better like him. Every time a person receives Jesus through this man's testimony, the process starts all over again.

Witnessing becomes the starting point for evangelism. We are living epistles or living testimonies of Christ. People start asking us what we have because they see something in us they need and want. Evangelism is not knocking someone in the head with the Bible! On the contrary, it is sharing with a person who is asking you how they can also be changed. It's natural, easy and fun! Once a person gets experience testifying to those around him, they usually become confident enough to begin witnessing to others in their life.

While it is true that this witnessing process goes on in regular, non-cell churches, it is also true that gaining entry into these churches is tougher. Why? Because the traditional church has a hard outer shell which makes penetration into the church-life and fellowship more difficult. No, it is not actually more difficult to walk into a traditional church building, but it is more difficult to find your place in the "society" of that church. Weaving through the maze of special interest groups and little clicks can be quite difficult. That's why so few are actually added to the Body of Christ after all the crusades, special events, evangelism campaigns, prayer festivals, advertising, etc. After a giant crusade at huge expense, a new couple attends church for the first time...only to drop out a month

later because they didn't make any friends. So you see, the size of the church is not really the issue; it's the openness and friendliness that counts. Unfortunately, the friendliest church in the world cannot achieve its goal if the hand shake at the front door is not followed up by an invitation to a home.

A cell church, on the other hand, has an easy entry threshold. The soft spot is the home meetings; a house environment is much less intimidating than a church building. Remember, the number one reason new people drop out of church is because they don't find relationships there. I cannot stress the importance of relationships enough. They are imperative not only to new growth, but to continuing church attendance and participation. Without relationships, the newcomer grows cold and eventually drops out, leaving the church on a negative note. Now instead of that couple reaching their community for Christ, they become a drop-out statistic of the traditional church structure. According to the statistics that happens to 99 out of every 100 people. The church's answer to this problem is usually to spend more money instead of instituting a superior strategy. According to a recent report only one out of a hundred stay in a church and in turn witness to their friends. This type of evangelism borders on poor judgement and at the very least bad stewardship.

I used to be marketing director for a larger successful church that spent millions in advertising. The Television budget alone was monstrous. With all of the exposure, plus giant Christian events and a very expensive church building, they were unable to hold onto the people. No matter how many people came in the front door almost as many left out the back door. While marketing director at this church we conducted a little survey on our first time visitors. Ten percent said that they attended the church for the first time because of what they had seen on television. Five percent attributed it to other things such as radio, advertisements and direct mail. An overwhelming 85% said it was because someone had asked them to attend. Where would you invest your money? In the 10% return, the 5% return, or the 85% return?

People and relationships are where the emphasis should be. This is why the cell church is superior in retaining souls and multiplying. The cell church puts the most emphasis on building relationships. These positive relationships in turn spawn more positive relationships as the cell church grows. Ask any marketing executive or advertising agent about 'word of mouth' advertising. It is the single most powerful tool in advertising. If a product can become what's called a household name, it will be successful. What advertising message is coming out of the mouths of your congregation or fellowship members? Once people start talking about Jesus spontaneously to their friends and inviting them to their cell group or church – that is equal to much money spent on advertising. The end result is more souls. Instead of one out of a hundred sticking, it increases to a phenomenal one out of two. Fifty percent is so much stronger than the traditional 1%. Make your harvesting efficient with a cell church structure approach!

Incredible as it seems, most traditional churches put their money on the things that get the smallest return. Are they going for souls or prestige? Is the goal making the pastor's name a "household word" or the name of Jesus? What is the motivation? Is it a television program or church growth? Is it fame or winning the lost? As a pastor, the answers to these questions confirmed that cell evangelism is the only way to go. Instead of invitations coming through the television, radio or the newspaper, it comes from a friend. "Stranger" evangelism is just too costly and ineffective to justify its continued utilization by the church. That is why the cell revolution is taking over. It's not only a better, more effective, less costly and less politically sensitive way to win souls, but it is also the way Jesus evangelized!

### **Evangelization Through Like Interest:**

Every cell has a central point of interest for various reasons – for direction, motivation and evangelization. The cell is a tremendous aid to evangelism because it has the potential of attracting people completely outside the Christian circle – people who's family and friends have no religious heritage. Cell vision has the ability to draw in the un-churched that would never be reached in any other way.

In the church where I pastor, I try to help leaders choose positive visions based on victorious visions verses negative visions. For example, instead of having a group for cancer victims, you have a group of intercessors for hospital visitation. Practically speaking, if a person believing for healing joins a group that visits hospitals or intercedes for the sick, it is more effective than if they join a group believing for their healing. What happens when they get healed? Do they leave their friends and the group? No! The same goes for other groups. Instead of a “single mom's” group you could have a “parent's” group. That way when one of the mothers gets married, they can still stay in the same group. Always keep the group’s vision positive if at all possible. I know there are exceptions, but look how powerful it is to belong to a positive group instead of a “need” group.

From the point of evangelism, it is also important that the cell's focus never compromise righteousness or integrity. To make an exaggerated point, a group’s vision would not be an international beer club or a satanic rock group just because it reached out to un-reached groups! Although Jesus is always the focus, having a cell vision unarms a person. It helps lower defenses so that they might receive. A cell vision establishes a common interest upon which to establish a reason to communicate until the greater reason – Jesus can emerge.

In my younger days, just the word “Jesus” was enough to totally intimidate me. I believe that’s why there are so many names of God. “The man upstairs,” is not really a proper definition of God, but people without a personal relationship with God find it intimidating to speak directly about the Father, Son or Holy Spirit. Reaching people outside your circle of friends or work acquaintances is a little different than reaching people through like interest. All like interest really does is provide a platform for friendship. Talking to a stranger about a common interest develops an interest in one another, which in turn develops into friendship. It all gets down to fellowship and personal relationships.

### **Follow-Up**

The goal of all follow-up is the same – discipleship. Evangelism involves bringing a lost person to Christ. Follow-up involves bringing them to church or the fellowship. Discipleship involves training that person to be successful at evangelism and follow-up. Evangelism is the process to get a person to attend the cell or church service the first time – then the follow-up process begins. It doesn’t necessarily involve praying a prayer of salvation with a person. If you can get them in church for the service, the Word of God will bring them to a decision. People being followed up can be broken down into three categories: the non-churched (which usually means: the lost); people looking for another church; and those involved in cults.

Even though the follow-up process can begin in different locations, it needs to begin with the same information. Once a person makes a single visit to either a church service or a cell, information should be gathered on them. A simple card requesting sufficient information so that the person may be contacted, preferably at home, will do quite nicely. This “information card” should be given to the cell leaders still developing their groups further. If the first visit is to a cell group, however, this step need not happen. Once the information card is in the hand of the cell leader, an intense follow-up should be set in motion. It is critical to contact the person or family that visited as soon as possible after their visit. Many choose to call the same or following day in addition to sending a personal letter thanking them and inviting them to return. The challenge is letting that person know that he or she is special to God and your church without pestering or annoying them. Because of self-condemnation, guilt and fear, a kind letter of invitation or a friendly call can be perceived as pushy.

The real key to follow-up is knowing just how hard to push. That is why a cell group encounter has a greater advantage than a church service because it gives leadership greater insight into the character and personality of the person being followed up.

Follow-up or tracking new believers is a little different for friends and family than it is for following up people that come in because of common interest. When our friends or acquaintances are drawn into the church, follow-up is a natural. We are already in regular communication with friends and after all, that is all follow-up is – communication, motivation, and encouragement.

Follow-up with a new acquaintance based on a common interest, however, involves more dedication and energy. The wonderful excuse is the common interest. The Jesus-connection, especially for the un-churched, is many times too intense for most people. A conversation about computers or children followed by a gentle reminder about this weeks meeting is much more comfortable for most people.

Another delicate contact is when a person commits to attending a meeting, especially a cell meeting and doesn't show up. That almost always requires a personal visit. A definite 'no-no' is to ask where they were. That is a very confrontational question. If someone committed to attend a meeting then he or she knows why you are paying them a visit; you don't need to compound the guilt or condemnation by asking hard questions.

So what do you do in situation like this. Initiate a light conversation, one in which you causally bring up how the meeting went and what it did for you personally; this will go much further than condemnation. A personal visit will go a long way in establishing trust and friendship to a person on the 'outside' of Christian faith. Anybody not in Christ is hurting and needs help. Many are so lost they don't know where to start. A new Christian friend is an entrance to a new world of hope. Fears and anxieties keep people from fulfilling their commitments. That is the very reason they never went to church in the first place.

Another caution is apostatizing. There are many reasons why people look around for another church. In my experience, "program based" church-goers usually experiment with a cell church because they are looking for fellowship and greater fulfillment in their Christian walk. This group is the most unique and the most difficult. They are definitely not the target group for various reasons. They arrive with all kinds of baggage requiring lots of counseling and love. Since people don't usually leave a church if they are fulfilled and content, taking in people from other churches usually means taking in hurting, offended people. Unlike the new believers, they have been hurt by the very institution that they went to for help. The "coming from another church" group is the easiest, however, to follow-up because they have already made a commitment. The real work with that group starts with discipleship. A strong orientation about how cells work and the vision of the church are critical to successful transformation of people coming in from other churches.

Lastly, people coming out of a cult form the third group. Many times people involved in cults are sincere about serving God, but they have been deceived. The fact that they attended any meeting or service beyond their own, means there has been a significant break through. It is also a very fearful time for them when they break out of a cult like: the Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, Bahia, Satanism and witchcraft to name a few. Separation victims of cults and the occult requires much more information than this study contains. It should suffice to say that anyone coming out of a cult needs special attention and aggressive follow-up.

Once the follow-up process is started, it is very important that it be followed through to its completion. Completion of the follow-up process means that the person is in discipleship in the cell or regularly attending church services. Until one of these two things occur, follow-up should be continued. Following up on someone for more than two months without any success usually means "don't bother me any more." Follow-up on those from cults could go on longer while those from other churches much shorter. The goal is not to shift sheep but to save the lost.

### **In Summary:**

Evangelization through cells is many times more successful than using the same efforts and finances in mass media. If the church is behind the cell leadership and will finance their evangelism effort, I promise the church will grow as more people will come to the church and will stay.



# HOW TO DEVELOP SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE CELL

Relationships are the essence of the quality of our lives. Whether we are single, married, widowed, or somewhere in between, our relationships and friendships form the backbone that gives meaning to our lives. Moms, dads, brothers, sisters, friends, co-workers, teachers, students, bosses, room-mates, employees, teammates – all are people with whom we have relationships. In every case problems are their middle name. There has never been, nor ever will be, a relationship free of challenges.

How do we cope with relationship problems? Volumes have been written on this subject. Since the days of Adam and Eve, human beings have been trying to gain some insight into how we can improve our relationships. And since Adam and Eve, we've definitely had a tough time of it. If you are married, have children, or work you have relational challenges.

Troubled relationships are not limited to those between human beings. After they sinned in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had great difficulty in their relationship with God. In Genesis 3:9, God's first question to man was, "Adam, why are hiding?" When God asked Adam the critical question about whether he had eaten forbidden fruit from the tree, Adam admitted that he had but put the blame on Eve. Eve also made excuses for eating the fruit. Since that day, relationships between people, as well as between people and God, have been troubled.

Why all the trouble in relationships? Part of the problem is that we humans are so wonderfully complex. Not only do we have trillions of cells fusing into a biochemical matrix called flesh, we are also spiritual beings formed into the likeness of an enormously complex God. No saint has ever had a neat little life. The apostles Peter and Paul had relationship problems and so did many other people in the Bible. Everybody needs help to have better relationships.

In this study I want to examine the basis when it comes to relations within a cell group setting. Here are four simple ideas to consider when wrestling with relational problems within the cell.

First, most of us spend much of our time responding or reacting to problems in a relationship rather than finding out what the problem really is so that we can creatively work toward some resolution. Another way we handle problems is to talk about them or gossip and complain instead of working in love to solve the problem.

Second, when describing a relational problem, think of that problem in the form of verbs rather than nouns. In other words, don't just say that he or she is stupid; that only labels the person and makes problem solving more difficult. Instead, define the actions of that person, exactly what it is, that bothers you.

Third, beware of "either/or" categories. Saying, so and so is either stupid or a fool does no one any good. We want to be 'right' so badly that we lose the ability to solve problems. A win/lose situation usually means that both parties will eventually lose.

Fourth, each of us is 100 per cent responsible for all of our relational difficulties. This may seem like a shocking thing to say; nevertheless, it 's true. I found this principle shocking myself the first time I heard it. A friend of mine and his wife were going through great difficulties. I was spending much time with my friend trying to listen and help him. My wife shocked me by saying, "that man will never even begin to solve his problems with his wife until he realizes that it is 100 percent his fault." I quickly came to his defense spouting the wife's problem areas. At that my wife informed me that the wife is also 100 percent responsible for the relationship!

Too often we think our relationships are percentages such as 50/50 or 60/40 or even 70/30. In reality however, the mathematics of relationships are really 100/100. Going halfway has never been God's solution for a relationship. Each of us is totally responsible for the relationship because the only person that you can ever change is yourself. If you want to help your spouse, child, friend, or whomever, then work on the problems rather than the symptoms. Recognize again and again that the only person you have the real power to change is yourself. Nothing is a greater obstacle to being in good relationships with others than being ill at ease with yourself. When you want more

passion in your life and more zest put more into yourself and your relationship with God. If you rely solely on others to provide your passion, you'll usually end up frustrated.

Self-love is a concept too often confused with vanity and pride. We think it's selfish to love ourselves. When in reality it is selfish not to. When we don't love ourselves we take from others in order to fill our own emptiness. It is important to realize that the better you feel about yourself, the better you'll feel about your relationships. All of our relationships with people begin with our relationship with God. Christ has shown Himself among us. God has made His dwelling place within us. And this is what sets us free to love each other. Unfortunately, we often expect the world or others to provide us with the kind of peace, security and love which only comes from the Kingdom God dwelling within us.

### **Realize the Importance of Relationships**

In the Chinese language, whole words are written with a symbol. Often two completely different symbols put together have a meaning quite different than either two separate components. For example, the symbols of "man" and for "woman". When combined mean "good". Likewise, when you take the symbol for "trouble" and "gathering crisis". And put together, they mean "opportunity". As the answers to life always lie in the questions, so the opportunities of life lie in our problems.

Some people have strong, loving relationships with people around them who support and enhance their lives. They are excited to discover more about relationship situations to further enhance the relationships they already have. Others are in situations where their lines of communication may have broken down in some of the most important relationships of their lives, such as their families. I must confess that at times I have been totally overwhelmed with relational problems. If we're honest, we probably all have been. While relationships add great richness to our lives, they can also add great pain. Within relationships exist some of life's most complex and most painful problems.

In Genesis, God said, "Let there be light and there was light, and God saw it was good. And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place and let the dry land appear. And it was so, and it was good. And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to separate day from night, and it was so. God saw that it was good. And God said, let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures and let the birds fly across the earth and across the firmament of the heavens. And God saw this and said it was good. And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures according to their kind. And it was so, and God said it was good. And finally, God made man in His image and He said, It is not good." That will cause you to think. God had done good so far, so what's up? In Genesis 2:18, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."

I said all that to say this... we were designed for relationships. We were made to be with each other, to grow with each other, to discover each other, and to love each other. However, it's not quite as simple as that. We must forge our relationships together. It takes a great effort and care to enjoy good relations. In order to have these good relations, we must be good at solving our problems with each other. In this light, I would like to offer a few suggestions.

### **Don't Blame**

The only person I cannot help is one who blames others. When we blame others, we make it difficult, if not impossible, to solve our problems. When problems invade our lives, and they inevitably do, we must resist the temptation to accuse others, as well as to blame ourselves or to blame God. Focus on the problems, not the person. Figure out the problem. If there have been failures, we have to confess them in ourselves and forgive them in others. Put the problem in perspective and get on with problem solving.

### **Protect or Learn**

Conflict doesn't cause problems in relationships, instead problems evolve from how we respond to conflict. When faced with conflict, we can choose to respond in two ways, either protect or learn.

We must ask ourselves if we're trying to defend and protect ourselves, or if we're trying to learn from our experiences. Seeing conflict as opportunity rather than calamity puts it into a new light. You may think this sound ridiculous, if not impossible, but we must face emotional pain willingly. Yes, this does make sense. If we stop putting the blame on others and assume responsibility for our own lives, change becomes possible. Our relational problem solving will always be unsuccessful as long as our primary interest is protective. Problems will be solved and we will be changed if we commit ourselves to openness and learning.

### **Deal with Real Issues**

The Western world has been programmed very narrowly. Define problems, seek solutions, set goals, make decisions, fix things. Fix your spouse, children, or yourself. When we see something we don't like, we judge it and we want to change it rather than to understand it. We look for immediate solutions instead of seeking to understand how and why the problem arose.

It is because of this that most problems never really get solved; they are never accepted. Although hiding from problems is easier than facing them, avoidance never solved anything. There is no such thing as an "appropriate" time in relational problems. Deal with your problem now; don't wait. The Bible says not to let the sun go down on your anger. We must recognize when we have a problem and find the first available moment to discuss it while it is still in its proper proportion. The best technique I know for solving and stopping problems before they get blown out of proportion is to spend time with the person(s) involved.... talking about your feelings and the current issues.

### **Listen**

Love is a four letter word spelled t-i-m-e. The way you show someone you care for him is to spend time with them and listen intently to them. One of the best ways to demonstrate God's love is to listen to people. Listening is the key to quality cell leadership. People feel good when someone listens to them. I promise that everyone that feels like they got "heard" will feel satisfied after the meeting and they will look forward to coming to the cell meeting again the following week. That is exactly why a cell group meeting is not a Bible study; it is not a time for the leader to speak, but to listen. A good leader encourages others to speak so that they might feel satisfied and fulfilled.

### Communication is the key to success.

The word "communication" comes from the Latin root "*communus*" meaning: to have something common. Communication breaks down most often as a result of our inability to listen. According to a large survey study, the single biggest reason couples split up is the inability to be honestly with each other, to bare their souls, and to treat each other as their best friend."

Listening, surprisingly, is the most important aspect of communication. A researcher in the field claims that couples chat with each other for seventy minutes a day in their first year of marriage, dropping to thirty minutes a day in their second year then to only fifteen minutes in the fourth. His research shows that by the eighth year, a husband and wife share hardly any small talk at all and become nearly silent.

Communication, however, involves much more than words. One authority said that only 7% of our communication involves spoken word, another 38% is conveyed by body language including gestures and facial expressions, and 55% by the tone of our voice.

Listening is perhaps the most profound way you demonstrate to others that you love them. Strangely enough, listening is perhaps the most potent way we can affect another life. It is impossible to overemphasize the immense need humans have to be really listened to, to be taken seriously, to be understood. No one can develop freely in this world and have a fulfilling life without feeling understood by at least one person. Listen to all conversations of our world, between nations as well as between couples. They are for the most part dialogues of the deaf.

The most important thing we can do to solve a problem is to understand it. Unfortunately, we never listen long enough to understand what the problem really is, so we in turn are never able to solve it. Instead of listening, we simply take turns talking. To listen effectively, postpone your

desire to react, defend, or respond. The purpose of listening is to allow both of you to understand the situation more fully. Listening attentively makes people feel special.

The people I work with find it extremely helpful to get firm, concrete answers from their parents to these three questions:

1. What does it mean to you to be loved?
2. What does it take for you to feel loved?
3. What are you asking of me?

This then reveals seven levels of needs that people have to have in order to be loved:

1. Feeling safe.
2. Feeling defended
3. Feeling supported.
4. Belonging.
5. Feeling cared about
6. Feeling accepted.
7. Feeling special.

If it works with your spouse, it will work in a cell setting. Everybody wants to be loved. I believe that nothing makes people feel supported, cared about, accepted, and special as much as listening to them. Active listening is responsive, attentive, and considerate. It means listening with your eyes as well as your ears. When someone really listens to us, it gives us the freedom to continue to explore, at deeper levels, who we are and what the problem is. Love is best demonstrated by attentive listening.

### **Design Creative Questions**

We can cultivate our listening ability by designing and asking appropriate questions. For example:

- What dreams have you thrown away, or kept secret, because no one encouraged you to try it or you feared you would fail?
- If you could do anything in the world and be certain of success, what would you do?
- In what three specific ways could we improve our everyday communication? Where are we strong in communicating? Where do we hit difficulties?

In the cell group these types of questions are called "ice breakers". Questions that stimulate people to start talking and for others to start listening. The list of good questions is endless. All we need to ask are questions that deepen our relationships. Really good questions are those in which both people discover something about themselves.

### **Seven Steps to Overcoming Relational Problems:**

1. Accept ownership of the problem. Even if you believe that the other person is at fault, if you care about the relationship, it is still your problem. Once you accept ownership of the problem you will be willing to commit your time and energies to solving it.
2. Analyze the problem. Take the problem apart and identify its various components. Often this means untangling numerous problems so that you can focus on them one at a time. This is a good time to ask "dumb questions" to challenge your assumptions, to keep a broad perspective, and to avoid getting emotionally hooked.
3. Define the problem in the best terms you know. Develop a workable definition that all parties can agree to and write it down. It is critical here to separate the symptom from the real cause of the problem. Remember, the flip side of criticism is idealism. If somebody is struggling with being too cynical, that's the symptom, they need to wrestle with the problem, which is their hidden realism. In other words, you don't try to help the person become less cynical, but help him to be more realistic. That is working on the core of the problem. Likewise, anger and apathy are expressions of frustration. Frustration begets anger, and anger begets apathy. Instead of reacting to anger or apathy, listen to his or her frustration.

4. Brainstorm. What are all the possible solutions that could be employed at this time? Any time you can “make-it-fun”, you will improve not only the quantity of ideas, but the quality as well. Take this opportunity to listen intently to others. Sometimes we have to take a risk and suggest outrageous ideas. If you want change, you must be willing to think sideways, back wards, around corners, and upside-down. Limiting yourself to your regular patterns of thinking restricts you to seeing what you’ve always seen before with little chance for change or improvement in your problem solving.
5. Select a course of action to which everybody involved can commit. It is important to be able to articulate clearly why you believe this is the best selection. If you know why this is the best plan, you will be much less likely to abandon it when the way becomes difficult.
6. Implement. You’ve planned your work, now work you plan. Work lovingly, there is great joy in a well-built relationship. Remember to tap the resources of the Master. To do this, bathe your work in prayer.
7. Evaluate. This is another chance to learn from your problem, even if you weren’t successful in solving it. What you learn and how you learn it will allow you to move into deeper levels of mutual understanding and appreciation.

Relational problems are process oriented. We will always be in process, but I hope that some of these techniques will enable you to gain greater definition of your problem and to find healthy, loving solutions. Not all of these techniques recommended, however, for the cell group setting. Some of the processes given here for problem solving are best done privately between parties involved, remembering of course that singles of different sexes need to bring a friend along.

In the heat of conflict, it is easy to forget the goals of your relationship. Wanting to be right is easier than wanting to be understood or wanting to understand. These principles of relational problem solving won’t help you build defenses, but they will help you to attack the problem and not the person. You cannot afford to neglect the incredible power of love. Remember that God is love and that he, who dwells in love, dwells in God and God in him. This love makes us fearless, and where there is no fear there is true understanding.

The power of God’s love will never be contained nor understood. It is available to all and can literally produce miracles in relationships. Love is by far the most important of all. It casts out fear. It covers a multitude of sin. Love is absolutely invincible. There is no difficulty that enough love will not conquer; no disease that enough love cannot heal; no door that enough love will not open; no gulf that enough love will not bridge; no wall that enough love will not throw down; no sin that enough love will not redeem. It makes no difference how deep the trouble, or how helpless the outlook, or how muddled the tangle, or how great the mistake; sufficient love will dissolve it all! I believe that when we put God, who is Love, in the center of our relationships, He can transform them. He empowers us to influence each other’s lives.

The reason for the cell group, after all, is to better express the love of God, not just to have a bigger church! A cell setting expresses the love of God better than a traditional church setting because it provides an opportunity for people to be heard instead of only listening to someone else.

# A GUIDE TO CHRISTIAN WORKERS

## I. Commission

“Then Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and look, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ Amen.” (Matt. 28:18-20). “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8). “So you, son of man: I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore you shall hear a word from My mouth and warn them for Me. When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die!’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.” (Ezek. 33:7- 8). “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matt. 5:13-16).

## II. Compassion

The story is told that a famous singer received a huge amount of money for singing only twice. Paul and Silas sang one night in a prison. Their song was not rendered with the skill or harmony of that of world's celebrities, but its tenderness touched the heart of the keeper of the prison and echoed through the angel-crowded streets of heaven; and the listening King of kings rewarded those who sang with crowns of glorify that will gleam in beauty throughout eternal ages.

An immortal soul is beyond all price. There is no trouble too great, no humiliation too deep, no suffering too severe, no love too strong, no labor too hard, no expense too large, but that it is worth it, if it is spent in the effort to win a soul. God loves the soul more than all creation. He fashioned it after His own image, and made it like unto Himself. Every soul has departed from God and gone astray, and God has bought the soul back again with a price. That price was in, and through, and by Jesus Christ. God loves the soul with an everlasting love.

Satan hates the soul. In Satan's enmity toward God he is using all his energy, using every snare, his utmost cunning, employing every means with the single purpose of ruining the soul of man. When a million eternities have each lived their endless ages and have rolled by in the unthinkable past and time is no more, the soul will still be living, a conscious personality endowed with perpetual life reunited with the body.

God has said: “And he who wins souls is wise.” (Prov. 11:30). The Bible says: “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever.” (Dan. 12:3). Compassion was the heartbeat of our Savior's ministry. “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.” (Matt. 9:36). “But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in mercy and truth.” (Ps 86:15). Heaven is geared for redemption. “I say to you that likewise there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.” (Luke 15:7). No man who ever had a glimpse of hell would ever want a fellow human-being to go there. (see Luke 16:28). “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” (Ps. 126:5-6).

## III. Concern

One of the first questions raised in recorded history was, “Am I my brother's keeper? (Gen. 4:9). Do I have moral obligations toward others? “So, I sought for a man among them who would make

a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it, but I found no one.” (Ezek. 22:30). “My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and on every high hill; yes, My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them.” (Ezek. 34:6). “If you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday.” (Is. 58:10). “I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” (Rom. 9:1-3). See also Psalms 106:23; Luke 19:41; Acts 20:31.

Intercession is the way that leads to the winning of souls. No church can prosper without it. No Christian can grow without it. The law of life demands reproduction – that “kind should beget kind.” Jesus interceded for each of us. “Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong. Because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” (Is. 53:12). Christ left this command to us: “Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Matt. 9:38).

#### **IV. Contact**

It began with personal contact. “He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, ‘We have found the Messiah, (which is translated, the Christ).’” (John 1:41). With Christ came the emphasis of seeking the lost. “For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10).

The movement of Christianity in this world is Scripturally based on personal contact. Anyone who really knows Jesus will want others to know Him. The secret is in the words of Andrew, “We have found Him.” The search for satisfaction in a man’s soul is completed in a living knowledge of Jesus Christ. Personal evangelism is sharing this discovery. “And he brought him to Jesus” (John 1:42).

How is this accomplished? Christ gives the answer. “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” (Matt. 4:19). A love for Christ produces a love for mankind. We are to be workmen, “who (do) not need to be ashamed.” (2 Tim. 2:15). Lives today are complicated by sin. They need more than slogans and formulas. They need personal help. A conscientious doctor must deal with each patient separately and so must a conscientious soul-winner.

#### **These guidelines must be kept in mind:**

1. **I MUST LIVE IT:** I can’t say to others, “Do as I say, but don’t do as I do.” They must see Christ in me (I Cor. 4:9). My strongest testimony is my daily life.
2. **I MUST LOVE PEOPLE.** I cannot pretend. The other person knows my motive immediately. The power of evangelism is described in Revelation 22:17, “And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” When my concern for others is in keeping with the concern of the Holy Spirit toward mankind, there is a community of interest in the individual that results in compulsion.
3. **I MUST MEET THE PUBLIC.** Jesus was heaven’s artist at this. Paul testified, “I have become all things to all men, that I might be all means save some.” (I Cor. 9:22).
4. **I MUST LOOK FOR NEED.** Jesus said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Mark 2:17). You will be surprised how many people are ready to talk. They simply need someone in whom they can put their confidence. Zacchaeus was in trouble. Uninvited, he talked about his sin. That is my point of contact – human need.
5. **I MUST COMMUNICATE.** Keep away from technicalities. Refuse to become involved in debate. The Samaritan woman quibbled: “Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.” (John 4:20). It wasn’t her

head that was troubling her. It was her heart. She needed Christ before she needed a church; a Redeemer before she needed a ritual. "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things. "Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." (John 4: 25-26).

6. **I MUST CONCENTRATE ON CHRIST.** I can get so much "I" into my testimony that spiritual pride will offend the person to whom I am witnessing. The rule of the great Baptist still holds: "He must increase, but I must decrease." (John 3:30). My business is to present Jesus (John 12:32). Christ is the attraction.
7. **I MUST USE TACT.** This suggests sensitivity to the other man's feelings. It is a spirit of discernment. "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him." (James 1:5). Be natural. Be courteous. Be a good listener. Ask wise questions.
8. **I MUST BRING A PERSON TO A DECISION.** This can only be accomplished through the power and presence of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8). The chance may never come again. Opportunity is God given. Don't gamble with it. Press for a decision. "Yet you do not have because you do not ask." (James 4:2). Don't let people say of you at Judgment Day, "he never asked me to be a Christian!"
9. **I MUST TEACH THEM TO LISTEN TO GOD'S VOICE.** It is my business to introduce them to the Savior. So often the workers only introduces himself. "Now acquaint yourself with Him, and be at peace: Thereby good will come to you." (Job 22:21). Let the person with whom you are dealing hear for the first time the voice of God speaking to him or her in reassurance and comfort, and you have built strength. This is done by teaching the person two or three primary verses of Scripture. Tie the seeker to God's Word. Let your friend know before you leave him that God has spoken these words to him. These words carry a guarantee. Here is an example:  
"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My Word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement, but has passed from death into life." (John 5: 24). These are the words of the Son of God. They are spoken to you. They are spoken with finality and authority.
10. **I MUST MAKE IT CRYSTAL CLAR THAT THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KNOWING GOD AND KNOWING ABOUT GOD.** Hearsay is not enough. Birth is not something that is second-hand. "And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them: and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers." (John 10:4-5). I know God when I get down to business with Him. "Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8). God has expressed His willingness in a covenant, contract, or testament. It bears His signature: the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The moment I exercise faith toward this written Word and become personally involved in agreement, that very moment the entire contract, or covenant, is in force toward me.  
If I do not associate the seeker with the Word of God, that person will miss his way. The devil will deceive the inquirer before breakfast. He will lie so cleverly that the inquirer will apologize to worldly associates before the day is over.  
Remember! The authority is in the Word of God.

## V. A Conversation

**Some calls this two-way conversation: "convincing confutation." The following are answers to some excuses one may come across in personal conversations during witnessing and sharing of the gospel:**

1. Excuse: "I want to get established in business first. After that I will be a Christian."



Answer: No business should be allowed to cheat one out of heaven's blessings. Property should not kill the privilege of being a child of God. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). God called one man a fool to his face. "But God said to him, "You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided? (Luke 12:20). He was the man who neglected his soul's welfare by building barns, enlarging crops, and feeding his soul on corn.

Further Scriptures which may be used: Matthew 6:33; Psalm 1:1-2; Proverbs 29:25; Mark 10:29-30.

2. Excuse: "I am not a sinner."

Answer: But God says, "There is none righteous, no not one." (Rom. 3:10). "But the Scripture has confined all under sin." (Gal 3:22). If you are not a sinner, are you keeping God's commands? What about Matthew 22:37? "Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."

3. Excuse: "I have no encouragement at home."

Answer: Without families we came. Without our families we go. Guilt is personal. Then, too if you have praying parents, a saintly wife or husband, and godly children and you continue your selfish resistance to their accepted and your rejected Savior, your guilt is deeper

4. Excuse. "I am good enough as I am."

Answer: God says you are bad enough – by nature. Man in his natural state does wicked deeds, thinks evil thoughts, goes to bad places, rejects Jesus Christ – because he has an evil heart. No one is naturally good. If you are good, why not become acquainted with Jesus, who is supremely good?

5. Excuse: "I am as good as others."

Answer: Violin players do not take their tones from each other, but from the piano. Builders are constantly using the plumb line, the level, and the square. We need to live by standards – not comparisons. Nobody can claim health because he is better than another diabetic or stronger than another cancer victim. Measure yourself by Jesus if you want to know how good or bad you are. Do not be too sure you are better than many within the Church. They have confessed Jesus before men – as Jesus asked. You have not. Moreover, you are forbidden to judge to justify yourself. You are not saved or lost by the deeds of others.

6. Excuse: "I have no feeling."

Answer: The world isn't run by feeling. Most people do most of their worthy acts contrary to feeling. The doctor does not deal with diseases because of feeling but because of necessity.

Scriptures which may be used: Revelation 3:20; John 3:26; Ephesians 1:13; First Peter 1:8.

7. Excuse: "I am so weak."

Answer: "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trust in You. Trust in the LORD forever, for in YAH, the LORD, is everlasting strength." (Is. 26:3-4). Who will keep? The Almighty God. How? "Perfect peace." On what condition? "Whose mind is stayed" on God – not on self, nor circumstances, failures, successes, nor on others. Trust – not try or worry, but trust. In whom? God. How long? All the time. Why? For God is everlasting strength.

Further Scriptures: Jude 24; I Cor. 10: 13; Phil. 1: 6; Is. 41: 10, 13-14; II Tim. 1: 12.

8. Excuse: "I am doing the best I can."

Answer: How long have you been doing your best? Have you succeeded? How long will it take you to make yourself fit for heaven? Suppose you die now? The best you can do is to acknowledge you cannot do anything to save yourself – except believe.

9. Excuse: "I am too big a sinner."

Answer: Jesus came to save all sinners. "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." (I Tim. 1:15). Are your sins scarlet? "Come now, and let us reason together," says the Lord, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as a snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Is. 1:18). Are you lost? "For the Son of man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10). Are you without strength? "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:6-8). "All that the Father gives me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." (John 6:37).

Further Scriptures which may be used: Matthew 9:13; Hebrews 7:25; Luke 23:29-43.

10. Excuse: "There are too many hypocrites."

Answer: Hypocrites are lost. If you let hypocrites keep you from being saved, you will spend eternity in hell with them. Besides, you have to be smaller than what you hide behind. If you hide behind a hypocrite, you must be smaller than a hypocrite.

Further Scriptures which may be used: Zechariah 13:6; Acts 1:6; Hebrews 12:2; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 2:1-6; Rom.14:12; Matthew 7:1-5; First Samuel 16:7.

11. Excuse: "A professing Christian wronged me."

Answer: Granted. But is that any reason why you should wrong God and insult Christ, who loved you and gave Himself for you? "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him." (John 3:26).

12. Excuse: "There is too much to give up."

Answer: Better give up everything than lose the soul. Put Christ and your soul ahead of all else. Is it too much to give up false pearls for glittering gems? Dirt for diamonds? Is it too much to give up rags for riches?

Further Scriptures which may be used: Psalms 16:11; 84:11; Proverbs 3:17; Prov.13:15; Matthew 11:30; Isaiah 57:21; Romans 8:32; Mark 8:36-37; Luke 1:29-30.

13. Excuse: "I cannot understand."

Answer: Why let mystery cause you to refuse the Master? Do you understand the chemistry of digestion? Does your ignorance of it keep you from eating meat? Can you understand why the same sun and the same soil and the same rain get sweetness into the orange and sourness into the lemon and bitterness into the persimmon? Lay aside your excuse of mystery and trust God as you trust the telephone to transmit your voice. Further Scriptures which may be used: Romans 11:33; First Corinthians 1:8; 2:14.

14. Excuse: "God is unjust"

Answer: Who is God? Who are you? Injustice is sin. Do you mean to accuse God of sin? God is so just that He never demands two payments for one debt. Jesus paid your sin debts on the Cross – all of it. Therefore, when you accept Christ, you do not have that sin debt to pay.

15. Excuse: "Folks would laugh."

Answer: Better let them laugh than to have God laugh. "I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your terror comes." (Prov. 1:26). Shun evil companions. "Do not enter the path of the wicked. And do not walk in the way of evil. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble." (Prov. 4:14, 19). Do not be ashamed of Christ. "Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 10:32-33).

16. Excuse: "Not now."

Answer: Every time you say no, it is more difficult to say yes. The time and day is now. "For He says: 'In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.'" (2 Cor. 6:2). Seek the Lord while He may be found. Delay is decision for the wrong way. "Today – if you will, "says the Lord. Tomorrow is the day when the idle man works, the thief becomes honest, the drunkard sober. Tomorrow is a period nowhere to be found except, perhaps, in the fool's calendar. God's call is not a call for tomorrow, but for today.

Further Scriptures which may be used: Proverbs 27:1; 29:1; Isaiah 55:6; Hebrews 2:3.

**Some other common excuses and questions are:**

17. Excuse: "I think you are making too big a fuss about this."

Answer: Why is Calvary such a big date in history? "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8). Isn't your soul important? "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26). Isn't life uncertain? "But God said to him, "You fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will these things be which you have provided?" (Luke 12:20). Death, judgement, and hell lie ahead (Gal. 6:7; Heb. 9:27). The Son of God asks for your decisions (Rev. 3:20).

18. Excuse: "I will take my chances."

Answer: God always has the last word. "So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'" (Matt. 22:12-13). Nebuchadnezzar gave this testimony, "That the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, gives it to whomever He will" (Dan. 4:17). "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, 'What have you done?' (Dan. 4:35). God's Word has eternal force (Is. 55:11). A judgement must be rendered on each life lived (John 5:27-29).

19. Excuse: "My friends mean so much to me."

Answer: Are they your friends or your enemies? "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (James 4:4).

Do your friends care for your soul? "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything." (Luke 15:14-16). You will gain a greater Friend and friends (John 15:15, Matt. 19:29). Your example can lead your unsaved friends to Christ (John 1:45).

20. Excuse: "I am going to have a good time in this world and let the next world take care of itself."

Answer: Others have followed this course before. "Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comfort and you are tormented." (Luke 16:25). Your life can prove to be an act. (Luke 12:15). Opportunity brings responsibility. (Eccl. 11:9).

21. Excuse: "Please do not talk to me about it."

Answer: I am simply bringing God's message to you. "Therefore prepare yourself and arise, and speak to them all that I command you. Do not be dismayed before their faces, lest I dismay you before them." (Jer. 1:17). "And go, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, "Thus says the Lord GOD," whether they hear, or whether they refuse." (Ezek 3:11). My business is to witness (2 Cor. 12:15- 16).

22. Excuse: "I am my own boss."

Answer: Wise men and women receive counsel. "There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." (Prov. 14:12). The easiest thing in the world to get is a wrong answer.

23. Excuse: "Frankly, I am skeptical about the whole matter."

Answer: Are you honestly looking for answers? Will you accept evidence as it would be accepted before a court of law? Are you an inquirer or a spiritual subversive, "who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator." (Rom. 1:25). "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do things which are not fitting." (Rom. 1:28). Jesus Christ threw out this challenge: "He who is of God hears God's words: therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God." (John 8:47). You can doubt to your own peril. (2 Thes. 2:10,12). The way to find out whether or not a thing is true and worthy of one's acceptance is put it to a personal test. (Ps. 34:8).

24. Excuse: "I want to be absolutely neutral about this matter."

Answer: There are some things you can't be neutral about – food, drink, sleep, light, for instance. That is why Christ likened Himself to the necessities of life. "I am the bread of life." (John 6:48). "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (John 8:12). Jesus said, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad. (Matt. 12:30).

25. Excuse: "I believe God is too good to damn anyone."

Answer: That is not what the Bible says. "Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous, For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish." (Ps. 1:5-6). God bases your salvation or damnation on your acceptance or rejection of Jesus Christ. (John 12: 48). It is not God who is hard. It is you! "But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God." (Rom. 2:5). Every agency of God seeks to lead you to repentance. (2 Pet. 3:9).

26. Excuse: "How can I reconcile the doctrine of hell with the Christian's God of salvation?"

Answer: "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" (Matt. 25: 41). "Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place." (Acts 1:25).

“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering towards us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:9). “Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord God, “and not that he should turn from his ways and live?” (Ezek. 18:23). “And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matt. 25:46). “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and you are tormented.” (Luke 16:25). “Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?” (Matt. 23:33). “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matt. 10: 28). “Therefore Sheol has enlarged itself and opened its mouth beyond measure; their glory and their multitude and their pomp, and he who is jubilant, shall descend into it. People shall be brought down, each man shall be humbled, and the eyes of the lofty shall be humbled. But the Lord of hosts shall be exalted in judgment, and God who is holy shall be hallowed in righteousness.” (Is. 5: 14-16).

27. Excuse: “I am religious.”

Answer: Religion is often something that is on the outside. “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness! (Matt. 7:22- 23). No man was more religious than Paul. (Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:14; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:13, 15). Cornelius was a religious man who needed to be saved. (Acts 11:14).

28. Excuse: “I am trying to be a Christian”

Answer: It is not trying, it is trusting that counts. A drowning man tries with all his might and perishes, but when he trusts in the saving power of another he is rescued. “Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; ‘For YAH, the Lord, is my strength and my song, He also has become my salvation.” (Is. 12: 2). Ishmael was Abraham’s fleshly attempt to fulfill the promise of God (he tried). Isaac was God’s provision (he trusted) (Rom. 4:3, 5). No work that you can do for yourself can ever substitute in merit for the work that Jesus has done for you on the Cross. (Eph. 2: 9). “But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.” (Is. 64: 6). To try is to fail! “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.” (James 2:10).

29. Excuse: “What is sin?”

Answer: Sin is breaking God’s law. (1 John 3:10). All unrighteousness is sin, and there is no sin not leading to death. (1 John 5:17).

Unbelief is sin (John 16:8, 9).

Questionable indulgences are sin (Rom.14:23).

Missing the mark is sin (Rom. 3:23).

Undone duty is sin (James 4:17).

30. Excuse: “My sins are small, so why worry?”

Answer: Because any sin torments. “There is no peace,” says the Lord, “for the wicked.” (Is. 48:22).

Because any sin separates you from God. (Is. 59:2).

Because any sin enslaves you. (John 8:34).

Because any sin ends in death. (Rom. 6:23).

31. Excuse: “I may be punished but not eternally.”

Answer: If God is eternal and heaven is eternal – hell will be eternal also. “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire

prepared for the devil and his angels.” (Matt. 25:41). There is “a resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28- 29). Don’t forget there is the ‘second death” (Rev. 20:13-15).

32. Excuse: “I am too old now to become a Christian.”

Answer: There is no age limit (2 Cor. 6:2). God has foreseen your problem. “But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the Lord your God and obey His voice (for the Lord your God is a merciful God). He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them.” (Deut. 4:29-31).

33. Excuse: “I do not think I am old enough to make a decision.”

Answer: You have reached an age of accountability if you sense Christ’s approach to your life. “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them.’” (Eccl. 12:1).

The time to make a decision is when your conscience is tender (2 Sam. 19:35).

The best time is now. (Heb. 3:13).

34. Excuse: “I intend to before I die.”

Answer: Can you determine the hour of your death? Nothing is so uncertain as life. (Prov. 29:1; Job 34:20). God warns against presumption (James 4:13-17). There is no time like the present. “Seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.” (Is. 55:6).

35. Excuse: “I am afraid I cannot hold out.”

Answer: Jesus not only saves you but He keeps you too. He is the Good shepherd (John 10:11-14). The same One who convicts you is concerned about you. “He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.” (1 Thes. 5:24). Paul gives his experience. “And He said to me, My grace is sufficient in weakness. Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.” (2 Cor. 12:9). God has made an investment in you and He will work to protect that investment (Phil. 1:6). To know Him is to have assurance. Commit your entire life to His care. Leave the future in your Master’s hands. (2 Tim. 1:12).

36. Excuse: “I am afraid of persecution.”

Answer: It is a cowardly thing to deny Jesus Christ. “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.” (Rev. 21:8). “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38). So little is asked for so much in return. “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (Rom. 8:18). It is all or nothing. “If we endure, we shall also reign with Him, if we deny Him, He also will deny us.” (2 Tim. 2:12).

You join a select company. It is a chance of a lifetime to do something worthwhile.

“Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man’s sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.”

(Luke 6: 22-23). He does not ask you to do anything for Him that He did not do for you.

(Heb. 12:2).

37. Excuse: “I think that Jesus Christ is only one of the great men in history.”

Answer: He claimed to be God, “...Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God.” (Phil. 2:6). He was put to death for this claim. (Matt. 26:63-

65). The resurrection substantiated this claim: “Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.” (Acts 2:24). The moral grandeur of His life surpasses anything on record. “Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?” (John 8: 46). No one has so influenced history. (Luke 2:34). There is the repeated testimony of personal experience. “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world” (John 4:42). There is the open challenge to prove His divinity for yourself. “If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority.” (John 7:17).

38. Question: “Why does God allow evil in this world?”

Answer: Freedom of choice is the Creator’s great gift to the human race. “I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live.” (Deut. 30:19). Sin originated in man, not in God. God prevents sin’s dominion. (Rom 6:14). God has, at His own cost, provided a remedy. “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (John 14:6).

39. Excuse: There is so much suffering.”

Answer: This is not the world as God planned it – the world that He said was “very good” (Gen. 1:31). It is the world in which man has spread his sin. “Even as I have seen, those who plow iniquity and sow trouble reap the same.” (Job 4:8). God has provided an alternative. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 6:23). It is not the world that God intends to establish (Is. 65:20).

40. Question: “Does this have to be done publicly?”

Answer: God makes the rules. He has under taken our salvation completely; therefore He has the right to say how we are to receive it. “Therefore, whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven”. (Matt. 10: 32-33). “For with the heart one believes to righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.” (Rom. 10:10).

Like a true marriage – a miracle of trust happens in the heart first; then an open acknowledgement, through proper ordinances, is made to the public. “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38). “Also I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angles of God.” (Luke 12:8-9). “Nevertheless, even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.” (John 12:42-43).

41. Question: What about baptism?

Answer: Baptism like Communion “shows the Lord’s death.” It is faith you show publicly when you are baptized. “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (Rom. 6:3-5).

Baptism is our open profession before the world that we are now living a miracle, supernatural life of Christian grace by the quickening, regenerating power of God in us. You should baptized because like your Lord it fulfills, ”... all righteousness...” It keeps setting forth the gospel of Jesus before this world. Baptism is one of the first tests of obedience.

42. Excuse: "I cannot break with my sins."

Answer: Salvation is a life-and-death choice. "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3). You cannot live one way and die another way. "For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the spirit will of the spirit reap everlasting life." (Gal. 6:8 cf. Rev. 21:8). You cannot do it in your own strength. "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36). "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." (Phil. 4:13). Christ can reach you where you are. (Heb. 7:25).

43. Excuse: "I see no harm in worldly amusements."

Answer: The approach to this question should always be positive, and not negative. Instead of asking, "What harm is there in it?" I should ask, "What good is there in it?" "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Col. 3:17). "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor. 10:31). "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1 Cor. 6:12).

As a Christian, I am responsible to use my body and my mind in trust for God's glory. (1 Cor 6:19-20). Sharp warnings appear in the New Testament: "If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." (1 Cor. 3:17). "Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you." (2 Cor. 6:17). "They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work." (Tit. 1:16). My aim should always be to give my utmost for His highest (2 Tim. 2:4).

44. Excuse: "I am not respectable enough to be a Christian."

Answer: It is your saving, active faith in Christ that counts, "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still 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 to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here 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 15:20-24). See also Luke 18:10-14. We can never make ourselves good enough. "But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness." (Rom. 4:5). See also Isaiah 41:13.

45. Excuse: "I am afraid Jesus will not receive me."

Answer: You have His word on it. "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out." (John 6:37).  
God is no respecter of persons. (Rom. 10:13; Luke 15:2). See also Revelation 22:17.

46. Excuse: "I have tried before and failed."

Answer: One failure need not mean final defeat. Upon whom did you depend? Did you make a complete surrender? Did you keep something back? Did you confess Christ publicly? Were you faithful in prayer? Did you seek guidance from the Word? "These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the Word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so." (Acts 17:11). Did you go to work for Christ? (Luke 11: 24-26). See also First Peter 2:2. Make a full surrender, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service."



(Rom. 12:1). Keep in touch! “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matt. 26:41). Be present in church (Heb. 10:25).

47. Excuse: “I think I have committed the unpardonable sin.”

Answer: You will know if you have committed this sin. The desire to be a Christian will be forever past. No spiritual impression will ever again come to your soul. A hardening process will have taken place. “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Any one who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.” (Matt. 12:31-32). In another passage we read: “but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation.” (Mark 3:29).

The tragedy lies in the eternally un-forgiven soul. Since the Holy Spirit is the agent in conviction and conversion, there can be no rebirth without the Holy Spirit. To sin against the Holy Spirit is to sin against your own soul. To blaspheme against the Holy Spirit is to shut yourself off forever from access to God. “If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death.” (1 John 5:16). You will know if you cross this line. Those who have committed this sin are completely given over to Satan and have not the slightest interest in spiritual matters. Paul describes it as being “past feeling” (Eph. 4:19).

On the other hand, Satan, the deceiver, will lie to you and tell you that you are unpardonable. God makes no exception in His offer of salvation. “And by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.” (Acts 13:39).

Murder is not unpardonable. The patient thief on the cross was pardoned. (Luke 23:43).

Blasphemy is not unpardonable. Paul was a blasphemer, and he was pardoned (1 Tim. 1:13).

Adultery is not unpardonable. The woman of Samaria was saved. (John 4:18).

One of the amazing records of forgiveness is found in First Corinthians 6:9-11.

The person who sincerely asks for pardon will never be refused. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.” (Is. 55:7). “Come now, and let us reason together, says the Lord, “though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”” (Is. 1:18). See also Acts 10:43. Paul was a great sinner, but he obtained salvation. (1 Tim 1:15-16).

48. Question: “Would not suicide be the best way out of my trouble?”

Answer: There is only one solution for guilt consciousness – forgiveness and cleansing (Job 15:20; 1 John 1:9). Self-murder only hastens judgement. “So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.” (Rom. 14:12). A correct relationship with Christ brings a new approach to living. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” (2 Cor. 5:17). Get the sin problem settled first, and then the trouble problem can be settled. (Matt 6:33).

49. Excuse: “I am seeking but I cannot find Christ.”

Answer: Christ is not distant. His presence is noticeable, “so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, “for we are also His offspring.” (Acts 17:27- 28). Paul says that Christ makes Himself real to a person through the exercise of faith. (Rom. 10:6-11). Be sure you are looking in the right direction! “And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.” (Jer. 29:13).

50. Excuse: "I am ashamed to come to Christ".

Answer: "But when Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means. "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." (Matt. 9:12-13). Salvation is for the lost. "For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:6-8).

51. Excuse: "I would like to be a Christian, but I cannot forgive my enemies."

Answer: Through God's help you can do what you cannot do otherwise. "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." (Matt. 19: 26). I become a recipient of God's grace. "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work." (2 Cor. 9:8). See also second Corinthians 12:9. Tell God only that you are willing to be made willing. (Matt. 6:14-15).

52. Excuse: "I want to be saved, but I cannot believe."

Answer: Whom does the Bible ask you to believe? "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." (Acts 16:31). Do you believe that God has saved others? Do you believe that He wants to save you? Do you believe that He can save you? Will you trust Him to save you now? You are saved through the Word which is God's contract with you, and because God wants you to be saved. (John 5:24). "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name; who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12-13).

Use the faith that God gives you! "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8). See also Romans 5:1.

53. Question: "Does the Bible have inconsistencies and contradictions in it?"

Answer: Where are they? The Bible is revelation. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.'" (Is 55:8-9).

The Bible is a locked book to a locked heart. "Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." (Dan. 12:10). "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14).

Certainly there are mysteries presented in God's Word! "As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which those who are untaught and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you know these things beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen." (2 Pet 3:16-18). Know Him and you will know His book!

54. Question: "How can I know there is a God?"

Answer: There are three sources of material. First, there is the Bible. Second, there is nature. Third, there is man. These point to the Creator. None are possible by happenstance. None could have been produced by accident. "Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them." (Rom. 1:19). "When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon of the stars, which you have ordained." (Ps.

8:3). “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” (Ps. 33:6).

55. Question: “Why do I need the blood?”

Answer: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” (Lev. 17:11). Jesus died for you and me. (Matt. 26:28). “And according to the law almost all things are purged with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.” (Heb. 9:22). He tasted death for me. Thus He bore the supreme penalty of my sins. (Rom 5:9-10). It took the greatest price in the universe. “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” (1 Pet 1:18-19).

56. Question: “Why should I accept the Bible as the final authority?”

Answer: The Bible has survived all unbelievers. “For what if some did not believe? Will their unbelief make the faithfulness of God without effect? Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar.” (Rom. 3:3-4). “All Scriptures is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). God’s character rests upon the authentically and authority of the Bible. (Mark 13:31).

57. Question: “What must I do to be saved?”

Answer: God, through Jesus Christ, His Son, has provided a way for you (Is. 53:5-6). That sixth verse begins and ends with the same word “all.” It is a universal salvation for a universal need. Your part is to “receive”, God’s part is to give you “power to become”. “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” (John 1:12).

Conversion and regeneration go together. When you have turned to God (conversion), He will turn over your life (regeneration). God’s part is as essential as your part. (John 3:7).

Saving faith reaches out and believes what God’s Word says about you. “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My Word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement, but has passed from death into life.” (John 5:24).

Your salvation is in your acceptance of what Christ has done for you. Did He, or did He not, die for you? (Acts 16:31).

Outward form is useless until something has happened within your life. Salvation is like marriage. All the ceremony involved can’t really marry a couple unless first of all something real toward each other has happened in each of their hearts. When that occurs, they want the whole world to know. (Rom. 10:9-19).

### **God saves sinners only: Are you a sinner? Do you need two things –**

#### **(1) FORGIVENESS and (2) CLEANSING**

What God has done for others, He will do for you. “For whoever calls upon the name of the LORD shall be saved” (Rom 10:13).

Jesus foretold that excuses and alibis would be given. Excuses are never reasons.

“Then He said to him, ‘A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited. ‘Come, for all things are now ready’. But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.’ And another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused. ‘Still another said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.’ So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house,

being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor, and the maimed and the lame and the blind.' And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.' Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.'" (Luke 14:16-24).

## VI. Conversion

### Steps to the Christian Life:

1. **REPENT.** Turn around. Change your mind. "I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." (Luke 13:3).
2. **GIVE HIM.** You need the Savior. Accept Him. "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." (John 1:12).
3. **BE "BORN AGAIN."** This is what God does for you. This is the New Birth – a miracle of spiritual life performed by the Holy Spirit. "Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:13). See also John 11:25.
4. **REJOICE PUBLICLY.** Make your testimony for Christ, "that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation." (Rom.10:9- 10). See also Matthew 10:32- 33.
5. **REQUEST WATER BAPTISM.** This is an outward testimony to an inward transaction. "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:16).
6. **READ THE WORD.** The Word is the source of your faith. "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5:13). See also Romans 10:17; Psalms 119:105.
7. **REACH GOD IN PRAYER.** Prayer is conversation with God. Life is sustained by union and communion. (Eph. 6:18; James 4:2). "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him." (1 John 5:14- 15).
8. **RELATE YOUR EXPERIENCE TO OTHERS.** You maintain strength by exercise. Nevertheless if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul. Therefore you, O son of man, say to the house of Israel: "Thus you say, "If our transgressions and our sins lie upon us, and we pine away in them, how can we then live? (Ezek.33: 9- 10).
9. **RESIST THE DEVIL.** Temptation is not sin. It is yielding to temptation that is sin. "That the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 1:7). "For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." (Heb. 4:15).
10. **RESTITUTION.** Your guilt is gone, and you can convert your influence for good. "Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the

poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.” (Luke 19:8).

11. **“RENDER ...TO GOD THE THINGS THAT ARE GOD’S”** Start tithing your income immediately. “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You? In tithes and offerings. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house. And prove Me now is this, “Says the Lord of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.” (Mal. 3:8, 10). See also First Corinthians 16:2.
12. **REGULARLY ATTEND CHURCH AND SUNDAY SCHOOL.** Associate yourself immediately with God’s people. Become a church member. (Heb. 10:25). “So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.” (Luke 4:16). “As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue.” (2 Pet. 1:3).

## VI. Convincement

“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John 1:4) “But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins.” (Luke 5:24). It is too late in another world. Forgiveness of sins must be received on this side. (1 John 3:2).

What is this assurance? How can I know for certain? There are second chances in health, money, championships, and education; but when a man passes from this life, he cannot return for a second chance. Your religion must furnish your proof. You have a right to demand it.

Calvary is ridiculous if your life can be changed and you do not know it. Something you may have and not know it is something you can lose and never miss. The proof of your salvation is not by sensation. It is by Scripture.

Certain evidences must be manifested in our lives immediately. These evidence are recorded in the Bible.

1. **THERE IS AN INFALLIBLE INSIDE WITNESS.** “He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.” (1 John 5:10). The preacher and the church may tell you that you are all right. But you, yourself, are the final judge in that matter. Christ asked Peter about this. He said, “do you love Me more than these?” (John 21:15). There was no doubt in Peter’s mind about his relationship to Jesus.
2. **THER IS A FAMILY RELATIONSHIP.** “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren.” (1 John 3:14). You sense a different and vital relationship with God’s children. You are at home with spiritual things. It is tie stronger than any family background in this world. (Gal. 6:10).
3. **THERE IS A NEW IMAGE.** “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, old things have passed away, behold, all things have become new.” (2 Cor. 5:17). A New Testament Christian is not a patched-up job, a reformed sinner. There is a new will; there are new affections; there is a new purpose because there is a new nature. The emptiest and unhappiest occupation in the world is trying to act like a Christian when you are not a Christian. You do not gradually stop stealing. You stop stealing. It is miracle, not magic.
4. **THERE IS A RESPONSE OF VICTORY.** “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.” (1 John 5:4). See also John 17:15- 16. The born-again man or woman is not motivated by this world-system. Fancy yourself on the farm. It is hot midsummer. Nearby is a big mud wallow. Here comes a pig. He grunts with contentment as he wades into the slime. You say, “Mr. Hog, why do you want to submerge in that filth? Why do you not seek a cleaner environment?”

That pig has not the slightest interest in your ideas for his betterment. He loves the mud. Now watch a sheep with long white wool. The moment a sheep notices mud it heads toward safer ground. The sheep has a different nature. So has a New Testament Christian. These are Bible proofs. "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5:13).

### **VIII. Camouflage**

Today is a day of substitutes. Nylon has been substituted for silk. Oleomargarine has been substituted for butter. There also are many substitutes offered for salvation. Beware!

1. **SERVE IS NOT SALVATION.** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves." (Matt. 23:15). How can you lead others to Christ when you do not know Christ yourself?
2. **TURNING OVER A NEW LEAF IS NOT SALVATION.** Man does not get saved by reforming, saying, "I will clean up my life, and begin life anew." "But we are all like an unclean thing. And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." (Is. 64:6). "How you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God." (1 Thes. 1:9). Notice the direction! The new birth is a divine miracle.
3. **ASSERTING ONE'S MANHOOD IS NOT SALVATION.** Men "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1) cannot throw back their shoulders and assert their manhood for righteousness. The cross of Christ does not call upon men to assert their manhood. The cross of Christ exposes men's degradation. That is part of the 'offense of the cross' (Gal. 5:11). It does not appeal to man's pride. It unsparingly shows man that he cannot do anything for himself. He has no righteousness or decency to offer to God.
4. **RIGHT THINKING IS NOT SALVATION.** It is not cultivating and concentrating on a "divine spark" that is within you. "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mothers conceived me." (Ps. 51:5). It is not keeping a picture of your mother, sweetheart, or your wife in your billfold, and looking at it frequently. It is not thinking high thoughts (Is. 55:8-9). How can you think high thoughts with a base nature?
5. **DENYING THE EXISTENCE OF SIN IS NOT SALVATION.** God does not deny sin. Calvary is God's recognition of sin. "And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all." (Is. 53:6). "But the Scripture has confined all under sin." (Gal. 3:22). One of the first steps toward salvation is to recognize your sin – not deny it.
6. **TO DENY SELF IS NOT SALVATION.** Many unbelievers are masters at this. They practice all kinds of asceticism (1 Cor. 13:3). You are not saved by crucifying yourself. It is not proving to yourself that you can do hard things.
7. **SACRIFICE IS NOT SALVATION.** Dying for a great cause – the supreme sacrifice – is not salvation. Discipline does not cleanse a man from sin. If that were true, then everybody who entered a penitentiary would become a Christian. Paying for wrongdoing does not make a person a Christian. (1 Sam. 15:22). There is no side door into heaven. Jesus said, "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved." (John 10:9). "He who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber." (John 10:1). You cannot steal your way into heaven.

### **IX. Christ**

The Master has not asked us to do what He did not do constantly during His ministry upon earth. He says, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." (Matt. 4:19). His record

is one of personal contact from when He said to Andrew, "Come and see", to His assurance to the penitent thief, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise."

He is clear and concise about God's plan of salvation.

1. **He came to meet a human need.** "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners... (Luke 5:32). Salvation is for sinners only.
2. **He came to be the sinner's substitute.** "The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep." (John 10:11).
3. **He came to do what none other can do.** "I am the way, the truth, and life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6).
4. **He came to provide assurance to the trusting sinner.** "Your sins are forgiven... go in peace." (Luke 7: 48-50).

James remembers emphatically the passion that his brother manifested toward the lost. He reflects this when he says, "let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins." (James 5:20).

## X. **Condensation**

The story of salvation can be told in four words:

Sin  
Calvary  
Faith  
Life

1. **Salvation is needed.** "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23).
2. **Salvation is provided.** "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness- by whose stripes you were healed." (1 Pet 2:24).
3. **Salvation is offered.** "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8).
4. **Salvation is accepted.** "He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." (1 John 5:12).

# HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL MINISTER OF CHRIST?

Let me share them with you. And as you read it, I pray that you will be blessed and may this help you pull yourself to a higher realm.

1. **You must have a call:** A Bible college degree, a plastic coated credential, the title of a Reverend or ordination certificates are not the proof of the call. If you do not know whether you have a call then sit at the Master's feet till you will receive His call. And if you do not have a call for the full-time ministry then go and do something else, it will save you and others much trouble.

Now, you may ask me, "What is a call?" It is a deep knowing, usually accompanied with a passionate burden for a particular ministry. The method by which you will receive the call will differ—Peter received a pretty direct call; Paul received a vision; Mathew was asked to just follow Him. The way each one of us will receive our call may differ, but the 'for sure' knowing in our spirit got to be there.

2. **Know your call:** Once you receive the call, then know what your call is. Often the call, to start with, is general. In general it gradually narrows into specific ministries, as one continues to be faithful in serving God within the general call.

Also, the call for ministry can be a part-time or full-time one. However, never think that a full time minister is superior to a part-time one. No! The important thing is one's commitment and the extent to which one is obedient to their call. Know your call and stick to it.

3. **Know your ministry:** Within your call, there are specific ministries. For example, when God called me to serve Him as a cross-cultural missionary, my call was very general—to win the lost souls. Gradually, as I continued to be faithful in that calling, God started to release me into a more specific ministry—that of a pastor. Over the years, as I have been faithful in the small things, God has added new ministries and has developed my call into greater dimensions.

The Bible lists so many ministries—helps, administration, evangelist, teacher, etc. Get to know your ministry and whatever it is—whether to clean toilets or raise up orphans or teach in a Bible college or do church planting—remain faithful to God, and just do it! Do not select a ministry because it is more glamorous than the rest or because the pay packet is better. Do the ministry, whatever it may be, that God entrusts you with.

4. **Be a student all your life:** Formal education may stop after the Bible college, but one should never stop learning and maturing. One cannot develop and rise unless they continue to learn and develop. Read regularly, hang around the people who challenge you, attend seminars, listen to tapes. Continue to remain a student all your life.

May I advice you to make books your friends. My prescription to keep growing: A very good book a month and 4 magazines every year, that is the minimum. Do not read books, read only very good books.

5. **Have good friends who love God and hate sin:** Avoid 'non-spiritual' friends. You may have them as casual acquaintances, but never as friends. As the saying goes, "Show me your friends and I will show you your future."

6. **Today is crucial-live it well:** What you do today will define your tomorrow. Your actions today will reflect in your life and ministry after 5 or 10 or 20 and even 50 years. So be careful how you live today!

Be careful in your dealing with finances, with girls, with your colleague's, etc. Build your future today and every day.

7. **Be influenced by great men and women of God:** Meet people who are successful. People who have a good public standing—men of God in your own land. When you meet them:



- a) Explore their spiritual experiences by asking questions, and learn the secrets of their success and fruitful ministries.
- b) Ask them to impart their anointing on you by praying for you. If you realize that a person is not spiritual, then do not be hasty in asking them to lay their hands on you, as the ‘spirit in them’ could be passed to you.  
If a person, who is carnal, lays his hands on you without your permission, do not be afraid. Reject that spirit and walk in the boldness of Christ.
8. **Speak in tongues:** Pray regularly in tongues. Speak in tongues as you take a shower, as you walk, ride the bicycle, work, at home, etc. Your prayer language is your power generator. No wonder Paul says that he spoke in tongues more than the rest.
9. **Pay your tithes – faithfully:** Be faithful in your financial giving. Give your tithes an offering to those who are blessed by God. Sow your seeds in good ground.
10. **Smile please!** Have a smile on your face all the time, especially if you are preaching. Once, when a famous Christian mystic and preacher, was speaking in a large meeting in a large city, a monk looking at him said, “He’s got what I am searching for.” The salvation you speak about must be visible in you and on your face. As said, “Please smile when you talk about heaven. But when you talk about hell, your normal face is enough.”
11. **Marry a helpmeet:** Do not look for movie stars, models or a hero which look good in films. Marriage involves much more than mere looks. More importantly, life lasts more than a three-hour movie. Believe me!  
Also, do not look for Miss. Singer or Mr. Preacher. And, don’t be on the look out for Ms. Help-Me-Eat, either. It is much more important that you enjoy and love just being around your life partner, than the looks. Pray for a "Help Meet"! Marrying the right partner is important for a happy life and a successful ministry!
12. **Take care of your family:** Do not neglect your wife and children. Be there to fulfill your roles as a king (provider and protector), Prophet (one who guides and counsels) and the priest (one who prays and intercedes) of the family. Remember that the priorities should be: 1) God; 2) Family and 3) Ministry.
13. **Your body is the temple of God:** Maintain a healthy body. A healthy body and a heart that has a good relationship with God and man are necessary for long and good life. Do not blame God for premature death or sickness, if you do not control your food habits and don’t exercise.
14. **Do God’s work:** Do the work assigned to you by God, and not the work you want to do. Even if it is a tough job, hard work, life in a remote village, rejection by people – do it at any cost, if God has called you to that.  
Do not look for the glamour. One day a man prayed. “God give me a job that no one else wants to do but is in Your heart.” God asked him to go to Korea soon after the Korean War. He went and saw thousands of orphans on the street. God asked him to pick up as many as he could. That was Bob Pierce, and so was birthed ‘World Vision.’ Do what Jesus asks you to do and stick to that ministry till He should show you to move.
15. **Let an anointed person mentor you on site:** Once you graduate from your Bible College, work with some one who has the anointing and the experience in the type of ministry you want to do. Bible College will educate your mind with knowledge but it cannot impart any anointing. Find an anointed person of your choice ministry and be his ‘Elisha.’ While you are with him, be faithful to him– that includes his property, his daughters / sons, and his finances. Faithfulness must be our trademark. Whenever you have to depart, leave in love. (Ps. 101:2).
16. **Hang out with men of God:** Whether you are in the Bible College, or are working in an organization or in a church, do not be with those who are ‘murmurs’, or ‘the evil reporters’. Instead, be with the worshippers.

Mutiny and fight that will cause trouble to the organization is not from God. Ps. 101:7. There is a curse on those who bring division or trouble. "It is necessary sometime that offence must come. But woe unto them who cause offence." (Matt. 18:7). They never excel in the long run. They are like the grass that flowers only for a season. (Ps. 37:35-36).

If there arises a problem in the organization you are working with, take the initiative to call for fasting and prayer for 3 or 7 or 14 days. That will show God that you are a friend and not a foe. It will bring result and not trouble. Be a David and not Absalom.

17. **Be a servant:** There are many masters but only few servants. God is looking for servant hearted sons. Jesus was a servant. (Is. 42:1), so why can't we be?

I just mention three characteristics of servant:

- a) A servant knows the will of His master. Spend time in His presence daily. Try to spend an average of three days every month, in fasting and seclusion with God, if you are a minister.
- b) A servant works very hard to see the interest's of the master grow and glow. I believe that servants of God (full-time) must work at least 8 hours a day for Him. We are not hired, but have committed ourselves unto our Lord.
- c) A servant is not jealous if the master gives honour to another. He is not bothered by who gets the credit, as long as the results shine. If the Master gives a scooter, a house, a big church, etc. to a other person, the good servant never complains, instead continuous to work hard.

18. **Have a mentor:** Have at least one mentor. Remember David? When he sins, he has a mentor (a prophet) to stand up and correct him. But when his son Solomon trudges along the path to destruction we see no mentor in his life to guide him back.

19. **Work in Unity:** Unity is the most important factor that will force God to bless. (Gen. 11:6 and Matt. 19:18). Unity is from God and disunity is from devil.

20. **Be a faith person:** Believe in Jesus for all your needs – spiritual, material, physical, related to ministry or whatever. Have an absolute and unshakable faith in God. Have faith to have a ministry – preaching, church planting, evangelism or just being the father to your children – and have a successful one.

21. **Seek for anointing:** Ministering from your anointing and not on the anointing that brings result: salvation, healing, peace etc. Be hungry for "the anointed one" (Jesus) and seek for God's anointing. Spend time with the Anointer. (Ex. 34:29). Anointing breaks the yokes of the villages, cities and nations. (Is. 10:27c). The anointing sets the captives free. Yes, seek for God's anointing and let it flow through you.

# MANAGING PERSONAL FINANCE

## What does the Bible say?

Three important principles emerge as we look into the Bible to find out what the Bible teaches a Christian about managing his personal finances. Firstly, a Christian should understand that all his income and wealth does not belong to him, but belongs to God alone. Secondly, a Christian's attitude towards money should be such that in no way should he at any time tend to love money. Thirdly, a Christian should use his income and wealth to please and serve God.

## Let me explain these three important Biblical principles:

### (1) Understanding about money

We read in the Bible that all the earth is God's. (Ex. 19:5). King David acknowledged all that is in heaven and on earth is God's. He added, all things come of God. (1 Chron. 29:11-14). Apostle Paul argued, even we are not our own, having been bought with a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Thus, it is clear that our income and wealth belong to God and God alone, and not to ourselves. If we happen to have them, we have them only as stewards who are obliged to give account thereof to God. The parable of the shrewd manager brings out clearly this obligation of giving account as a steward. (Luke 16:1-2).

Once this principle is fully understood by a Christian, for him, the questions on matters such as bribery, conspicuous living and the like are issues with clear and definite answers.

### (2) Attitude towards money

Apostle Paul, writing to Timothy, stated in clear words that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10). While laying the qualifications for an overseer, Paul deemed it important to state that an overseer must be one who is not a lover of money. (1 Tim. 3:3). He warned Timothy that in the last days, people will be lovers of money (II Tim. 3:1).

Through the parable of the rich fool, Jesus pleaded for guarding against all kind of greed. (Luke 12:15). In the parable of the sower, Jesus mentioned that the deceitfulness of wealth and desires for other things could choke the Word, making it unfruitful. Jesus had no hesitation in declaring that one cannot serve both God and Money. (Luke 16:13). It is imperative that a Christian ought to keep his life free from the love of money and be content with what he has.

He could draw solace from the fact that God has said, "Never will I leave you: never will I forsake you." So he could say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (Heb. 13:5-6).

Even a desire to make money with the declared objective of using the money for God's work, indicates a hidden and indirect love for money. Yes a Christian, with God's help, should develop the right attitude towards money that he will be enabled by God to steer clear of the love for money.

### (3) Goal with money

It was Jesus who said: "Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." (Luke 16:9). He also taught us, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not break in and where thieves do not break in and steal." (Matt 6:19-20). King Solomon, in his wisdom advised, "Honour the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops." (Prov. 4:9).

No wonder, the Early Church gave so liberally that, as Paul testified, they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. (II Cor. 8:3). The widow who put in two very small copper coins presents a perfect model of a person with the right goal with the money in his / her possession. (Luke 21:13). Clearly, the New Testament requires a Christian to please God with his giving. We must also note that it is not only the failure to tithe but even the failure to give the offerings in addition to the tithes that amounts to robbing God. (Mal. 3:8).

Obviously, a Christian cannot be content with giving one-tenth of his income. He should aim at pleasing God with his generous giving, that is, giving as much as he is able to and even beyond his ability.

A Christian who comprehends as well as follows the above three important Biblical principles of managing personal finance, will find that his income is applied to:

- Tithes and Offerings
- Taxes
- Expenses
- Savings

Let me amplify in this order to priority!

### **(1) Tithes and Offerings**

A Christian should set aside a substantial portion of his income regularly for God's work, on top priority. None of his expenses, or other financial commitments should be allowed to affect this act of returning to God a portion of what belongs to Him. (Mal. 3: 8 -12).

### **(2) Taxes**

A Christian should pay his taxes honestly and should stand absolutely transparent in this area. (Mark 12: 17; Rom. 13: 5- 7). However, he should exploit all the provisions of law and ensure that by following the legally permitted modes, he pays the least amount of tax, so that more money is available for other matters, including for giving for God. Even those who are employed could structure their salaries (of course, with the understanding with employers), in such a way that the tax burden is the least. A salary-package which includes the provision of following perquisites would normally give substantial tax relief:

- Rent free accommodation/ House rent allowance.
- Motor car for official and personal use/ Allowance for commuting between residence and office.
- Reimbursement of medical expenses of self and family.
- Uniform allowance.
- Children education allowance.

### **(3) Expenses**

One who spends all he has and does not save is referred to by the wise king Solomon as a fool (Prov. 21:20). The king also refers to the nature of an ant to store its provision in summer and to gather its food at harvest as an example to follow. (Prov. 6:6-8). A Christian will be advised to carefully and systematically save on a regular basis, so that he may:

- reduce his tax liability (by investing the savings in tax saving instrument)
- increase his future income by investing the savings in financial assets which give good returns on future)
- enable acquisition of assets (such as buying a house, car, refrigerator, etc.)
- leave an inheritance (to help his children to settle down in life).

However while putting his savings in investment, he should balance well among:

- returns on the investment.
- liquidity of the investment.

These factors should be duly considered and then a choice may be made from among the following investments:

- Tax-saving Instruments
- Other Financial Assets.

- Immovable Properties.
- Gold.

While giving tithes and offering to God, while paying taxes, while meeting the expenses, and while saving for the future in all these and each of these cases, a Christian should keep reminding himself, based on the Biblical principles:-

- # All income and wealth belong to God and not me.
- # Love of money is the root of all evil.
- # The money in my possession is to be used to please and serve God.

May God help us to manage our personal finance just as the Bible teaches us to!

# MANAGING YOUR MONEY

## INTRODUCTION

Is money important to God? Many Christians handle their money as if it were not. They assume responsible Christian stewardship over other realms of their lives but often neglect this important area. They prematurely conclude that God is spiritual and money is only natural and carnal and, therefore, God is not interested in this subject. If we closely examine the many references to money in the Bible and consider how often the Lord Himself referred to it in His teachings, our opinion and perspectives will radically change. In the gospels alone, one out of every ten verses relates directly to this subject of money. Sixteen of the thirty-eight parables are concerned with the handling of money and possessions.

God does care about money management, and has given us in His Word the blueprint for the proper stewardship of our finances. The purpose of this study is to teach the basic Scriptures! Principles of managing our money and possessions.

## THE RIGHT FOUNDATION

“Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power and the glory, the victory and the majesty; for all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as Head over all.” (1 Chron. 29:11).

As Christians, we are challenged to relate to the authority and sovereignty of God in every aspect of our lives. This is especially important regarding our relationship to money. As we develop proper attitudes and Scriptural principles of relating to money, we can trust that God is working with us and controlling the circumstances of our lives. The result of this confidence is personal peace and contentment.

The following are four essential foundation stones in building a Biblical relationship to money:

1. **God Owns**- “For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours.” (1 Chron. 29:11). Christians must recognize God as the owner, not only of heaven and earth, but also of your possessions. This knowledge will free you from the selfish outgrowths of a possessive attitude, and produce a godly perspective concerning your money and possessions.
2. **God Controls** – “For all things come from You.” (1 Chron. 29: 14). Many Scriptures throughout the Bible remind us that God rules in the affairs of men. Having this confidence allows us to relax when facing the potential fears and concerns over financial matters.
3. **God Provides** – “For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.” (Matt. 6:32). God has promised to provide for all our needs. We can relate confidently to the future knowing that we serve a Creator who both cares and provides for us each day.
4. **Our Commitment** – The final foundation stone to be set in place is our commitment to obey the financial principles of the Lord who owns, controls and provides. We must renounce our ownership and independent ways, and commit ourselves to becoming good stewards of what God has entrusted to our care.

## FAITHFUL STEWARDSHIP

“Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” (1 Cor. 4: 2). The word “steward” means: manager, overseer or supervisor. A steward is one entrusted with the responsibility of handling and administering the property and business of his master.

Faithful stewardship of finances requires more than just how much we give. It involves the proper management of all of the money and possessions God has entrusted to us. The same principles of stewardship apply to all, whether you have much or little. In Matthew 25, God required good stewardship both of the individual who received two talents, and the one who received five.

How we handle our money will reveal our priorities and values. We are told in Matthew 6:24 that we cannot serve both God and mammon. The faithful steward has chosen to make financial decisions according to the Word of God.

## **FINANCIAL ETHICS**

“Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? (Luke 16:11). God grants spiritual blessing and favour upon us according to our faithfulness and integrity in financial matters.

Shortly after delivering Israel from Egypt, the Lord established an ethical foundation for their nation embodied in the Ten Commandments. In it He developed the laws of liability, restitution and justice. He upheld honesty and integrity, and denounced stealing and covetousness.

The Christian must endeavor to maintain a good conscience before God and others in all of his business and financial affairs. We must avoid the selfish and worldly tendency, to advance our financial position through unscrupulous and dishonest practices. This includes any form of cheating, deceitfulness, fraudulence or unlawful behavior. Though we may fool others, we cannot fool God. Remember, “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” (Gal. 6:7).

## **THE DEBT TRAP**

“The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.” (Prov. 22:7). In our contemporary society, financial debt has become the norm rather than the exception. The stigma of debt has all but disappeared. The commercial advertising of TV, radio, newspapers, computer, and magazines entices the consumer to buy now and pay later, even if he can’t afford it.

The Bible, with good reason, warns against debt! Its consequences can result in stress, marital problems, bankruptcy and poverty. The Bible does not specifically define debt. However, we can describe debt as existing when either of the following two conditions exist:

1. Money is Owed With Payments Due. – If a purchase is charged and can be paid off at the end of the month, it is not necessarily a debt. If payments are stretched out, you are in debt.
2. When the Amount Owed Exceeds the Assets Value of an Item – Many depreciating items like cars, furniture, appliances, clothing, etc. immediately lose their resale value upon purchase. Depreciating items, as a rule, should not be financed unless what is owed is less than their resale value.

Money could, if necessary, be borrowed only for the following four items: homes, business, education, or certain kinds of investments. Borrowing should then be limited to appreciating assets that produce an income. The amount borrowed should be within your ability to repay without producing a strain. There are cases where need or crisis demands that you borrow for an item or a service. Repay the money as quickly as possible and avoid the debt cycle.

Debt is made easy through credit. The “buy now, pay later”-syndrome has caught many in its grip. Credit has its price in interest. Few really understand how high that price is. Continuing to finance and overspend your income consistently by even a fraction of your income each month can cost you much money in interest in a number of years. Not having to pay that same interest would increase your spending power a lot. Living on credit results in less rather than more personal assets.

What About co-signing? Co-signing a loan for another is a dangerous way to flirt with debt and financial ruin. (Prov. 6:1-5). When you co-sign, you are as responsible for the loan as the person receiving the money. The loaning institution demands a co-signer whenever the person receiving the loan is too great a risk. Though most co-signing is done out of kindness, the consequences to your financial stability, as well as your relationship to the one you co-signed for, will be devastating if there is a default on the payments. Only co-sign if you are willing to face the possible consequences, and that preferably only for another believer.

## GETTING OUT OF DEBT

“Owe no one anything except to love one another.” (Rom. 13:8). Getting into debt is much easier than getting out of it. Breaking out of the debt trap takes a definite goal, consistent discipline, and a realistic plan.

Here are some steps to follow in freeing yourself if you are caught in the same:

1. **Continue to give to the Lord** – We must not take from God in order to pay our creditors (Mal. 3:10). God blesses those who give. (Luke 6:38).
2. **List both your debts and yours assets** – Take a clear look at what you owe. List what you own and consider what might be sold to pay off your debt.
3. **Sell what you can** - Be liberal in your liquidation. Sell what you really do not need, even if it lowers your standard of living. The money received can knock a chunk out of your debt.
4. **Establish a pay-off schedule** – Plan your schedule to pay off as much as possible as soon as possible. Remember, interest compounds!
5. **Communicate with your creditors** – Share your plan with each one.
6. **Stick to it** – Ask God’s help in retaining a consistent commitment to eliminating your debts.
7. **Add no new debts** – Avoid repeating the debt trap cycle.

## LIVING ON A BUDGET

“Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established.” (Prov. 24:8). A home must be established upon sound financial principles if it is to prosper. The best way to accomplish this is to plan property and to budget your money. Good planning requires a detailed outline of our monthly and yearly expenses. Budgeting is planned and controlled spending. Successful budgeting must be based upon earnings and not yearnings! It must be realistic and disciplined.

**Below is an example of a monthly budget sheet:**

### Monthly Income

Salary	_____
Interest	_____
Rental Income	_____
Other Income	_____
Other Income	_____
TOTAL	_____

### Monthly Expenditure

1. Tithes	_____
2. Savings	_____
3. Rent	_____
4. Food	_____
5. Clothing	_____
6. Various	_____
7. TOTAL	_____

Money should be allotted according to the need. Both husband and wife must work together if a budget is going to be successful. It is wise to break down the expenses of food and miscellaneous into weekly allotments to protect yourself from unintentional overspending during any given week. Successful budgeting demands a record-keeping system such as a budget record book recording each purchase, or safely hidden envelopes that contain the money allotted. Besides frequently check-ups on how you’re doing, you must also balance your check-book each month.

If your income does not take care of expenses, there must be modifications made either by earning additional income, or by trimming your expenses.



## **BE CONTENT**

“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.” (Heb. 13:5). A key to avoiding the debt trap is to cultivate contentment in our lives for what we have. It is usually greed that motivates us to purchase what we cannot afford. Proverbs 15:27 tell us that, “He who is greedy for gain troubles his own house.”

Genuine contentment does not depend upon what we possess in the natural. This truth is established by Paul in Philippians 4:11, “I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.” We can cultivate contentment by developing a grateful spirit and attitude. We should establish the practice of daily thanking God for what He has given us rather than complaining about what we think we lack. Scripture teaches us to, “let the peace of God rule in your hearts....and be.... thankful.” (Col. 3:15). The Lord has promised to provide for every genuine need. (Matt. 6:32).

## **TITHING**

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house.” (Mal. 3:10). The tithe is a divine principle of giving ordained by God. Simply defined, the tithe means: “one tenth.” It is a spiritual system of proportional giving unto the Lord for the work of His Kingdom.

Contrary to the misconception of many, tithing was not initiated with the laws of Moses. Though the tithe was a mandatory requirement after the giving of the Law, it was a financial principle observed by godly men long before the Law of Moses. (Gen. 4:3; 14:20; 28:22).

Since Pentecost, the Church, as a whole, has embraced and taught tithing as a means to “honour the Lord with your substance, and with the first-fruits of all your increase.” (Prov. 3:9).

Good financial stewardship requires that we offer our tithe to the Lord. It can be given in the local church or fellowship of your membership. Church leaders tithe to their denomination or can give to orphans or widows. God, in turn, promises to honour our faithfulness with divine protection, material blessing and eternal rewards (Mal. 3:10-12).

## **GIVING**

“It is more blessed to give than to receive.” (Acts 20:35). The Kingdom of God in the earth has many needs. The Christian who has achieved some financial stability should be willing to give beyond the tithe. Here are some of the benefits of giving:

1. The Spiritual Blessings of the Giver – The person who gives shares in the nature and character of Christ Who “though He was rich, yet....He became poor.” (II Cor. 8:9) That He might make others rich. God rewards the “cheerful giver” with grace. (II Cor. 9:7-8).
2. Giving Defines Our Trust – Giving reminds us that God is the sovereign owner of all we possess.
3. Giving is An investment in the Kingdom – Through giving, we contribute to the enlargement of the kingdom of God in the earth.

Other areas of giving include missions, other ministries, the poor, those in need in the church,

## etc. **SAVING**

“Precious treasure remains in a wise man’s dwelling, but a foolish man devours it.” (Prov. 21:20). The idea that saving or investing money is unspiritual and reveals a lack of trust in God’s future provision is absolutely unscriptural. The Lord commends the principle of saving. In Proverbs 30:25 we are told to consider the habit of the ant who diligently prepares for the winter.

To be successful in saving, you must make yourself your number one creditor, after the Lord, by putting aside a portion of your income into a saving account. A family that saves even 5% of their income a month at 8% interest for 20 to 25 years will find these regular monthly savings amount to a huge sum at the end of the period.

The amount you save is not as important as the fact you save. The biggest enemy of saving is procrastination (postponing or putting it off). If possible, begin this month!

## INVESTING

“The plans of the diligent lead surely to plenty, but those of everyone who is hasty, surely to poverty.” (Prov. 21:5). Investments, like savings, are a wise way of preparing for the future. Every investment has a degree of risk.

The following three categories are possible areas of investment:

1. **Career** – Education and training for your vocational field is an excellent investment in your future.
2. **Home** - Purchasing a home has proven to be a profitable investment for the last several decades. Careful consideration must be given to the market, interest rates, and the types of loan you can secure.
3. **Farmland** – If you plant and harvest it regularly, it can return food and money to your household.

## ACCUMULATING AND LENDING

**Accumulating** – “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness.” (I Tim. 6:10). As we begin to accumulate money and possessions, faithful stewardship can give way to greed. Our affection can subtly turn from building God’s kingdom to creating and reinforcing our own. Money has a way of feeding pride and self-sufficiency. As riches increase, it is essential to maintain right priorities.

**Lending** – “A good man deals graciously and lends (out).” (Psalm 112:5). The Bible teaches compassion and generosity towards the needy. Money given to the poor for such basic needs as food, clothing or shelter should be seen as gifts without expectation of repayment. (Luke 6:34-35). In so doing, we lend “to the Lord”. (Prov. 19:17). He promises to repay. Money given for a person’s “wants” can be considered loans, and repayment is expected. We should exercise good judgment in what we loan for and who we loan to.

## THE WORK ETHIC

Labour and financial increase go hand in hand. Our economic system is based upon productivity. In this section we will consider seven facts related to work:

1. **Work is Essential** - “Six days you shall work.” (Ex. 34:21). In this Scripture God gives His directive to His chosen people concerning work. The Lord commands us to be productive, both for our prosperity and our character growth.
2. **All Honest Work is Honorable** – “In all labor there is profit.” (Prov. 14:23). Though we are created with different aptitudes and abilities, we are all equal before God. A person’s value is not in what he does for a living, but in who he is before God and how faithful he is in what he does.
3. **Work Develops Character** – “The soul of the diligent shall be made rich.” (Prov. 13: 4). Labour develops our sense of responsibility and accomplishment. It releases the creative and productive element of God’s nature within us.
4. **Employ / Employee Relationship** – “Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.” (Col. 3: 23). Christian employees should maintain an attitude of respect and submission to their employers. Christian employers should be honest, sensitive to their employee’s needs, and provide a fair wage.
5. **Strive For Excellence** – “Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord.” (Col. 3:23). The Christian should strive for excellence in his or her work responsibilities. We are not perfect, but we should endeavor to do the best job possible.
6. **Diligence Brings Prosperity** – “The hand of the diligent makes one rich.” (Prov. 10:4). The faithful, hardworking employee will be rewarded with promotion and financial increase.

**7. A Time For Rest** - “On the seventh day you shall rest.” (Ex. 34:21). In their desire for productivity and accomplishment, some people work excessively. Rest is also responsible stewardship of our time. It brings refreshing, and recharges our creative energy.

## **LEAVING AN INHERITANCE**

“For the children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children.” (II Cor. 12:14). The following three areas are important if parents are to leave their children an inheritance for their financial future.

1. Training – Good money management has to be learned. Training in how to manage money should be part of a child’s education. Beginning with allowances, children can be taught the principles of budgeting, tithing, giving, saving, etc. Good work habits must also be taught.
2. Future Education – Parents should attempt to set aside money for their children’s education and career training. Because of the expense, this should begin while they are small.
3. Prepare a Will – If you have definite feelings about where you would like your assets to go upon your death, it is essential that you prepare a will. Parents can bless their children, their church, mission organizations, etc. by leaving a will indicating where they would like their money and property to go.

## **CONCLUSION**

We have examined a wide range of topics related to managing your money. As you read this study, you probably conclude that you need to make some changes in your financial habits. Change takes discipline, but when it’s made in alignment with the Word of God, it will always bring forth fruit. However difficult or challenging your situation may appear, we encourage you to begin now to structure your finances upon Biblical principles.

# **BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF TITHING**

## **INTRDOUCTION**

Salvation was meant to have a life-changing impact upon every area of our lives. This includes our involvement with finances and possessions. Though many consider Christianity and money to be incompatible, the Bible contains a wealth of an information and instruction concerning its use and abuse. The Scriptures say a great deal about our financial priorities, stewardship and responsibilities.

Though the Bible contains many cautions against the love of money, greed and a carnal dependence upon it, it does not give a blanket condemnation against its value and use. It includes many Scriptural principles concerning its proper purpose and function.

One of these principles involves the concept of tithing. This study offers a comprehensive yet concise examination of this important financial principle. It explores the Biblical guidelines concerning this subject and carefully considers what our relationship and responsibility to this financial principle should be.

## **THE CONCEPT OF STEWARDSHIP**

Christian stewardship is defined as: “an individual’s responsibility to properly manage everything which God has entrusted to his or her care.” The Scriptures reveal that it is an area of responsibility that demands faithfulness: “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” (I Cor. 4:2).

Stewardship is an important dimension that involves the right use of our time, talents, resources, possessions, and finances. Tithing is a principle of financial giving included within the concept of stewardship.

Stewardship includes the recognition that everything, ultimately, belongs to God: “The earth is the Lord’s and all its fullness.” (Psalm 24:1). It involves our accountability before Him for the proper use of everything we possess. This includes the Scriptural use of a portion of our income for the glory of God, for the benefit of the kingdom, and for the furtherance of the gospel in the earth.

## **THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGE**

The subject of financial stewardship is a challenging one to many. While most Christians have little difficulty accepting the Scriptural guidelines for properly managing their finances or adjusting their financial life-style to the principles of God, some face this area of responsibility with confusion, consternation and difficulty. It can actually become a major testing ground for their faith.

The awareness that our entire life belongs to the Lord, including our material possessions and money, is quite disturbing to some. The revelation that Christianity affects not only the spiritual dimension, but our pocketbook and purses as well is particularly sobering to some. Problems arise either because of insufficient Scriptural teaching, or because an individual has not fully surrendered his possessions and money to the Lordship of Christ. Some say: the heart is only truly converted when the purse is converted!

We will now examine the subject of tithing and carefully consider the reasons for it, as well as the blessings and benefits which come with it.

## **WHAT IS THE TITHE?**

The tithe is a divine principle of giving ordained by God. Simply defined, the tithe means: “one tenth”. It is a spiritual system of proportional giving unto the Lord for the work of the kingdom. In the Old Testament, the tithe was a mandatory program of giving which equally applied to the whole nation of Israel. No one was exempt. It was levied upon the entire amount of one’s income and produce: “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of ALL your INCREASE” (Prov. 3:9).

The Lord considered the tithe to be sacred and holy: “And all the TITHE OF THE LAND...IT IS HOLY UNTO THE LORD.” (Lev. 27:30).

The tithe belonged to the Lord – it was His possession: “And all the tithe of the land .....IS THE LORD’S” (Lev. 27:30).

### **WHEN DID THE TITHE BEGIN?**

As we saw before tithing was not initiated with the Laws of Moses. Though the tithe was a mandatory requirement after the giving of the Law, it was a financial principle which was observed by godly men long before the Laws of Moses came into effect. It traces its origin to the very beginning of history.

There is a definite indication that the tithing principle was first practiced when Cain and Abel brought the “first fruits” of their labors unto the Lord. (Gen. 4:3-4). This lends support to the fact that God originally created this divine principle and imparted it to Adam.

The patriarchs of Israel also observed this principle hundreds of years before the institution of the Law. Abraham gave “tithes of all” to Melchizedek, king of Salem. (Gen. 14:20). Jacob made an oath unto the Lord concerning his commitment to the tithe: “...all that You shall give me I will surely give the tenth unto You”. (Gen. 28:22).

These references prove the existence of the tithe principle long before the legal requirement of the Laws of Moses.

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF TITHING?**

God ordained the tithing principle for practical purposes. It is a spiritual discipline which was established for several important reasons.

We will briefly examine the more prominent ones as follows:

1. **Tithing Is a Means of Worship** – The Scriptures exhort us to, “Honour the Lord with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase.” (Prov. 3:9).  
First and foremost, tithing represents a practical expression of worship unto the Lord. It is an act of worshipping the Lord with our substance. It is not meant to be a meaningless ritual but a sincere reflection of heartfelt honor, reverence and gratitude unto the Lord for His loving care, compassion and provision for us.
2. **It is a Means of Building Faith** – Tithing is a means of reinforcing our confidence, faith and dependence in God’s promise of provision and support. For this reason, when speaking about the responsibility of tithing, the Scriptures challenge us to, “Test me in this (the principle of tithing.), says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.” (Mal. 3:10).
3. **It provides Financial Support for the Ministry** - The tithe represents God’s system of economic support for those called to full-time ministry: “But tithes...I have given to the Levites.” (Num. 18:24). This divine method of financial support for the Old Testament priesthood was carried over to the New to provide practical support for the ministers of the gospel.
4. **It provides Financial Support for the Church** – It is God’s ordained method of meeting the financial needs of the Church. The tithe represents financial provision for the practical maintenance of the Church and the continuation of the various facts of Church administration, evangelistic outreach, and ministry. For this reason God stated: “Bring the whole the tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house.” (Mal. 3:10).

### **WAS TITHING ABOLISHED THROUGH CHRIST?**

Although Christ brought an end to the curse of the Law and did away with the ceremonial requirements involving sacrifices, dietary restrictions, washing, circumcision, holy days, and a host of other ordinances, He did not terminate the moral obligation of the Law.

Though we are no longer in legal bondage to the Laws of Moses (Gal. 4:5) or justified through the works of the Law (Gal. 2:16), the gospel of grace has not canceled our Christian responsibility to live up to the spirit of the Law or its righteous requirements. We have been called to fulfill the “righteous requirement of the Law” (Rom. 8:4) by walking in the Spirit and not the flesh.

This is an important, underlying consideration concerning the doctrine of tithing. It is not a dead, legalistic observance but an act of spiritual consecration which involves our heart attitude toward God. It touches upon our moral responsibility of spiritual stewardship, honesty, faithfulness, thankfulness and heartfelt devotion. It challenges the carnal spirit of materialist affection, greed, covetousness, ingratitude and selfishness. Tithing is an external act which should reflect the godly virtues of the heart towards Christ.

### **WHAT DID JESUS SAY?**

Contrary to the belief of some, Christ did not do away with the tithing principle. He placed His divine stamp of approval and authority upon it when He gave His inspired verbal endorsement. In the gospel of Matthew, Christ confirmed the tithe principle when He chided the scribes and the Pharisees for their spiritual hypocrisy and inconsistency: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and arise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these you should have done, AND NOT TO LEAVE THE OTHER UNDONE.” (Matt. 23:23). Though Christ strongly challenged the Pharisees’ perversion of the tithing principle through their legalism and spiritual hypocrisy, He was careful to qualify His challenge by stating that the principle should not be discarded or discontinued.

### **ABRAHAM’S EXAMPLE**

The Scriptures refer to Abraham as “the father of all those who believe” (Rom. 4:11). The Scriptures also reveal that all those who believe in Jesus Christ “are children of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7). We are his spiritual seed.

Abraham set the spiritual example and established the Scriptural pattern for us when he offered tithes to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20). The Bible depicts Melchizedek as a clear type of Jesus Christ. He is called the “king of peace, without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.” (Heb. 7:2-3). Christ is also referred to as “a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (Heb. 7:17).

### **GOD’S WARNING AGAINST WITHHOLDING THE TITHE**

The Scriptures contain strong cautions against withholding the tithe:

“Will a man rob God?” Yet you have robbed me! But you say, In what way have we robbed You? IN TITHES AND OFFERINGS. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation.” (Mal. 3:8-9).

God bluntly characterizes those who withhold the tithes and offerings as thieves. Since the tithe does not belong to us in the first place, our refusal to honour God with that which is rightfully His, after having been Scripturally instructed concerning our financial responsibilities, amounts to an act of spiritual thievery. Our desire to selfishly withhold the tithe and squander it upon our temporal pleasures, pastimes and pursuits reveal an inner attitude of the heart which is corrupted with a miserly spirit of materialism, greed, self-centeredness, covetousness, ingratitude, dishonesty and unfaithfulness!

### **WHY DO PEOPLE WITHHOLD THE TITHE?**

Poor stewardship in tithing can result from a variety of reasons:

1. Ignorance – Some people have never adjusted their lifestyle and income to the tithe principle because of a lack of sufficient Scriptural instruction concerning its spiritual significance.
2. Selfishness, Materialism, and Greed – A reluctance to tithe is often the result of a materialistic spirit. A failure to surrender our finances to the principles of God’s Word is often a sign that a lingering attitude of covetousness and materialism has not been adequately dealt with.

3. Distrust and Unbelief – Some Christian have never come to a place of secure confidence in the Lord’s promise to provide for our every need (Phil. 4:19). Instead of trusting in the Word of God, they depend upon their finance, material resources, and natural abilities.
4. An Ungrateful Spirit – A failure to appreciate the depth of what Christ has accomplished for us often manifests itself in a misery spirit, financial stinginess which selfishly withholds thankful support from the Church, the kingdom of God and the work of the Gospel.

### **THE RESULTS OF REFUSING TO TITHE**

An obstinate refusal to honor the tithing principle will inevitably result in detrimental consequences. A person who stubbornly refuses to surrender his life completely to Christ’s Lordship will never become a strong, victorious Christian. An unwillingness to yield our finances and possessions to Christ may be an indication of spiritual selfishness, distrust, dishonesty and greed. A stingy, materialistic mentality is detrimental to healthy spiritual growth. An impoverished spirit in giving inevitably leads to spiritual poverty. The Bible establishes this principle when it states, “One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty.” (Prov. 11:24).

A Christian who refuses to trust in God’s financial provision will experience a stunted and anemic faith walk. If a person cannot express his love and gratitude to the Lord in the use of his possessions and income, he will never experience the riches of joy, appreciation, thankfulness, contentment and reward which is possible through totally surrendering one’s life to Christ.

### **GOD’S PROMISES TO THE TITHER (The one who gives his tithes)**

Though our motives for tithing and giving should not be mercenary (meaning: influenced by greed), God has graciously promised abundant blessings to the faithful, consistent tither (the person who gives his tithes of all his income to God):

1. **Spiritual and Material Blessing** – God has guaranteed to repay the responsive tither by overwhelming him with blessings:  
 “Test me in this (the tithe), says the Lord Almighty, and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.” (Mal. 3:10). “Honor the Lord with your wealth...then your barns will be filled to overflowing.” (Prov. 3:9- 10). “Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously” (II Cor. 9:6; see also Prov. 11:25 and Luke 6:38).
2. **Divine Protection** – God has promised to protect the faithful tither from the ravages of the devourer, enable our possessions to last longer, and cause our 90% (of which we give our offerings) to go much further than our 100%.  
 “Bring you all the tithes into the storehouse....And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, says the Lord of hosts.” (Mal. 3:10- 11).
3. **External Rewards** – In a very real sense, our tithing represents a practical investment in the kingdom of God and has a direct impact upon our eternal destiny and heavenly reward.  
 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matt. 6:19-21).

### **WHERE DOES OUR TITHE BELONG?**

The Scriptures clearly exhort us to “BRING ALL THE TITHES INTO THE STOREHOUSE, that there may be food in my house.” (Mal. 3:10). The “storehouse” is the house of the Lord where spiritual provision is provided for God's people. The storehouse represents the local church where we receive shepherding, support, care, instruction and fellowship. God stipulates that our tithe should be brought to the church where we attend, where we are part of the fellowship, where we are member or where we are committed. Our tithe should not be sent to other worthwhile or charitable institutions outside of our local church. It should not be mailed to T. V. or radio evangelists,

missionaries, orphanages, or other spiritual projects. This type of support falls under the category of free-will offerings, which is above and beyond the minimum tithe responsibility.

Since the tithe “is the Lord’s” (Lev. 27:30) and does not belong to us, it is not ours to do with as we please. It is not our right or prerogative to send it where we like. God has clearly instructed us to deposit it in the storehouse – the local church where we fellowship. As a matter of fact, when we give our tithes to the Lord (give ten percent of ALL our income to God), we actually have given nothing to God as yet; we have only returned to Him what belongs to Him! Our real giving to the Lord starts by giving only AFTER we have given our tithes!!

## TEN COMMON QUESTIONS CONCERNING TITHING

There are a variety of questions which usually arise over the issue of tithing. We will now briefly examine some of the more familiar ones:

- 1. Should I tithe On the Gross or Net of My Income?** The tithe should be based upon the gross amount of all our income. (Not just our salaries, but also financial gifts, interest earned on fixed deposits, rent received from letting out property, etc.). We must remember that the deductions on our income also represent financial benefits to us in another form. If a person is self-employed, the tithe should be on the net gain of the business.
- 2. Shouldn’t I Pay My Bills First?** NO! The tithe belongs to God, not your creditors. Too many bills are usually an indication of poor financial stewardship and wrong priorities. Tithing is a first step to financial responsibility and provision.
- 3. What If I Can’t Afford to Tithe?** In reality, a Christian cannot afford NOT to tithe. Nowhere in the Bible does go exempt the poor from giving or tithing. Jesus even commended the generosity of the poor widow who gave her two meager mites (Luke 21:4). The poor are better off giving unto God than withholding it. Tithing is a means of giving our way out of poverty and financial debt. This is a divine law (Luke 6:38; Mal. 3:10). The best way to get out of poverty is to give your way out. Whether we are rich or poor, our 90% (and of course, from this we give our offerings, etc. to the Lord) will go much further through the tithe than our 100% will without the tithe. Withholding the tithe only perpetuates poverty.
- 4. What If I Haven’t Tithed Previously; Should I Pay Back Tithes?** The important thing is to commit yourself to faithful, consistent tithing now! If God pours out an abundance of finances, you can honor the Lord by giving more. If you have repented from withholding the tithe in the past, then begin afresh in the comfort and assurance that God has forgiven you. Don’t look back but press forward in an attitude of confidence, commitment and determination to be faithful before the Lord.
- 5. If God Wants Us To Give Cheerfully (II Cor. 9:7) Shouldn’t I Just Give when I Feel Like It?** NO! We shouldn’t make moral decisions, resist temptation, love others, pay our bills, believe God, serve God or give our tithe just when we feel like it. If we harbor a begrudging attitude in giving or if we are not particularly joyful and enthusiastic, we should not stop tithing. The solution is in repenting for wrong heart attitudes- not in withholding the tithe. We should ask God to forgive us, renew a thankful spirit, and restore a joyful, cheerful, generous and enthusiastic attitude towards giving.
- 6. Should I Keep A Record of My Tithing?** YES! Stewardship requires faithfulness, discipline and diligence. Keeping a reasonable record of our tithes helps promote responsible stewardship. Simple bookkeeping helps us establish a balanced financial budget which takes into account our financial responsibility before God. It helps us to keep track of our tithes on an ongoing basis, as well as the consistent structuring of our income and expenditures around the tithing and giving of offerings-principle.
- 7. When Should I Tithe?** The best safeguard for consistent, diligent tithing is to set aside the tithe whenever income becomes available, as soon as cash or pay check comes into your hand, rather than run the risk of spending it or forgetting about it.



**8. Should I Tithe if I'm Married to An Unbeliever?** YES! Though you are not responsible for tithing off of your husband's or wife income, you are responsible to tithe off of your personal allowance, spending money, or income from work or other outside sources.

**9. What About Those Who Object to Tithing On the Grounds That They Already Give More?** In reality, this seemingly spiritual argument has generally proven to be a clever cover-up for stingy giving. With very few exceptions, those who use this defense in rejecting the tithe principle are not even meeting the minimum requirement in giving represented by the tenth. Tithing is a spiritual law and financial discipline to help determine whether we are, in fact, meeting this basic level of giving.

**10. Who Should Tithe?** EVERYONE! Even minister's tithe off of the salary and other financial gifts they may receive. (Num. 18:25-28). We should even instruct our children in the privilege and discipline of tithing at an early age.

## **CONCLUSION**

We have carefully examined the subject of tithing and have established the fact that tithing is an important principle of giving which traces its roots back to the creation of man. It was practiced by godly men hundreds of years before the legal requirements of the Laws of Moses came into effect, and was a principle that Jesus clearly endorsed and commended.

Tithing is not a concept which Christians should take lightly, overlook or fail to respond to. It is a divine law which will result in benefits and blessings if we faithfully obey it, or detrimental consequences if we ignore or violate it. If a Christian has not established this principle of proportionate giving in his or her life, now is the appropriate time to do so. This is an important decision and life-long commitment which requires faith in the promises of God and the counsel of His Word.

## ESTABLISHING YOUR PRIORITIES IN LIFE

God's priorities should be what we seek in life. If we follow His plan, we'll have proper balance in both family and ministry responsibilities. "So teach us to number (organize) our days (our lives), that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom." (Psalm 90:12). It's important to set priorities in your life. Establish what things are of most importance, then let everything else fall into its right place.

I've found the following to be a helpful guidance for my life. I encourage you to find your own guidelines from the Lord and His Word.

- # Priority No. 1:- Time with God.
- # Priority No. 2:- Time with family.
- # Priority No. 3:- Time for ministry.

### Time with God

Time with God is so vital. If we don't have time with Him, we will not find the grace to handle the day effectively. It's like filling up petrol in your car. If you're on "E" (for Empty) of your petrol indicator and you don't fill up the tank, you'll run out of petrol along the way, often without realising it. Spiritually speaking, you'll run out of patience, joy, peace, and self-control and will miss God's leading in various areas. However, if you start your day with prayer and God's Word, you will have on the armor of God, your spirit will be filled with the Holy Spirit fruits, and your heart will be sensitive to hear God's voice speaking to you. I have a prayer guide which I daily pray through, and I cover every area that surrounds my life.

When you pray daily, always pray for yourself and your family – to be filled with God's wisdom, to be strengthened in spirit, soul, and body and protection from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Pray God's Word over your spouse, over yourself, and over your children. Pray God's Word over your ministry and the people of your church. Do the same for your city, nation and rulers of your country. You'll see results!

Take time to read and study God's Word daily without failure. Don't let the devil talk you out of it. That's exactly what he wants to do, to keep you occupied with work, so you'll be weak and can't fight him. Remember, you are in a spiritual battle; keep your guard up.

Most times I have my one hour prayer time in the morning. (Matt. 26:40-41). During this time I regularly "pray the Word" or the Scriptures. Then I have my Bible reading and study time in the evening or however you want to do it, but just do it. If Jesus had to take time alone with God, then we surely need to!!

If your times get interrupted, don't give up. Sometimes that happens with small children. Just pick up later where you left off. Also, you can pray while you're doing other things if you have to. God wants you to be still and know Him, but there are occasions when you may be interrupted in that time of stillness. This is where flexibility comes in. However, sometimes during your day God will give you time. Be sensitive to take that time with Him. Whenever I have missed my time at the start of the day, I repented and asked God to forgive me, help me through that day, and help me to get up earlier the next day. That's important, but don't allow condemnation. The devil would love to make you feel like a failure all that day. Don't let him! Draw near unto God and resist the devil, and he will flee.

God is looking at your heart. He understands and loves you. Having four small children, I've learned that God understands the life of a mother who is making the effort to seek Him. You can seek Him all through your day. He's listening. Once I remember when I was feeling weighted down with the cares and responsibilities that I had, and God spoke something to my heart. He directed my attention to a Scripture which Jesus spoke to His disciples, "...Come you yourselves apart into a desert place, an rest for a while." (Mark 6:31). Jesus and the disciples had been ministering to people, and He realized that as they had "given out of themselves", they needed to be refilled. God spoke to me, "come apart before you come apart". I realized I need some quality time alone with Him to be built back up, refreshed, restored, and refilled. Sometimes we'll be able to take time away with our husbands, but there will be those who can't take the time away. This was one of the times in my life I know that I had to draw into that quiet place in my house with Him.

Oh, the sweetness of His presence when we pour our heart feelings out to Him, cry and laugh and listen to Him speak to our hearts those words of comfort and encouragement. Your time with God is your source of strength in life. The Word of God also says, "...the joy of the Lord is your strength. (Neh. 8:10). I remember the day in my devotion time I was feeling discouraged because of a trial we were going through. I had been carrying the care of the ministry to the point that I had begun having a physical problem. The Lord showed me that even though I would cast the care on Him at the beginning of my day, later on in the evening when I would be still, I would begin meditating on the care again. This worry caused me to have a slight heart problem. In my heart He spoke to me to dance before Him, but I just didn't feel like it. He also spoke to my heart that David, the Psalmist, once had "to encourage himself in the Lord" (I Samuel 30: 6). So I began to sing, "The joy of the Lord is my strength" and dance there in my house unto Him. I felt the release within, and He spoke Psalm 40:3 to me that He had put a new song in my heart. "An He has put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God..."

Within a couple of weeks, I realized I was healed of my physical problem. You see, carrying the weight of cares can effect your physical body. When you give place to care, fear, un-forgiveness, or other such tricks of Satan, you open you open yourself up for other problems. It took a process of time to actually walk through the trial, but I had a peace within that God was perfecting the things that concern us (Psalm 138:8). And He did! God began to give me songs as I read the Scriptures. I found that I could rejoice and again rejoice. (Philippians 3:1; 4:4). Paul had to rejoice continually in the midst of prison situations and trials, and God always delivered him.

It has been said that if we let go of our joy, we let go of our strength. Many times it will be a sacrifice when you began to rejoice, because you might not feel like it. David, the Psalmist, says to offer up the sacrifice of joy (Psalm 27:6). You'll sense the grace of God rising up within you to overcome when you rejoice, and His joy will be your strength.

### **Time With Your Family**

It's important that couples take time with each other Just like any other human being, you need a day off for the family, a day of rest and refreshing. Electricians can tell you if you overload a good circuit too long, it will burn out. We can avoid "burn out" in the ministry by following Scriptural and natural guidelines. Take some time each week for rest and relaxation. Don't feel condemned to spend time together, just the two of you, may be for a meal or for a walk. Sometimes it may be late at night before going to bed, but whenever you can, find the time to share together. Also, make time to pray together during your week. If possible pray together in your early morning prayer time. Sometimes we've prayed at night before going to bed. It is said that, "Prayer produces intimacy." We have seen that happen in our lives. You can share things on you heart with each other. Then there also is great power in the prayer of agreement between husband and wife (Mathew 18:19-20). Prayer may seem awkward for a husband and wife at first if they've not been paying together before. May I encourage you to press past that awkwardness and into the power of agreement.

Establish time with your children. In order to keep family time, you may need to mark the calendar for this block of time. There will always be ministry needs, but there will also be needs in your children for time and love. Although you may not have every night free to be at home, the times you have at home can be quality and can meet the needs of your children. Some people have a lot of time doing their own thing instead of doing something together to build relationships.

Relationships are built by communicating with each other and interacting together. You can find ways to accomplish this as you do things together. Also, as the children grow, include them in your work. Let them feel like they're a part of what you are doing. This also builds relationships with them.

Finally, have family devotion time together (apart form husband and wife prayer time) at some point of the day where you read the Word and then have discussion followed by praying together. There's an old saying, "The family that prays together stays together." I believe that statement is true.

At night we have our family devotions. Usually my husband does the Bible reading. Sometimes we talk about it. Then we pray and put the children to bed. This can be interesting when all four children are little! Usually we have some enlightening conversations, too!

### **Time for Ministry**

Since our calling is ministry and it is not a regular 9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. job, our time must be flexible with our calling. There are times when we'll be called upon unexpectedly or there will be special services that may go for several nights. Whatever is the case, be flexible and sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading. Be sensitive in your spirit to know where you should go and pray about when to go and when not to go, and then discuss this with your spouse. There are times when my husband and I feel I need to stay home with the children rather than go to a meeting. We can usually tell when the children are tired and need to stay home with me.

Phone calls will come at your house. With all phone calls, always ask immediately who it is and what they need; sometimes they think the pastor is the only one they can talk to, but many times you or others can handle the matter just as well.

God may direct you to organize and train some people in your Church to do phone counseling. This way, when you receive so many calls, you can re-direct some of the calls to others who are on call to help. I have a mercy motivation gift and tend to let people talk a lot as I counsel them. There have been times when my husband would come in for supper, the meal would be ready, but he would find me counseling on the phone. I had to learn how to get people to identify their need, then pray and agree on the Word of God with them and politely excuse myself, letting them know we could talk again at church.

Some people will monopolize your time. I have had to learn how to handle them lovingly, yet firmly, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Always be clear about your priorities and do everything for the glory of God!

# **OFF TO WORK: THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRIST-LIKENESS AT WORK**

What motivates us to keep at it? By retirement time most people will have spent more than 100,000 hours in their work, not including the travel time to the work place. Add to that significant time investment the fact that most people dislike their work and we are confronted with a tragic waste. Why do men and women work? How can a husband and wife in a dual-income family be sure the time they invest in their work is time well spent, that the work they are doing is satisfying, and that their work is kept in proper perspective?

## **REASONS WE WORK**

First, we need to explore why men and women work. Some persons who are less thoughtful about the relationship of work to one's sense of well-being and quality of life may tend to pass off too quickly the question. "Why do we work?" For them, "We work to pay the bills", is satisfactory. However, a more thoughtful approach to the question will result in a much more complex answer.

Looking at the reasons for work from the viewpoint of contemporary men and women, we will discover that both sexes work for some of the same reasons: money, personal independence, personal satisfaction, and social network expansion. Taking husbands and wives separately, we may identify some different emphases in their answers to "Why do you work?"

Men in a dual-income marriage will likely respond in terms of earning a livelihood for the family, discharging societal expectations that they support their wife and children, finding an outlet for self-expression, and contributing to society. Wives may respond in terms of economic necessity, planning for the future (owning a house, insuring the children's college education, building for retirement), fulfilling a sense of calling, achieving personal growth and fulfillment, or meeting emotional needs.

Husbands and wives who are Christians perhaps will respond in terms of two Biblical ideas about work, in addition to the reasons given above. First, the Biblical record indicates that God is working God (Gen. 2:2-3; John 5:17) and that man, who is created in God's image, has been blessed with the privilege of procreation and work (Gen. 1:27-28). Thus, work is the gift of God not a curse resulting from man's fall.

Second, the Christian's view of work is that it is service to God and to people. Christian husbands and wives in a dual income marriage may include these Biblical views in the rationale for their work in the world. Wives, who choose to work only at home, on the other hand, may interpret these Biblical concepts to mean that their work is to be done at home and that their service to God and to people is as significant through their homemaker's role as in any job they could have outside.

## **Finding Meaning in Work**

Just because husbands and wives are employed outside the home does not mean their work is meaningful and personally satisfying. What can be done to assure that Christian employees find meaning and satisfaction in their work? The answer may relate to three concepts: call, stewardship, and priorities.

### **- CALL-VOCATION: -**

is an important word in the Christian vocabulary. Paul used the word in Ephesians 4:1, "I... beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called." The call to which Paul refers has two aspects; the call to a saving relationship with Christ that involves one's whole heart, mind, soul, and strength and a call to serve in daily work. Compelled by this sense of call the Christian labourers daily work ought to be ordained for him by God, and he ought to discover where God wants him to work. Labouring with a sense of call does not eliminate all the frustrations and problems in the Christians' marketplace, but it does provide a perspective that gives meaning and purpose to one's work.

### **- STEWARDSHIP: -**

In addition to call, stewardship is an important concept for the Christian worker. To summarize briefly, the Biblical view of stewardship is that God created and owns all the resources of the earth

and all that man has is a gift of God. (Ps. 24:1). As recipient of God's gifts, man is steward and is accountable to God for his use of them. (1 Cor. 4:2). The Bible sends stern warnings to those who would forget that God gives us strength to work (Deut 8:11-18) and that seeking wealth can have corruptive influence (Luke 12:15). Happy Christian workers are those who labour as God's representatives in the world, manage all their income as God's stewards, and never cease to thank Him for the energy to work.

- **PRIORITIES:**

The third concept has to do with priorities. For the Christian, developing a rich relationship with God is much more important than acquiring material things or laying up treasures for himself (Luke 12:21). Maintaining strong husband-wife and parent-child relationships in the dual-income family is more important than achieving vocational goals or acquiring money for both current needs or wants and future comforts. Being the best Christian one can become, developing a strong Christian home, and maintaining a healthy home-church link are priorities.

Work is meaningful and satisfying for the Christian when it is done as a part of God's call, as an expression of Christian stewardship, and is kept in proper perspective with higher priorities.

### **Establishing Helpful Guidelines**

How can spouses in dual-income families pursue their labours in the world and their relationships in the home in a manner that will enable them to grow as individual Christians and to strengthen Christian marriage and Christian family life? A few simple guidelines follow below:

1. Live life as under a divine call away from self-centeredness. The nature of one's occupation and level of performance on the job should be compatible with that call. One's vocational goals must never be achieved to the neglect of the Christian calling or at the expense of family relationships, both of which are higher priorities.
2. Distinguish between needs and wants. A desire to maintain a certain standard of living as a motivation for the wife's working outside the home is different from the desire to have more money just to keep up with the neighbours. Motivation that has greed, covetousness and social power at its roots is unacceptable.
3. Live by the principle that persons are more important than things and must never be subordinated to impersonal forces. When ambition to achieve professionally or to acquire a higher socio-economic status drives persons to exploit their own family members for their own ends, they are sinning and will come under God's judgment.
4. Accept that Christians live under a higher discipline and loyalty than non Christians. God's standards for us as workers and His expectations for our marriages and families are greater than are those by which the unsaved live. At the same time, God resources for enabling us to develop needed self-discipline and for balancing our responsibilities in the home with those in the work world are adequate (Phil.4:13; 1 John 4:4).

## **ARE YOU BEING DRIVEN OR LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT?**

**Besides hearing God's call when we enter the ministry, it is also necessary to be led by His Spirit. Only then we can be a firebrand for the Lord!**

I prefer to read Romans 8:14 as follows: "For as many as are continually led by the Holy Spirit, these are the ones who will become the mature sons and daughters of the living God." Until we implement this aspect of our Christian walk it is my belief we cannot reach fullness of Christian maturity. The amazing outpouring of the Spirit many are experiencing at this time is not just for a quick fix. Or that we should become addicted to experiencing prostrations, drunkenness, laughter and so on! Somewhere along the line there should be character change taking place, such as I have personally experienced and have witnessed in many others.

### **Powerfully Transformed by the Spirit**

Sitting across the room from me, he could see my desire. He said, "You are such a big target for God. He can't miss you! Fill him, Lord, with your Holy Spirit." Immediately I felt an invisible force take hold of both my wrists and force my hands gently but with strength behind me. My chest went out, my head went back and I roared supernaturally for a long period without taking a breath. I saw my frustration over the unbelief, skepticism, criticism and hard hearts of people and places I had ministered previously. I felt it all leaving me and progressed into a vision of seeing Jesus on the cross. In the vision I was then taken and superimposed over His body and found myself ceasing from the roaring to yelling out extremely loud the words He was speaking: "It is finished. It is finished." I continued to cry these words out for a period of about five minutes, at the end of which I found myself weeping and the still quiet voice of the Holy Spirit inside saying. "You were driven, but as from now I will lead you."

As the anointing lifted I became more coherent and realized the Lord's powerful touch upon my life through the visitation of the Holy Spirit on me. Since that day, my life has been transformed. I put away all my old sermons and preaching habits when ministering and relaxed into my ministry as an evangelist. In essence I let the Holy Spirit take control of my ministry and life. My character has subsequently changed. People who know me confirm it.

### **The Dangers of Being Driven**

What about you? Are you driving yourself so hard that you have been missing the scenery? Check this list to see if perhaps you are driven, and if so, where are you driving?

#### Driven people:

- Are most often gratified by accomplishment...so that begin to look for ways to accumulate more and more achievements...they are usually reading books and attending seminars that promise to help them to use what time they have to become more effective.
- Are preoccupied with the symbols of accomplishment...that means what they will be aware of the symbols of status: titles, office size and location, positions on organizational charts and special privileges.
- Are usually caught in the uncontrolled pursuit of expansion. They like to be part of something that is getting bigger and more successful.
- Tend to have a limited regard for integrity...shortcuts to success becomes a way of life. Because the goal is so important they drift into ethical shabbiness. Driven people become progressively pragmatic (officious, opinionated, meddlesome), endangering themselves for compromise.
- Possess limited or undeveloped people's skill. There is usually a trail of bodies in the wake of a driven person. Of such people we find ourselves likely to say: "They are unbearable to work with. But they certainly get things done!"
- Tend to be highly competitive, thus they are likely to view other people as competitors or as enemies who must be beaten-perhaps even humiliated-in the process.

- Are usually abnormally busy...too busy to pursue ordinary relationships in marriage, family or friendship, not to speak of one with God.

### **Be Led by the Spirit**

As we have already noted, driven people or workaholics often make great contributions. They start organizations, provide jobs and opportunities: they are often very bright and offer ways and means of doing things that are beneficial to many. But at what cost? Because they have not balanced their work with rest, worship and play, they become very vulnerable. The meaning of life escapes them. Driven by self, they achieve success without experiencing fulfillment. For them there's the loneliness of having everything and knowing that it is still not enough. It has been said, "You may be on some critical, earth shattering journey traveling at some crazy pace...but don't forget to smell the flowers on the way."

Hebrews 4:9-10 says, "There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered his rest has himself also ceased from his work as God did from His." The way to Christian maturity is: to be led by the Holy Spirit and not to be driven by self!! In these wonderful times of refreshing let's say: "Lord, less of me and more of your Holy Spirit in my life. Let me become more and more a reflection of the expressed image of Christ."

### **Personal Example**

In my ministry life the Lord has clearly indicated to me which way I should take. When people raise doubts with great contentment I answer simply. "The Holy Spirit is leading me." As a minister I must practice what I preach! After all, I'm now being led, not driven.

Again the question: What about you? Is it time to start being led by the Holy Spirit? Is it time for a character change? That's an important part of what this move of God is about.



## WHAT ABOUT THE DOWRY SYSTEM?

The groom's parents demanding large sums of money from the bride's people is a social evil that every fair-minded citizens and faithful Christians must fight against. In spirit of the anti-dowry bill passed by the government, the dowry system is not cracked yet. Newspapers still report of bride-burning due to torturous demands of husbands and in-laws. What should be the Christians stand on this crucial issue?

In the ancient Middle East, a man was expected to make a gift to his bride's father. (Gen. 34:12). The word "dowry" thus originally meant: "bride-price!" But today it's the groom-price! The bride-price was not always paid in money. Jacob worked for seven years in order to marry Laban's daughter Rachel (Gen. 29:18). King Saul urged David to marry his daughter, saying he wanted "no other price for the bride" than evidence that David had killed a hundred Philistines (1 Sam. 18:25). The bride was also given gifts by her father, which she brought into the marriage. Laban gave servant women to his daughters (Gen. 29: 24,29). Caleb gave a field and water springs to his daughter (Josh. 15:17-19). The groom also gave gifts to the bride (Gen. 24:53). Christ loved His Bride the Church and gave Himself for it. (Eph. 5:25). Father God who gave Christ, the Bridegroom, to us does not withhold any good thing from us. (Rom. 8:32).

When money transaction becomes a major factor in marriage, all sorts of evil will creep in. Money does matter but it does not matter for Christ-centered marriages! Many a Christian young man has missed God's best in the choice of his life-partner because he has yielded to the pressure from his parents to make money in the marriage deal. It's not cash or complexion but character that lasts! (Prov. 31:30). Believer boys must have the godly backbone to resist un-Biblical parental pressures. Throwing the entire blame on parents is not manliness.

In some circles the major chunk of properties goes to the boys, and the girls are treated as step-children. This again is a violation of Biblical principles and the law of equal rights. When parents treat boys and girls alike, it will be a major step in the eradication of the dowry system.

Both my wife and I had anti-dowry convictions and we wanted our marriage to be a testimony to it. When she was proposed to me I had just finished my studies. I studied under a loan scholarship and my parents had a nil bank balance. So my daddy asked her parents if they could wait because I had not started earning and there was no money even to stitch a wedding suit. To this her father replied that they were interested in the boy and not the job. And he voluntarily gave a relatively small sum of money to my parents towards the wedding expenses. I thank God for my parents who got satisfied with that amount as in those days the dowry offers for a rank-holding Engineering postgraduate ran in very high rates. However, I was not happy about this transaction. After our marriage I told my father-in-law that I would repay this amount to him in course of time from my earnings. He answered, "The amount was neither big nor a demanded dowry. It's the minimum I could have done to help your parents conduct the wedding. You can go with a clear conscience."

Instead of standing on formalities, the richer party must help the other family conduct the marriage decently. Getting the less affluent family into heavy debts is not Christian. If we Christians would not set up an example, then who else will?

# NUGGESTS - POWER - PACKED SAYINGS - PRINCIPLES FOR LIFE - “FOOD FOR THOUGHT”

## LOVE THEM ANYWAY

People are unreasonable, illogical, self-centered. Love them anyway.  
If you do good people will accuse you of selfish motive. Do good anyway.  
If you are successful, you will win false friends and real enemies. Try to be successful anyway.  
The good you do will be forgotten tomorrow. Do it Anyway.  
The honesty and frankness will make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.  
People favor the underdog, but they chum up to the top dog. Fight for the underdog anyway.  
Give the world the best you have and chances are you will get kicked in the teeth.  
Give it Anyway!

### CHANGE:

- Your vile ways
- Your bad habits
- Your untruthful talk
- Your mismanagement of time
- Your ingratitude toward others
- Your disgusting temper
- Your misunderstanding of people
- Your bad manners
- Your attitude toward spouse and family

Be honest to God and then  
SEE THE CHANGE IN YOUR LIFE!!!

Have **POSITIVE** thoughts.

Think **POSITIVE** ideas.

Speak **POSITIVE** words.

Expect **POSITIVE** feedback.

Create **POSITIVE** circumstances.

Share **POSITIVE** results.

**The wise judge themselves lest they be judged. The even wiser ask for the judgment of the Lord, because they realize that they cannot even judge themselves very well. Therefore they pray for the Lord to judge them severely, to correct them ruthlessly, so that they could serve Him more perfectly!!**

He works through the Holy Spirit changing us into the likeness of Jesus Christ so that His holy life is reproduced in us as we yield ourselves to God, the Holy Spirit will live the holy life of Jesus Christ in us through us and out of us.

It is not a matter of perfecting your abilities and activities. It is a vibrant, personal relationship with the living God-God and man united in spiritual life.

**A WINNER LOOKS WHERE HE IS GOING TO!**

**A LOSER LOOKS WHERE HE IS GOING THROUGH!**

**Three thoughts on conversation:**

- Is it true?
- Is it kind?
- Is it necessary?

**RESOLUTIONS**

Choose to love	- rather than hate	Choose to heal	- rather than wound
Choose to smile	- rather than frown	Chose to give	- rather than grasp
Choose to build	- rather than destroy	Choose to act	- rather than delay
Choose to persevere	- rather than quit	Choose to forgive	- rather than curse
Chose to Praise	-rather than group	Choose to pray	- rather than.....

**Great faith** comes out of great tests and trails. When you realize that, then you'll thank God for the great test or trail you're going through, because you'll know that if you persevere by faith – if you count it all joy – great victory awaits you on the other side of that test or trail.

Excellent translation of John 21: 15b: **“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?”**

**Spiritual maturity** is not the possession of vast quantities of Bible knowledge or possessing the most powerful spiritual gifts. Carnal people can have both of these. Spiritual maturity is discerning God's voice and sharing the affections of God in practical ways with fellow humans. It is loving what He loves and hating what He hates. Mature Christians love God and His people, and they hate anything that takes them away from God.

**Oswald Chambers' statement.** **“The root of sin is the suspicion that God is not good, ” is tremendously profound. The notion that God is not worthy of our absolute trust lies at the root of many of our problems. From counseling I have discovered that a lack of confidence in the goodness of God is a major reason why people do not have inner strength and security.**

**THE BEST GIFTS YOU CAN GIVE:**

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 1. to your friend....loyalty    | 4. to your mate....love and faithfulness |
| 2. to your enemy....forgiveness | 5. to all men and women.....charity      |
| 3. to your boss....service      | 6. and to God.....your life.             |

Paul shows the Christian way to think and act. People make two mistakes in life; some only think but never act and others act without thinking. The challenge is to think and act biblically in all areas of our life.

**You just keep walking by faith, believing God. By the time you reach the mountain, He will have move it out of your way!**

**I questioned the truth of what I had heard. I complained to God. Then He spoke words to me that have changed my life: “Son, all truth comes to you in seed form. It may be fruit in the person sharing it, but it is seed to you. Whether or not it bears fruit depends on what you do with it.” Spiritual information seeds must grow into fruit-producing revelation!**

### What is Christianity?

In the home, it is kindness; in play, it is fairness; toward the wicked, it is resistance;  
In business, it is honesty; toward the unfortunate, it is pity; toward the strong, it is trust;  
In society, it is courtesy; toward the weak, it is help; toward the penitent, it is forgiveness;  
In work, it is thoroughness; and toward God, it is reverence and love.

### **A LESSON IN LOVE**

Paul gives us a wonderful teaching on the nature of genuine love in 1 Corinthians 13: 4 – 8. Here is one way of developing that way of loving in all our relationships. Read the passage, and then read it again asking: “Am I?” or “Do I?” before every given mark of love.

- Love is patient. Do I get impatient with others?
- Love is kind. Am I kind?
- Love does not envy. Do I envy others?
- Love does not boast. Do I boast or look forward to being praised?
- Love is not proud. Am I proud? Do I consider myself better than others?
- Love is not rude. Am I rude, forgetting to respect another as a child of God?
- Love is not self-seeking. Am I always looking after my own interests at the cost of others?
- Love is not easily angered. Do I lose my temper at the slightest provocation?
- Love keeps no record of wrongs. Do I keep a record of wrongs, to bring them up even after reconciliation?
- Love does not delight in evil . Do I feel a little happy when bad things happen to people I don't like?
- Love rejoices with the truth. Do I take a stand for the truth?
- Love always protects. Do I protect others, especially the weak?
- Love always trusts. Am I ready to trust those I say I love?
- Love always hopes. Is hope a mark of my life?
- Love always perseveres. Do I persevere, or do I give up when things go wrong?
- Love never fails. Do I ever fail those I love?

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**The call of Jesus is to be with Him, to be in an intimate, life-changing, life  
- enhancing relationship with Jesus.**

Sometimes a bridge falls, but that does not mean the ‘law of gravity’ has failed.  
Sometimes power lines are short-circuited, but that does not mean the ‘electricity’ has failed.  
Sometimes a friend betrays, but that does not mean the power of ‘love’ has failed.  
Sometimes prayer is not answered, but that does not mean the ‘power of prayer’ has failed.

Don't quit when the bridge falls down.

Don't quit when the lights go out.

Don't quit when a friend lets you down.

Don't quit when prayer is not answered.

Why should we...It doesn't mean a thing. The law and the lawgiver are still there!

## GOD'S ANSWERS

**For all the negative things we say to ourselves, God has a positive answer for it.**

You say: "It is impossible!" God says: All things are possible (Matt. 19:26)	You say: "I can't forgive myself." God says: I FORGIVE YOU (Ps. 32:5)
You say: "I'm too tired." God says: I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28)	You say: "I can't manage." God says: I will supply all your needs (Phil. 4:19)
You say: "Nobody really loves me!" God says: I love you (Is. 43:4)	You say: "I'm afraid." God says: I have not given you a spirit of fear (II Tim. 1:7)
You say: "I can't go on." God says: I will direct your steps (Is. 48:17)	You say: "I'm always worried and frustrated." God says: Cast all your cares on ME (I Peter 5:7)
You say: "I can't figure things out." God says: I will direct your steps (Is. 48:17)	You say: "I don't have enough faith." God says: "I've given everyone a measure of faith (Rom. 12:3)
You say: "I can't do it." God says: You can do all things (Phil. 4:13)	You say: "I feel all alone" God says: I will never leave you nor forsake you! (Heb. 13:5)
You say: "I'm not able." God says: I am able (Mark 9:23)	
You say: "I'm not smart enough." God says: I give you wisdom (Psalm 32:8)	

**The early Christians didn't confirm their faith. They had the truth, and they refused to water it down. They held the faith that would not compromise. Because they dared to buck the tide of public opinion and be different, because they dared to believe when other men doubted, because they were willing to risk their lives for what they stood for, because they chose death rather than to live an empty life, their world became curious about what motivated these men; and in due time they turned the philosophical, political, and religious world upside down.**

**Prayer is a time for me to know  
God better and to hear Him**

In God's vision-  
you'll find His provision!

**DO ALL THE GOOD YOU CAN, BY ALL THE MEANS YOU CAN, IN ALL THE WAYS YOU CAN, IN ALL THE PLACES YOU CAN, AT ALL THE TIMES YOU CAN, TO ALL THE PEOPLE YOU CAN, AS LONG AS EVER YOU CAN.....**

### **BURNING QUESTIONS IN GOD'S HEART ARE:**

- (i) Are we interceding with God for a dying world (Ps. 2: 8)?
- (ii) Are we still truly seeking for lost souls (Ezek. 34:4; Luke 19:10)?
- (iii) Are we really seeking God's Kingdom first (Matt. 6:33)?
- (iv) Do we mourn before God for the spiritual wanderers and do we go and find them (Eze. 34:6)?
- (v) Do we still visit and care for widows and orphans – which James says is "religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless" (Jas. 1:27)
- (vi) Do we still feed the poor who are hungry, cold and naked (Matt. 25:35- 36)?
- (vii) Are we still striving to have a pure heart and a holy life (Col. 1:22; Jas. 1:27; 2 Pet. 3:14; Heb. 12:14)?
- (viii) Do we still humble ourselves before God for cleansing, a new anointing and new power of the Spirit in our lives (Jer. 50:4- 5)?

## **PERSPECTIVE: Differences between you and your boss**

If you take a long time, you're slow. BUT if your boss takes a long time, he's thorough.

If you don't do it, you're lazy. BUT if your boss doesn't do it, he's too busy.

If you make a mistake, you're an idiot. BUT if your boss makes a mistake, he's 'only human.'

If you are on a day off sick, you're 'always' sick. BUT if your boss is a day off sick, he must be very ill.

If you take a stand, you're being bull-headed. BUT if your boss does it, he's being firm.

If you overlooked a rule of etiquette, you're bang rude. BUT if your boss skips a few rules, he's being original.

If you please your boss, you're arse-creeping. BUT if your boss pleases his boss, he's being co-operative.

If you do something without being told, you're overstepping your authority. BUT if your boss does the same thing, that's initiative.

If you're out of the office, you're wandering around. BUT if your boss is out of the office, he's on business.

If you apply for leave, you must be going for an interview. BUT if your boss applies for leave, it's because he's over-worked.

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**Character** is like the foundation of a house – it's below the surface.

**Personality** is what you are with other people – character is what you are when you are alone.

**Integrity** is Christ-like character in working clothes.

We inherit personality – we build character. Character is not made in crisis – it is only exhibited then. Christianity is of no value unless it changes your character. Reputation is what people think of us – character is what God knows about us.

**A nominal Christian is one who follows Jesus, except when the Master's teachings infringe upon his life practices!**

**Nothing can ever separate us from his love. Death can't, and life can't. The angels won't, and all the powers of hell itself cannot keep God's love away... (Romans 8:38). With His incredible love reaching out and surrounding us, how can we blame God for unfortunate circumstances? How can we be bitter and angry when these emotional responses will not manipulate God? His love is greater than our pain.**

Please understand that no man will ever truly seek God with all his heart until he is emptied of the opportunities of working out his life in the flesh. From that empties position, with utter desolation of life, he will move in abandonment toward God, through prayer, realizing God is his only hope. Then God can supply not only the need, but His life to that individual. It boils down to this..... More of His and less of me! Let's go further...

His will instead of my will.

His Glory instead of my glory.

His Agenda instead of my agenda.

His Name instead of my name.

His Character instead of my character.

His Word instead of my word.

**We probably do not intentionally nor maliciously push ourselves into prominence, but in a subtle way it can be in our thinking and serving. So we need to often be alerted to the need to lift up Christ and put self down.**

**Your attitude determines your altitude, not just your aptitude!**

## **Why God used D.L. Moody**

God used evangelist D.L. Moody, an un-educated man, to win more than a million to Christ. His friend, R.A. Torrey gave the reasons why God used D.L. Moody:

1. He was totally surrendered unto God.
2. He spent much time alone with God in prayer.
3. He spent much time daily studying the Bible.
4. He was completely humble man.
5. He has no love for money.
6. He was filled with power from heaven.
7. He had a great compassion for the lost.

Simple reasons for the young ministers as well as the veteran minister to follow.

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**“OUR LIFE WILL BE MEANINGFUL ONLY WHEN WE LIVE IT TO SERVE OTHERS! WE WILL BE LOVED AND RESPECTED ONLY IN PROPORTION TO OUR SELFLESSNESS!”**

## **DYING TO SELF**

When you are forgotten, or neglected, or purposely set at naught, and you don't sting and hurt with the insult of the oversight, but your heart is happy, being counted worthy to suffer for Christ.

**THAT IS DYING TO SELF**

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation, or to record your own good works, or itch after commendations, when you can truly love to be unknown. **THAT IS DYING TO SELF**

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinions ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart, or even defend yourself, but take in all in patient loving silence.

**THAT IS DYING TO SELF**

When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy, nor question God, while your own needs are far greater and in desperate circumstances.

**THAT IS DYING TO SELF**

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, and im-punctuality, or any annoyance: when you stand face-to-face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility and endure it as Jesus endured.

**THAT IS DYING TO SELF**

When you can receive correction and reproof from one of less stature than yourself and can humbly submit inwardly as well as outwardly, finding no rebellion or resentment rising up within your heart.

**THAT IS DYING TO SELF**

When you are content with any food, any offering, any climate, any society, any raiment, any interruption by the will of God.

**THAT IS DYING TO SELF**

Are you dead yet? In these last days the Spirit would bring us to the cross. “That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable unto His death.” - Phil. 3:10

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Answering the following three questions can help clarify one's purpose and call in life. They are:

- **Who am I?**
- **What am I doing with my life?**
- **Is what I do going to make a difference?**

**THE PASTOR** is a trained person and his job is to train the laity or church members to do the same things as he himself feels constrained to do. Compare Jesus, our Lord; how He used to send out people, two by two, to do the very same things as He was doing and wanted to do? The Pastor is like the coach of the hockey game who teaches the team to win the Olympic. When the team makes the win, it rushes with the trophy to the coach and lifts him on shoulders in the lusty noise of hurrah. "You taught us to win; this belongs to you," they say. This will happen in the church as well, when the Pastor trains his people and demonstrates the call of God in his own life as Jesus did. Many years ago, a bunch of laymen confessed to me about another Pastor: "We love him even to death." When the laity will be on their job, and the work of the Lord prospers, the church treasury also will be filled up and many worries of support disappear!

Though our **negative feelings** may not at first appear to have much to do with God, they are, quite often, making a profound statement. **Fear says:** Is God capable of taking care of me?

**Anger says:** Why does God allow my goals to be blocked?

**Envy says:** God seems to bless other more than me.

**Disappointment says:** Is God fair?

Our feelings may surface in the horizontal context of life – as a result of circumstances, events, situations – but they have a vertical context also: our concept of God.

**God loves me and makes me His child. God loves my neighbor and makes him my brother. My privilege is to complete the triangle, to close the circuit by loving who God loves.**

**KEY TO SUCCESS: BE SINGLE – MINDED!!!**

<p><b>A CHURCH GROWS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- WARMER thru' fellowship</li><li>- DEEPER thru' discipleship</li><li>- STRONGER thru' worship</li><li>- BROADER thru' ministry</li><li>- LARGER thru' evangelism</li></ul>
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So the Church is the community of people who would not otherwise be related, but whom the crucified Jesus brings together, forging new relationships through His death for us." The Church of Jesus Christ is not an abstraction but a community of believers who have flesh-and-blood relationships characterized by family affection, brotherly love and the bonds of trusting friendship.

**The winner always has a plan. The loser always has an excuse.**

This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody, and Nobody. There was an important job to be done, and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody would not do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

**YOU HAVE POTENTIAL FOR GREATNESS BECAUSE OF THE GOD WHO LIVES WITHIN YOU! YOU HAVE UNLIMITED POSSIBILITIES, BECAUSE ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE TO HIM WHO BELIEVES!**



## **I ASKED GOD**

I asked God for strength, that I might achieve.  
I was made weak, that I might learn to obey.  
I asked for health, that I might do greater things.  
I was given infirmity, that I might do better things.  
I asked for riches, that I might be happy.  
I was given poverty, that I might be wise.  
I asked for power, that I might have the praise of men.  
I was given weakness, that I might feel the need of God.  
I asked for all things, that I might enjoy life.  
I was given life, that I might enjoy all things.  
I got nothing that I asked for - but everything I had hoped for.  
Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.  
I am, among all men, most richly blessed.

.....

**CONSIDER YOUR OWN LIFE FOR A MOMENT. HOW MANY TIMES HAS THE DEVIL WHISPERED TO YOU: "IF GOD LOVED YOU HE WOULDN'T HAVE LET THAT HAPPEN TO YOU?" IT IS A STRATEGY HE USED ON THE FIRST HUMAN PAIR AND IT PROVED SO EFFECTIVE THAT HE USES IT WHEREVER AND WHENEVER HE CAN. LET THE THOUGHT TAKE ROOT IN YOUR SOUL AND NEVER LET IT BE TORN OUT THAT GOD LOVES YOU SO MUCH THAT HE WILL NEVER KEEP FROM YOU ANYTHING THAT IS BENEFICIAL FOR YOU, OR ALLOW SOMETHING TO HAPPEN TO YOU THAT IS NOT FOR YOUR GOOD!!**

**FEAR SEES THE OBSTACLE; FAITH SEES THE OPPORTUNITY.**

**An excellent test of character** is the way a person reacts under the pressure of a difficult situation. Under normal conditions, most people behave in a socially acceptable manner. They give the impression that everything is under control. When they are caught off guard or are unexpectedly upset, however, they reveal their true disposition.

**"You cannot become what you need to be by remaining what you are."**

Once more a personal question: Are you the kind of person who takes a genuine interest in the affairs of others? Are you the real thing? One of the reasons why God has put you in the church or group in which you now find yourself is to be genuinely concerned about others. As someone said: "Life is sensitivity". The lowest life is sensitive only to itself. The higher in the scale of existence you come, the wider the range of sensitivity and the deeper the depth. You can tell how high you have risen in the scale of life by asking yourself one question: How widely do I care and how deeply?

**DEATH TO THE THINGS OF THIS WORLD BRINGS NEW LIFE (RESURRECTION). SUFFERING FOR CHRIST BRINGS RULERSHIP WITH CHRIST! We are to know Who God is, and then we are to know who He has made us to be. This is imperative to the victorious Christian life. God has revealed all things to us through His Word, and He has empowered us by His Holy Spirit to walk in His ways. I pray that we can be the people that God created each one of us to be by His amazing grace!**

The flesh says do what you would do - Just be what you would be,  
But Christ says do what's right and true, if you would be like Me

**CHRIST FREED US FROM SIN'S PENALTY;  
THE SPIRIT FREES US FROM ITS POWER.**

**We simply cannot have a relationship with God without also relating to other people. "If you want to evaluate how close is your relationship with God then look at how close you are to others, especially those to whom you relate on an ongoing basis."**

**"Work as if you were to live a hundred years. Pray as if you were to die tomorrow."**

### **Begin with the end in mind!**

Management consultants and efficiency experts say it all the time: "Do fewer things and do them better." Go over your life in God's presence and ask yourself: Am I over-committed? Ought to pull back from doing some of the good things I am involved in so that I might concentrate on giving myself to the best? Better to say "One thing I do" than "These many things I dabble in."

When the Word of God comes into our hearts it does something to us: It enables us to crucify the flesh and die to ourselves and live victorious lives everyday. The first essential then is to have the Word of God abiding in our heart. The Word has to get down into your heart so that it effects our whole life style and when that happens you will find that the flesh will become crucified.

Consider those eight qualities outlined in the Sermon on the Mount for a few moments.

**Blessed**, said Jesus, are (1) the poor in spirit, (2) those who mourn, (3) the meek, (4) those who hunger and thirst, (5) the merciful, (6) the pure in the heart, (7) the peacemakers, (8) the persecuted.

Now focus your attention on **the principle** underlying each one: (1) humility of mind, (2) sensitivity to the needs of others, (3) a submissive and teachable spirit, (4) a passion for God, (5) a forgiving disposition, (6) freedom from impurity, (7) a reconciling attitude, (8) an unwillingness to compromise.

How many of those principles are operative (to some degree at least) in your life?

#### **THE IMPERATIVE QUALITIES OF A LEADER ARE:**

- the ability to dream (VISION)
- the ability to listen (FEEDBACK)
- physical and moral courage (FAITH)
- the willing ness to sacrifice (SERVICES)
- adherence to discipline (LIFE STYLE)
- unquestionable integrity (STEWARDSHIP)

Anyone who has the inclination to cultivate the aforesaid qualities has the ability to be a leader. Leader are defined by their ability to stand up and stand tall in moments of need for their brethren, for their teams, for their organizations and for their nation.

**OUR HEAVENLY FATHER NEVER TAKES ANYTHING FROM HIS CHILDREN UNLESS HE MEANS TO GIVE THEM SOMETHING BETTER!**

**WITHOUT GOD, WE CANNOT!**

**WITHOUT US, GOD WILL NOT!**

**Thus God's Sovereignty and man's responsibility go hand in hand!**

**As a BELIEVER one should BE:**

- alert in spirit
- passionate in prayer
- faithful in marriage
- rich in love
- lavish in worship
- honest in business
- generous in giving
- upright in motives
- fervent in faith
- creative in inspiration
- diligent in work
- superior in counseling
- holy in living
- balance in life-style
- true in word
- glad in celebration
- integer in character
- resolute in impartiality
- virtuous in serving
- positive in confession
- abiding in truth
- gentle in approach
- noble in reflection
- consistent in witnessing
- patient in meditation
- humble in mind
- global in perspective
- bold in communication
- punctual in timings
- truthful in appraisal
- hospitable in home
- reflective in solitude
- unwavering in zeal
- perfecting in aptitude
- liberal in prosperity
- mature in disposition
- progressive in accomplishments
- persistent in devotion
- persevering in intercession
- relatively in experience
- respectful in relationships
- appealing in reasoning
- grateful in attitude
- straightforward in practice
- joyful in testings
- clean in speech
- wise in conduct
- forgiving in misunderstanding
- committed in friendships
- conservative in spending
- overflowing in thanksgiving
- expectant in believing
- steadfast in trials
- jubilant in praise
- gracious in authority
- self-sacrificing in ministry growing in wisdom
- disciplined in behaviour
- innovative in pursuits
- focused in vision
- daring in adventure
- unfailing in doing good
- rejoicing in hope
- spontaneous in appreciation
- controlled in emotions
- meek in personality
- pure in heart
- teachable in success
- uplifting in encouragement
- sympathetic in comfort
- excellent in study
- pleasant in nature
- comfortable in interaction
- submissive to authority
- sensitive to the Holy Spirit
- obedient to the Word

### How the Apostles died.....

- Andrew : tied to an "X" shaped cross in Patras of Achaia
- Bartholomew: flayed in Armenia
- James: beheaded at Jerusalem
- Jude: shot to death by arrows in Armenia
- James: thrown from the pinnacle of the temple and stoned to death
- Matthew: slain by a sword in Armenia
- Peter: crucified upside down in Rome
- Philip: hanged on a pillar in Hiramopolis, Phrygia
- Simon: crucified in Persia at the age of 129
- Thomas: slain with a spear in India
- Matthias: stoned and beheaded
- Paul: beheaded at Rome
- John: died a natural death - YOU ?

### Smith Wigglesworth was a man of:

- |                |                   |         |
|----------------|-------------------|---------|
| - humility     | - simplicity      | -faith  |
| - truthfulness | - purity/holiness | -prayer |
| - compassion   | - conviction      | -love   |
| - the Word     | - courage         | -peace  |

### Every minister / leader should focus on:

- # prayer and intercession (with fasting)
- # study and preaching/ teaching of the Word
- # teaching and training leaders and assistants
- # building relationships and maintaining unity

### Vision to become reality requires:

- God's anointing
- Revelation
- Right co-workers
- Resources / finances
- Strategy
- Feedback - system

### **-Pleasing Him**

TRUE SUCCESS is: **-Portraying Him**  
**-Preaching Him**

With a clear vision a church can grow in the areas of:

- A) Evangelism
- B) Discipleship
- C) House churches
- D) Service / responsibilities
- E) Stewardship / finance

This requires:

1. Teaching of the Word
2. Modeling and practice
3. Plans and strategy
4. Appoint burdened leaders
5. Implementation of the plan
6. Monitor, feed-back and adjustments

### Seven necessities for an effective church:

- a) The importance of prayer
- b) The power of vision
- c) Moving forward in faith
- d) Priority to develop leadership
- e) Observe the priority of people
- f) Stay with a clear and practical message
- g) Be willing to carry out God's plans!

**The Call:** "calling is the most comprehensive reorientation and the most profound motivation in human experience; the ultimate why for living in all history!"

So send I you to labour un-rewarded  
To serve unpaid, unloved, unsought, unknown,  
To bear rebuke, to suffer scorn and scoffing  
So send I you to toil for me alone!  
Love never asks, "How much will this cost me?"

### **Is what you are living for worth dying for?!**

**Faith meets its toughest test when**

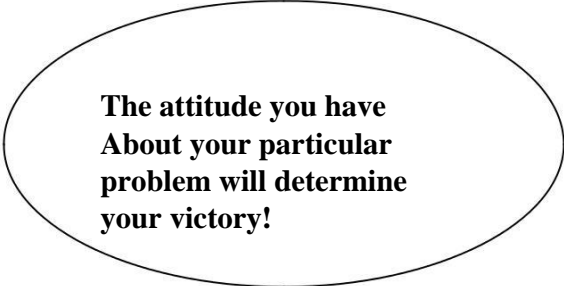
**Success is measured not so much by the position**

**we feel that the Lord has not rewarded our faithfulness!**

Every act of grace in Christ has been preceded by, and owes its power to intercession, which is when the prayer warrior stands between the authority of heaven and the power of hell, enforcing the victory of Calvary on the battlefield of earth.

### **Thankfulness-**

depends on what is in your heart not what is in your hand!



**The attitude you have  
About your particular  
problem will determine  
your victory!**

one has reached in life as by the obstacles that he has overcome while trying to succeed! The book of Psalms reflect the reality of peoples' lives and recognises that everything is not sweet and light. The Psalms are full of self-pity, anger as well as serenity, exhortation and joy. They deliver the total emotional package and that makes them very accessible, offering a sense of comradeship in the most difficult moments.

### **Success in life depends upon the three "I's":**

Integrity, Intelligence and Industry.

Sincerity, personal integrity, humility, courtesy, wisdom and love are the six essential qualities for success. Thus, let us work as if success depended upon ourselves alone; but with heartfelt conviction that we are doing nothing and God everything.

### **The greatest determinants of mental and emotional health are:**

- # a true knowledge of God
- # an acceptance of His ways
- # the assurance of His forgiveness

The measure of your success will be the measure of your ability to help others! We are not called to be successful in accordance with the ordinary standards, but in accordance with a corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying, becoming in that way what it could never be if it were to abide alone. The secret of success is to do all you can without the thought of fame!

William Booth: " As long as there are people in the world who have never heard the name of Jesus, I will serve. As long as there are young people who have not been challenged to discipleship, I will serve. As long as there are pastors and evangelists not having basic training, I will serve. Yes, I will serve right to the very end."

"We love you Lord Jesus", we often may say, But are we as ready His will to obey? Let's heed what God's Spirit has told us to do, For that's how we show Him a love that is true

**In true Christianity we must respond to the Cross**, and there's only one of two things we can do: flee it or die upon it! The man who has died to self: (a) has no ambitions - and so has nothing to be jealous about; (b) has no reputation - and so has nothing to fight about; (c) has no possessions - and therefore nothing to worry about; (d) has no rights - so he cannot suffer any wrongs; and (e) is already dead -and so no one can kill him. If I deny myself and take up His cross and follow Him, my attitude to others will also change. We will esteem each other, encourage, build, and honour one another. We will not be like crabs in the basket pulling each other down. We will enjoy transparent and open relationships not only in the surface but in depth. We have no testimony before people except in loving one another! It is then only that the world will look upon us and marvel that we have been with Jesus! Our service to one another will be out of genuine love, both in public and private as an offering of love to God.

**"Like a highly valued garden or the source of water that you drink - pay close attention to the condition of your heart (the invisible, intangible centre of your personality-where both healthy and unhealthy images, core beliefs, attitudes, thoughts, intentions, judgments, choices or feelings form or merge) with regular and thorough examination and discernment (regarding what you take in, purge out, nurture and manifest), for flowing out of its contents are the elements that inform and affect every other aspect of life - your spirituality, inter-personal relationships, work and ministry." (Amplified Prov. 4 : 23)**

You as a good leader are someone who:  
 = **knows the way**  
 = **goes the way**  
 = **shows the way**  
 You know the way which God has told you, you go that way by being obedient to the Lord, and you show that way by providing servant-leadership!

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In Phil. 2: 5 Paul writes: "Let this mind / attitude be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus". Yet this is not an appeal to imitate Christ on our own and out of our own resources. Rather, by the energy of His saving grace working in us and in the community of faith, and through mutual love, we may learn to be like Him! The high goal and call to imitate Christ Jesus is made possible by the power of the living, exalted Christ who is present and at work within the lives of believers through the work of the holy Spirit. When we supply our willingness, He supplies the power! The goal of all that God has done and is doing in order to save us and bring us to glory is to make us like Jesus! Conformity to Jesus is the final goal to which the Spirit is working as He weaves God's sovereign purpose into the diverse circumstances of our lives!

**Remember the following powerful principle:**  
*"If you turn back in a fight, God cannot fight for you. If you are afraid of conflict, you will never know the power of God!"*

The only people who get to know God's power are those who need it- those who face the issue of the fight, whether the issue is physical healing, finances, marriage, or any other area in which you have problems. Only those who go to war will experience God's power and victories! God constantly exhorts us: "Cast not away your confidence, which has great recompense of reward. For you have need of patience/ endurance, that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise... Now the just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." (Heb. 10: 35,36,38). Don't draw back! Don't throw away your confidence for what you want to win. Don't let go of your hope! You could be one month away or one day away from your victory! God knows. Just keep on keeping on. Fight in God's strength. God will win the battle for you, as you do your part by living faithfully in Him!

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**FAITH = RISK** (Heb. 11: 33 -34)  
 But failing to step out in faith is to risk missing real life!

- To laugh is to risk appearing the fool
- To weep is to risk appearing sentimental
- To reach out for another is to risk involvement
- To place our ideas and dreams before a crowd is to risk their loss
- To love is to risk not being loved in return
- To live is to risk dying
- To hope is to risk despair
- To try is to risk failure

Risks must be taken because the greatest hazard of life is to risk nothing. The person who risks nothing does nothing, has nothing, is nothing. He may avoid suffering and sorrow, but he simply cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love .... live!

Until we can handle rejection and other injustices without being wounded, we are not ready for . . . the spiritual priesthood that is the foundation of all true ministry.

Unless worship enables our hearts to touch the heart of God is not worship at all-it is just noise. If we touch the heart of God our hearts will be changed. **Every worship service should be an encounter with the manifest presence of the Lord.** When we behold the glory of the Lord we will be changed by that glory. However, true worship does not come by trying to see the Lord, it comes from seeking Him.

**Only 5% of churches have more than 350 members.  
95% of churches have less than 350 members.  
50% of churches have less than 75 members.**

(So if you have 76 members you are slightly above the world wide average)

### **Think it over: The World Needs Leaders:**

Who cannot be bought;  
Whose word is their bond;  
Who put character above wealth;  
Who possess opinions and a will;  
Who are larger than their vocations;  
Who do not hesitate to take chances;  
Who will not lose their individuality in a crowd;  
Who will be as honest in small things as in great things; Who will make no compromise with wrong;  
Whose ambitions are not confined to their own selfish desires;  
Who will not say they do it “because everybody else does it”;  
Who are true to their friends through good report and evil report, in adversity as well as in prosperity;  
Who do not believe that shrewdness, cunning and hard-headedness are the best qualities for winning success;  
Who are not ashamed or afraid to stand for the truth when it is unpopular, who can say “no” with emphasis, although all the rest of the world says “yes.”

**Responsibility and accountability are inseparable twins. Along with responsibility or delegation comes accountability or inspection (feed-back and oversight) as the other side of the coin.**

**There are no truly great men or women, only a great God who enables some to be effective leaders and outstanding benefactors of mankind. Realizing this will help us to overcome envy when others are highly praised, and it will keep us from becoming proud if someone tells us how great we are. Only God is truly great and worthy of praise!! (P.S. The one who thinks too much of himself will think too little of God!)**

It is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His manifest Presence to men. The miserable idea that God should in any sense need or crave our worship like a vain author presenting his new books to people who have never met or heard him is implicitly answered by the words: ‘If I be hungry I will not tell you.’ Even if such an absurd deity could be conceived He would hardly come to us, the lowest of rational creatures to gratify His appetite. I don’t want my dog to bark approval of my books!

**The 5 essentials for healthy relationships are: (a) LOVE; (b) TRUST ;  
(c) RESPECT / HONOUR;  
(d) UNDERSTANDING; and  
(e) TRUTH.**

## TO BE BORN-AGAIN MEANS:

After having been touched (often unknowingly) by the Holy Spirit there has come an interest in the heart of the person to hear god's Word. In response to the Word of God (the Gospel) repentance is produced, the need for a Saviour realised and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour exercised. Through this exercise of faith the person is saved, born-again by the Word and the Spirit, forgiven of sin, brought into God's Kingdom, declared righteous having received a new, inner spiritual life, even the very life of God (in Greek: "zoe"). Or to put it in the O. T. prophecy terms: the old heart of flesh which was sinful and bound to sin has been taken out and replaced by a heart of flesh and the Spirit of God empowering us to walk in His way.

Your conviction of the fact that Christ is the answer to every human need, finds its reflection on the measure to which you influence your environment for Christ!

**The entire Christian life is: becoming in experience what we already are by inheritance!**

Nothing of eternal value will occur outside the working of the Holy Spirit in your life!

**Principle to live by: Love, Acceptance, and Forgiveness!**

**As Christians / believers, we should NOT be: whining, whimpering, wandering, wasting, wavering, wearing, or worrying, INSTEAD we should be: worshipping, waiting, watching, working, warring, warning, weeping, witnessing, and winning!**

<p><b>If you can imagine it, you can achieve it!</b> <b>If you can dream it, you can become it!</b> <b>If you can conceive it, you can accomplish it!</b> <b>If you can perceive it, you can realise it!</b> <b>If you can believe it, you can have it!</b></p>
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God calls us to worship Him because He knows that in contemplating Him we complete ourselves for it is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His Presence to men! Ultimately we are the beneficiaries of worship, not Him!

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A very important issue concerns the relationship between God's sovereignty and our prayers. Since God is unchangeable, how is it possible to say that the Almighty can relent or change His mind? Well, be clear about this: God is not fickle, indecisive or prone to fluctuations of mood so that He acts on whim. Nevertheless, the Bible in many places tells us that God changes His mind. To understand this we must avoid two extremes: one, that everything is determined in a fatalistic way so that human freedom is an illusion; the other, that God is weak and the world is run by us. There is a great mystery in the sovereign purposes of God and the particular outworking of these purposes, yet one thing we can say with certainty-God's character never changes, but His dealings with people change. God, in His character, in His being, is always eternally the same, but obviously, in His dealings with human beings, God varies His procedure according to whether they repent or not.

Surely, history is a dialogue. God speaks so that we may listen, respond and co-operate with Him. Intercessory prayer is partnership with God's will. Clearly our obedient response counts, and our faithful praying make a difference. So pray on! Your prayers count more than you may think!



Spiritual authorities are appointed by God Himself. They do not impose themselves on others; rather they wait for others to accept their authority voluntarily. Believers submit to such authorities because they recognise the anointing of God on them. A spiritual leader is one who has earned the confidence of others.

Submission to a godly leader will not only protect us from doing many foolish things, but will also enable us to learn a great deal of wisdom from him. He will be able to warn us about dangers that he himself has faced that we may be unaware of. So to be under spiritual authority is as safe for us, as it is for children to be under their parents.

Authority is a very dangerous thing in the hands of an unbroken man. If you're not broken first and you try to exercise authority over people you'll ruin them and you'll destroy yourself in the process too. God has to break the strength of our pride first before He can commit spiritual authority to any of us! When a person has been broken through God's dealings in his life, then when God gives such a person spiritual authority over people, he will never exercise it like a dictator, but with compassion!!

Talking on the subject of prayer, we know that God answers every request put to Him. He says: **"Yes", "No", "Wait", or "I will give you something better."**

Putting the matter even more succinctly, one can say:

If the request isn't right, He answers "No",  
If the timing isn't right, His answer is "Slow",  
If you aren't ready yet, His answer is "Grow",  
When everything is ready and right, .....His answer is "Go".

Sow a thought, reap a deed; Sow a deed, reap a habit; Sow a habit, reap a personality; Sow a personality, reap a destiny!
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## HEARING THE VOICE OF THE LORD

The principle way God speaks to us is through Scripture, yet it is possible for God to speak to our hearts directly in words other than those of the Bible, though what He says will always be in harmony with Scripture. Men and women of God who have developed the art of listening to God have described this inner voice as- the gentle impress of the Spirit that brings the message of heaven direct to the human heart. Yet listening to God's voice is an art that needs to be cultivated through practice, patiently waiting and expectation. As one ventures into the area of listening to God's voice one must learn to listen in silence. At first there will be the ghostly whisperings of the subconscious self, a dog barking in the distance, the sounds of traffic, a radio or TV. in the other room perhaps, the clamour of personal ambition, the murmur of self-will, the song of unbridled imagination, but one hour of such listening may give one a sure instinct for the Divine that a year's hard study will not. Someone may ask, Well, what does the voice of God sound like? The best way this is described is that it sounds like the voice of conscience, yet of course is much richer and the message it gives is more positive. All of us had moments when conscience said to us; "That was wrong!" Or, "You shouldn't have done that!" But the voice of God does not merely approve or disapprove; it encourages, reassures, informs and instructs. The closeness of our walk with the Good Shepherd determines the degree to which we recognise His voice when He speaks to us (John 10: 27). And when God speaks there is a quiet sense of authority. We know what to do, or we can say with the prophets of old: "Thus saith the Lord!"

TRUE FREEDOM: is not freedom from responsibility to God and others in order to live for ourselves, but freedom from ourselves in order to live for God and others!!

Wishing is hoping I'll get what I want from God.

Prayer is a plea that God will get what He wants from me!

**Prayer is meeting God's need: being involved with...“Thy Kingdom come”, “Thy will be done”**

The 7 - Mind-molders which form and shape up society are:

- A – Arts**
- B – Business**
- C – Church**
- D – Distribution of information**
- E – Education**
- F – Family**
- G – Government**

For God's Kingdom to come, true disciples of Jesus are called to influence these mind -molders with the gospel truths and Biblical principals and values of God's Word! This by live-style modeling and instilling in society.

Believers in Christ are called to influence the influencers and decision-makers of society

Religions are man's search for God

The Gospel is God's search for man!

Philosophies are:

man's ideas about God;

JESUS is:

God's revelation of Himself!

**Where we cannot be tested, We cannot be trusted!**

The first and most basic need we have in life is to belong. God's Word in Romans 1 verse 6, “And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ”, puts that most clearly. The end of our calling is not to know good, do good or be good, but the end of our calling is to belong! The knowing, doing, and being good result from our belonging to Jesus Christ!

**Part of discipleship is giving the ministry away. Jesus provided this example and called us to do the same. What we can do means only a little, but God provides people to disciple that He will equip. Our most important task is to equip others to go where we can't go and do what we can't do. Letting people struggle and find their confidence in God is 90 % of what our ministries should be. It is easy to get people excited about ministry and willing to get involved, but it is hard to find those who are faithful. This is why discipleship and ministry are inseparable. It is important to get people to turn their gaze away from their self-interest and towards God's calling, while at the same time drawing them into involvement into the ministry. We are all ministers of God if we have Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour. Also, the greater calling is not what we can do for God, but whom we can build up to catch the vision God has given us.**

A job is your choice; a ministry is at Christ's call.

In a job you expect to receive; in a ministry you expect to give.

In a job you give something to get something; in a ministry you return something that has already been given to you.

A job depends on your abilities; a ministry depends foremost on your availability to God.

A job well done brings you praise; a ministry done well brings honor to Christ!

Daily challenge for focused living to be answered by the following question: "Never do anything someone else can do or will do if there are things to be done that others can't do or won't do."

Happy moments, Praise God.  
Difficult moments, Seek God.  
Quiet moments, Worship God.  
Painful moments, Trust God.  
Every moment, Thank God.

**Christian ministry is essentially one of reminding people of the truth once revealed. The task of the Christian minister in a group of new believers is first, to "keep the pattern of sound teaching with faith and love in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 1: 13), second, to "guard the good deposit" (v. 14), and third, to hand down what has been received to faithful men. (II Tim. 2: 2). That is what Christian ministry is: faithfulness in handing on what has been received! (See also I Cor. 15: 3; Jude v. 17)**

### **The call to intercession!**

The ministry of intercession is probably the greatest calling in the Christian life, although there's no glory or glamour attached to intercessory prayer. The preacher may have his admiring crowd. He stands in his pulpit 'high and lifted up'. The evangelist, organiser, administrator, convener, reformer, social worker, all move in a circle of those who know their fame and may envy their skill. But the intercessor (though he may be more mighty than all the rest put together) receives no human admiration or applause. Yet it is through intercession we reach out and lay hold of the mighty resources of God. Intercession opens a channel to the spiritual world through which power can come to this world. Its through intercessory prayer that people begin to think about God. Non-believers, made the object of intercessory prayer, have felt upon them the pressure of spiritual influences and become aware of a God whose Presence they had scornfully dismissed.

Every spiritual revival that has ever taken place owes more to the ministry of intercession than to any other one thing. Today God can and will again open the windows of heaven and pour out an abundance of His Holy Spirit's power over our land. Yes, He can do it again, BUT are YOU willing to pay and pray the price of travailing intercessory prayer for the lost and dying in our land?!

### **THE FUTURE IS AS BRIGHT AS THE PROMISES OF GOD**

**Two main qualifications for success in life are: (1) to have the right destination; and (2) to keep going after having started till you reach!**  
**By keeping Christ uppermost in our lives it will keep us headed right and will give us strength to keep going.**

**IN PRAYER,**

**God hears more than just words-**

**HEART**

**HE LISTENS TO YOUR**

Things and money are to be used, people are to be loved!

**Leadership:** is influence. Nothing more; nothing less. It is about influencing others in a worth-while cause. It is not dependant on titles or positions. It is dependant on someone catching a vision from God, and mobilizing others to join them in its fulfillment. When this happens, leader ship arises in its purest form. The leader must earn the right to lead and others choose to follow.

**“Hurting people hurt people. Secure people offer security to people”**

**Our PURPOSE in live answers: WHY we exist!  
(purpose gives us: focus, direction, clarity)  
Our MISSION and our vision in live answers: WHAT  
we are trying to accomplish on short term  
and longer term perspective respectively!**

To deal with yourself use your head. To deal with others use your heart.

**Remember: “The less you will do, the more effective you will be!”**

Be as focused as possible in life in order to fulfill your calling!

Let your life be your message, because people do what they see, not necessarily what they hear!!!

PERSEVERANCE: *is often the determining factor between failure and success!!! Therefore: “NEVER GIVE UP!!!”*

**Remember the following in your life:**

- The most destructive habit.....Worry
  - The greatest joy.....Giving
  - The greatest loss.....Self-respect
  - The most endangered species.....Dedicated leaders
  - The ugliest personal trait.....Selfishness
  - The most satisfying work.....Helping others
  - The greatest ‘shot’ in the arm.....Encouragement
  - The greatest problem to overcome.....Fear
  - The most effective sleeping pill.....Peace of mind
  - The most crippling failure disease.....Excuses
  - The most powerful force in life.....Love (Agape)
  - The most dangerous outcast.....Gossip
  - The world’s most incredible computer.....The brain
  - The worst thing to be without.....Hope
  - The deadliest weapon.....The tongue
  - The two most power-filled words.....’I can”
  - The greatest asset.....Faith
  - The most worthless emotion.....Self-pity
  - The most beautiful attire.....A smile
  - The most powerful communication channel.....Prayer
  - The most contagious spirit.....Enthusiasm
  - Our greatest teacher.....Experience
- To the world you may be one person, but.....  
to the one person you may be the world!!!

**YOUR ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE MORE THAN YOUR APTITUDE**

## WILL TAKE YOU TO YOUR ALTITUDE AND FROM THERE TO THE MULTITUDE!

We create an atmosphere for spiritual growth by our love and trust towards others  
We create an atmosphere of friendship by our availability to others  
We create an atmosphere of belonging by including others in important decisions  
We create an atmosphere of responsibility by trusting others  
We create an atmosphere of compassion by our courtesy and kindness to others  
We create an atmosphere of godliness and spiritual reality by meditating regularly on God's Word, and by being a worshipper ( Personal) of God  
We create an atmosphere of faith and vision by seeing needs and discerning God's response to the need  
We create an atmosphere of generosity by constantly giving to others  
We create an atmosphere of righteousness by acknowledging God's enablement in every situation  
We create an atmosphere of human value and worth by having time to listen to others  
We create an atmosphere of self-esteem by constantly affirming and encouraging others  
We create an atmosphere of God's nearness by total openness to the person of the Holy Spirit  
We create an atmosphere of comfort by caring when others are hurt  
We create an atmosphere of joy and peace by constantly expressing our thankfulness and gratefulness to God in every situation  
We create an atmosphere of security by seeing the good and the potential in others  
We create an atmosphere of obedience to God by fearing Him and not fearing man  
We create an atmosphere of loyalty by never being critical of others  
We create an atmosphere of faith by being impressed with the greatness of God  
We create an atmosphere of honesty by being transparent, and admitting our own faults and weakness and asking for forgiveness when we have wronged those around us  
We create an atmosphere of team unity by sincerely desiring to release others into their ministry in God's timing.

“A **belief** is what you hold; a **conviction** is what holds you!” We must allow the Holy Spirit to establish strongly rooted Biblical convictions in our hearts through reading and study of the Word of God!

A conviction is not a truly conviction unless it includes a commitment to live by what we claim to believe!

A **commitment** is not a vow, but a strong resolution – a strong determined purpose to live by God's Word as the Holy Spirit applies it to our lives.”

Some strike when the iron is hot, but others go on striking till the iron gets hot! – Thus stick to your calling!!

You may have the capacity to do great things, but do you also have a capacity to do little things?! You may be highly qualified to serve the Lord Jesus in a significant way. Because of your training and gifts you may have the potential to carry on great and effective spiritual service. But are you willing to humbly perform some menial task if He so assigns you?! Would you be willing to clean another's toilet or wash another's feet? (John 13: 14-15). That's what obedient discipleship is all about. Or to put it in other words: Are you big enough to become small enough for God to use?

Realise that both God and men take notice, commends, honors and recognizes the man who is successful!

**A TRUE PRINCIPLE WILL WORK ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD!!!**

To understand the Word of God, rely on the Spirit of God!

**Eight Wisdom Keys to Success:**

- ⇒ “What you tolerate, you cannot change!”
- ⇒ “What you respect, you will attract”
- ⇒ “The secret of your success is hidden in your daily routine”
- ⇒ “Your rewards in life are determined by the problems you are willing to solve for others”
- ⇒ “If you insist on taking something God did not give you, He will surely take back something He did give you”
- ⇒ “An uncommon seed always creates or produces an uncommon harvest”
- ⇒ “What you make happen for others, God will make happen for you”
- ⇒ “Whoever wins souls is wise!”

**MORE THAN 1,50,000**

**CHRISTIANS / BELIEVERS ARE  
KILLED AND MURDERED AS  
MARTYRS EACH YEAR!!!**

AS CHRISTIANS WE ARE CALLED TO WITNESS FOR CHRIST IN THREE WAYS:

- 1) BY OUR LIPS
- 2) BY OUR LIVES
- 3) BY OUR LOVE

Human consciousness is an amazing instrument for self-deception. That’s why it is necessary to expose ourselves regularly to God’s Word! For only His Word has the power to pierce our defences and discern the intentions of our heart!

**REMEMBER: Your spiritual life will develop only to the extent that you are prepared to expose your heart to the Word that is alive**

COMING TOGETHER IS BEGINNING  
KEEPING TOGETHER IS PROGRESS  
WORKING TOGETHER IS SUCCESS

God does not take us to heaven when we give our lives and hearts to him for the obvious reason: He leaves us here so we might minister to others on His behalf. Our first duty as enslaved sinners, is to be ministered to by Jesus, but once we have been freed we should then go out and minister to others!

**P L A N** – AS IF Christ’s return is many years away;  
**L I V E** - AS IF HE WOULD COME TODAY!!!

A vanguard leader is by definition pro-active and strategic. Most people in life only react to what happens or occurs to them. A true leader “fore -sees” and takes action before something (like a crisis / event / change) happens. He is strategic and makes things happen! Are you a vanguard leader?!

What is justice? God is a just God and is concerned that things in His universe are done justly, and wherever injustice arises you can be sure He sets His face against it!

Justice should be established in communities where truth and righteousness prevail, and where widows and orphans, aliens and strangers, women and children, the poor and oppressed are

particularly welcomed and find a home! (Is. 42: 4; I Kings 10: 9; Ps. 73; Ps. 89: 14; Zeph. 3: 5; John 1: 17)

### **WINNERS VERSUS LOSERS**

- The Winner is always part of the answer; The Loser is always part of the problem.
- The Winner always has a problem; The Loser always has an excuse.
- The Winner says, “Let me do it for you;” The Loser says, “That is not my job.”
- The Winner sees an answer for every problem. The Loser sees a problem for every answer
- The Winner says, “It may be difficult but it is possible;”  
The Loser says, “It may be possible but it is too difficult.”
- When a winner makes a mistake, he says, “I was wrong.” When a Loser makes a mistake, he says, “It was not my fault.”
- A Winner makes commitments; A Loser makes promises.
- Winner have dream; Losers have schemes.
- Winner says, “I must do something;” Loser says, “Something must be done.”
- Winners are a part of the team; Losers are apart from the team.
- Winners see the gain. Losers see the pain.
- Winners see possibilities; Losers see problems.
- Winners believe in win; Losers believe for them to win someone has to lose.
- Winners see the potential; Losers see the past.
- Winners are like a thermostat; Losers are like thermometers.
- Winners choose what they say; Losers say what they choose.
- Winners use hard arguments but soft words; Losers use soft arguments but hard words.
- Winners stand firm on values but compromise on petty things.  
Losers stand firm on petty things but compromise on values.
- Winners follow the philosophy of empathy: “Don’t do to others what you would not want them to do to you;”  
Losers follow the philosophy. “Do it to others before they do it to you.”
- Winners make it happen; Losers let it happen.

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“We are conditioned by our whole inherited cast of mind and our education to look for political, social and economic causes of the rise and fall of nations and empire; the Bible would have us reform our thinking and seek the cause of things in the moral and spiritual realm upon which all else is consequent... To the Bible, history is the arena of moral decisions, moral conflicts and moral consequences.” This statement deserves to be given front – page prominence on every daily newspaper in the world. The world’s greatest problems are not material but moral.

**Adoration has the power to disinfect us from egoism. When we adore and worship God and put Him at the center and see all worth is in Him, then everything else, including “the self” is removed to the circumference. The more we focus on Him, the more His love and power**

penetrates to the core of our personality and thus we grow in holiness; it is being received rather than being achieved!

At the cross we find not only the greatest condemnation of sin, but also the greatest revelation of grace! The humble do not realize they are humble; their actions and attitudes are as natural as breathing. Jesus, knowing, “that he had come from God and was returning to God” (John 13: 3), was able to take a towel and wash the disciples’ feet. Because He knew who He was, and that His security and dignity rested with His Father, He was free to turn His energies away from Himself and use them to serve others. You can be humble only when you are conscious of being great. Real humility is not rooted in a sense of humiliation, but in a sense of being inwardly great – in Christ. The person who carries an air of superiority is really suffering from a sense of littleness because the little person doesn’t dare to be humble; it would give away – to compensate for his being small. However, the person who has come to an understanding of who he is in Christ doesn’t have to act a part. He is great by virtue of the fact that he is “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6), so he is free to express humility.

When we know who are and understand our position in Christ then we experience a sense of self – assurance without self-centeredness. This prevents us from acting in a superior manner and enables us to be genuinely humble. And old proverb says it well: “The little man is afraid to bend lest he expose his littleness.”

Watch your **THOUGHTS**, they become your **WORDS**  
Watch your **WORDS**, they become your **ACTIONS**  
Watch your **ACTIONS**, they become your **HABITS**  
Watch your **HABITS**, they become your **CHARACTER**  
Watch your **CHARACTER**, it becomes your **DESTINY!**

**JESUS CAME TO EARTH NOT SIMPLY TO SHOW GOD’S OMNIPOTENT POWER,  
BUT GOD’S ALMIGHTY LOVE!!!**

If you got hurt by somebody’s word, then choose the following response:

- Don’t curse it!
- Don’t rehearse it!
- Don’t nurse it!
- But disperse it!
- And God will reverse it!

The saying: “Our small things are great to God’s love; our great things are small to His power.” Is so very true! There’s nothing in our lives so small that God isn’t concerned about it – no need, no desire, no burden, no emotion. Likewise, no problem or crisis is so big that it baffles God’s wisdom and power.

All Word and no Spirit, we dry up  
All Spirit and no Word, we blow up  
But with Word and Spirit, we grow up!

**Jesus gave His ALL to SAVE you; Do  
you give your ALL to SERVE Him?!**

**WHEN YOU’RE DOWN TO NOTHING, GOD IS UP TO SOMETHING!**



**Expect great things from God;  
Attempt great things for God!**

## **WHO IS JESUS?**

He is unparalleled and unprecedented  
He is the centerpiece of civilization  
He is the superlative of all excellence  
He is the sum of human greatness  
He is the source of diving grace  
His ear is open to the sinner's call  
His name is the only one able to save  
And His blood is the only power able to cleanse  
His ear is open to the sinner's call  
His hand is quick to lift the fallen soul  
He's the eternal lover of us all  
Every one.  
And you can trust Him!

He supplies mercy for the struggling soul  
He sustains the tempted and the tried  
He sympathizes with the wounded and broken  
He strengthens the weak and the weary  
He guards and He guides the wanderer  
He heals the sick and cleanses the leper  
He delivers the captive and defends the helpless  
And He binds up the broken-hearted  
He's for you!  
And you can trust Him!

Jesus is the key to all knowledge  
He's the wellspring of wisdom  
He's the doorway of deliverance  
And He's the pathway of peace  
He's the roadway of righteousness  
He's the highway of holiness  
He's the gateway to glory  
And yes you can trust Him!

Jesus is enough!  
He's the all-sufficient King  
He's the King of the Jews  
He's the King of Israel  
He's the King of righteousness  
And He's the King of the ages  
He's the King of Heaven  
He's the King of glory  
He's the King of kings and  
He's the Lord of lords  
And yes again you can trust Him!

And rejoice in this my friend  
He is a sovereign King

There is no gauge to measure His limitless love  
There is no barrier to block His blessings outpoured  
He is enduringly strong  
And He is entirely supreme  
He is eternally steadfast  
He is immortally faithful  
He is imperially powerful and  
He is impartially merciful  
He is Jesus, God's Son  
And you can trust Him!

I wish I could more accurately describe Him to you  
But He's indescribable  
He's incomprehensible  
He's invincible  
He's irresistible  
You can't outlive Him  
And you can't live without Him!

The Pharisees couldn't stand Him  
But they found they couldn't stop Him  
Pilate couldn't fault Him  
Herod couldn't kill Him  
Death couldn't conquer Him  
And the grave couldn't hold Him!

My friends, He's the Alpha and Omega  
The first and the last  
He's the God of the future  
And the God of the past  
And we rise to speak His Name again and again  
Jesus, Jesus,  
He is Jesus,  
He is for us,  
And we can trust Him!!!

## **JESUS!**

He is the first and last, the beginning and the end!  
He is the keeper of Creation and the Creator of all!  
He is the architect of the universe and the Manager of all times.  
He always was, He always is, and He always will be...  
Unmoved, Unchanged, Undefeated, and never Undone!  
He was bruised and brought healing!  
He was pierced and eased pain!  
He was persecuted and brought freedom!  
He was dead and brought life!  
He is risen and brings power!  
He reigns and brings peace!  
The world can't understand Him,  
The armies can't defeat Him,  
The schools can't explain Him, and  
The leaders can't ignore Him.  
Herod couldn't kill Him,  
The Pharisees couldn't confuse Him, and  
Nero couldn't crush Him  
Hitler couldn't silence Him.  
The New Age can't replace Him, and  
Donahue can't explain Him away!  
He is light, love, longevity, and Lord.  
He is goodness, kindness, gentleness, and God.  
He is holy, righteous, mighty, powerful, and pure!  
His ways are right  
His Word is eternal  
His will in unchanging, and  
His mind is on me!  
He is my Redeemer,  
He is my Saviour  
He is my guide, and  
He is my peace!  
He is my joy!  
He is my comfort,  
He is my Lord, and  
He rules my life!  
I serve Him because His bond is love,  
His burden is light, and  
His goal for me is abundant life.  
I follow Him because He is the wisdom of the wise,  
The power of the powerful  
The ancient of days, the ruler of rulers,  
The leader of leaders, the overseer of the over-comers,  
and The sovereign Lord of all that was and is and is to  
come. His goal is a relationship with ME! He will never  
leave me,  
Never forsake me,  
Never mislead me,

Never forget me,  
Never overlook me, and  
Never cancel my appointment in His appointment book!  
When I fall, He lifts me up!  
When I fail, He forgives!  
When I am weak, He is strong!  
When I am lost, He is the way!  
When I am afraid, He is my courage!  
When I stumble, He steadies me!  
When I am hurt, He heals me!  
When I am broken, He mends me!  
When I am blind, He leads me!  
When I am hungry, He feeds me!  
When I face trials, He is with me!  
When I face persecution, He shields me!  
When I face problems, He comforts me!  
When I face loss, He provides for me!  
When I face death, He carries me home!  
He is everything, for everybody, everywhere,  
Every time, and in every way!  
He is God. He is faithful.  
I am His, and He is mine!  
My Father in heaven can whip the father of this world!  
So if you're wondering why I feel so secure, understand this....  
He said it, and that settles it!  
God is in control, I am on His side, and  
That means all is well with my soul.  
EVERYDAY IS A BLESSING FOR GOD IS!!

**THIS IS BOOK NO:**

<b>7</b>
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