

DR DIRK H

MINISTRY
LEADERSHIP
TRAINING
COURSE

A
PRACTICAL
GUIDE TO
BECOMING
A WORLD
CHANGER

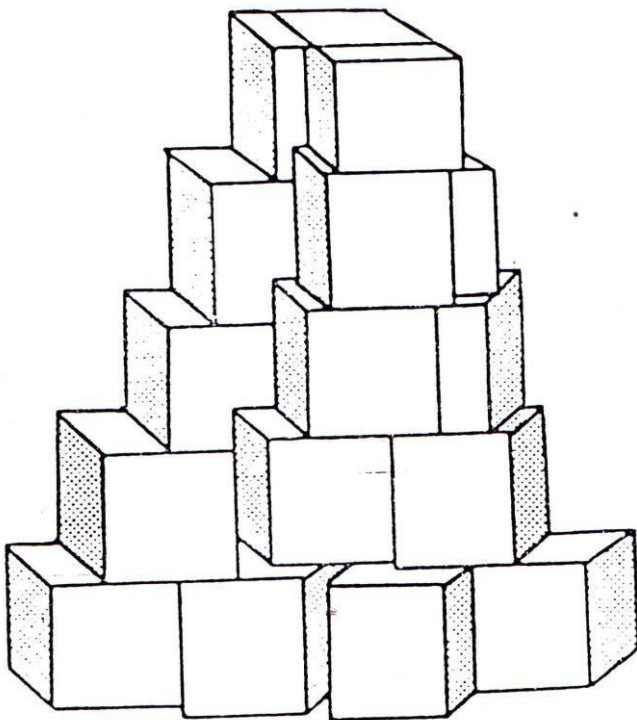
BOOK - 9
LEVEL
LEADER

ENGLISH

MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE

Level: **LEADER**

Study book no: 9



LEVELS:

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

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

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

MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP TRAINING COURSE

PURPOSE:

- TO KNOW HIM, THE ONLY TRUE GOD

(Growing / Maturing)

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

- AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN TO OTHERS!

(Multiplying / Reproducing)

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

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

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

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BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP DEFINED – from the books of the Bible

The Bible is the story of God redeeming man from the leadership he lost so he may reign with Him again in eternity. Here is a compilation of lessons on leadership from each book of the Bible.

GENESIS

Only those under authority can exercise authority. Adam lost his rulership when he disobeyed God and played blame-shifting (1:26,28; 3:12, 17-19).

EXODUS

The sooner a leader delegates authority and distributes responsibilities, the better for him and those under his care. But a fear of insecurity holds many leaders from doing this (18:13-27).

LEVITICUS

Leaders must spend sufficient time before God in order that they may be a blessing to the people. To be much for God one must be much with God. (9:23).

NUMBERS

As long as leaders stay humble and broken before the Lord with utter sincerity, they need not worry about destructive criticisms and revolts from co-workers (12:1-9, 16:1-4, 20- 21).

DEUTERONOMY

The strength of a leader is decided by his walk with the Lord and not by his skills, abilities or material resources (17:14-20).

JOSHUA

Leaders must share with the people the excitement of victories. Joshua called his co-leaders and the men of Israel to put their feet on the necks of the defeated kings. A good leader makes his people shout, This is “our” victory! (10:24-25).

JUDGES

It is not enough that leaders teach people what to do. They must show them how. People are looking for models and examples (7:16-18).

RUTH

Leaders must invest their lives in youngsters by giving them close guidance and loving supervision. Naomi would have never thought that Ruth would find a place in the genealogy of Jesus.(Matt. 1:5)

1 SAMUEL

The first king of Israel was rejected when he became more concerned about his own honour and popularity than God’s glory. He further deteriorated when he could not tolerate his successor being praised (13:11; 15:12, 22-24, 30; 18:7-10).

2 SAMUEL

Effective leaders have the heart of a shepherd. They don’t isolate themselves from the people but identify with them (5:1-2; 8:2-4).

1 KINGS

“If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever” (12:7).

2 KINGS

The associates feel honoured when the leader lets them do important jobs. Prophet Elisha gave the flask of oil to one of his students and asked him to anoint Jehu as the king. Similarly Jesus let His disciples do the baptizing (9:1-6; Jn 4:2).

1 CHRONICLES

A leader can challenge and motivate people only to the extent of his own sacrifice. (29:3-9).

2 CHRONICLES

No one is too young to be a leader if God has called him to that responsibility (34:1-7, 35:25-27).

EZRA

Leaders are God's ministers of restoration. A proper balance of prayer and study of the Word gives them stability and strength to fulfill their calling (7:8-10; 10: 1, 6).

NEHEMIAH

A leader should not be discouraged over the thanklessness of people. But he should trust in the Lord and keep on doing good (5:19; 13:14, 22, 31).

ESTHER

The wives of leaders should support their husbands with their exemplary behavior, both in private and in public (1:15-20).

JOB

God is mighty, yet He despises no one. Leaders should not despise anyone on the basis of education, personality, wealth, culture, capability or any such thing. Their heart must be with the weak and the oppressed (36:5-7).

PSALMS

When leaders are clothed with truth, humility and righteousness, their lips shall pour forth grace. Their scent will keep wooing (drawing) people. (45:1-9).

PROVERBS

While other sins may weaken a leader, the sin of sexual immorality will slay him (7:25-26).

ECCLESIASTES

"If the axe is dull, and one does not sharpen the edge, then he must use more strength; but wisdom brings success." (10:10).

SONG OF SOLOMON

Leaders who are too busy with their ministry to care for their own life will mourn at the end (1:6b).

ISAIAH

When leaders free themselves from inferiority complex, superiority complex, crookedness and roughness, they shall serve as a highway for people to see the glory of God (40:3-5).

JEREMIAH

Leaders must weep in secret for the disobedient before they take the whip of discipline in their hands (13:17; 9:1).

LAMENTATIONS

Problems can dampen the enthusiasm of a leader but only sin can destroy his joy and jubilation. "Let us search out and examine our ways." (5:15-18; 3:40).

EZEKIEL

Nothing has brought down leaders like pride. The higher the Lord lifts us the humbler we must become. There is no other safety (28:17).

DANIEL

A leader who maintains a good conscience before God and man need not be afraid of conspirators (6:22).

HOSEA

The greatest tragedy of a leader is his unawareness of his backsliding (7:9).

JOEL

Revival begins with leaders. Nothing happens until the ministers of the Lord repent of their own sins and lament over the state of their congregations (1:1- 2a, 13- 14).

AMOS

Woe to the leaders who sacrifice people for their own pleasure and comfort! (6:1, 3-6; Gen. 37: 24-28).

OBADIAH

Leaders should identify with people in their crises by showing their love and concern in positive action (vv. 12-14).

JONAH

However gifted, a leader cannot accomplish the purposes of God if he is plagued with prejudice (4:1-5).

MICAH

“Her heads judge for a bribe, her priests teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? No harm can come upon us.” Leadership corrupts by covetousness (3:11).

NAHUM

Leaders are God’s watchmen for His sheep. When they become lazy and sleep off, God’s people fall an easy prey to wolves in sheep’s clothing (3:18).

HABAKKUK

The success of a leader depends on his ability to make the people understand his vision. (2:2).

ZEPHANIAH

Leaders may fail, but Jesus never fails! (3:3-5).

HAGGAI

Fear paralyzes leaders. Pessimists don’t make good leaders. God’s word to leaders of any generation has been, “Be strong. Fear not!” (2:3-5).

ZECHARIAH

Teaching and training enhance leadership skills, but nothing can replace the power and influence of the Holy Spirit (4:6-7).

MALACHI

One who does not love his wife as he loves himself has not learnt the ABC of Christ-like leadership (2:13-16; Eph. 5:25-29).

MATTHEW

The ministry of a leader is to built people, not break them; quicken people, not quench them; enable people, not exhaust them; teach people, not tease them; and uphold people, not undermine them. People will “trust” (have great confidence in) such a leader (12:18-21).

MARK

Leaders should grow in the art of appreciating other ministers and rejoicing over the victories of others. This is one way to avoid becoming self-centered or lop-sided (9:38-41).

LUKE

The greatest temptation of leaders is to be spectacular and appear powerful. If they discern the demonic behind such pressures, they will not miss God’s will (4:5-14).

JOHN

Christ demonstrated true servant leadership by footwashing. Water cleanses and refreshes. The two-fold responsibility of a leader is to make people holy and happy (13:3-15).

ACTS

True leaders spare no pains to produce other leaders (9:26-28; 11:25- 26)

ROMANS

Leadership involves the sovereign will of God. No man can lift us to a place God has not designed for us, nor can anyone bring us down from where God has placed us. Therefore, relax! (9:16-17).

1 CORINTHIANS

Christ has commissioned us to make disciples for Him and not gather devotees around us. Leaders therefore should refrain from doing anything that might attract people towards them rather than to Christ (1:12-16).

2 CORINTHIANS

Financial accountability is an absolute necessity for those in leadership. Top leaders must leave the money matters in the hands of faithful men and stay blameless (8:18-23).

GALATIANS

It is impossible to please everyone. It is impossible to please anyone always. God alone can be pleased and that always. Leaders therefore should not waste time and energy trying to do the impossible. (1:10).

EPHESIANS

Whether they are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors or teachers, the primary obligation of leaders is to train believers for ministry. (4:11-12).

PHILIPPIANS

In Paul's day, material-minded ministers outnumbered the eternity-conscious. Is the condition different today? Leader, where is your heart? (3:17-21).

COLOSSIANS

Paul to the believers: "I rejoice in my sufferings for you." (1:24).

1 THESSALONIANS

A true leader always carries his people in his heart. The perfecting of the people tops his prayer list and he is least bothered about his own prosperity (3:7-10).

2 THESSALONIANS

Godly leaders give up even their legitimate rights in order to set up an example to the people (3:7-9).

1 TIMOTHY

God first; family second; and ministry third. Many a leaders is confused because he has changed this order of priority (3:5).

2 TIMOTHY

A leader who does not prepare the next generation of leaders during his time is selfish and shortsighted (2:1-2).

TITUS

"In all things show yourself to be a pattern of good works: in doctrine showing integrity and incorruptibility." (2:7).

PHILEMON

In matters other than doctrine and discipline, good leaders request the people and not command them (vv. 8-9).

HEBREWS

Leaders should never stop learning (5:8-9)

JAMES

Leaders who go after the rich and the affluent will be disappointed at the end. The poor in general are more trustworthy than the rich (2:1-7).

1 PETER

Junior leaders must submit themselves to their elders and humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. He will exalt them in due time (5:5-6).

2 PETER

“Freely you have received; freely give.” Don’t attach price tags to your ministry. This is the way of Balaam which God hates. He calls it madness (2:14b-16).

1 JOHN

It is not enough for leaders just to teach the truth. They must also train God’s people to discern the spirit of truth and the spirit of error (4:5-6).

2 JOHN

Many things cannot be accomplished by administration through paper work. Personal contact and fellowship will yield lasting results. (v.12).

3 JOHN

There is no greater joy to a leader than to know that he has produced more Demetriuses (those of a good report) than Diotrepheses (those who become self-appointed) (vv. 3, 9-12).

JUDE

These being days of unprecedented apostasy, every leader, whether he is a preacher or not, should contend earnestly for the faith (vv. 3, 17).

REVELATION

Those who are faithful in their calling shall reign with the Lord of lords and the King of kings forever and ever (17:14).

THE PERSONAL LIFE OF THE PREACHER

P.	Prophetic	and	Practical
R.	Real	and	Respectable
E.	Earnest	and	Enduring
A.	Accountable	and	Authoritative
C.	Courageous	and	Committed
H.	Honest	and	Humble
E.	Enthusiastic	and	Energetic
R.	Radical	and	Royal

Visiting –card (1 Tim. 6:11-16)

As a preacher you are God's visiting card. You are His mouthpiece, His ambassador. Everything you do will be measured seriously, and your opinion as a man of God has a great impact on your audience. That's why you have to realize the awesome responsibility that is upon you. Therefore, walk worthily according to your high calling. Faith, Love, Endurance, Joy, Humility, Faithfulness, Compassion, Wisdom, etc., are qualities that should mark your life and walk with God.

Gift and calling

You can never make yourself a preacher. Even the church, the Bible-school or preachers-seminar, can't make you a minister. The Bible says, "God has chosen some to be apostles, prophets," etc. God himself calls and confirms His calling in our life. His calling however will never be fulfilled if you don't stir up that gift. Paul said to Timothy: "Stir up the gift that is within you!" God has sowed it as a seed, but by your commitment it will begin to grow and bear fruit.

Authority

As ambassador you speak with the authority of your King. It is just because God has called you, that He also gave His authority to you. In the measure in which you submit yourself to God's authority, in that measure God's authority will be manifested in your life and ministry. Therefore you should function first within the body of Christ, before you can effectively minister into the world. (See: Philip - Acts 6-8).

Prayer

To proclaim the Word of God, first you have to hear the Word of God yourself. To hear the Word of God you have to listen to the heartbeat of our Lord. Therefore, prayer is of vital importance in the life of the preacher.

Family-life

Unfortunately there are ministers who have made their ministry an idol. Some ministers even sacrificed their family on this idol-altar. That has never been God's intention. Our family-life should be the foundation of our ministry. Whatever we preach, should be practiced in our family, so our message derives authority from our daily life.

Speaker

As a preacher you are first and foremost a speaker, therefore you have to equip yourself in communicating God's Word effectively.

Question: What is your calling and how can you develop it effectively?

Aspiration	- a desire to preach God's Word
Meditation	- consideration, reflection on God's Word
Interpretation	- explaining, declaring, defining, expounding
Preparation	- equipping, notes, examples, proverbs, etc.
Inspiration	- anointing, seal, ability of the Holy Spirit
Presentation	- the manner, the way of presenting the message
Illustration	- clarifying your point by a story, tale, picture

Proclamation	- preaching, heralding, cry it out, make it known
Confrontation	- pointing out what's wrong, call for repentance
Communication	- speaking a language that your hearers understand
Motivation	- convincing, rebuking, comforting, inspiring
Demonstration	- showing the power of the coming Kingdom

P-R-E-A-C-H-I-N-G

Powerful	Be Tactical in your presentation
Realistic	Be Original in your expressions
Enthusiastic	Be Simple in choosing your words
Attractive	Be Plain in your explanation
Creative	Be Practical with your application
Holy	Be Royal with illustrations
Inspiring	Be Adjusted to your audience
Natural	Be Balanced with your conclusions
Genuine	Be Directive in your approach

THE MINISTRY OF THE PASTOR

Read: Eph. 4:11-13.

When God set different ministries in the Body of Christ, He did it with great care, and in doing so He provided for a great variety of expression. God realized the tremendous variety of needs that exist among His people and He is very much concerned that all of those needs were met.

The office of a Pastor is a high calling and he who is successful in it has a great reward awaiting him. It is an office which is very demanding!

E.g.- Who is the one that is asked when illness comes or misfortune strikes?

-Who is the one expected to comfort the bereaved when death visits a home?

I. THE QUALIFICATIONS OF THE PASTOR

A. A Pastor must be able to lead the sheep - John 10:4.

1. If he is to lead God's people he must be one who has walked before the people in the ways of God.
2. If he has not experienced basic fundamental truths he will not be able to lead others in them.
E.g. - a. If he wants his people to pray, he must be a man of prayer.
- b. If he wants his people to tithe, he must first be one who tithes.
3. He must exhibit a lifestyle that sheep can follow.

B. A pastor must be able to feed the flock and provide pasture - Jer. 23:4; I Pet. 5:2-3; Acts 20:28.

1. He must be able to provide the necessary food and water that will nourish, strengthen and build up the people of God.
 - a. He must be one who is constantly involved in personal preparation and feeding on the Word of God.
 - b. He must give himself to the Word of God and prayer. (Acts 6: 4)
 - c. He must minister meat in due season to the household of God.
2. He must be able to communicate and to breakdown the food to various levels of the body. John 16:12; Is. 40:11, 29.
3. He must be able to feed all levels from the very young to the very old. -
Every normal flock will have sheep at every stage of development.

C. A Pastor must have a personal relationship with the sheep.

1. A Pastor should know the names of his people, John 10:3.
2. A Pastor should not only know the names of his people but he should allow himself to be known to them.
 - a. It means he must identify with the people.
 - b. It means he must sit where they sit.
 - c. It means he must let them know he is one of God's sheep himself.
Ezek. 3:15; Phil. 1:28-30.

D. A pastor must be willing to lay down his life for the sheep John 10:15 1 John 3:16.

1. This means that there must be a deep commitment and loyalty that the shepherd has to the sheep.
 - a. It involves caring for the sheep in times of need. John 10:13.
 - b. It involves a pouring out of one's life and strength. John 10:11.
 - c. It involves visiting in the homes of the sheep.

- d. It involves a continual watchfulness for the safety of the sheep.
2. This means, the true shepherd is one who places the well being of the sheep above his own life and ministry.

II. THE RESPONSIBILITIES AND OBLIGATIONS OF THE PASTOR

A. The pastor must be impartial.

1. He will not cater to the rich or to the influential.
-He must be as Paul, be all things to all people that he might win some.
2. He will not fail to rebuke open sin. I Tim. 5:20.

B. The Pastor must be of unimpeachable (blameless) character.

1. He must practice what he preaches.
2. He must in all things be an example to his flock and to his community. 1 Tim. 4:12; Tit. 2:7.
3. He must avoid appearance of evil.
E.g. - There are always gossipy tongues.

C. The Pastor must always be courteous. 1 Pet. 3:8; Rom. 2:10.

1. He must be warm and approachable.
2. He must show sincere interest in the welfare of his sheep.

D. A Pastor must be Punctual.

1. He must keep his appointments.
2. He must carefully arrange his time to use it to the best advantage. E.g. - In his visitations, he must not seem hurried.

E. A Pastor must take his faith with him into his home.

1. It is his task to find the right helpmate.
 - a. A wrong marriage will prove to be a steel trap.
 - b. A wise and prudent wife can be an asset to a man of God.
E.g. - When a man goes through adverse circumstances, how it strengthens him to have a faithful companion at his side, giving encouragement and support.

F. A Pastor should from the beginning learn the life of faith.

1. He must always look to God and not to man.
God has promised to supply all our needs. Phil. 4:19; Ps. 23:1.
2. He must be careful of temptation to borrow from those of his congregation.

III. CAUTIONS TO PASTORS

A. Pastors must not neglect their own spiritual growth.

Because of busy schedule it is easy to neglect their own relationship with God.
Acts 6:2-4; Jer. 10:21.

B. Pastors must remember that their health is an important factor to the success of their ministry.

1. Relaxation is necessary. Mark 6: 31.
2. Exercise is necessary. I Tim. 4: 8a.

C. Pastors must not be working for temporal gain. 1 Pet. 5:2.

Jesus warned of false shepherds. John 10.

- a. All three illustrations He used had to do with money.
- b. He warned of thieves, robbers and hirelings.
 - A thief is one who steals by subilty.
 - A robber is one who steals by violence.
 - A hireling is one who is paid to do a job, but has to heart for his sheep.

Conclusion: Acts 20:28-35.

YOUR PASTOR

At the end of three difficult years, a pastor was on transfer. During the farewell meeting, several members praised the pastor for all his good qualities. In his response, the pastor said: "I wish one of you told me earlier half of what you told me today."

With more than four decades of experience with pastors, I can say boldly that here are not many other occupations that can be so demanding and yet so discouraging. There are very few professions that offer so many opportunities for failure. There are unique problems facing pastors. Although their work can be most satisfying and rewarding, it involves extremely difficult, discouraging and despairing experiences that can frustrate even the most dedicated servant of God.

In the Early Church, pastors were chosen from the mature men of the fellowship. The pastor was an elder in terms of spiritual maturity, and an overseer in terms of ministry. It was usual for the churches to have more than one elder or pastor.

The task of the pastor in this generation is particularly hard. It involves strenuous work. Someone said: "One of the disciplines will be that of learning to speak words that stir the imagination and demand the attention." It is not only the work of preaching that takes the energies and endurance of a pastor, but the physical weariness and nervous exhaustion that can result in strained relationship between him and the congregation.

The pastor must have patience toward the sheep; he must not be contentious or greedy for money; he must be free from covetousness, putting Christ and the church predominant in his life. He must have good testimony even among the unsaved, lest his bad reputation should tear down the witness of the church. It is tragic when pastors leave behind bad debts and unfulfilled promises. This hurts the testimony of the church. The pastor not only faces the temptation of his own sinful nature and the world, but also the criticism of unsanctified church members and hatred of sinners. The inability to please those he loves the most and the discouragement of being opposed by those he was depending on for moral support, can prompt him to throw up in despair.

The Apostle John wrote: "There came a man who was sent from God: his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, he came only as a witness to the light." (John 1: 6-8). The pastor is a human being and so cannot possibly conform to the perfect pattern expected of him by the members. He has faults and limitations. But he has a divine authorization. In spite of his faults and shortcomings, he is the channel through whom the Word should be proclaimed to the congregation. In the wisdom of God, He did not create some special emissaries to proclaim His message. Neither did He send angels to minister the Word. As a man with a divine call, the pastor should be treated as God's servant with respect and honour. You owe him your co-operation and prayer support to help make his ministry as effective as possible.

Too many people in the church are expecting too much from the pastors and so, continually criticize them. They look for super-human qualities in the pastor. Do not expect your pastor to be perfect or to excel in every area of ministry. He is not a combination of: outstanding Bible teacher, good speaker, spirited evangelist, compassionate counsellor, inspirational preacher, able administrator, a shrewd businessman and a compassionate, creative, original person with the wisdom of Solomon – all rolled into one. Pastors make mistakes, even if their hearts are right! But then, who doesn't?

Unreasonable demands are often placed on God's servants. According to an article entitled "Qualifications of a good pastor." A pastor must have "the strength of an ox, the tenacity of a bull dog, the daring of a lion, the wisdom of an owl, the harmlessness of a dove, the industry of a beaver; the gentleness of a sheep, the versatility of a chameleon, the vision of an eagle, the skin of a rhinoceros, the perspective of a giraffe, the endurance of a camel, the bounce of a kangaroo, the stomach of a horse, the disposition of an angel, the loyalty of an apostle, the faithfulness of a prophet, the tenderness of a shepherd, the fervency of an evangelist and the devotion of a mother." Still, he is not able to please everybody."

Some members want to be the "boss" of the church. They love to have pre-eminence and be first in everything. They refuse to acknowledge the leadership of the pastor. Whenever a church member

wants position and prestige, he attacks the pastor either privately or openly. Usually, they start a “whispering campaign” and try to tarnish the pastor’s character and undermine his ministry. Such members destroy churches. Eager for power and authority, they trample on the truth, ignore the Bible, grieve the Spirit and scatter the flock. The church members should remember not to listen to accusations against their pastor in the absence of witnesses: this would help to solve the gossip problem (1 Tim. 5:19). Every accusation must be supported by at least two witnesses. The matter must be given honest appraisal, and there must not be any partiality. Christ alone deserves pre-eminence (Col. 1:18).

Some people think that their pastor cannot do anything right. In spite of his sincere effort to earn the approval of the congregation, and hard work to shepherd the flock faithfully, there are always some who stand ready to find fault and criticize. Some in the congregation cannot refrain from publicly pointing out the shortcoming of the pastor. Because of this, many pastors are waging a difficult and discouraging battle. Someone has described it as follows:

- * “If the pastor is young, he lacks experience; if his hair is gray, he is too old for the young people.
- * If he has five children, he has too many; if he has none, he is setting a bad example.
- * If he preaches from notes, he has earned sermons and is dry; if his message are extemporaneous, he is not deep enough.
- * If he caters to the poor in the church, he is playing to the grandstand; if he pays attention to the wealthy, he is trying to be an aristocrat.
- * If he uses too many examples, he is neglecting the Bible; if he does not include stories, he is not clear.
- * If he condemns wrong, he is cranky; if he doesn’t preach against sin, he is a compromiser.
- * If he preaches the truth, he is too offensive; if he does not present the “whole counsel of God,” he is a hypocrite.
- * If he fails to please everybody, he is hurting the church and should leave; if he does make them all happy, he has no conviction.
- * If he lives in an old house, he shames his congregation; if he buys a new one, he sets his affection on early things.
- * If he preaches all the time, the congregation gets tired of hearing him; if he invites guest ministers, he is shirking his responsibility.
- * If he receives a large salary, he is greedy; if he gets a small one, it proves he is not worth much any way.”

The members should not engage in a personal crusade against the pastor. The problem should be dealt with quietly and privately in loving concern for the minister and the Lord’s work. Whatever action is taken should be bathed in prayer and exercised with extreme caution. Just as you appreciate a “pat on the back” for a job well done, your pastor also welcomes the expression of your gratefulness and the assurance of your moral support - not praise to inflate his ego, but a word of sincere gratitude for his faithful ministry. Instead, some people treat them shamefully.

Your pastor has a family and needs material support. “The laborer is worthy of his hire.” No soldier supports himself, but receives wages and supplies from the government. It is only right and proper for Christians to support financially those who serve them in the Lord. The local church should show appreciation for the spiritual blessings by sharing material things (1 Cor. 9:13-14) with the pastor so that he can maintain his family reasonably well. If the local church cannot do it, the central organization should take that responsibility. Without it, the pastors feel helpless and insecure. Provision should be made for medical care and old age. Pray for your pastor and pay him adequately.

Every pastor genuinely sent of God would be glad to perform whatever services he can. But, we should be on guard to see that these activities do not prevent him from being a man of prayer and a man of the Book (Word). The members should not expect the pastor to run to them whenever they sneeze. Moreover, do not expect the pastor to be the errand boy of the church!

In the first century, because of ministerial responsibilities in the growing church, the apostles refused to administer the treasury. They declared to the multitude that their primary duty was to be involved in the spiritual ministry; prayer and ministry of the Word of God. (Acts 6:4). Whenever the minister neglects his spiritual service to the members for temporal concerns, he has failed the divine callings. A pastor's involvement in "maintenance" duties may be justifiable when a church begins life, but it can seldom be continued for long without injuring both the minister and the congregation. It is unfortunate that most pastors now think that promotion in ministry lies in competing for administrative jobs, climbing a corporate ladder and "rule" over the congregation(s). When they do this, they turn their backs on spiritual ministry to the congregation.

The task of the pastor is to set forth the whole counsel of God to the congregation. (Acts 20: 27) Often, pastors are not able to show the congregation the whole plan of divine wisdom, love and power within which alone the full glory of our Lord is seen. It is necessary for the pastor to examine whether he proclaims Christ in terms of all the great things that the Bible speaks about Him.

The apostles suggested the solution and specified the qualifications of the officers: good reputation, spirituality and practicality. The responsibility for choosing the officers was left to the church. This is a picture of unity and harmony between the leaders and the members of the flock. The church knew best who among them were efficient, reliable and impartial. Such officers in the church will always bring credit to Christianity and under them the cause of Christ will prosper. The pastors will thus be freed from time-consuming temporal interests so that they may continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the Word. If local churches would allow their pastors to spend their time in prayer, preaching and teaching, we would see increase in spiritual power and in numbers.

The pastor must know the Word for two reasons: to be able to minister to members and to be able to refute false teachers. He reproves, rebukes and exhorts the congregation with the inspired Word of God. (II Tim. 3: 16-17). The pastor should never separate the Word and the Spirit. Some pastors have great faith in the Holy Spirit but they neither study nor expound the Word of God. Others are great students of the Word. Their desks are piled with volumes. But, they seldom, if ever, cry to God for the light and power of the Holy Spirit. In this context, it may be asked: "Why separate what God has joined?" The pastor should expound the Word of God, paying careful attention to both the text and the context. Authentic Christian faith is not afraid of scholarship or the critical study of the Scriptures. The devoted pastors have everything to gain by exploring the questions that haunt us all. A good minister will feed on the Word that he might be able to feed others. Lasting benefit comes from listening and wrestling with the difficulties that stop people from believing. A strong faith has deep foundations.

Many pastors love God and work hard day and night for His Kingdom. But, there are some who do not; they have lost their vision and are merely going through the motions. They are trapped; for financial and other reasons, they are not able to leave. They are spiritually exhausted and have nothing to offer to their congregations. What the Apostle Thomas said of Christ, the world is saying now about the church. The world is saying to every preacher: "Unless I see in your hands the print of the nails, I will not believe." A great Bible expositor said: "It is only the man who has died with Christ, that can preach the Cross of Christ."

In the ministry of Augustine, there was a time when the burden almost made him despair and run away from his task. The remarkable Pope Gregory the Great, wrote to him as follows: "Since it had been better not to have begun what is good than to turn back from it when begun, you must, most beloved son, fulfill the good work, with the help of the Lord, you have begun. Let, then, neither the toil of the journey nor the tongues of evil-speaking men deter you; but with all instancy and all fervour go on with what under God's guidance you have commenced, knowing that great toil is followed by the "glory of an eternal reward." It is the exhilarating task of the pastor to be faithful to the One who has called him, named him and blessed him.

Although the person must have known better, he failed to recognize that the pastor, in spite of his divine call and wonderful, spiritual qualifications, was nevertheless a man; a human being like everyone else, and for that reason he could not possibly conform to the perfect pattern some believers have cut out for him. Because of this, when a man is called to pastor a church, he's expected to have almost super-human qualifications, like:

- He must be good speaker.
- He must be deep Bible student.
- He must be a spirited evangelist.
- He must be a compassionate pastor.
- He must have the Wisdom of Solomon.
- He must have a pleasing personality and good looks.
- He must be an astute businessman and an effective and efficient administrator.
- He must be creative and original.

And the list goes on. Pity the poor preacher who fails to live up to all of these requirements. Of him it will be said, "Oh, he has his good points, BUT....."

Some time ago I came across an article titled, "Qualifications of a Good Pastor," and it further underscores the unreasonable demands often placed on God's servants. It reads as follows:

"A good pastor must have:"

- The strength of an ox,
- The strength of a bulldog,
- The daring of a lion,
- The wisdom of an owl,
- The harmlessness of a dove,
- The industry of a beaver,
- The gentleness of a sheep,
- The versatility of a chameleon,
- The vision of an eagle,
- The hide of a rhinoceros,
- The perspective of a giraffe,
- The endurance of a camel,
- The bounce of a kangaroo,
- The stomach of a horse,
- The disposition of an angel,
- The loyalty of an apostle,
- The faithfulness of a prophet,
- The tenderness of a shepherd,
- The fervency of an evangelist,
- The devotion of a mother,
- And still he could not please everybody!"

There would be those who say, "Oh, he's all right, BUT....." Remember, the Bible says, "There was a man." And as a man, our pastor can't possibly be proficient in all things, nor can he do everything to perfection. He's going to have his failings and shortcomings simply because God sees fit to use a man, and in many cases He chooses the weakest of men. The apostle Paul declared: "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence." (1 Cor. 1:26-29). So don't expect your preacher to be perfect or to excel in every area of the ministry. And try not to act so shocked when you discover that he's not a combination of outstanding Bible teacher, spirited and effective evangelist, compassionate pastor, inspirational

preacher, able administrator, and shrewd businessman all wrapped up in one person. The Lord Himself doesn't demand that much. The apostle Paul wrote: "Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified." (1 Cor. 9:26-27).

With all of these things in mind, then, I would encourage you to pray for your pastor instead of criticizing him. If, however, you just can't keep your complaints to yourself and you must talk to someone about him, talk to God. And while you're at it, pray for him. If anyone needs the prayers of God's people today, it's the man who labors in the pastorate. I don't know of many other occupations that can be so demanding and yet so discouraging. And I can think of very few professions that offer so many opportunities for failure.

The pastor not only faces the temptations of his own sinful nature and the world but also the criticism of unsanctified church members and the hatred of sinners. Because of this, he is a special target of Satan's fiery darts. So pray for him and encourage him. How long has it been since you took your pastor's hand and, with a affirm hand-shake, expressed your gratitude for his ministry? You'd be surprised, even shocked, if you knew how many pastors go for weeks and months with very little, if any, encouragement. Somehow people get the idea that the preacher doesn't need a good word like others do. But just as you appreciate a "pat on the back" for a job well done, so also your pastor welcomes the expression of your thanks and the assurance of your moral support-not praise that would inflate his ego but a word of sincere gratitude for his faithful ministry of the Word. I hope you'll remember the lesson suggested by those four words in John 1:6, "There was a man."

DECISIONS OF A PASTOR

1. **I will lead my sheep by example and not by authority.** I will endeavour to live above reproach I will keep a distance with the opposite sex. I will not be upset by criticisms but handle them objectively and examine myself honestly whether I am to correct myself. I will voluntarily commit myself to a few godly leaders for accountability, (John 10:4; 1 Pet. 5:3; I Cor. 11:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-2; 5:2; Tit. 2:3-4; 2 Sam. 12:7-9).
2. **I will set aside a definite time each day to pray for the members of my Church.** Just as the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraved on the breastplate of the High Priest, I will carry the burden of my sheep on my heart to see them grow in the purposes of God. I will not stay indifferent even if one member backslides. I will consider visiting those who are sick and suffering as my top priority. (1 Thes. 1:12-4; Ex. 28:29; Phil. 1:3-6; 2 Cor. 11:28-29; Luke 15:4; Jas. 5:14).
3. **I will spend not less than two hours each day for the study of the Scriptures.** I will freely consult Study Bibles, Commentaries and other study aides. I will not believe the devils lie that I am great if I preach without notes. Instead of dwelling on pet topics, I will teach my congregation the whole counsel of God and serve a balanced diet. I will not allow business matters to steal my study time. (Mal. 2:7; Luke 9:10-11; Matt. 10:27; Acts 20:20,27; 6:2-4).
4. **I will strive to make every member of my congregation a minister.** I will help each one to identify his/her gift(s) and operate them. I will not play solo but delegate responsibilities. I will trust people and tolerate their mistakes. I will introduce Bible study aids to the believers. I will be a servant leader. I will be open to corrections and welcome new ideas and changes for the better. I will be a friend of the youth. (Eph. 4:11-13; Rom. 12:4-8; Mark 3:14; John 13:13-15; I Cor. 3:21-23; Acts 6:14; 1 John 2:14b).
5. **I will show no partiality but treat the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, the affluent and the downtrodden alike.** I will not be influenced by the size of anyone's offering. I will give special attention to destitutes and the downtrodden. I will die to caste-ism and play no politics in my dealings. (Jas. 2:1-5; Luke 21:1-4; Jas. 1:27; Col. 3:11-14).
6. **I will be honest in financial matters.** I will account for all monies or financial gifts received whether as tithes or offerings or contributions or whatever, and submit audited accounts to the government. I will not buy with the Church money any moveable or immoveable property in my personal name or that of my family members. I will simply receive a maintenance allowance or monthly support and leave all financial matters with a trusted committee. (2 Cor 8:20-21; Rom. 13:6-7; Matt. 22:21.)
7. **I will share leadership of the church with a couple of associate pastors,** remembering that the single-pastor system is unscriptural. (Pastors and Elders are interchangeable words.) I will have at least one associate pastor even if the congregation is small. I will not allow my ego to clash with collective decisions. I will not consider any fellow leader as a threat if he becomes more popular than I. I will not lust to bring my son as the next leader. (Tit. 1:5; Acts 20:17,28; 1 Pet. 5:1; Acts 15:22,28; 1 Sam. 18:7-9).

8. **I will cordially relate to the pastors of other churches** and leaders of para-churches and Christian organizations. I will gladly join hands with them for common programmes. I will let my people go to other meetings; so they will find pasture “in and out.” I will rejoice over the victories of others and openly acknowledge them. I will warn my congregation against false doctrines. (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 3:5-9; John 10:9; Luke 9:49- 50; Phil. 3:2; 1 John 4:1).

9. **I will make my Church missionary-minded.** I will arrange to lead teams of our believers to visit pioneer mission fields. I will periodically invite missionaries and mission leaders to challenge the congregation. Supporting missionaries will be the first item in our church budget. I will encourage young people to go as missionaries to difficult places. I will not hesitate to release efficient workers for missionary work. (Rom 10:13-14; 15:20; Matt. 10:35-38; Eph. 6:19-20; Acts 13:1-3).

10. **I will spend sufficient quality time with my family.** I will take my wife with me for house visits. I will have an outing with my wife and children at least once a week and won't talk about church or ministry during those hours. I will keep Monday or any one of the weekdays for rest and relaxation and let the congregation know it! (Gen. 18:17-19; 1 Cor. 9:5; 1 Tim. 3:4- 5; Mark 6:31-32).

What's Really Important

For nearly two years I've been trying to frame a set of statements, I've called, "The Essentials." This byproduct of more than 25 years of refining my focus addresses one question: "What are the essential teachings a pastor / leader must cover in order to shape a ministry-minded believer and a spiritually maturing congregation?"

So, here's my list of "The Essentials:" basic Biblical keys necessary to disciple a people founded and freed in God's Word, and led to fullness and fruitfulness.

1. **Divine Revelation**

1. The inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures: Helping people understand the Bible's supernatural source, its absolute authority, and its resource for growth and freedom.
2. The existence and nature of God and the Godhead: Teaching the character of the sovereign God - our Creator and the sustainer of all things - His worthiness, His ways and His workings.
3. The revelation and incarnation of the Son of God: Introducing Jesus, our Redeemer, from first glimpses in the prophets to His birth, His ministry and His saving work.
4. The general witness of the Holy Spirit to all humankind: Helping people recognize how the Spirit has been sent to awaken souls to God and to draw them to Christ.

2. **Redemption in Christ**

1. The message of the gospel for all the world: Spreading the truth of God's love given in His Son Jesus' blood atonement for human sin, that through His blood we may be reconciled, and "whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life."
2. The freedom from guilt and condemnation: Leading believers to a solid assurance in Christ; knowing God's justifying grace, full forgiveness, abiding love and total acceptance.
3. The meaning and significance of being a child of God: Seeing the Father's hope for each of us in Christ; recovering our created intent, His entrusting us with authority and leading us to triumph.
4. The issues of sanctification and deliverance: Nurturing toward freedom and holiness of life; avoiding exaggerations of law or grace; being "cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit."

3. **Basic Disciplines**

1. The intent and application of the Biblical sacraments: Teaching beyond ritual the dynamic intended in water baptism and in our faithful observance of the Lord's table.
2. The necessity of nurture through God's Word: Guiding forward in a practical use of God's holy Word, growing habits of reading, feeding, study and memorization.
3. The promises and pathway of praying with faith: How an intimate, daily walk with Christ in prayer cultivates love's climate for growing in the exercise of dynamic faith - the appropriation of God's promises with boldness, humility and Biblical confidence.

4. The knowledge of an obedience to God's will: Teaching principles for finding the Father's intended personal purpose for one's life as His Word, will and ways are welcomed.
5. The principles and practice of stewardship and giving: Understanding God's call to yield our treasure, time and talents through tithes, offering and service; learning to abound in His prospering ways to the blessing of others.

4. **Spiritual Empowering**

1. The call to and ministry of the baptism with the Holy Spirit: Leading every believer to receive "power from on High" as Jesus promised; teaching to minister this experience with the same passion and expectation as the early Church.
2. The gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit: Teaching the place and operation of spiritual gifts, while growing in the grace and maturation of spiritual fruit; reflecting Jesus' character and charisma in life, ministry and influence.
3. The purposes and patterns of the prophetic word: Cultivating wisdom and balance in receiving and responding Biblically to the Holy Spirit's gift of "words" of temporal prompting.
4. The promise and ministry of health and healing: Leading with Biblical love, grace and faith as we open up to God's healing covenant and Christ's healing ministry for the whole person - spirit, soul and body.
5. The realm and ministry of the Kingdom of God: Instructing in the life dimensions opened by Jesus' call to "Repent...the Kingdom is at hand"; discerning His ongoing call to "reign in life."

5. **The Church**

1. The mission and structure of the Church: Showing how Christ builds His Church locally and globally through His appointed servant leaders given to grow the member-ministry of His body.
2. The priorities and practice of Spirit-filled worship: Leading toward Biblical, vibrant, personal and corporate worship with a reverent, humble and joyous freedom to enter His presence.
3. The principles of authority and submission: Finding the balance of applied submission; how a Biblical regard for God-given authority in life opens to fullest freedom and dynamic living.
4. The dominant value and power of love: Teaching to know and grow in God's love; learning the grace of this over-arching trait of His nature, which values human distinctiveness, remembers human finiteness and shows patience and mercy toward human fallibility.

6. **Spiritual Conflict**

1. The origin and nature of Satan and the demonic: Helping people learn to resist the devil, break strongholds and cast out demons without presumption, superstition, fear or confusion.

2. The reality of the invisible and of angels: Teaching Christ as “Creator of all things visible and invisible,” toward a discerning, functional faith that embraces both realms as equally real.
 3. The call to and means of spiritual warfare: Equipping in Spirit-enabled intercessory prayer: leading to a sane, Scriptural engagement in the age-long “battle in the heavenlies.”
 4. The issues of eternal life and eternal loss: Seeing God’s love and benevolent intent in His call and requirements of humankind, with the eternal implications of obeying or rejecting Him.
7. **Issues of Daily Life**
1. The present prophetic movement: Teaching the prophetic Word of hope revealing the final triumph of God’s purpose through His Messiah - His return, millennial rule and eternal promise.
 2. The vocation and ministry of the believer: Teaching the dignity of each one’s gifting and calling within God’s design and creative purpose to extend His life into all human enterprise and experience.
 3. The meaning and responsibility of a witness: Hearing Jesus’ command to love our neighbor, declare the gospel, shine as lights and bear the truth; “salting” the world in all realms, including business, politics, media, education and arts.
 4. The divine purpose of God for Israel and the Jew: Embracing God’s “chosen people” whom He has used to intimate and advance redemption’s plan throughout their history; relating with Biblical sensitivity to their past, present and future.
8. **Persons and Family**
1. The divine call to Biblical manhood and womanhood: Teaching both genders the Father’s unique call and way for male and female believers to live in a society where true humanity is mistaken, confused or neglected.
 2. The God-ordained order for human sexual behavior: Discipling all regarding God’s gift of human sexuality; teaching responsible growth as being given such a capacity for either lifelong fulfillment or destructive self-indulgence.
 3. The divine design for the home and family: Training in the principles of foundational relationships; bringing God’s order for life in ways that focus, fulfill and bring fruitfulness.

DON' TS FOR PREACHERS

Hundreds of ministries have spring up in these last decades in our land. While we rejoice over the fact that more and more people are reached with the gospel through these ministries, the confusion and shallowness among them cause great concern. In this study I share with preachers what the Lord is teaching me. I do not venture to write because I am perfect but I yearn to see the Lord's Name glorified through all of us in the ministry.

1. **Don't copy other ministries**

We are all called to work in the same vineyard but God's assignments to ministries differ. Some are called to be eyes – say, prophets. “If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing?” (1 Cor. 12: 17). Some are to be hands – say, helpers. Legs or feet may speak of pioneer missionaries, and so on. “Let each one remain with God in that calling in which he was called.” (1 Cor. 7: 24). Don't change track in the race. Just because a particular type of ministry is more popular, successful or appealing to people, don't jump into it like the businessmen of this world. You have a race that is set before you and run it with “endurance” – patience, determination, steadiness, perseverance, resolution, courage, steadfastness. (Heb. 12:1). We can learn so many helpful things from other ministries but we should not lose the originality God has given us. When we start doing what Go has not called us to do, we still will be finding some blessing but would have missed God's best for us. God delights in variety. Look at His creation to appreciate His taste. “Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?” (1 Cor. 12:29). The answer is simply “no.” We should be a voice, not an echo.

2. **Don't exceed your limits**

“For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.” (Rom. 12:3). In the parable of talents, we find all were not given equal number of talents. One was given five, the other two and the next just one. God's demand is only according to what is given to us. It is good to plan big projects but the Bible admonishes us to “sit down first and count the cost”, whether we have enough to finish it. I have painfully watched many faith evangelists in the TV literally begging people to help pay the large pending bills or the huge bank loans. This does not bring glory to God. One of the broadcasting agencies tells of some evangelists who don't even reply its repeated reminders to pay their long dues of airtime cost. One should not try to do everything and get into many troubles. Expansion is a blessing from God, but we can always run ahead of Him. Sometimes we fix and announce big targets which are not clearly guided by the Lord, and then to save our face before the people we turn heaven and earth and end up in fleshly methods. Also avoid sympathy appeals which actual let God down.

3. **Don't compete with other ministries**

We need to draw inspiration from the progress of other ministries, but the realization that we are all serving the same Lord and working towards the same goal will keep us from unhealthy competition. Look at the example of Jesus in John 4:1-3. “When the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John...He left Judea and departed again to Galilee.” What a lesson! While attending a conference a mission leader asked me how many fulltime workers we had. At that time I told our number. The leader of another mission was by my side and without anyone asking him he said, “We have fifty!” This rat race should stop. We should die to our boasting of figures and achievements. “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches;...He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.” (Jer. 9:23; 1 Cor. 1:31). We should learn to rejoice over the victories of another

ministry. “Rejoice with those who rejoice.” (Rom. 12:15). God may bypass a senior mission and bless the junior mission, as in the case of Saul and David. But we should never give place to envy. Envy is bone cancer! (Prov. 14:30).

4. **Don’t violate rules**

The Christian life and ministry are compared to athletics, an army, a building, etc. These are all governed by definite rules and regulations. Apostle Paul rightly said, “If anyone completes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.” (2 Tim. 2:5). The spirit of the ministerial world today is that the end justifies the means. Do anything, as long as it blesses the people and benefits the preacher. This is totally alien to the teaching of the Lord and His apostles. The Biblical principles should not be violated under any circumstance! God cannot honour such a work. The quality of the materials we have used in our building will be tested on that day by fire - even the Word of God (1 Cor. 3:12- 13; Jer. 23:29). A new brand of preachers has come up baptizing all their methods and practices with the formula, “God told me!” People are afraid to think or discern. It must be clearly established that God never contradicts His written Word! Let’s beware of forgetting the Scriptural principles while evolving fund-raising techniques and promotional methods. Another sad thing is that defection of workers in ministries has become common. But the other ministries should not directly or indirectly encourage the defectors. Leaders should maintain high ethical standards. The 10th commandment says, “You shall not covet your neighbour’s manservant, nor his maidservant... nor anything that is your neighbour’s” (Ex 20:17). What you would not want others do to you, don’t do it to them! (Matt. 7: 12).

5. **Don’t exaggerate**

“Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’, and your ‘No’ be ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.” (Matt. 5:37). Almost every ministry has its magazine to report its news. We should be honest in reporting! God will judge us for what impression we leave on the readers rather than what information we serve. If 600 people attended our camp, we do not bring glory to God by saying, “About 1000 people attended!” Because it is a lie, we actually honour the devil, who is a liar and the father of lies. The first petition in the Lord’s prayer is, “Hallowed be Your name!” How often we have dis-hallowed His name by exaggerated and twisted reporting. For our people, anything above a few thousands is one hundred thousand! Preachers should not exploit this. If a modern magazine reports the five-loaves-two-fish miracle, it will simply add two more digits to the 5000 and the photographic manipulation will make it appear true! The photographs sent by certain agencies sometimes give a complete wrong, incorrect and untrue representation. Let’s repent of this sin of giving wrong impressions.

6. **Don’t aim to please men**

The testimony of Paul is a great challenge. “Do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be servant of Christ.” (Gal. 1:10). We are called to bless people, not please them. Jesus is called “a stumbling stone and rock of offense” (Rom. 9:33). And Paul speaks of the “offense of the Cross” (Gal. 5:11). Several times we read in the gospels that the people were “offended at Him” (Matt. 13:57; Mark 6:3). Once the disciples of Jesus came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?” But He answered and said, “Every plant which My Heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind.” (Matt. 15: 12- 14). Don’t hide the truth just to keep some rich and influential men with you. Don’t soft-pedal while preaching that you may gain wide acceptance. John the Baptist did not garland the Pharisees and Sadducees saying, “What a privilege to have you in our campaign!” He simply called them “Brood of vipers!” and

urged them to repent. Apostle Paul asked the Galatians, “Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16).

7. **Don’t project yourself**

John the Baptist said, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (John 3:30). And Jesus told of John, “Among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist.” (Matt. 11:11). It is sickening to see certain magazines projecting an individual from cover to cover. The evangelist is photographed in all poses – like cine stars. After sending a magazine or listening to a message we should be able to exclaim, “What a wonderful Saviour we have!” and not “What a powerful preacher he is!” Also avoid titles like “Reverend” and so on. “Holy and reverend is HIS name!” (Ps. 111:9). One of the greatest apostles of the last century just called himself Brother. Jesus said, “You are all brethren” (Matt. 23:8). Titles have become so cheap.

8. **Don’t be questionable in money matters**

Paul writes to the Corinthians, “Avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us – providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” (2 Cor. 8:20- 21). In some churches, the huge sums received by pastors as “tithes” from people are not accounted. Unaccounted money is black money. Churches and missions need to have their accounts audited and submitted to the Government. We need such financial accountability because we are handling public money. A minister should not keep his wife or any relative as the Treasurer. We should live above reproach. The Apostles left the business affairs which involved finance into the hands of “seven men of good reputation” chosen by the people. (Acts 6:3). Billy Graham testifies, “All financial affairs of our Association are in the hands of the boards of directors; I have no control over this aspect of the work. Along with the other evangelists on our staff, I am paid a salary by the board. I have not accepted a personal gift or offering. Our finance are audited...and the report is made available to our supporters.” Thank God for the many leaders who can so testify. Examine whether your hands are clean.

9. **Don’t be selfish**

“There should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another.” (1 Cor. 12:25). “Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” (Phil. 2:4). Look for opportunities to help other ministries. Share your resources and knowledge with them. It matters not who pounds the paddy provided it becomes rice! Also in your own ministry, don’t always try to bring yourself and your family to the front. Give ample opportunities to others and labour to bring them up. As we get older, “Let the young men now arise, and play before us.” (2 Sam. 2:14). They should not wait for our death! Let them take up the leadership and we can always advise them from behind.

10. **Don’t spread evil reports**

“He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbour, but a man of understanding holds his peace. A talebearer reveals secrets, but he who is of a faithful spirit conceals a matter.” (Prov. 11:12- 13). When you hear something bad about a preacher, the only thing you are permitted to do is to plead for him before the Throne for his restoration and exhort him privately. Doctrinal errors, heresies and unscriptural practices of course must be exposed and people warned. But the pulpit or the press should not be used for character assassination! When the backslidden Saul died, David said: “Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon – let the daughters of the Philistines rejoice, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.” (2 Sam. 1:20). Two Scripture verses are conclusive:” “We ALL stumble in many things.” “LOVE will cover a multitude of sins.” (Jas. 3:2, 1 Pet 4:8).

DO' S FOR PREACHERS

After studying the ten Don'ts for preachers, I will continue here with ten positive counsels for ministers. I request my fellow preachers to be assured that I do not place myself on a pedestal but identify with them all in whatever I write.

1. **Maintain a spirit of prayer**

There are three secrets for a successful ministry – First prayer, second prayer, third prayer! Because, it is neither by might nor by power but by His Spirit that any true work of God is accomplished. (Zech. 4: 6b). It is possible to begin in the Spirit and end in flesh. (Gal. 3: 2); God anoints His men rather than their methods and machinery. Jesus accomplished so much in three years and six months but He never allowed any work to crowd out prayer from His life. None of us need be busier than He. There is freshness about a minister who keeps inhaling the fragrance of prayer. If we do not learn to carry our ministerial burdens to the Lord in prayer, we will be crushed by them and finally collapse. Prayer means exchanging our heavy burdens for the light yoke of Jesus. (Matt. 11:28-30). The work is always great and the harvest always plenty. But the command of Jesus is, “Pray therefore” before “Go therefore!” (Matt. 9:38; 28:19). A minister who is not praying is staying. Traveling is important but travelling even more. Preachers are in danger of asking the people to pray for them but neglecting personal prayer. Paul said, “I bow my knees” and then he urged the people, “You strive together with me in your prayers.” (Eph. 3:14; Rom. 15:30).

2. **Have a disciplined study life**

Apostle Paul admonished Timothy the young minister to “give attention to reading” (1 Tim. 4:13). “For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.” (Mal. 2:7). The early hours of the morning are best for meditation and deep study. It is possible to preach sermons with a superficial knowledge of the Scriptures. We should get deep into the Word using the study aids available. “I don't refer to any study help or commentary but learn directly from God!”—so have I heard from more than one person. Though this looks spiritual, it is not Scriptural. Paul instructed Timothy to teach faithful men what he had learnt from him and let the process continue. (true discipleship) (2 Tim. 2:2). And God has placed “teachers” in the church for its growth and edification. (Eph. 4:11). Teachers can either be heard or read. The only way to be benefited from the teachers of the past or a distant country is to read their writings. Therefore use Commentaries and Study Bibles freely. No one prevents you from going beyond them. Read as much as possible. People should learn at least a few things every time they hear you. Travelling time can be profitably used for reading.

3. **Spend sufficient time with your family**

Every minister should maintain this order of priority – first God, second family and third ministry. Reversal of this order means serious consequences. Let no preacher say, “I am sacrificing my family for the ministry.” See what God's Word says: “If a man does not know how to rule (manage) his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim. 3:5). The wife does not want a preacher at home but a husband, and the children not a teacher but a father. Spend quality time with the family and be involved in domestic affairs like marketing, gardening, house-cleaning, etc. Peter cared for his mother-in-law. Jesus knew how much tax was to be paid. The disciples knew the cost of perfume. Play indoor or outdoor games with the family. Have regular vacationing. Don't always talk church or ministry, but enjoy the fun jokes of your children. Eat together and have relaxed chats while dining. If possible, take your wife with you for ministry and in any case don't be separated for long. Don't share the defects of your wife with the women you meet in your

ministry. You are in for trouble! When writing letters, address the husband or both the husband and wife. Let your wife reply personal letters to women. If your wife is not capable of handling such correspondence, direct the candidates to women ministers. “Discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you.” (Prov. 2:11).

4. **Keep your body fit**

The body is the temple of God and it must be properly maintained (1 Cor. 3:16). Eat balanced food and avoid overeating. Timely meal and good rest will give you extra years of service. Go to bed early and get up early. Do some daily exercise. Do lot of walking and cycling. Don't get addicted to motorized vehicles. Preachers should not think that cycling is below their dignity. It is a false prestige. Up to His thirtieth year Jesus was a busy carpenter and during the next three and a half years he did so much of walking and mountain-climbing. He carried His own cross. He kept His body trim and fit. Praise God for comforts but don't be addicted to them. Simple living and high thinking – this should be our watchword. Flee sexual immorality. It is sin against your own body (1 Cor. 6:18). You will lose your anointing and strength. Have a periodical medical check-up and attend to any problem immediately (1 Tim. 5:23). Claim divine health (3 John 2).

5. **Listen patiently to counsellors and critics**

“Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.” (Prov. 11:14). “Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more.” (Eccl. 4:13). When we reach certain level of popularity, more and more worldly people will surround us and the simple but godly friends will go unnoticed. The book of Psalms begins with a warning: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly.” Criticisms will not appear pleasant to us, but if we prayerfully and patiently consider them we will be greatly benefited. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy (the ungodly) are deceitful.” (Prov. 27:6). When someone criticizes you, resist the impulse to find an excuse for your actions. Don't look for ways to defend yourself. Don't become angry. Listen gratefully, and do what is right. That's how to benefit from criticism!

6. **Build second line leadership**

In the Old Testament the leadership was mostly singular. But there is a definite shift to the plurality of leadership in the New Testament. The words bishop or pastor or elder refer to one and the same office and these ministers are always mentioned in the plural throughout the New Testament (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 5:12; Tit. 1:5; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24; Jas. 5:14). This is God's definite plan of leadership for any New Testament ministry. A leader should be delivered from the lust of keeping the sole authority and absolute control of the ministry on himself. We have only one head and that is Christ! All others including the leaders are only members of the Body. We must share the responsibility with and delegate authority to men on whom we find the necessary grace bestowed. Leaders must voluntarily retire to give opportunity to the next line and stand behind the young leaders to support and counsel. People generally will not be mature enough to accept this arrangement but leaders should boldly take such steps counting on God's enabling grace. The death of a founder-leader should in no way slow down the onward march of a ministry.

7. **Maintain a balance in your ministry**

We must avoid extremes in preaching and practice lest we become spiritual eccentrics. Preach both about Heaven and Hell, love of God and His righteousness, sanctification and service, First Coming and Second Coming of Christ, Calvary and Pentecost, Salvation and healing, prosperity and suffering, position in Christ and practice, gifts and fruits of the Spirit, personal soul winning and corporate ministry, revival and evangelism, and so on.

Only in this way we can join Paul and testify, “I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” (Acts 20:26-27). If we don’t serve wholesome meal to the people who hear us regularly, we will send them around with tinted glasses and this will cause great harm to the overall growth of the Body of Christ. Also evangelistic and revival ministries must consider themselves as a supplement and not a substitute to the local church. The church is the building and the so called "para-church" organisations are a scaffolding.

8. **Let your love for people be genuine**

God so love the world that He gave His Son (John 3:16). Christ so loved the church that He gave Himself (Eph. 5:25). Most of the healing ministries which begin with a compassion for people become commercialized in course of time. It is possible to continue to manifest the miraculous gifts of the Spirit without a genuine love. This awful possibility is explained in 1 Cor 13:1-3. “Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.” If we love and respect rich people more than the poor, it is actually love of money. Read James 3:1-4 and understand this truth. Some preachers are really blessed with tears in prayer (Acts 20:31), and if you don’t have that grace, please don’t go about telling your hearers and readers that you will pray for their problems “with tears.” We can cheat people today but a day of reckoning is near. Meditating on God’s love toward people makes it easy for us to love them. We should constantly meditate on Calvary to keep our hearts broken and filled with divine love.

9. **Examine your life and ministry periodically**

Setting aside one day every month and a couple of days twice or three times a year for self-examination and evaluation is a very healthy and helpful practice. The hymn-writer sang, “Take time to be holy.” Jesus said, “Come apart.” David prayed, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” (Ps. 139:23-24). Investigation, interrogation and inspection! Success and blessing can easily blind our eyes to the plan and purpose of God. A sudden disaster will awaken us to realize the neglect of periodic overhauling. Open and transparent fellowship with reliable and mature leaders is a must for any preacher. Don’t be a loner. When God convicts us of a particular action or a course we followed, we should have the courage to tell the people we were wrong. That is manliness. God will back us. John the Apostle lived closest to Jesus and he received greatest revelations. But he worshipped the angel twice and on both occasion he was corrected. He did not cover this fundamental mistake but faithfully recorded it. (Rev. 19:10; 22:8-9).

10. **Do everything with eternity in view**

Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame “for the joy that was set before Him” (Heb. 12:2). Paul said, “But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phil 3:13- 14). He warned the ministers, “Let each one take heed how he builds on it...Each one’s work will become manifest; for the day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.” (1 Cor. 3:10, 13). Successfulness will be applauded here, but faithfulness rewarded THERE!

QUESTIONS FOR PASTORS TO CONSIDER AND EVALUATE FOR EFFECTIVE MINISTRY

1. Am I regular in prayer life? (Acts 3:1; Luke 5: 15- 16)
2. Am I systematic in Bible meditation? (Ezra 7:10; Luke 4:16-17)
3. Am I serious about thought purity? (Prov. 4:23; Matt. 15:18-19)
4. Am I careful about my words? (Jas. 3:1-2; Eph. 5: 4)
5. Am I self-controlled in food habits? (Prov. 2:1- 2; 1 Cor. 6:12- 13)
6. Am I satisfied with a simple lifestyle? (1 Tim. 6:6-8; Phil. 4:11-13)
7. Am I faithful to my wife? (1 Tim. 3:2a; Rom. 2:22a)
8. Am I dutiful as a father? (1 Tim. 3:4- 5; Deut. 6:6-7)
9. Am I obedient to civil laws? (Matt. 17:25-27; Rom. 13:1-7)
10. Am I transparent in money matter? (2 Cor. 9:20-22; Acts 20:33-34)
11. Am I affectionate to my sheep? (2 Cor. 12:15; 1 Cor. 13:1-2)
12. Am I committed to train people? (Luke 11:1-2; Eph. 4:11-13)
13. Am I compassionate towards the poor? (Gal. 2:9- 10; Acts 20:35)
14. Am I impartial? (1 Cor. 5:21; 2 Chron. 19:5-9)
15. Am I dead to casteism, regionalism, nepotism, etc? (Col. 3:9-11; Rev. 7:9-10)
16. Am I enthusiastic in evangelism and missions? (John 10:16; Matt. 9:26-28)
17. Am I true in reporting? (Rom. 15:18; Mark 6:5)
18. Am I accountable to others? (2 Cor. 8:18- 19, 22-24; Acts 15:22)
19. Am I open to correction? (Gal. 2:11-14, Eccl. 4:13)
20. Am I quiet when spoken against? (1 Pet. 2:21-23; Matt. 5:11-12)
21. Am I respectful of others' reputation? (Prov. 17:9; 2 Sam. 1:19-20)
22. Am I friendly with my co-workers? (John 15:15; Acts 20:17, 36-38)
23. Am I cooperative with other ministries? (Luke 5:5-7; Gal. 2:7-9)
24. Am I working hard? (1 Cor. 15:10, 58; John 9:4-5)
25. Am I practicing self-denial? (Luke 9:23; John 3:30)

PASTORAL VISITING - A practical guide

IS VISITING NECESSARY?

The pastor is a shepherd who needs to know his flock, and his people need to know more of God through him. A brief handshake at the door of the church on a Sunday morning, with all the congregation pressing around, does not provide the opportunity for sharing news or problems. The pastor who is seen only on Sundays and is invisible for the remaining six days in the week, quickly loses touch with the needs of his people and gains the reputation for not caring. His care for his people will be shown both through leading of worship and preaching of God's Word Sunday by Sunday, and by regularly visiting them at other times.

THE PURPOSE OF VISITING

As well as worshipping God, the church is also concerned with fellowship. The pastor's visits (as well as those of Pastoral Visitors in churches that have them) extend the fellowship of the church into the homes of Christ's people. Only by visiting can a pastor come to know the actual circumstances in which his people live, their problems, joys and talents. Visiting provides the opportunity to review blessings, receive suggestions and, when appropriate, give guidance. Because many people's sense of hospitality means they will want to provide some refreshment, to accept this may help to put them at their ease and can be an aid to conversation. However, food and drink is not essential to a visit, nor must such hospitality become a burden on the home.

The pastor does not visit in order to collect money, so avoid appearing to expect payment for your visit. However, some who are not able to get to church due to ill-health or some such reason, may wish to take the opportunity to send their contribution to church funds through the pastor. It is wise for the pastor to have a few blank envelopes, perhaps in his visiting book, into which such offerings can be placed and the name of the donor written in the outside. This will help him to remember where the money came from and avoid possible confusion with his own private finances. Make sure that proper and signed receipts are sent or mailed to acknowledge the receipt of these gifts or contributions by the church treasurer or accountant.

As much as possible, let every visit include a short time for Scripture reading and prayer, with, if you are able, the whole family. Always prepare a few verses of Scripture before setting out on your visit, so that your reading will have relevance for the people being visited.

A SYSTEM FOR VISITING

Unless the pastor has a definite system for visiting, it is all too easy to gravitate toward the homes where he feels most at ease and to avoid visiting 'difficult' members – who, if visited more frequently, may become more supportive. There will, of course, always be those whose circumstances mean that they have priority for our visiting time. Those who are house-bound because of ill-health or have responsibility for caring for a sick or invalid person, need special attention. Some who are going through a time of crisis or facing a particular dilemma, may require regular visits for counseling over a period of time. Sudden emergencies or critical illness may mean that the pastor has to spend extra time with certain families. New people coming to worship should be visited as soon as possible, to know that you are interested in them. Let your visiting include non-Christian friends. This helps to build bridges between communities and prevents the Christian community from appearing insular and not interested in their neighbours.

Allowing for special needs, I suggest a system for visiting as follows. In arranging the weeks' schedule, let two evenings, if possible the same two evenings each week, be set aside for general visiting. Another two periods could be set aside for 'priority visiting', remembering that often for those who are ill or in hospital or are housebound, daytime rather than evening visiting may be more suitable. Occasionally, a whole morning may have to be given to a particular visit, but normally, it is better to give the first hours of the day when one is fresh and most alert, to the study of the Word and prayer. Much can be accomplished in two hours study, prayer and preparation and then between mid-morning tea and lunch there will be time for a hospital or home visit. Keeping

the housebound and sick in mind, I found it was often helpful to visit on a Saturday afternoon when I was able to take with me a copy of the Order of Service for the next day. This would include the numbers of the songs or hymns to be sung, the Bible reading, perhaps a brief outline of the sermon or message and notices about future church activities. In this way, the sick person would be able to share in what was going on and feel included in the fellowship of the gathered church. If the person has a radio or tape-recorder, it may be possible to leave a recording of last week's service. Suggestions about times and wave-lengths which Christian radio programmes may be heard can also be a help. Often when I have been visiting a sick person in hospital and have had prayer with them, a patient in a neighbouring bed has asked for prayer also. Never refuse such an invitation. When praying with a patient in hospital, include non-christian patients and staff in your prayers. Some may be listening who will appreciate the prayer which can be offered with confidence 'through Jesus Christ' or 'in the name of Christ'. Use the opportunity not to 'preach' at the patient, but to show the love of Jesus in whose name you will pray, and invite him over to church when he is well, so then you can share the gospel in a more relaxed setting.

Having decided on the two evenings for regular visiting, you then need to know by what system you will ensure each member of the church will receive equal attention. The system that I have found most helpful is to keep a Visiting Book. This may be an ordinary notebook, or better still, a loose-leaf notebook into which extra pages can be placed as necessary. The pages are divided up allowing several pages for different streets or block of flats. It will take some time writing such a book, but in my experience, will prove very worthwhile. Allow space beside each family to record the names of all the children as well as the parents and note dates of birth beside their names, this along with their phone numbers (both residence and office), and e-mail addresses. Children like to be addressed by their names, and a quick look into the visiting book before going into a home will serve to remind the pastor, not only of the names of the children, but whether anyone has had or will soon have a birthday. One other thing I have found useful is to write the names of church members in blue ink, but the name of others yet to join the church or other friends in the neighbourhood in a different colour.

By following a system as outlined above, visiting area by area, you will be able to announce to the congregation the previous Sunday which area you intend to visit in the coming week. Do not allow callers to frustrate your planned visits. You can tell them that you have a prior engagement. Only real emergencies should hinder your visiting, and if you have to cancel visits, try to inform those who are expecting you. Tell them of your regret, and visit them as soon as possible.

WHEN NOT TO VISIT

There are times when the pastor is not welcome. For example, if there are guests in the house or a special family celebration is taking place. Homework may be in progress during exam times or the family may be having their evening meal. Be sensitive to such matters. Go on to the next visit and offer to return later, or on another day. Such sensitivity to the situation is as indicative of your caring for the family as is the visit itself.

Again, when children are alone in the house, or a young daughter is there by herself, it is best to decline any polite invitation to come in. Rather, ask when the parents will be back and return on another day. When visiting single working women who appreciate and need a pastoral visit, or a married woman who is at home while her husband is away, try to take another suitable person with you, and so save your church members from the possible gossip of neighbours. (This is a situation where a visit from the pastor along with his wife may be the answer.)

LETTING PEOPLE KNOW

Some of the difficulties mentioned above may be avoided if people are aware in advance of your intention to visit. An advertised programme of visiting through the church bulletin board or in the church notices will allow those living in the area to be visited to let you know if it will be inconvenient. Three or at the most four homes are all that you will manage in one evening and your people will appreciate knowing that you are likely to visit them on a particular evening. It will also save you much wasted time and disappointment from knocking on doors and getting no answer

when people are out. However, there will be times when you do call at a house and find no one in. Put a note through the door or leave a printed card to let it be known that you have called. It is worth the trouble and expense of having such cards printed. People do appreciate knowing that they have not been forgotten, even though they may not have been at home to receive you.

HAZARDS OF VISITING

I know of one colleague who, if he found the television on in the home he was visiting and the family made no move to turn it off, took his chair and sat in front of the screen, so making viewing impossible! This seems to me to just as rude as the act of leaving the set on, and hardly the way to start a pastoral visit. However, it has to be admitted that the television can cause problems for the visitor. It may be that, if the programme has only a short while to run, then one can sit with the family to allow them to see the end of their programme. At other times, a polite request that the set be turned off for a short time, is accepted. But, if there is obvious reluctance to part with the T.V. programme, then it is best not to say anything, but to give a greeting and pass on to another house – where they may be fortunate enough not to be watching T.V.!

Dogs! If you are frightened by dogs, they sense it and give you a rough welcome. Most dogs mean no harm, but if one does appear to be regarding you as an unwanted intruder, it is best to stand still until one of the family rescues you. Never turn and run, because the animal will then regard you as fair game and may bite.

Children, these can hardly be described as hazards, but there are certain things to be aware of when children are present. It is always a delight to have the children there when visiting a family but do realize that they are listening to all that is being said and may well repeat garbled versions of a conversation and so cause misunderstanding. Save confidential matters for another occasion, or be very guarded in what you say. Children can be very hurt by the way we speak about them in their presence. On the occasion, when introducing me to the family, the lady of the house, to my horror, said, “This is son. See how dark he is!” Such thoughtless remarks can be very hurtful to the child and the pastor needs to make a quick and comforting response such as, “I think dark people are very nice” or “Thank God that He loves us whatever our colour”, or quote from the Bible and say, “The Song of Solomon speaks of a dark person as being comely.” This will take the sting out of the hurtful words and give the child a positive attitude to himself. Your kindness will be remembered as representing the attitude of the Savior who loves each one.

VISITING PEOPLE WHO ARE ILL

“Father, am I going to die?” “ This was the question one young person put to me as she lay on her hospital bed. At the time I hoped she would recover and I sought to reassure her. But as I read a few verses of Scripture and prayed with her, I reminded her that Jesus has promised to be with His people always, and that day or night, whether we are conscious or asleep, we are always present with our Lord. Later I was thankful that I had been led to speak in this way, as the youngster died within a few hours of my visit. The tendency when visiting the sick is always to deny the possibility of death. Of course we need to stress the positive approach and pray for and look for recovery, and we would always try to encourage the patient in faith and hope. (I Pet. 2: 24). But to deny the possibility of death is to suggest that our faith cannot cope with the event. We value good health and together with believing prayer and medical care we trust for recovery, but nevertheless our Saviour is a risen Saviour and thus the victor over death. Sometimes we have to be with people in their last hours in this world and the minister has to watch with them and pass them over to Christ who is on both this side and that side of death.

In this connection, we note that people from different backgrounds have different attitudes to receiving Holy Communion when they are ill. Some regard it as equal to receiving the last rites and as a signal that they are not expected to live. Others find it an extension of the fellowship of the Lord’s Table, feel included in the membership of the Church and are strengthened by the bread and wine and the invisible presence of Christ. This latter view is the view I have and I would encourage those who are ill to receive Holy Communion regularly, but we do need to be careful for those who would find it anything but a comfort.

It helps and encourages those who are ill to know that the gathered church is praying for them. If it is possible, make an announcement during the Sunday worship service and request for prayer.

You will find it useful to have verses marked in your Bible that are of a particular comfort to those who are ill and sick or hospitalized. Always pray with the patient in positive faith based on the promises of God's holy Word. Do not stay too long. Usually a ten to twenty minute visit is long enough and will not over-tire your church member. If an unknown patient requests prayer, always make time for this.

VISITING THE BEREAVED

Sometimes it is the pastor who has to break the news of the death of a loved one. Though this is never an easy thing to do, who better to do it than a 'brother in Christ?' We do not, of course, do this in our own strength or wisdom, but count on the Holy Spirit to guide our words. The pastor should never forget the gravity of the situation or the shock which death can cause for relatives. At first it is difficult for people to grasp the fact that a loved one has gone. It takes time for the fact to sink into their minds. Then, weeping and crying out is to be expected. The presence of the pastor is usually a great comfort at such times, even though he may not say very much. Indeed, silence is often better than careless words such as "It can't be helped", or "Don't worry, you will get over it" which can be like stabbing wounds to a person already grievously hurt. To sit silently with a person allowing them to talk, may be the best ministry for the moment. Later on Bible portions can be read and shared to comfort and console the bereaved.

Be caring in practical ways. At such times as bereavement, people may lose their power to think straight. Some will want to fast until after the burial, but gentle persuasion to drink or eat just enough to avoid faintness may be necessary. Finding a member of the family or a close friend who will take the responsibility of contacting the undertaker and making the funeral arrangements may be necessary. The pastor is often the one who will know whom to contact in these necessary practical arrangements and will be able to supply names and telephone numbers for the cemetery, etc. There may be messages to be sent to relatives and arrangements to be made for the immediate care of young children. The pastor is not expected to undertake these tasks himself, but can give guidance to the family when their state of shock prevents them from thinking of such details. When leaving for the burial, a reminder to someone to close and lock the windows and doors of the house and so avoid giving an unscrupulous person the opportunity to take advantage of the grieving family, is just another small way in which the pastor, from his wider experience of bereavement, can minister to his people. At certain times, it may be that the pastor can shield the family against intrusion by the press or inquisitive neighbours, and it is always wise to be guarded over any comments made to reporters or to onlookers. It is after the funeral is over and the relatives have departed that the sense of loss and loneliness is at its most acute. The pastor and his wife or a rota of church members can help by keeping up regular contact with the family in the weeks following the funeral. Such ministry will help build up the church, as members are brought into closer, caring fellowship with each other.

THE AUTHORITY OF A LEADER: Its sphere and limitations

The unshakable foundation

- Ezek. 37 Ezekiel had to prophesy to the dead bones.
Eph. 2:20 Erected on the foundation of apostles and prophets.
Eph. 3:3-5 God reveals His council to his apostles and prophets.
2 Chro. 20:20 Believe in His prophets and you shall be prosperous.
Matt. 10:41 Who receives a prophet, receives also his wages.
1 Pet. 2:1-0 The apostles and prophets lay down the foundation.
The saints are the living stones.

The work of the prophets

- Jer. 1:10 See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant.
Amos 3:7 Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the prophets. (Seers)

Things God is doing in these days

1. Storms that destroy existing church-structures.
2. Crumbling away of denominations and ministries of leaders.
3. The test of our own individual integrity and endurance.
4. A new awareness of unity amongst all true believers.
5. Restoration of the Church in prophetic power and intensity.
6. Restoration of prophetic and apostolic ministries.
7. Persecution, specially by backsliders and religious people.
8. A new revelation of God's glory over His restored Body.
9. Then the Lord will come to take His Bride to the wedding feast.

God speaks in the storms (Elijah, 1 Kings 19:11-13)

1. Wind - that destroys rocks and mountains.
2. Earthquake - that shakes all the foundation that can shake.
3. Fire - that consumes all remains of the former two.
4. Cool breeze - in which God speaks.

Isaiah 5:8-24 The six-fold - "Woe to you who.... etc.

Isaiah 6:5 The sevenfold - "Woe to me, Ietc. Afterwards His lips were purified with fire and He began to speak with Gods authority (baptism with fire).

God's plan was that man should reign on earth, but when man sinned, he became disobedient to God, but also obedient to the devil and consequently came under the devil's authority. Disobedience destroys Gods authority in us, until we become obedient to God's authority again. Then, God will restore His original plan in our lives. (Gen. 1:26).

Biblical principles in which God gives authority *to* us and *over* us:

<u>Gods Kingdom</u>	<u>Family</u>	<u>Church</u>	<u>Society</u>
God	God	God	God
Man	Jesus	Jesus	King
Family	Man	Pastor	Parliament
Church	Wife	Elders	Police
Society	Children	Deacons	Teacher
Nation	Animal	Members	Boss, etc.

As long as we live we have to deal with all kind of authorities. We have to obey all authority that God puts above us. (Rom. 13: 1-7). It is our duty to submit to it, otherwise we disobey God who delegated that authority.

Note: Obedience to human authority doesn't mean a total surrender or commitment towards it, for it is not above reproach, it can fail. That kind of surrender and commitment is only reserved for God. We have to obey, not to worship it. (2 Sam. 23:16-17; 1 Pet. 2:13; Rom. 13:10).

Rom. 5:19, "For just as though the disobedience of one man, many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous before God."

How? * How do you work for God? (2 Sam 6:6)

- We must do God's works on God's time (Moses)
- We must do God's work in God's ways (Abraham, David)
- We must do God's work at God's place (Paul)

What? - For God it's not so important, what we do, but how and why we do it. Do your work as unto the Lord! (Col. 3:17).

Faith? Faith worked through love (Parable of talents)

- I work for God because I love Him.
- I love Him because I believe in Him
- I believe in Him because He loves me.

Questions for lesson

1. What must I do, do the works of God? (See John 6: 29)
2. Do you work for God, or do you work with Him? (See II Cor. 6:1)
3. What is your motive to work for God? (See I Tim. 1:5)
4. Do you work for God's love or out of God's love? (See II Cor. 5: 14)
5. Do you make God your intimate partner in your daily job? (See Eph. 6: 5-8)
6. Do you do God's work on God's time and in God's way?
7. Who do you glorify with your work? God or yourself? (See I Cor. 10: 31)

CHARACTERISTICS OF SPIRITUAL LEADERS

Characteristic	Example	Scripture-reference
Appreciative	Nicodemus	John 19:38-42
Attentive (listener)	Barnabas	Acts 9:27; 11:22
Authoritative	Samuel	1 Sam. 7:3, 15
Available	Lydia	Acts 16:20
Bold (forceful)	Caleb	Numb. 13:40; Josh. 14:20
Charisma (personal)	Saul	1 Sam. 10:23-25
Committed (devoted)	Mary (mother)	Luke 1:38; 2 Chron. 31:21
Communicator	Apollos	Acts 18:24-26
Confident	Elijah	1 Kings 18
Courageous	Stephen	Acts 7; Josh. 1:9
Consistent	Daniel	Daniel 6:10
Conviction	Ester	Esther 4:16
Creative (imaginative)	David	Psalms 22, 23, 24, 103
Decisiveness	Joshua	Joshua 24:15
Delegating	Nehemia	Ex. 18:17-23, Nehemia
Determination	Paul	Phil. 3:13-14
Dedicated	Josiah	2 Kings 23:3; Col. 3:23
Diligent	Noah	Genesis 7:5
Discerning	Deborah	Judges 4:9
Encouraging	Philemon	Philemon 4:7
Enduring	Job	Job 42
Enthusiast	Peter	Matt. 12:4; John 18:10
Example (to follow)	Caleb	Proverbs 4:11
Faith	Abraham	Heb. 11:6, 8
Faithful (follow through)	Jeremiah	Jer. 33:1-3; 2 Tim. 2:2
Firm	Moses	1 Cor. 15:58; Ex. 32:26
Flexible	Ruth	Ruth 1:16
Follower	Mary Magdalena	Matt 27:56, 61
Fruitful	John Mark	2 Tim. 4:11
Gentle (kind)	Timothy	Eph. 4:32
Genuine	Aquila & Priscilla	1 Cor. 16:19
Gracious	Abigail	1 Sam. 25
Godly	Aaron	Ps.12:1; Heb. 5:14
Holy	Elijah	2 King 2:11; 2 Tim. 1:9
Humble	Moses	Dan. 2:27-30; Jas. 4:6
Initiative	Joab	1 Chron. 11:6
Inspirator	Gideon	Judges 17:17-18
Integrity	Daniel	Daniel 1:8
Intense	Samson	Judges 17:17-18
Joyful	David	Psalms 21:1-6
Knowledgeable	Ezra	Ezra 7:10
Loving (Compassionate)	John	1 John 4:7
Loyal	Jonathan	1 Sam. 18:6
Motivator	Paul	Phil. 3:17
Obedient	Zaccheus	Luke 19; John 14:21
Optimistic	Paul	1 Cor. 15:57; 2 Cor. 4:16

Organized (planned)	Joseph	Gen. 41:38 – 49
Pace setter	Uriah	2 Sam. 11:11
Patient	Hosea	Hosea 3, Heb. 10:36
Persevering	Elisha	2 Kings 2:9
Reliable	James	Jas. 1:1-8, Phil.2: 20-21
Respectable	Boaz	Ruth 4:11- 12
Self controlled	Joseph	Genesis 39:8
Sensitive	Joseph (Mary)	Mark 8:1-3; Matt 1
Servant	Martha	John 12:2; 2 Cor. 4:5
Sincere	Mary (Martha)	John 12:3-7
Singlemindedness	Timothy	2 Tim. 4:6-8
Spirit-filled	Philip	Acts 8
Teachable	Joshua	Exodus 24:13
Transparent	Peter	Matt. 26:69-75
Truthful (Honest)	Blind man	John 9:25
Uncompromising	Mordecai	Esther 4
Understanding	Luke	Col. 4:14
Visionary	Isaiah	Is. 53; Prov. 29:1
Wise	Solomon	Poverbs 3:5-6

Exemplary men of God:

D.L. Moody
Charles Finney
George Whitefield
John Knox
Hudson Knox
George Muller
Brainard
Smith Wigglesworth
William Carey
Oswald J. Smith
Norman Grubb
Corrie ten Boom
Brother Andrew
David Wilkerson
You & me

Their special gift and ability:

- The great gospel-preacher
- Fire and miracles
- Preaching until the day he died
- The king shook when he prayed
- The first missionary-pioneer in China
- Faith for running orphanages
- The Indians for Christ
- Raised twenty-three people from the dead
- Give me India or I die
- Reaching the un-reached
- Standing "In-the-gab", intercessory prayer-warrior
- Beggar for God, unlimited forgiveness
- For God there are no closed doors
- Founder of Teen Challenge
- ????????

PERSONAL CHECK - LIST FOR MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP

A. Motives for leadership

1. Did you ever want a higher position to feel important?
Can you describe why and how that happened?
2. Did you ever seek leadership for more financial security?
3. How did you refrain from personal praise instead of God's praise?
4. For which personal needs are you not trusting God? List one!
5. Have you ever felt you were doing your work out of guilt or obligation instead of joy?
Name an instance!
6. Have you sought to compare yourself with those of different gifts, background and calling?
How does this frustrate you?
7. Do you spend time to compare yourself with others? Who?
8. Why do you compare yourself with this person?
9. Do big / small numbers affect your leadership? Should they?

B. Leadership-style, motivator Rom. 12:8; Administrator - 1 Cor. 12:28

1. Do you like to work with people rather than specific tasks?
2. Do you consider yourself a people-motivator or organizer?
3. Do you desire to take care of people under your leadership?
4. Do you desire to meet needs immediately when you see them?
5. Can you make quick decisions in times of stress and difficulty?
6. Do you feel responsible for things? Do you have to do it all?
7. Can you show what type of leader you are? Why?

C. Communication

1. Do you communicate daily with the Lord in prayer?
2. Do you take time to communicate with your wife?
3. Can people disagree without affecting their relationship with you?
4. Do you appreciate viewpoints of others? How do you show them?
5. Do you look people in the eye and speak directly to them?
6. Are you willing to admit your mistakes to others?
7. Are you willing to take the blame for failures in your ministry?
8. Are you open to new ideas? Can you change your viewpoint?
9. Do you regularly tell your people, "Thank you!"?
10. Do you talk too much, and not take time to listen to others?
11. Do you give clear directions, when assigning a task? (What, etc.)
12. Are you aware of you eloquence? Do you think it impresses others?
13. Do you humiliate others to inflate your own importance?
14. Do you exaggerate to get a better response from others?
15. Are you critical about small things, losing sight of the big things?
16. Do you assume the truth of your statements without proving it?
17. Are you known by others to be truthful always?
18. Can you be trusted to keep things in confidence and not gossip?
19. Do people feel free to talk to you without fear of what you may think, say or do? Do they consider you open?

D. Loving others

1. Is there someone in your ministry or church who is hard to love? Who is he/she and how do you treat him/her?

2. Do you feel you're "too busy" to give love to people around you?
3. If you have too many responsibilities, will you allow others to take some of those burdens? List some of those responsibilities?
4. Are you patient with your people? What makes you impatient?
5. Can you name some symptoms of insecurity in your life?
6. Are you super-sensitive to criticism? How do you overcome this?
7. Do you take time to build close relationships with others? How do you do that, and how much time do you take for it?
8. Do your people know that you love them unconditionally, in spite of their behaviour and failures in the past?

E. **Style of authorship**

1. Are you understanding and sensitive to the people you lead?
2. Are the people able to pinpoint this ability in your life? How?
3. How willing are you to be a servant of others?
4. Do others react positively to your authority, because of your example?
5. Do you respond quickly to the requests of others?
6. Do you take time to explain your decision when it affects others?
7. Do you show partiality? Name a recent instance?
8. Have you developed the habit of asking instead of demanding?
9. Do you have a clear job-description for your workers and yourself? Do they clearly understand this description?
10. Do you struggle to relate to God as the source of all authority?
11. Do certain people resist your authority? Who, how and why?
12. How do you deal with those resisting your authority?
13. Do you give glory to God for the spiritual progress you make?

F. **Setting an example**

1. How do you compare your job with Moses' job? (Ex. 18:14-24)
2. Are there responsibilities that you try to do all by yourself?
3. How have you trained key-figures around you? (2 Tim. 2:2)
4. Have you violated divine principles in exercising your authority?
5. Are you an example in living for God for others to follow?
6. Did you allow others to observe you as their example? How?
7. How do you open yourself for your key-people?
8. Do you believe that others should follow your example?
9. Why do you believe that?

G. **Leadership Check-list (1 Tim 3: 1-2; Titus 1: 5-9)**

1. Is there a constant desire for leadership in your heart? Describe it.
2. Are you a new, just born-again believer?
3. Are you devoted to your marriage-partner without any hesitation? Describe your feelings for your partner?
4. Do your children (natural and spiritual) respond to your leadership? Why do or don't they respond to your leadership?
5. Are you stable in difficult situations? Describe a recent example!
6. Are you realistic in evaluating your talents and gifts?
7. Are you easily overwhelmed by circumstances?
8. Are you patient or quickly irritated with people? List a person!
9. Do you yield to others or must you always be right?

10. Are you willing to give up questionable things to be a leader? List some things you gave up to be leader?
11. Are there things you still need to give up? When will you do it?
12. Search yourself in the following areas:
(Rate yourself with: 1-Weak; 2-average; 3-good; 4-excellent. (1 Tim 3))
- | | | | | | |
|----|------------------------|-----|----|---------------------------|------|
| A. | A pure heart | ... | K. | Patient | |
| B. | Alert and awake | ... | L. | Easily to approach | ... |
| C. | Sober an serious | ... | | | |
| D. | A good lifestyle | ... | M. | Openly one with Jesus | ... |
| E. | A good teacher | ... | | (Confessing Him) | ... |
| F. | Hospitable | ... | N. | Head of the family | ... |
| G. | Spiritual maturity | ... | | (When you are a man) | |
| H. | Abstaining in drinking | ... | O. | Submissive to your man | ... |
| I. | Diligent (not lazy) | ... | | (When you are a woman) | |
| J. | Not greedy (money) | ... | P. | Children under discipline | ... |
13. When the result is meager, do your know why?
14. Can you handle criticism without getting bitter or discouraged?
Think about a situation and how you handled it!
15. How do you deal with loneliness in your life?
16. Do you realize the necessity of friendships?
17. How many good friends do you really have? Mention them!
18. Do they know that they are your best friends?

In Conclusion

I pray that the Holy Spirit will search your heart, and purify your motives by these questions, and that the result will challenge you to be a better servant of the Lord and of His Body, the Church.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A RIGHT ATTITUDE IN MINISTRY

(Hebrews 11: 23-27)

Definition of “Attitude”: ‘How you think or feel about something and how this makes you believe.’

We shall handle this subject under 3 main sections:

1. PRICE OF MINISTRY
2. AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION
3. A RIGHT SPIRIT

In all of God’s dealings with and through us, He is primarily interested in developing and testing our attitudes. Poor attitudes will rob us of blessing in ministry while good attitudes will carry us through many and diverse difficulties, causing us to minister life in spite of adverse circumstances. Such ministry is both pleasing to God and profitable to man.

The difference between success and failure in most cases is a function of attitude and the admonition to guard our attitudes at all times must be heeded if we desire to progress and develop in our ministry before God. This study is designed to pinpoint the major area of difficulty and equip us to develop good attitudes, releasing us to a greater fulfillment in ministry.

1. THE PRICE OF MINISTRY

WHAT DID MOSES’ MINISTRY COST HIM?

A. THE COMFORTS OF EGYPT

All prospects of security: Pleasures of Society
Social acceptance
Partner and settling down
Career and future (promising though it was)

For what? The desert and a mob of sheep? NO!! For following in God’s purpose.

Not a silly mistake BUT a step of FAITH; not blind faith; not hopelessness/futility; not a gamble; not an unavoidable action (Surely he could have got off such a charge).

But a sure STEP forward in God’s purposes

How do you think he felt at the time? Questions in his mind? In the forty years that followed?

The EYES OF FAITH saw those years as vital and valuable preparation for the years of service that were to come.

NO PREPARATION? NO SERVICE!!

Having given up his former: Position; Power and influence; Friends; Family; Comforts; Interests; Home. All of this in order to do what he knew God is calling him to.

We often think of Moses’ killing of the Egyptian as being a silly spur of the moment mistake – I believe that it was in fact a planned, premeditated action which Moses believed would establish him as God’s chosen deliverer – the man of the hour! In this we are warned that God has His own way of doing things and it is best for us to find that out before we rush into things. Remember Isaiah 55:8-9. God used it for His purpose however – Moses couldn’t yet come into his ministry – he hadn’t paid the price! So God led him on - the slow costly way

In case you haven’t grasped it yet there are no shortcuts to ministry – in fact the shortcuts always take longer; so, if you think you’ve found one, give it away!

Hebrews 11:24-27	vs. 24, 27:	refused:-	because of faith
	vs. 25:	chose:-	because of faith
	vs. 26:	accounted:-	because of faith

Giving a pattern of faith:

1. Account the situation – size up the real values involved.
2. Choose the only action, which is really right (or valuable).
3. Go through with the choice – regardless of what it might cost.

The reason? vs. 27: through it all he saw God’s purpose.

B. FORTY YEARS OF WAITING

- * All his hopes and aspirations lost in the seemingly endless waiting. Most of us find waiting the hardest of all, yet those whose lives have count for God have had to learn to wait.
- * Why the wait: God was teaching Moses:
 - 1) His timing is the only important thing. David in Psalm 31:14
 - 2) His way is the only way: Romans 11:33-36
 - 3) His equipping is the only one: Exodus 4:12
 - 4) His commissioning is all that counts: Exodus 3:10
 - 5) His purpose is never frustrated: Ecclesiastes 3

In this time Moses gained a wife: Some new security; Friends and family.
But this time he willingly lays aside all that he has in order to follow God's direction in God's way.

C. IN FACING THE PEOPLE

- * This time it cost him his pride
He had to face up to: a) the risk of rejection
b) the risk of losing face
c) his own past – no longer able to run from it
- * No matter how it hurt him to remember his past mistakes and know that the other remembered them, he could not keep on running.
- * Serving God meant facing his past fairly and squarely. Philippians 3:13 – 14
Eccl. 7:3, “Sorrow is better than laughter for by the sadness of the countenance the heart better and gains gladness” (Amplified version) “Sorrow is better than laughter; it may sadden your face, but it sharpens your understanding.”
II Cor. 7:10, “For the grief and pain God uses produce a repentance that lead to salvation and it never brings regret; but worldly grief and hopeless sorrow is deadly – ending in death.”

In God there is no such thing as an irretrievable situation. We know God is in control.

- * We know we have made mistakes.
 - * We know that God has allowed them for our benefit.
- The past beats us when we keep on running from it and fail to face up to it. Facing up to it means – learning the lessons it teaches us.
- * Committing the memories to God.
 - refuse to allow them to torment us, we CHOSE. When the memory comes to mind THANK God for it and its lessons.
 - think constructively and positively about the lesson, NOT the mistake.
 - * Accepting any consequences that are due believing God for His help.
 - * Being prepared to start again.
See Philippians 3:13-14; aim and purpose in life.
Ecclesiastes 7:3,5; II Corinthians 7:10 – the purpose of painful things.
That's costly – but it is the price of victory and going on with God.
God doesn't promise it will be easy – He does say it will be worth it all though.

D. SUMMARY

If you mean business with God it is likely to cost you something:
e.g. comfort, family, friends, security, time, prospects
If you want to go on for God you'll need to pay the price.
It's the only way to a effective, meaningful, successful walk with GOD.
IT'S THE PRICE OF THE MINISTRY.

2. AUTHORITY AND SUBMISSION

- 2:1 The Source of all authority. Psalm 103:19; John 1:3.
All authority is established by God: Colossians 1:16; Romans 13:1.
The great controversy in the universe pertains to authority. See Isaiah 14:13; Genesis 1:26, 29; 2: 8-9, 15, 19-24; 3:8.
Man is either under God's authority or Satan's authority - with differing end results.
Satan's authority has been allowed by God in His wisdom but in the end it shall not prevail.
- 2:2 The need for and the benefits of authority.
- * We keep ourselves right with God by submission to those in authority over us; Romans 13:1-7.
 - * We are open to deception if we are not under authority: Acts 20:28-31.
 - * The key to life: Ephesians 6:1-3.
 - * God appoints authority for the BENEFIT of His people: 1 Chronicles 17:6; Hebrews 13:20; Isaiah 40:11.
 - * Correct attitudes toward authority fosters unity which produces strength and in turn increases the anointing: Mark 3:24-25; Psalm 133.
- 2:3 Qualities: Those exercising delegated authority should exhibit:
- * Under authority: Luke 17:7-10; John 13:12-17.
 - * Recognition that authority is from God: Romans 13:1 (Principle of Divine Election vs. man's selection).
 - * Humility: Keeping silence unless have the Lord's mind; Numbers 12 (instead of presumptuously forwarding own ideas).
 - * Meaningful fellowship with the Lord.
 - * Willingness to allow God to establish their authority.
 - * Graciousness: Numbers 16:41-50.
 - * Love as the overriding motivation: John 10:1-15; 15:13.
- 2:4 Submission must be based on intelligent reasoned choices to obey: Luke 14:28-32.
Joshua 24:1-25 and not on mindless, robot responses. Submission is not found in legalism, not in outward 'obedience', which covers inward rebellion. Submission is a heart attitude and is therefore total. Obedience is designed to be the outworking of the submitted heart without inward submission, obedience is hollow and ultimately false. Submission is revealed in the Godhead: John 5:19-23; 12:49; 16:13-15.
Jesus is the pattern for submission: Philippians 2:5-8.
- 2:5 Benefits of submission:
- a) Submission reinforces authority and so fosters restoration.
 - b) Submission establishes God's kingdom.
 - c) Submission is the antidote for rebellion.
 - d) Brings revelation from God: Acts 5:33; John 16:13-15.
 - e) Produces light, freedom and unity: 1 John 1:6-7.
- 2:6 Attributes of a submissive spirit:
- a) Looks for and finds authority to come under (e.g. Ruth).
 - b) Soft, gentle and afraid of being wrong.
 - c) Doesn't like being in authority, controlling others.
 - d) Speaks carefully, self-disciplined: James 3:1-2.
 - e) Sensitive to lawlessness and rebellion.
- 2:7 Are we submissive:
- a) How do we react to delegated authority – especially if we don't like the person?
 - b) How do we respond to God's commands?
 - c) Do we obey in the unenforceable realms – eg. thought life.

2:8 Biblical examples of Authority and Submission:

- a) Adam: that submission to God must come before love of wife, family.
Eve: those who come out from their covering of authority are open to deception.
- c) Ham: we should not uncover the faults of those in authority.
- d) Abraham: God blesses those who exercise delegated authority with love and humility: Genesis 12-14.
- e) Joseph: submission (even though it may mean suffering) leads to being raised to a position of authority.
- f) Nadab and Abihu: spiritual authority is based on God's call: Leviticus 10:1-2; Hebrews 5: 4.
- g) Aaron&Miriam: we must not "touch" (criticize, undermine or put down in any way) God's delegated authority: Psalm 105:15; Numbers 12.
- h) Korah, Datan & Abiram: God will deal with rebellion against delegated authority. Numbers 16 – obedience shuts the gates of hell and releases life. Rebellion is contagious v.1-40: leaders rebelled; v.41-50: people rebelled.
- i) Ruth: God blesses those who seek out good authority to come under.
- j) Eli: God judges those in authority who do not restrain evil.
- k) David: i) left the establishment of his authority to God: I Samuel 26:9-11.
ii) showed no impatience – content to remain in Hebron 7 years till God brought all Israel to him.
iii) Humility – before God: II Samuel 7:18-20.
- before people: II Samuel 6:14-23.
iv) Wrongful use of authority, provided an occasion for God's enemies to blaspheme, brought judgment, caused God to withhold his blessings: II Samuel 11-12.
v) presumption and its price on those under him: II Samuel 24:1-28.
- i) Naaman: Obedient to the Word God (no matter how strange) through his delegated authority brings healings/restoration: II Kings 5:1-19.

2:9 Those who misuse authority:

- a) God will judge: Ezekiel 34:1-10; Zechariah 11:17.
- b) Ask God to deal with the situation, being sure to keep an open right attitude towards the one in authority. Bitterness will foster rebellion, E.g. II Samuel 1:17-27.
- c) Be careful whose authority you come under as you will imbibe of the spirit which motivates them. I Samuel 31: Jonathan died because he did not observe this.

3) **A RIGHT SPIRIT**

At times in our Christian lives, difficult occurrences can be out lot. Our reaction to these things is crucial. Proverbs 16:2 tell us that what is right and what is wrong is not particularly relevant, but a right spirit is what counts.

Hebrews 12:15 tells us to look diligently, to avoid any root of bitterness. We need to guard ourselves, to be sure that despite what others do to us, we don't disqualify ourselves from God's blessings. Psalm 51:17; Isaiah 66:2.

3:1 Establishing Credibility

Genesis 32:24:

- a) Jacob in conflict with others
- b) God deals with Jacob
- c) God's dealing give Jacob:
- i) power with God
- ii) power with man.

Jacob had tried for years to do what God had said he would. Jacob had failed God until God broke through in his life. The above order must always be a,b,c. Any other order produces conflict.

3:2 Learning to handle opposition and jealousy:

manifested in e.g. criticism, judgment, enmity, undermining, lying, meddling.

- * Jealously opens a person to other demonic activity. Jealousy begins with looking at others instead of looking at God. II Corinthians 10:12: without understanding! John 21:21-22: What is that to you! (Phil. 3:7 count everything dung -so why worry!).
- * An unrighteous attitude towards one who is jealous produces oppression, depression, physical and spiritual pressure.
- * Forgiveness: Matthew 18:23: If not observed produces torment. Self-justification, self-defense reveal un-forgiveness.
- * God will always justify that which is right in the end, even though it may seem to take a while – provided we keep a right attitude towards things and people. Proverbs 24:17-18; Matthew 20:1-14.
- * The only right attitude is one of meekness and dependence of God.

A HIGH STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE NEEDED

“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come...” Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Scandal and corruption are increasingly commonplace in our world. It does not surprise us when we read of immorality in the political arena or dishonesty in the business world, but now we are finding that the same attitudes have invaded the home and even the Church. Integrity of any kind seems to be more and more scarce. As Christians, we are called to be people of spiritual integrity, despite our surroundings. The Bible tells us in Philippians 3:14, “I press toward that mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” What is that high calling? It is the challenge for every one of us to walk in the spiritual integrity laid out in the Scriptures. This is a high standard of excellence, but it is possible, and it is what God empowers us to do so.

The dictionary defines integrity as: “moral excellence, honesty, or sincerity.” Scriptural integrity goes even further; we might add: doing right because it is a requirement of God’s Word and because we love God and want to please Him.

Scripture tells us what God said to Satan about a man of Job. “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one who fears God, and stays away from evil? And still he holds fast his integrity, although you moved me against him...” (Job 2:3). God used the word integrity to describe a man!

Integrity involves trust. We want God to trust us, but it goes beyond that to our relationship with one another within the Church. We want everyone within the Church and outside to be able to say: “I trust you, Brother.” The only way that can happen is if we live by the precepts and the standard of excellence which we find in God’s Word. It has been said that in the public realm there are three great tests of integrity: money, power, and sex. Spiritual integrity on a personal level faces challenges in these areas too. As Christians, we need to live in financial integrity. Christians and the work of the Church, are tested on the use or misuse of authority. And if there is anything that Satan challenges in these last days, it is our moral standards. Some people are very meticulous about one area, yet seemingly careless regarding others. However, if we are striving for excellence, we want to come up in every area by the help of the Lord.

David said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me.” (Psalm 139:23-24). We must open our hearts before the Lord and let God’s search light shine in, revealing what we need to do in order to maintain our spiritual integrity. This is vital, not only in terms of our personal walk with God, but also in the spread of the Gospel. Our own spiritual integrity will impact our unity as a church; and our unity as a church, will impact our evangelistic efforts. So your integrity and mine is very important.

If there ever was a story of spiritual and personal integrity in the Bible, it is that of Joseph, found in the book of Genesis. We find that he was tested in all three areas: his financial integrity, his integrity in the area of authority, and his moral integrity. Integrity is not always well received. Joseph was tempted by Potiphar’s wife to commit adultery, and when he refused, he went to jail for it. You may suffer for taking a stand. Some people think, Oh, if I do things right, everything will go well in my life, but Joseph went to jail because he did what was right.

Joseph was also tested in the area of the use of authority and power. When his brothers came to Egypt to buy corn for their family, Joseph had every reason to be angry with them, but he did not misuse his position in order to avenge himself. Instead, he forgave them. In fact, Scripture records that he fell on their necks and wept. He said, “For this cause God sent me here. Do not berate yourselves.” His spiritual integrity led him to do what was right, simply because it was right.

As we search through the Bible, we find many other examples of men and women who maintained spiritual integrity. By their example, we learn that we can have victory too; that we can truly attain spiritual integrity in our daily walk on this earth. However, though it is good thing to study God’s Word to learn about spiritual integrity, the proof of it comes in application. No matter how much we learn, it is of no value until we apply it to our lives.

For example, consider financial integrity. We may think that our financial arrangements are nobody else's business, but as representatives of God, we also represent each other and the church. The world scrutinizes the business dealings and financial encounters of the representatives of Jesus Christ. That tells me that we must walk very carefully. We do not want our financial affairs to bring discredit to the Gospel or to our Christian brothers and sisters. We need to live honestly and above board, because financial integrity is an important part of our testimony that the world sees.

The challenge of maintaining moral purity comes up in numerous areas. The way we dress, the places we go, our attitudes one to another, and our behavior all fall under this category. We live in a world of seduction. Fornication and adultery are the sins of our time. God help us to maintain our moral integrity! God has a good plan. He invented sex, but he made it to be between a husband and his wife. We take vows before God to be faithful to each others as long as we live, and spiritual integrity requires that we cherish those vows. We protect that covenant which makes a man and woman one in marriage. The world may condemn those who say that sex outside of marriage, adultery, or homosexuality are wrong, but the Bible says, they are wrong! We need to have a sense of spiritual integrity which will help us maintain that standard of excellence.

In some countries dating is an accepted practice for youngsters. Yet dating can present a real temptation for those who are trying to maintain their moral integrity. Spiritual integrity starts with attitude of the heart, and we need to be very careful about our behavior with the opposite sex. Part of maintaining moral integrity involves taking seriously the Biblical admonition to dress modestly. Don't advertise what's not for sale! The immodest styles and fashions of the world can slip into the Church if we are not very careful; we must be aware that immodesty can impact someone who is trying to preserve their spiritual integrity. Also the old age advise to maintain distance with the opposite sex still holds true in our days!

I truly believe that the evangelism of these last days is going to be one-on-one encounters. It will be you talking to your neighbour, your relatives, or the people on your job. And the success of that type of evangelism is contingent upon your integrity. When you invite someone is come to church, they may come to enjoy the good music or to enjoy some special program, or to play basketball with the youth group. But people will get saved because they see your spiritual integrity.

Thus, let us take time to check whether or not we are really maintaining God's high standard of excellence in our lives!

PILLARS OF CHARACTER AND THEIR POWER

(TRUSTWORTHINESS; RESPECT; RESPONSIBILITY; FAIRNESS; CARING; CITIZENSHIP)

Trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship – these six core ethical values, which can be called, “Pillars of Character,” provide objective criteria to guide our choices. The standards of conduct that arise out of those values constitute the ground rules of ethics, and therefore of ethical decision-making. There is nothing sacrosanct about the language of the Six Pillars. The terms simply represent discrete ethical concepts that function as moral truths. The principles represented by this concept in turn act as filters through which to process decisions. So, being trustworthy is not enough we must also be caring. Adhering to the letter of the law is not enough –we must accept responsibility for our inaction. Finally, using core ethical values as the basis for principled reasoning can help us detect situations where we focus so hard on upholding one moral principal that we sacrifice another. Where, intent on holding others accountable, we ignore the duty to be compassionate; where, intent on getting a job done, we ignore how. In short, systematically using the Six Pillars can dramatically improve the ethical quality of our decisions, and thus our character.

PILLAR ONE: TRUSTWORTHINESS

When we are trusted, we are given greater leeway by others, because they don't feel they need contracts to assure that we will meet our obligations. They believe in us. That's satisfying. But there's a downside: We must constantly live up to the expectations of others and refrain from competitive self-serving behavior that tarnishes it, and destroys relationships, both professional and personal.

Simply refraining from lies and deception is not enough. Trustworthiness is the most complicated of the six core ethical values and concerns a variety on behavioral qualities – qualities like: honesty, integrity, reliability and loyalty.

Honesty

There is no more fundamental ethical value than honesty. We associate honesty with people of honor, and we admire and trust those who are honest. But honesty is a broader concept than many may realize. Honesty in communications requires good-faith intent to convey the truth as best we know it and to avoid communicating in a way likely to mislead or deceive. There are three dimensions:

(a) Truthfulness

The obligation of truthfulness precludes intentional misrepresentation of fact (lying). Intent is the crucial distinction between truthfulness and truth itself. Being wrong is not the same thing as being a liar, although honest mistakes can still damage trust insofar as they may be evidence of sloppy judgment.

(b) Sincerity / Non-Deception

The obligation of sincerity precludes all facts, including half-truths, out-of-context statements and even silence, that are intended to create belief or leave impressions that are untrue or misleading.

(c) Candour / Frankness

In relationships involving legitimate expectations of trust, honesty may also require candor, forthrightness and frankness, imposing the obligation to volunteer information that another person needs to know.

Honesty in conduct prohibits stealing, cheating, fraud, subterfuge and other trickery. Cheating is a particularly foul form of dishonesty because one not only seeks to deceive but to take advantage of those who are not cheating. It's two-fer: a violation of trust and fairness.

Not all lies are unethical, even though all lies are dishonest. Huh? That's right, honesty is not an inviolate principle. Occasionally dishonesty is ethically justifiable, as when the police lie in undercover operations or when one lies to criminals or terrorists to save lives. But don't kid yourself: occasions for ethically sanctioned lying are rare and require serving a very high purpose indeed – not hitting a management-pleasing sales target or winning a game or avoiding a confrontation. We're talking saving a life, that sort of thing.

Integrity

The word integrity comes from the word integer, meaning: “one or wholeness. This means there are no divisions in an ethical person's life, no difference in the way he makes decisions from situation to situation, no difference in the way he acts at work and at home, in public and alone. At one time or another, we all have allowed our behavior to depart from our conscience or to vary according to locale. Even so, almost all of us have lines we will not cross; our challenge is to draw the line around the Six Pillars.

Because he must know who he is and what he values, the person of integrity takes time for self-reflection, so that the events, crises and seeming necessities of the day don't determine the course of his moral life. He stays in control. He may be courteous, even charming, but he never demeans himself with pretense behaviour toward those he thinks might do him some good. He is trusted because you know who he is: what you see is what you get.

Four enemies of integrity: 1) Self-interest—Things we want; 2) Self-protection--Things we don't want; 3) Self-deception-- A refusal to see a situation clearly; 4) Self-righteousness—An “end-justifies-the-means” attitude.

Reliability (promise-keeping)

When we make promises or other commitments that create a legitimate basis for another person to rely upon us to perform certain tasks, we undertake moral duties that go beyond legal obligations. The ethical dimension of promise-keeping imposes the responsibility of making all reasonable efforts to fulfill our commitments. Because promise-keeping is such an important aspect of trustworthiness, it is important to:

Avoid Bed-Faith Excuses

Honorable people interpret their contracts and other commitments in a fair and reasonable manner and not in a way designed to rationalize non-compliance or create justifications for escaping commitments.

Avoid unwise commitments

Be cautious about making commitments that create ethical obligations. Before making a promise consider carefully whether you are willing and likely to keep it. Think about unknown or future events that could make it difficult, undesirable or impossible. Sometimes, all we can do is promise to do our best.

Avoid unclear commitments—Since others will expect you to live up to what they think you have promised to do, be sure that when you make a promise the other person understands what you are committing to do.

Loyalty

Loyalty is a special moral responsibility to promote and protect the interests of certain people, organization or affiliations. This duty goes beyond the normal obligation we all share to care for others. Some relationships like: husband-wife, employer-employee, citizen-country, create an expectation of allegiance, fidelity and devotion.

Limitations to loyalty

Loyalty is a tricky thing. It is not uncommon for friends, employers, co-workers and others who have a claim on us to demand that their interests be ranked first, even above ethical considerations. Loyalty is a reciprocal concept, however, and no one has the right to ask another to sacrifice ethical principles in the name of a special relationship. Indeed, one forfeits a claim of loyalty when so high a price is put on maintaining the relationship.

Prioritizing loyalties

Because so many individuals and groups make loyalty claims on us, it is often impossible to honor them all simultaneously. Consequently, we must rank our loyalty obligations in some rational fashion. In our personal lives, for example, most people expect us to place the highest degree of loyalty on our family relationships. It's perfectly reasonable and ethical to look out for the interests of our children, parents and spouses even if we have to subordinate our obligations to other children, neighbors, or co-workers in doing so.

Safeguarding confidential information

The duty of loyalty requires us to keep secrets learned in confidence.

Avoiding conflicting interests

Employees and public servants have an additional responsibility to make all professional decisions on merit, unimpeded by conflicting personal interests. Their goal is to secure and maintain the trust of the public, to whom they owe their ultimate loyalty.

PILLAR TWO: RESPECT

The way one shows respect varies, but its essence is the display of regard for the worth of people, including oneself. We have no ethical duty to hold all people in high esteem or admire them, but we are morally obligated to treat everyone with respect, regardless of who they are and what they have done- even if they don't deserve respect. The reason is not because these undeserving souls are human beings, but because we are. We have a responsibility to be the best we can be in all situations, even when dealing with the heinous.

Respect focuses on the moral obligation to honor the essential worth and dignity of the individual. Respect prohibits violence, humiliation, manipulation and exploitation. It reflects notions such as civility, courtesy, dignity, autonomy, tolerance and acceptance.

Civility, Courtesy, Decency

A respectful person is an attentive listener, although his patience with the boorish need not be endless (respect works both ways). Nevertheless, the respectful person treats others with consideration, conforming to accepted notions of taste and propriety, and doesn't resort to intimidation, coercion or violence except in extraordinary and limited situations to teach discipline, maintain order or achieve social justice. Punishment is used in moderation and only to advance important social goals and purposes.

Autonomy

An ethical person exercises personal and managerial authority in a way that provides others with information they need to make informed decisions about their own lives.

Tolerance

An ethical person accepts individual differences and beliefs without prejudice and judges others only on the content of their character.

PILLAR THREE: RESPONSIBILITY

Life is full of choices. Being responsible means: being in charge of our choices and, thus, our lives. It means being accountable for what we do and we are. It also means recognizing what we do, and what we don't do matters and we are morally on the hook for the consequences.

Responsibility makes demands on us. It imposes duties to do what we can, not because we are being paid, but because we will suffer if we don't, or simply because it is our obligation to do so. The essence of responsibility is the continuous awareness that our capacity to reason and our freedom to choose makes us morally autonomous and, therefore, answerable for how we use our autonomy and whether we honor or degrade the ethical principles that give life meaning and purpose. Beyond having the responsibility to be trustworthy, respectful, fair and caring, ethical people show responsibility by being accountable, pursuing excellence and exercising self-restraint. In other words, they exhibit the ability to respond to expectations of performance.

Accountability

An accountable person is not a victim and doesn't shift blame or claim credit from the work of others. He considers the likely consequences of his behaviour and associations. He recognizes the common complicity, the triumphs of evil when nothing done to stop it. He leads by example.

Pursuit of excellence

The pursuit of excellence has an ethical dimension when others rely on our knowledge, ability or willingness to perform tasks safely and effectively.

Diligence

It is hardly unethical to make mistakes and be less than "excellent," but there is a moral obligation to do one's best, be diligent, reliable, careful, prepared and informed.

Perseverance

Responsible people finish what they start, overcoming rather than surrendering to obstacles and excuses.

Continuous improvement

Responsible people look for way to do their work better.

Self-Restraint

Responsible people exercise self-control, restraining passions and appetites (lust, hatred, gluttony, greed, fear, etc.) for the sake of reason, prudence and the duty to set a good example. They delay gratification in necessary and never feel it's necessary a "win at any cost." They realize they be as they choose to be, every day.

PILLAR FOUR: FAIRNESS

Most would agree that fairness and justice involve issue of equality, impartiality, proportionality, openness, and due process. Most build agree that it is unfair to handle familiar matters inconsistently. Most would agree that it is unfair to impose punishment that is not commensurate with the offense. Beyond that, there is little agreement. Fairness is another rocky concept, probably more subject to legitimate debate and interpretation than any other ethical value.

Disagreeing parties tend to maintain that there is only one fair position (their own, naturally). But while some situations and decisions are clearly unfair, fairness usually refers to a range of morally justifiable outcomes rather than discovery of the fair answer.

Process

In setting disputes or dividing resources, how one proceeds to judgment is crucial, for someone is bound to be disappointed with the result. A fair person scrupulously employs an open and impartial processes for gathering and evaluating information necessary to make decisions. Fair people don't wait for the truth to come to them; they seek out relevant information and conflicting perspectives before making important judgments.

Impartiality

Decisions should be made without favoritism or prejudice.

Equity

Fairness requires that an individual, company, or society correct mistakes, prompt and voluntarily. It is improper to take advantage of the weakness or ignorance of others.

PILLAR FIVE: CARING

Caring is the heart of ethics. It is scarcely possible to be truly ethical and not genuinely concerned with the welfare of others. That is because ethics is ultimately about our responsibilities toward other people. If you existed alone in the universe, there would be no need for ethics and your heart could be a cold, hard stone without consequences to anyone or anything.

It is easier to love "humanity" than it is to love people. People who consider themselves ethical and yet lack a caring attitude toward individuals tend to treat others as instruments of their will. They

rarely feel an obligation to be honest, loyal, fair or respectful except insofar as it is prudent for them to do so, a disposition which itself hints at duplicity and a lack of integrity.

A person who really cares feels an emotional response to both the pain and pleasure of others. Oddly enough, though, it is not uncommon for people to be remarkably ungracious, intolerant and unforgiving toward those they love-while at the same time showing a generous spirit toward strangers and business associates. Of course, sometimes we must hurt those we truly care for and some decisions, while quite ethical, do cause pain. But one should consciously cause no more harm than is reasonably necessary to perform one's duties.

The highest form of caring is the honest expression of benevolence. This is sometimes referred to as altruism (living and acting for the good of others), not to be confused with strategic charity. "Gifts" to charities to advance personal interests are (to put it uncharitably) a bit of a fraud. That is, they aren't gifts at all. They are investments, or tax write-offs.

PILLAR SIX: CITIZENSHIP

The concept of citizenship includes civic virtues and duties that prescribe how we ought to behave as part of a community. The good citizen knows the laws and obeys them, yes, but that is not all. He volunteers and stays informed on the issues of the day, this to execute his duties and privileges as a members of a self-governing democratic society. That is, he does more than his "fair" share to make society work, now and for future generations. And beyond respecting the law, reporting crimes, serving on juries, voting and paying taxes, the good citizen protects the environment by conserving resources, recycling, using public transportation and cleaning up litter. He never takes more than he gives.

REPUTATION OR CHARACTER?

- ❑ The circumstances in which you live determine your REPUTATION.
The truth you believe determines your CHARACTER.
- ❑ REPUTATION is what you are supposed to be;
CHARACTER is what you really are.
- ❑ REPUTATION is the photograph;
CHARACTER is the face.
- ❑ REPUTATION comes over from without;
CHARACTER grows from within.
- ❑ REPUTATION is what you have when you come to a new community;
CHARACTER is what you have when you go away.
- ❑ REPUTATION can be made in a moment;
CHARACTER is built in a lifetime.
- ❑ REPUTATION grows like a mushroom;
CHARACTER grows like the oak.
- ❑ A newspaper report gives you your REPUTATION;
A life of toil gives you your CHARACTER.
- ❑ REPUTATION makes you rich or poor;
CHARACTER makes you happy or miserable.
- ❑ REPUTATION is what men say about you on your tombstone;
CHARACTER is what the angels say about you before the throne of God.

LIVES WITHOUT INTEGRITY

“Whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did.” (1 John 2:6).

To live a life of integrity in the Kingdom of God is to live a righteous, holy life. This is a possibility for the Christian because of the work of Jesus. Every time we do fail, we can simply confess our sin to God, repent of it (i.e. turn our backs and walk away from it towards God), and God has promised to restore us to a place of cleanness in His sight (1 John 1:7-9). If, however, we are harbouring some form of sin in our life and we are unwilling to repent of it, then this will act as a barrier between us and God and we will begin to lose our motivation to serve Him. This will be because God will seem more distant to us and because we are not living in the way He intended us to live. In fact, living with sin in our life is extremely dangerous to our motivation to serve the Lord. We may be able to function well on the outside, but eventually the sin will so eat away at us and get such a strong grip on us, that it will begin to choke the life out of us.

Integrity also involves recognizing our true feelings and motives and expressing them honestly. As Christians, we should live lives that are honest both with ourselves and with God (after all, we cannot hide anything from Him anyway!). The opposite of integrity is hypocrisy. Jesus seemed to be very concerned with this (Matthew 6:5, 16; Matthew 23:13-36; Matthew 24:51). Unfortunately, too much hypocrisy has taken root in the Church and it has taken its toll. It has caused people to hide from themselves or to numb themselves to their consciences. Hypocrisy eventually will destroy a person’s self-worth and godly motivation they may have had. “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.” (Proverbs 4:23).

Another aspect of lives without integrity is particularly relevant to those leaders who teach. We should never teach anything without first at least starting to live in the good of it. If what we are teaching cannot be seen to be working first in us, then it is going to be very difficult for other people to receive that truth (some will of course, as God can use us despite what we do, at times). This is even more true if we live lives that contradict the truth we are teaching. If, however, the truth that we are teaching about does work for us, then other people will see this and want what we have got. It will give our teaching credibility, and enable many more people to receive, and act on the truth we teach to them.

Many Christian leaders have a pressure on them to ‘come up with the goods’ when they preach, so they grab a hold of any truth that sounds good and they teach this. This type of approach to teaching may get a good response at the time, but people tend to forget such messages as soon as they hear the next sermon that is communicated well or that takes their fancy. Leaders who do this, tend to find that their congregations do not change and that they themselves are just ‘treading water’ or staying where they are spiritually. A loss of motivation will often occur as a result of these things, especially if the leader has the courage to be honest about themselves and their situation.

We need to live lives of integrity as Christians. To lie to ourselves or to try and cheat or do it the easy way, may give us short-term success, but in the long-run, we will find that it does not really work and it may even cost us our motivation to serve the Lord. We need to be careful how we live and be honest with ourselves and with God; and we need to live lives that bring Him glory. We also need to have God’s standards for our life and not live as the majority want, because even in a church, their standards may differ from God’s. The normal is not necessarily the right! We need to allow God to determine what is right and let Him define what living a life of integrity means.

THE MATURING PROCESS

God puts His own people with others and in the place which will tend most to develop the spiritual graces.

He puts one who is quick with one who is slow, and one who is quiet with one who is talkative: that the one who is quick may be patient with the one who is talkative.

He puts one who is orderly with one who is untidy, that both may learn lessons.

Often our environment is but an answer to our prayers:

We pray for patience, and God sends those who tax us to the utmost, for “tribulation works patience.” (Rom. 5:3)

We pray for submission, and God sends suffering, for we learn obedience by the things we suffer. (Heb. 5:8)

We pray for unselfishness, and God gives opportunities to sacrifice ourselves by thinking on the “things of others.” (Phil. 2:4)

We pray for victory, and the things of the world sweep down upon us in a storm of temptation, for “this is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith.” (1 John 5: 4-5)

We pray for humility and strength, and some messenger of Satan torments us until we lie in the dust, crying to God for its removal. (II Cor. 12:7-8)

We pray for union with Jesus, and God severs natural ties and lets our best friends misunderstand or become indifferent to us. (John 15:2)

We pray for more love, and God sends peculiar suffering, and puts us with apparently unlovely persons and lets them say things to rasp the nerves, lacerate the heart, and sting the conscience; for love suffers long and is kind; love is not impolite; love is not provoked; love bears, love believes, hopes and endures; love never fails. (I Cor. 13:4-8; John 15:9- 10)

We ask to follow Jesus, and He separates us from home and kindred, for He himself said, “Whosoever he be of you that forsakes not all that he has, he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:33)

We pray for the Lamb life, and are given a portion of lowly service, or we are injured and must seek no redress for He was as a lamb to the slaughter, and opened not His mouth. (Is. 53:7)

We pray for gentleness, and there comes a perfect storm of temptation to yield to harshness and irritability.

We pray for quietness, and everything within and around is confusion, that we may learn when He gives quietness no one can make trouble. (Job 34:29)

WE CHOOSE TO LET GOD CONFORM US INTO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.

INTEGRITY - A BIBLICAL CONCEPT

Today, our world is cluttered with lies, deceit, hypocrisy and fraud at almost every level. Even casual observers of our country can see the demise of integrity in all walks of life, involving politicians, bureaucrats, businessmen and the man on the street. Truth and integrity have eluded most of the leaders, even in many Christian organizations. Unfortunately, the general ethical conduct of Christians is hardly at variance from non-Christians, with several grand exceptions. Christians bribe municipal authorities for construction permits, just as others. We falsify income tax returns, steal office time and use pirated software like anybody else. We go back on our words just as easily as anyone else. The apostle Paul observed as follows on the depravity of man: "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practise deceit." (Rom. 3:13). How true of us!

All children walk with integrity up to about the age of five, when they fall victim to the influence of the adult world and mass entertainment. It is then they begin, all unconsciously, to become plausible actors. The product of this process is known as maturity, or you and me!

Integrity means: to be integrated, to have one's outward performance connected with his inward being, to have his works issue out of one's heart. A person of integrity "speaks the truth from his heart" (Ps. 15:2). Our outward living should be consistent with our inward condition. That is the essence of Christian integrity – "wholeness in Christ," where attitudes, motives, intentions, thoughts, behavior, and speech are united under the Lordship of Christ. It is not just another word for honesty. Biblical integrity calls for a wholeness (entirety, completeness) that comes from God. In God is no shadow of change. He is constant and consistent. Integrity compels us to keep short accounts before God and men. A person who values God's Word will keep his own word. A person of integrity takes responsibility for what he says or does. When he falls, he admits to sin and makes right when needed.

Integrity can be composed of two words, "internal grit". The strength comes from within. Grit is the Christ-empowered determination to what is holy in spite of going against the flow. It takes many trials and testings for rock solid convictions to emerge. Integrity is integral and fundamental to God's character. Therefore, we dare not reflect adversely on that integrity by our lack of integrity. For faithful loyal servants, what is of the greatest importance is not their own honour, but their Master's – that the purposes of the Master's be fulfilled, not their own. "In matters of principle, stand like a rock; in matters of taste, swim with the current."

A man of integrity keeps his oath even when it hurts (Ps. 15: 4-5). In order to stand for justice and fairness, he is prepared to put his reputation and success on the line. Standing up to Saul in defence of David, Jonathan put his own life at stake several times. Such commitments are costly. Such friends are indeed rare. The Hebrew boys refused to bow before the image set up by king Nebuchadnezzar: God delivered them from the burning furnace. Often, tests of faith and integrity do not have that kind of immediate happy ending.

If we are to be people of integrity we must become good first. Only a good tree can bear good fruit. True people of integrity know their weaknesses and know that they are sinners. However, the problem is that most people lack integrity and so, are unaware of their sin. When religious people fail to have integrity, the situation is all the more tragic. Jesus condemned the hypocrisy of the Pharisees (Matt. 23). Their problem was that they were religious. But, their religion was external, not internal; it was to impress people, not to please God. They appeared to live and breathe God's Word, but were like tombs: pretty on the outside, but full of dead bones within. They neglected the practice of holiness and righteousness, and hypocritically professed their faith. They had a form of godliness, but no power. (2 Tim 3:5). They did not understand the purpose of God's law. The law is meant to crush our pride, to show us that if we had integrity, we would probably be behind bars. Instead, they used it to puff up their pride, to pat themselves on their back. So do we.

Integrity has always been a rare quality. Nowadays, it is harder to maintain this quality. Cheating is rampant everywhere, even in examination halls where students copy with the connivance of the invigilators and school/college authorities. Even when the offenders are caught, they feel sorry for getting caught – more than for cheating. It is easier to fall in line.

The Pharisees set out to trap Jesus. They came to Him and said, “Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You are not swayed by men because you pay no attention to who they are.” (Matt. 22:16). (If they knew this, why did they not obey what He taught them?) Without realizing it, they defined for us the three qualities that make for integrity.

- Not men-pleasures. A man of integrity does not make decisions based on popularity or on convenience. He does not do things for others to see. He acts the same way whether he is watched or not. In our hearts we are more concerned about what men think of us, than what God thinks of us. To please the Lord, rather than men, should be our priority concern. We should not do anything out of fear, favour or affection.
- Not respecter of persons. It is easy to be awed by the rich, the powerful and the intelligent. It is just as easy to scorn the poor, the clumsy and the weak. Jesus was neither impressed with the grandeur of Herod nor was He scornful of the plight of the Samaritan woman. The apostle Peter, who was happy to eat with the Gentiles withdrew from the table fellowship for fear of the Jews, who came from Jerusalem (Gal. 2:11). The apostle Paul rebuked him over this issue of integrity. “The fear of man brings a snare.” (Prov. 29:25).
- Teacher of Truth. Both our words and our lives should point to Him who is the Truth. We should discipline ourselves to tell the truth as a habit – something we do without thinking. A man of integrity cannot be bribed or threatened. Jesus would not bow down to the devil, even when He was offered all the kingdoms of the world. Neither did He call down the angels in the face of the cross and the suffering which followed.

In the modern, ‘civilized’ world, excuses take the place of honest answers. This has infected the Church as well. Promises to pray salve our consciences, even when we are not really bothered to find the time and put in the effort to genuinely help others who are in need. We would rather lie, than show a lack of commitment. We impart gossip under the guise of prayer requests. We find it hard to guard our tongue. We criticize and accuse in torrents of self-righteous anger. We cut down even those who trust us, under the pretence of “speaking the truth in love.” We have been brain-washed by the world and the media to think that false promises and sweet talk can cover a mountain of hypocrisy. Are we true to our word? The Church cannot progress if there is deception among its members. The Church needs people who are free from hypocrisy. A large number of people will eagerly embrace the faith if Christians model integrity in their lives.

Integrity demands that our speech should be intentionally true. “The Lord detests lying lips, but He delights in men who are truthful.” (Prov. 12:22). A person of integrity never cheats or steals. “Differing weights and differing measures – the Lord detests them both.” (Prov. 20:10). Convenience Christians are by far the norm in this new century. They are either too tired or too indifferent to make a difference. They gravitate towards the lowest common denominator with the excuse that everyone else is doing it. It is easy to compromise in little things because they seem to make no difference in the society at large. But, every drop is important as it helps determine the contents.

James’s scorching criticism of Christians for lack of integrity must strike a chord in our hearts. In spite of being seemingly religious, they showed favoritism to the rich (2:9), substituted bland platitudes for true compassion (2:14-16), spoke falsely against each other (3:9-12) and allowed envy and boasting to cause division among them (3:16). What a fair account of our churches today! People do not believe that we are saved, if they do not see a change in our lives! Being a Christian is not what we say with the lips; it involves what we do with our lives.

Job lost his riches, his children, the respect of his friends and even the support of his wife. Yet he did not despair. He refused to give up his integrity. He refused to pretend to be humble and agree to the admonition of his friends. Instead, he declared, ‘...till I die, I will not deny my integrity’ (Job 27:5). We need to make the same declaration. When we live lives that reflect Jesus, His light in us reveals the darkness of sin and rebellion in the world around us.

Integrity is not without attendant risks. The friends of Job thought that he was stubborn and hiding some secret sin. A man with integrity is likely to be hated. Integrity is often met with derision and misunderstanding, if not physical violence. Solomon says, “Blood-thirsty men hate a man of integrity and seek to kill the upright.” (Prov. 29:10). Daniel is an ideal model for us. His daily conduct was consistent with his spiritual values. His walk in the world was in harmony with his walk with God. Yet, he was not without his enemies. He was even thrown into the den of lions. Mercifully, integrity does not equate sinless perfection. To be blameless before God, we should deal with our sin against God and against our fellow humans, honestly and consistently, and love others with sincerity and humility. People already know we make mistakes. They want to know if we have the integrity to admit them. God wants us to be truly good and integrated.

A man of integrity is a man of principle. He walks, works and speaks uprightly, righteously, truthfully. “He who does these things shall never be moved.” (Ps. 15:5). The only way for others to express faith in our lives is be practical loving obedience to the Word of God. God’s Word should draw the line for us, not culture. We must discipline ourselves to have integrity with the power of the Holy Ghost. What the church will need, what our century will need, are not people of genius, not brilliant tacticians or strategists, but simple, straightforward, honest men and women. A time like this demands strong minds, great hearts, true faiths and ready hands, men whom the lust of office does not kill; men whom the spoils of office cannot buy; men who possess opinions and a will; men who have honour; men who will not lie.

Our condition is similar to that of the frog in the boiling pot. Because the water warmed up slowly, the frog did not realize that it was in imminent danger: Instead, it enjoyed the warmth initially. That has happened in our society where we compromised – not all at once, but step-by-step, a little at a time. Our world lives in spiritual darkness, separated from God. But, people have adjusted and are generally feeling comfortable. The resultant danger is what we see all around us. It is time for us to wake up and be alert against the danger. Will you?

Integrity = What we think equals what we plan equals what we say equals what we do and these are all one and the same!

THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF INTEGRITY

We are living at a time in human history, when personal integrity is neither easier found, nor given great importance. However, God places great importance upon integrity.

What the Bible says

The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines integrity as: "...moral uprightness, honesty, wholeness, soundness..." These words sum up really what integrity really means.

Job is described by God as a man of integrity because of his faithfulness under severe trial (2:3). God promises to establish Solomon's rule if he lived in integrity (1 Kings 9:4). Integrity and uprightness is our protection while we place our hope in God (Ps. 25:21). God said to Samuel, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance. But the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Sam. 16:7). This verse does not use the word "integrity." However, since integrity has to do with wholeness or soundness, it is a matter of the inner life being consistent with outward appearances. It is a matter of the heart.

In the Old Testament, the heart is the conscious self, the inner person with every function that makes a person human. The Greek word "*kardia*" is used in the Old Testament sense, with all the meanings found there. The heart of man is his very person; his psychological core. The conscious awareness each of us has, that makes us persons and the spiritual dimension of responsiveness or unresponsiveness to God are both expressed by the word "heart."

Christian behaviour must be only expected from those who are true believers. Only those who are regenerated by the Spirit of God, and have a new nature, and are seeking to walk in the fullness and power of the Holy Spirit, can endeavour to live a life of integrity. In Psalm 24:4a, we read about clean hands and a pure heart. 1 Timothy 2:8 talks about lifting up holy hands on prayer, and Psalm 15 is a Psalm emphasizing moral and spiritual purity in the life of those who would dwell in the sanctuary of God. In Psalm 19:12-14, David prayed that God would help him to keep his life pure. None of us is capable of rendering fair judgment when judging another's motives. Only God is capable of doing so, and this is why David prays like this in Psalm 19. Again, before approaching the communion table, Paul admonishes those who would participate in the communion service to examine themselves in the light of His Word. This each of us can do for ourselves, but we are incapable of doing it for others. That is why integrity is ultimately a matter of the heart, living a life of transparency before God and this then works out in transparency of living before others. . . .

There is a close relationship between seeking to live a life of integrity and keeping a clear conscience before God and man. In 1 Corinthians 4:1-5, Paul brings this out very clearly; his aim is to have clear conscience and he recognized that his thoughts, motives and attitudes were to be ultimately judged by the Lord. One commentary on 2 Corinthians 1:12 says: "Conscience – the soul's warning system which allows human beings to contemplate their motives and actions and make moral evaluations of what is right and wrong. . . . In order to work as God designed it, the conscience must be informed to the highest moral and spiritual level and best standard, which means submitting it to the Holy Spirit through God's Word (cf. Rom. 12:1; 1 Tim. 1:19; 2 Tim. 2:15; Heb. 9:14; 10:22). Paul's fully enlightened conscience exonerated (freed) him completely (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:5; 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3). But, ultimately (Acts 23:1, 24), only God can accurately judge man's motives (1 Cor. 4:1-5). Therefore, in order to grow in a life of integrity, a Christian must strive to have a clear conscience before God and man.

Integrity in relationships

Humans created in the image of God, are relational beings. Since the Christian faith has to do with all of life, integrity must be seen in our personal relationships. Our relationship with God is foundational, but we cannot stop there. Our Lord said that the first commandment is to love God supremely, but He went on to tell us that the second commandment is like the first and it is to love your neighbour as yourself. (Matt. 22:34-40). The quality and depth of our interpersonal relationships is very much dependent upon our relationships with God.

Relating to God

The first four of the Ten Commandments deal with our relationship with God, while the last six deal with our relationships with fellow human beings. The Scriptures throughout make this very clear. We must guard our relationship with God at all costs, for this is where integrity begins. In Psalms 51 (one of David's penitential psalms), though he has actually broken commandments relation to people, David says, "...Against You, You only have I sinned, and done what is evil in your sight..."(v.4). The reason for this is that he realized his relationship with God was primary in his life and that all sin is ultimately against a Holy God. In Psalm 139:23-24, and Psalm 19:14, again we see the desire of the Psalmist to have a right relationship with God. This is true spirituality – to be honest before God, and live a life of sincerity before our Heavenly Father.

Ourselves

No one can run away from himself or herself; we have to live with ourselves all our lives. That is why we should live a life of integrity as far as our individual lives are concerned. True faith is seen when you are alone with your thoughts. Honesty with our thoughts, feelings, and emotions is all part of living a life of integrity. We must strike a delicate balance here. One extreme is to dwell too much on your own thoughts, while the other extreme not to take any time for quiet introspection at all. Both are dangerous! We must strike a balance here. The ultimate goal of the Christian life is to grow to be more like Jesus and to reflect His character in our lives! (see 1 Tim. 4:7, where we are commanded to train ourselves to be godly). Living a life of integrity will definitely involve growth in Christian character and service.

Relating to others

Loving God and loving your neighbour go hand in hand. The Bible lays great emphasis upon our relationships with others. As God seeks the highest good of all people, we also are to imitate this goal in our interpersonal relationships (See Matt. 5:43-48). When seeking the highest good of others, sometimes this will involve discipline and chastisement, but the aim should be for the good of the other persons, not their harm. The Lord Jesus taught the importance of getting right with a brother or sister, if there is a rift in the relationship, even before offering to God. In other words, mending a broken relationship should be the priority, before true worship can take place. After you have taken the initiative, if there is no positive response from the other side, you are no longer responsible for the broken relationship. It is up to the other person now to accept your willingness to be reconciled, and mend the relationship. The point is, God takes our relationships with fellow Christians and others very seriously and so must we. Seeking to live a life of honesty in our interpersonal relationships is very much consistent with growing in integrity.

Moral integrity

God has laid down moral laws. If we break or disregard His laws, we do so at our own peril. Our Christian faith categorically states that there are moral absolutes that God has revealed to us in the Bible. You shall not steal. You shall not murder. There are not two ways about these absolutes. When I was in school, we had moral science as a subject. Moral guidelines, like doing good and helping others, were taught. Humans are concerned about moral issues only because we are created in the image and likeness of God. Yet, everyone needs regeneration, which is only possible by the Holy Spirit giving us a new life and a new nature. This is where true education begins. For a human being to live a life pleasing to God, the person must be born again.

The Prophet Micah tells us about the kind of life that God desires of every human being, but more specifically of those who are His adopted children through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: "He has showed you what is good, and what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God (6:8)." Closely linked with the goal of living a life pleasing to God, is the consistent effort to have a pure mind. Purity of thought is crucial in the life of a Christian, for it is here that the battle for integrity is fought, "Sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a destiny." How True! The struggle to keep one's mind pure in order to live a life of integrity in moral matters, is crucial to vibrant Christian living and service. For instance, consider the importance of books, magazines, television, computer-internet, radio, etc.

All these have a profound influence on our lives, whether we realize it or not. In order to live a life of moral and spiritual purity, we cannot take these things lightly. That is why it has well been said the repentance is to be a way of life for the Christian, for we all fall short in the pursuit of living a life of integrity in moral and spiritual matters.

Human sexuality is one area that needs integrity, if we are to benefit from it. Integrity in this area is crucial. We need to understand Biblical teaching on sex and keep to the standards that God has laid down in His Word regarding living a sexually pure life. The act of marriage, or sexual intercourse is to be reserved for marriage only. Any deviation from the standard of monogamous marriage is to be rejected as sin. We are living in times when God's clear teaching on this subject is largely neglected by those outside the Christian community and not taught or spoken about with clarity within the Christian community. Though sin is sin, sexual sin has far greater and more tragic consequences than other forms of sin (See Prov. 5:7; and 1 Cor. 6:18-20). Sexual sin is, however, not the unpardonable sin. Many are there who are trophies of God's matchless grace, who once lived debauched lives. There is absolutely no limit to the grace of God, no matter how far one has gone down the road of sin and vice.

Integrity in money matters

Money affects all of us. In some way or the other. If I want to buy a cake of soap to have a bath, I need money. If I want to buy matches, I need money. In fact, every aspect of life needs money. No wonder there is so much that God has revealed in His Word about money – its importance, how to use it, and the proper attitude towards it.

Money can be used for good as well as bad purposes; if we do not conquer money with the right Scriptural attitude, money will conquer us. Jesus spoke a lot about money, and we would benefit greatly if we were to go through the gospels, and note down His teaching on money and material possessions.

The few points given below will summarize the major teachings in the Bible on money and how we can live a life of integrity in money matters:

1. Correct attitude towards money: everything belongs to God (Ps. 24:1). We must start here. All that I am and have belongs to God. I am only a steward and He wants me to be a faithful steward.
2. One's attitude towards money will determine the level of spiritual maturity and usefulness: Read Luke 16:1-13.
3. We can serve God with our money, but we cannot serve God and money: Matt. 6:24.
4. Learn to daily pray the prayer found in: Proverbs 30:7-9.
5. Ill-gotten money will never have the blessing of God: Proverbs 10:2.
6. We can get money in three major ways: (1) Earning it; (2) Saving it or investing it; and (3) Receiving money as a gift. In the third way, we should be wise about the source from where we are receiving the gift.
7. The antidote to financial worry is found in: Matthew 6:25-34.
8. Seek the advice of these who are financial consultants, but avoid emphasizing management over ministry. Though we are to learn how to be wise in the management / stewardship of our money and resources, we should be careful about learning too much on management principles, rather than learning Biblical guidelines of wisely managing our resources. Scripture warns us of the dangers of trying to become wealthy: 1 Tim 6:6-10. It is not money that is evil, but the love of money that is condemned in Scripture.
9. Learn the importance of giving: 2 Cor. 8-9; Luke 6-38.
10. Practice the principle of generosity: Prov. 22:9.

11. Be careful of criticizing others in the stewardship of their resources: One person's need may be another person's want and vice-versa.
12. Use things and love people, not vice-versa.
13. We should seek to relate with and accept people, not on the basis of what they have or do not have, but on the basis of who they are, as people, created in the image of God.
14. We should constantly seek to live lives of financial integrity, and not harbour skeletons in our cupboards. After all, sin can never be hidden. It shall be revealed one day, and we can never hide anything from God.
15. Avoid debt: Rom. 13:8; Prov. 22:7. Never go in debt for consumer goods.
16. Christian should not become loan agencies: If you can help someone in need, do help; but do not become a loan agency.

Personal integrity is essential to what we are as Christians. If we have spiritual wholeness, we relate to God and others with integrity.

INTEGRITY IN LIVING: A FIRST REQUIREMENT

Each person must deal daily with the issues of right and wrong, good and evil. When struggling with these issues, there is a tendency to rationalize behaviour and compromise God's standard of integrity. Often these sins are explained away or ignored. These are the "vices of the virtuous" – sins which have become accepted as the normal standard. Christians must not allow any compromise with sin to infiltrate their lives.

THE STRUGGLE FOR INTEGRITY

1. What does God say about the need for integrity or honesty? Leviticus 19:11

2. Read Jeremiah 17:9.
 - a. What fact in your life makes the struggle for honest living so intense?

 - b. List a recent example when you tried to justify an action which you knew to be wrong.

 - c. How did God work in your life to show you that it was wrong?

3. **What are some of the ways you can be deceived?**
BY YOURSELF:
James 1:22 _____
1 John 1:8 _____
BY OTHERS:
Romans 16:17-18 _____
Ephesians 4:14 _____
BY SATAN:
II Corinthians 11:3-4 _____
Genesis 3:1 _____
4. Since you can be deceived so easily, how can you know when you have sinned?
Psalm 139:23-24 _____
Hebrews 4:12 _____

DISHONESTY EXPOSED

5. Compare II Corinthians 8:21 and Acts 24:16.
 - a. What guidelines helped Paul in his daily living? _____
 - b. In order to keep a clear conscience, what do you suppose Paul did when God exposed a sin in his life? (Compare with 1 John 1:9.)

 - c. Is there any area in your life in which you do not have a clear conscience? If so, what is it?

- d. What steps can you take to gain a clear conscience?

6. You must be careful not to be a hypocrite.
- a. How did Jesus describe hypocrites? Mark 7:6-8.

- b. What is one reason this style of living is dishonest?

- c. Give an example of the way God's name might be dishonoured.

7. The quality of your life should be able to withstand close examination by other people. You should live honestly – not pretending to be something you are not in order to create a false impression. Imagine an invention that could tell you what people are really like and what people thought.
- a. Would you want this invention used on you? _____
Why or why not? _____
- b. Would anything be revealed that you would like to remain hidden? If so, what is it?

8. Meditate on II Corinthians 8:21. Now consider the following list. Are any of them problem areas for you? Place a check by them.
- _____ exaggeration
_____ white lies
_____ cheating
_____ failure to keep promises
_____ allowing people to believe false impressions.
Choose one. What can you do to deal with this problem?
9. Read Psalm 15:1-5 and list at least five qualities of an honest man.

10. What does Paul's statement in 1 Thessalonians 2:10 reflect about the way he lived?

THE PRACTICE OF HONESTY

11. Honesty needs to be displayed in all phases of your life. List below some of the areas you might neglect.
- Romans 13:6-7 _____
- Colossians 3:23-25 _____
- 1 Peter 2:13-14 _____

Two essential standards for a Christian are:

- * Make sure that everything you have was obtained honestly.
- * Be sure that only truth comes out of your mouth. It is not always necessary to speak, especially in matters of opinion. Love, gentleness, courtesy should govern your tongue. And when you speak, speak truth. There is no such things as a "white" lie.

HONESTY IN SPEECH

12. What does your speech indicate? Matthew 12:34-35.

13. How does the psalmist describe the tongue? Psalm 52:2-4.

“Don’t think that friendship authorizes you to say disagreeable things to your intimates. The nearer you come into relation with a person, the more necessary do tact and courtesy become.”

14. Why are lying and abusive speech inconsistent with the Christian life? Colossians 3:8-10.

15. Can you think of a personal situation where dishonesty in living has led to lying ? Explain.

“A lie is: any deceit: in word, act, attitude – or silence; in deliberate exaggerations, in distortions of the truth, or in creating false impressions.”

16. Paraphrase the following verses.

Ephesians 4:29 _____

Colossians 4:6 _____

THE LEADER'S HIGHEST GOAL MUST BE: INTEGRITY

YOU MUST BE A PERSON OF GOD

Your highest goal as a Christian leader must be to be a person of God. Only a few people in Bible times were given this title – Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha, Timothy, and some others. Undoubtedly the term could have been appropriately used for leaders like Isaiah, Daniel, and Paul. Perhaps there is no higher honor to be given to anyone than to be considered to be a man or woman of God.

None of us would feel worthy of this term. At times in the Old Testament it seemed to be used for a prophet of God or one specially sent by God. Some well-meaning people have sometimes used this as an honored term for all Christian leaders, pastors, and ministers. But no leader is automatically a person of God just because his ministry relates to the church, includes sacred duties or because he has dedicated his life to Christian service.

Who is a true person of God? Perhaps we feel more free to note personality traits which should not be in persons of God than to define who is one. Yet all of us recognise those aspects of godliness that place the stamp of God upon one. Each of us desires more of God's seal upon one's own life. What does this include?

MARKS OF A PERSON OF GOD

- 1. A person of God lives a consistently righteous and holy life.** Only God is perfect in holiness. Only God is infinitely and eternally righteous. Each of us has sinned (past tense) and falls (present tense) short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:23). But God can give us an unwavering commitment to His will, His truth, and His glory. We can live in present victory and blessing moment by moment. We can walk in the light as He is in the light and experience the continuing cleansing from all sin (1 John 1:7).

We all stumble in many ways and find often that we are at fault (James 3:2). But the set of the soul, the habit of the walk with God can be a life of consistent righteousness and holiness. And if we sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the infinitely Righteous One (1 John 2:2). By God's grace we can live in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days (Luke 1:75). Any sin or moral defect in a Christian leader brings instant scandal to the name of Christ and to the church of Christ. Every person of God must live in holiness and righteousness.
- 2. A person of God lives a life of love.** God is love, and the more godly we become, the more the love of God will be manifest in us. "Live a life of love" (Eph. 5:2). "Do everything in love" (1 Cor. 16:14). "The fruit of the Spirit is love" (Gal. 5:22). There is no commandment greater than to love. (Mark 12:31).

If there is anything that adds beauty to character and personality, it is love. If there is anything that marks a Christian leader as a person of God, it is the love of the Spirit flowing constantly out of his life to others. Our love for God is no greater than our love for those about us. This marks us as Christ-like. This alone can make our leadership Christian.
- 3. A person of God serves others.** We must serve one another in love (Gal. 5:13). Loving service added to the other Christian graces places a special seal upon a person. Love always serves. Love expresses itself to others by blessing them, helping them, and gladly serving them. Jesus tolerates among His followers no lording it over others (1 Peter 5:3). No one is too good to serve. No one is a follower of Christ unless he is willing to serve as the Master did, who girded Himself with a towel and washed the feet of His followers.

For Jesus' sake we are servants of others (2 Cor. 4:5). As shepherds of God's flock we are to be eager to serve (1 Peter 5:2). There is no place in a person of God for pride of leadership, methods, ministry, organization, or accomplishments. We must have the servant heart and manifest the servant attitude of the One who humbled Himself as described in Philippians 2:5-8.

4. **A person of God manifests the beautiful fruit of the Spirit.** Jesus assured us that if the tree is good the fruit will also be good (Matt. 12:33). If the Spirit controls us, He will manifest His holy fruit through our attitudes, moods, words, and deeds. All people, said Jesus, are recognized by their fruit (Matt. 7:16).
The person of God has godly fruit, godliness of disposition, godliness of emotions, godliness of spiritual lifestyle. Paul outlines the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. The Christian leader carries with him the fragrant aroma of Christ (2 Cor. 2:15). The Holy Spirit imparts the loveliness, the beauty, the very Spirit of Jesus. This is an essential element of the Spirit's sealing of a man or woman of God.
5. **A person of God is filled with the Spirit:** "Filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19), "fullness in Christ" (Col. 2:9), "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18), "filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:11). Surely the Bible holds an amazing vision before us! But of all the terms the Bible uses to describe this holy reality, "filled with the Spirit" is by far most frequently used.
To be filled with the Spirit means to be saturated with the Spirit, overflowing with the Spirit, fully possessed by the Spirit, controlled and dominated by the Spirit, and transformed by the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit implies that one is fully available to the Spirit, fully influenced by the Spirit, and made beautiful with the grace and fruit of the Spirit.
To be filled means that the whole personality is so imbued by the Spirit, pervaded by the Spirit, and saturated with the Spirit that the person is not only spiritual but Spirit-full. For you to be Spirit-filled implies that the presence and power of the Spirit rests upon your person, clothes you, and is manifest through you. It makes a decided difference in you, a new God-given dimension and a new transforming fullness in your life and leadership. You recognize it and others recognize it. It adds a God-given Christ-likeness to your personality and a God-given might to your witness, ministry, and leadership. It marks you as a person of God.

OTHERS RECOGNISE A PERSON OF GOD

When God puts His seal upon you, not only do God's children often recognize it, but the unsaved may discern something different about you. Even Satan recognizes a person of God. David, who was himself called a man of God, said, "Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for himself; the Lord will hear when I call to him" (Ps. 4:3). One way God sets us apart is by putting His seal on our prayer life and giving us many answers to prayer. When God answered Elijah's prayer so outstandingly and repeatedly, the widow of Zarephath called out, "Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the Lord in your mouth is the truth." (1 Kings 17:24). On Mount Carmel Elijah felt God's seal was essential to his ministry if the nation was to be turned back to God. So he prayed, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant...Answer me, O Lord, answer me, so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell...When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The Lord – he is God! The Lord –he is God!" (1 King 18:36-39).

Later, when challenged and called a "man of God," Elijah replied, "If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven" (2 Kings 1:10). It did. God is ready to place His seal upon you when He sees that you need it, and others will recognize it. Your prayer life has much to do with your being a person of God and others' acceptance of your in that role. After Elisha had eaten several times in their home, the woman of Shunem said to her husband, "I know that that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God" (2 Kings 4:9). She prepared a room for the prophet's use whenever he passed by. Why did she go to that trouble? Hungry-hearted people want to be near a person of God. My mother tells me that when I was a small child and a visitor began to talk about the Lord I stood as near to his chair as I could. Even a child can sense spiritual reality in a person of God.

When Saul's mules were lost his servant said to him, "Look, in this town there is a man of God; he is highly respected, and everything he says comes true." (1 Sam. 9:6). Yes, people respect a person of God, but they lose respect if a Christian leader does not prove by his life, his prayer, and his words that he is truly a person of God.

A PERSON OF GOD BRINGS BLESSING

A well-known minister hungered for the presence of Jesus more than anything else, till at times Jesus was more real to him than his earthly friends. Ministers, students, fishermen, homemakers who came to know him were seized with an awareness of his love for Jesus. Said one young man, "If you didn't [already] believe in God, you could no longer be an atheist after meeting that man. You could see Jesus in his life and touch Jesus in his ministry." Again and again others saw the Shekinah (glory) radiance of God in his face. When Robert Murrery McCheyne walked into his pulpit, often before he even had time to open his Bible, the people would begin to weep. He carried the very presence of God with him.

A person of God brings blessing wherever he goes. He takes with him God's presence. He can live normally, have a happy home, attend joyous occasions and mix with the people – Jesus did. But the person of God leaves holy impressions behind. Those he speaks with soon sense the benediction of God from their contact with him.

THE COST OF BEING A PERSON OF GOD

No one becomes a person of God by accident. No one becomes a person of God overnight. We become children of God in a moment; we become people of God over a period of time. A casual commitment to Christ will not make you godly or Christ-like. No one becomes a person of God except by a deliberate set of the soul.

You cannot earn nearness to Christ, but there is a price to pay:

1. **Maintain a supreme commitment to Jesus.** It costs priority commitment to Jesus. He must become your Alpha and Omega, your supreme desire. It costs the giving of your time to Him, lavish self-giving, the setting of yourself apart for Jesus. It costs flaming love for Jesus, sacrificial devotion to Him, and un-bashed expressions of your love to Him. There must be determined, unwavering seeking to please Jesus above all else, a "Jesus first" attitude of your soul. There must be a waiting in His presence, not merely a willingness, but actual quality time alone with Jesus. He must be your supreme joy, your transcendent passion, your uneclipsed glory as you share His undisturbed and unbroken communion, bask in His Presence, and delight in His love. Then with unveiled face you will reflect the glory of Jesus and be constantly transfigured (the actual Greek word) into His likeness from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18). This is what Paul calls pursuing godliness (1 Tim. 6:11). It requires continuing effort, eagerness, persistence, and inflexibility in the pursuit. Regardless of what else needs to be sacrificed, with Paul you must say, "This one thing I do."
2. **Train yourself to be godly.** Paul contrasts physical training with spiritual training (1 Tim 4:7). The Greek word Paul uses is the root for our word "gymnasium." It implies disciplined, regular, strenuous exercise. Just as an Olympic athlete, training for the event of his life, sacrifices all else and disciplines himself early and late to toughen and train his body, so you are to spend your energies and your hours, as far as possible, investing your time and making whatever sacrifice is required to be more truly a person of God. And what is the purpose of your making this holy training, this spiritual discipline your supreme priority? It is to know Jesus, become one in a spirit with Jesus, and identify with Jesus so that you are transfigured into His likeness (2 Cor. 3:18). Your supreme priority is not what you do for Jesus, but to be like Him. Then all you so passionately do for Him will flow out of this deepest of all commitments. To make this possible two more steps are required.

3. **Saturate your soul in the Word.** Immerse yourself in the Word from Genesis to Revelation, but especially in everything relating to Jesus, including the whole of the New Testament and Psalms. It is the most tangible means at your disposal. Feed on God's Word, drink in God's Word, bathe your soul in God's Word. Read it – read all of it. Read it over and over and over until it penetrates the fiber of your spiritual being.
 You cannot be a person of God without being a person of the Word. If you are an authority on anything, be an authority on God's Word. If you have a hobby of any kind, make God's Word your hobby. If you spend time with any reading, read God's Word. Store it in your heart. Think on it, meditate on it, memorize it, dream of it. Apply it in your heart and life. Spend major time each day with the Word.
 The Word will feed you, nourish you, and strengthen you. It will enlighten you and guide you. Make it your priority guide and your final authority. When God's Word speaks, that settles it for you. Paul points out in 2 Corinthians 3:16 (Greek) that the Holy Spirit takes away the veil that covers the hearts of the unsaved when they read the Bible. The Spirit through the Word transfigures us into the likeness of Jesus from one degree of glory to another. This is what makes us persons of God. You should spend approximately as much time with the Bible itself (not just books about the Word) as in prayer.

4. **Give Jesus your prayer time.** Prayer is the greatest, most eternally beneficial way you can invest your time. Prayer is the most Christ-like activity you can engage in, for He today lives to intercede. Prayer is the greatest, most lasting, most rewarding investment you can make while alive on earth. Prayer is the most precious gift you can give to Jesus.
 Moses was closer to Jesus and spent more time alone with Jesus, as far as we know, than any other Old Testament leader had ever done. When the Israelites saw Moses after his forty days on the mountain they did not seem to have been specially impressed. But after his eighty days on the mountain, they were over-awed by the glory on his face.
 Spend much time with Jesus both in communion and in sharing His intercessory burden for the world and the Church. When husbands and wives love each other and grow together over many years, it sometimes almost seems as though they begin to resemble each other. They often have similar attitudes, gestures, vocabulary, and even at times similar facial features. When a child idolizes a parent, you may begin to note a resemblance in mannerisms, attitudes, and words.
 To become a person of God we must spend much time with Jesus. The more you love Him, the more you will want to spend time with Him. A weak prayer life always testifies to weak love of Jesus. You cannot have a merely nominal or casual prayer life when you are passionately devoted to the Lord. The more you are with Him, the more you will think and speak like Him, respond and resemble Him. You will be a person of God.

THE PERSON OF GOD AND HOLY INTEGRITY

God wants integrity in His people (1 Chron. 29:17). A person of God must be known for holy integrity. Nothing is more important in a Christian leader. Godliness is more than total mental commitment to the authority of God's Word and the doctrines of Scripture. We need that mental commitment, but that is not enough. Godliness is also more than emotions of joy and love as we sing songs of praise and worship and choruses of the greatness, goodness, and faithfulness of God, of the love of Jesus, and of the power of the Spirit. We do need to be moved by Calvary until our hearts and eyes are filled with tears, but godliness is more than the holiest of emotions.

Godliness includes a commitment of the will that results in righteous actions and holy living. The eye must be clear and good before the body can be flooded with light (Matt. 6:22). The heart must be pure before the attitudes, thoughts, and words are consistently pure.

According to the Bible the faith that saves us also sanctifies. Personal commitment to Christ brings the indwelling of the Spirit, and the fruit of the Spirit in its totality brings Christ-likeness. The Spirit applies the lordship of Christ to all of life. There is no alternative to Christian holiness of life with its full ethical implications.

The character of a person of God is manifest in holy attitudes and holy actions. Unless holy words come from a holy heart they are powerless. And unless holiness results in total integrity it is a pseudo-holiness. There is no person of God who can be careless about integrity. Until the actions and manner of life are righteous and holy we know the heart is not holy. And until the heart is holy the person is not a person of God. The only true holiness is that which is manifested in consistent holy living. We are to “serve Him without fear in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.” (Luke 1:74-75).

This standard of holiness of life is not impossible for us because when the Holy Spirit fills us He conforms us to God’s holiness by divine enablement. God’s standard of holy living for His holy people is awesomely complete and high. We are to be holy as He is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). He has called us to a holy life (2 Tim. 1:9). We are being made holy (Heb. 10:14). We are to be holy (Heb. 12:14). We are to be holy in all we do (1 Peter 1:15), i.e., holiness is not just theoretical; it is to be practical. We are to live holy and godly lives (2 Peter 3:11). Only with such holiness can we always live above reproach (1 Tim. 3:2). Since a Christian leader is “entrusted with God’s work, he must be blameless” (Titus 1:6-7). Paul summarizes his meaning in the words “upright, holy and disciplined” (v. 8). We are to be “without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Eph. 5:27).

Our holy ethic is both positive and negative. Having become dead to sin we become alive to God. Our holy ethic is deadness to sin and the world – a negative ethical separation in heart and life. It is also life to Christ and in Christ. It is a positive ethic of godliness, righteousness, and holiness of life. We offer our bodies, and thus our whole beings, as living sacrifices to God, holy and pleasing in His sight (Rom. 12:1). We refuse to offer the parts of our body to sin (Rom. 6:13) and we deliberately offer ourselves freely and positively to God for the ethic of holiness (Rom. 6:13, 19). We do not let sin reign in the body or through the body, but we let Christ reign on the throne of the heart; and His spirit then lives out His reign in our practical living in righteous and holy ethical practice rising from holy character.

This makes us constantly concerned to maintain holy integrity in the eyes of all people. “Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody” (Rom. 12:17). “We are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men” (2 Cor. 8:21).

INTEGRITY IN WORD

The person of God must be a person of his word. His holiness, love, and integrity must be evident in his speech. All our statements, reports, and writings must be open, honest, and kind. Both God and man judge us by our words. “I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgement for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.” (Matt. 12:36-37).

1. Say nothing for which you are not willing to accept full responsibility. Say nothing about an absent person which you would be unwilling to repeat in his presence.
2. Beware of a compulsion always to comment or say something about matters under discussion. Be willing to delay your comments. You do not need to tell everything you know unless your information is essential to the discussion. Speak when your comments are needed; be silent when they will not be beneficial.
3. Be positive in as many of your comments as possible. Avoid the reputation for being a negative person.
4. Beware of flattery and exaggerated praise. These will cause you to lose the respect of those who hear you.
5. Express full and cordial credit to all those to whom you are indebted for ideas and help.
6. Avoid plagiarism in speaking or writing.
7. Do not assume the attitude of an authority in areas where your information, experience, and training are incomplete.

8. Be as careful and understanding to your remarks about others as you would be if it were a member of your own family.
9. Be slow to give credence to negative reports and continue to believe the best as long as possible. Be specially careful to avoid casting any reflection or aspersion on a fellow-Christian or Christian leader.
10. Never criticize the motives of others. You rarely can put yourself in their position and so fully understand their motivation. Always give the benefit of the doubt. Remember, you only hear words and see acts; you do not know the full motives.
11. Be totally honest in intention in everything you say. Speak to bless, help, and guide.
12. Be accurate in every detail in reporting statistics and descriptions. Beware of over-generalization, understatement, or exaggeration.
13. Be faithful in characterization. All statements must be so fair, equitable, and uncolored in description that your comments could be repeated without hesitation regardless of whoever is present.
14. Avoid statements which can be understood two ways. Avoid all duplicity; let your position be clear-cut. If you change your position, say so, but beware of appearing to equivocate. Watch lest people feel they cannot depend on what you say.
15. Daily ask the Holy Spirit to guide or restrain you in your speech.

INTEGRITY IN PERSONAL ETHICS

The person of God must maintain such integrity in his personal ethics that others can safely make him their role model. Jesus was constantly setting a pattern for His disciples, establishing the standard of what a Christian life and ministry should be. He illustrated this by His attitudes (Phil. 2:5) and by His actions (John 13:15; 1 Peter 2:21).

Paul was conscientious in setting an example which he could commend to his followers as a role model.

- "You yourselves know how you ought to follow our example." (2 Thes. 3:7).

- "We did this... in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow." (2 Thes. 3:9).

- "I became your father through the gospel. Therefore I urge you to imitate me." (1 Cor. 4:15-16).

As a Christian leader you are responsible to be a role model for God's people. No word, no attitude, no action of yours should be unworthy for your people to emulate and follow. Whether we deserve it or not, we, our companions, and our children are marked people. The public holds higher standards for us than they do for themselves.

Our lives can honor Christ and be powerful sermons or sign posts only when we live in the holy integrity that always reflects Christ and always points others to Him. Our personal ethical goal must be Christ-likeness. The Holy Spirit must constantly guide us so that our integrity is above reproach and so that our lives commend the gospel. I give only a few examples.

1. Be above reproach in all your personal actions and leadership duties. You always represent God and the Church. You are a marked person wherever you go. Your priority commitment is to Christ and your ministerial responsibilities.
2. In every ethical decision make Scripture the standard for your action. If there is no clear Scriptural statement to guide you, base your decision on the general tenor of God's Word. You can always ask the question. "What would Jesus do? What is the Christian thing to do?"
3. Keep your speech, dress, habits, hobbies, and lifestyles in balance between what is appropriate in your leadership role and that which is appropriate for you as a Christian in a world of great spiritual and physical need.
4. Be an example in your person and home in cleanliness, orderliness, harmony, and godliness.

5. Be an example of consideration, fairness, and sensitivity to the feelings and rights of others. Always show respect in all interpersonal relations.
6. Be an example of gentleness and maturity in your reactions to the thoughtlessness, affronts, insults, opposition, and hostility of others. All must be responded to with forgiveness and prayerful Christian love.
7. Be an example in circumspection and discretion in all relation with the opposite sex. Be particularly watchful of the latent snares in your role as spiritual counselor. Be vigilant to keep your thought life pure as in the sight of God.

INTEGRITY IN FINANCE

The person of God must maintain total integrity in his stewardship of possessions and finance – in his handling and accounting for personal finances, and in his handling and accounting for all finance that pass through his control.

1. Be an example in maintaining a comparatively simple lifestyle in accord with a deep commitment to the need for the extension of Christ's Kingdom worldwide and for the meeting of human need.
2. Exercise all appropriate economy in your personal expenditures and of all funds entrusted to your use. Don't get a reputation for free-spending.
3. Be faithful in expending funds according to the request of those who gave them.
4. Be accurate in all your reporting. Financial reports must have adequate detail, be prompt, and meticulously correct. Reporting of what is accomplished through funds donated must be regular, detailed, and strictly factual.
5. Pay your bills on time. Do not leave unpaid bills behind when you leave to take up a new ministry.
6. Keep free of debt and keep your ministry free of debt. Debt is always a snare and often a reflection on Christ. It is always better to save money in advance than to borrow and then pay the continuing interest. A credit account can easily become a slave-master which handicaps your ministry and sullies your name. Avoid the snare of the philosophy: "Do now" or "Buy now and pay later."

INTEGRITY IN MINISTERIAL ETHICS

A Person of God must maintain the highest level of integrity in all aspects of his ministry and leadership. The ministry, like every profession, has its code of ethics, and Christian workers need constantly to manifest the highest ethics in their interrelations as well as in their work.

1. Be more careful, more courteous and kind, and more professional in your duties than any other professional person could be expected to be. The name of Christ and His church is at stake in all you do.
2. Recognize that you are always on call to represent God and to meet the needs of your people.
3. Give full time to your leadership and ministry. The only exception is when you have the agreement of your board or superintendent. Beware of a reputation of indolence and wasting your time. You will repeatedly be requested to accept other responsibilities, all praiseworthy, but which can erode your primary calling.
4. Be loyal to your church or organization and its doctrine and heritage. Any deviation on your part from your original commitments must be reported to the church or group.
5. Guard the reputation of Christ's church and your fellow Christian workers. The good name of all must be safe in your hands.
6. Avoid all unwholesome competition with other churches, ministries, or Christian leaders.

7. Respect the leadership of other Christian leaders and do not serve their members except in emergencies or with the consent of the other leader.
8. Keep confidences inviolate.
9. Endeavor constantly to strengthen the unity of the Spirit within your group and among Christians in general. Avoid being a part of any divisive group or church clique.
10. While seeking to please your people, keep your final priority on pleasing God.
11. Model and build loyal respect for government and active Christian citizenship.
12. Regard your service as primary and remuneration for service or financial advancement as secondary.

Always remember that even when you are not in a leadership role, you are always perceived as a Christian leader. You have a right to private relaxation and personal and family time. But even then you are a representative of Christ and His church. You are never off duty as a person of God. Maintain your integrity in all that you do and wherever you go. Then God's seal can continue to rest upon you and His power can continue to clothe you.

WHY MINISTERS FAIL: REASONS AND LESSONS TO LEARN

Text: 1 Tim. 4:6-11.

INTRODUCTION – Thousands of pastors and ministers of the gospel could have had a successful ministry – but have not. They haven't necessarily fallen or sinned, but aren't effective and bearing fruit in their ministry. Below we will analyse some of these reasons, so you can avoid them in your ministry!

Things that destroy a ministry:

1. INFLEXIBILITY

Inflexibility defined:

- “Unwillingness or lack of ability to change.”
- “Lack of ability to see a big picture.”
- “Intolerance of change” – people who don't know how to flow with change.

Inflexibility will destroy a major part of our ministry:

1. It will ruin and destroy our own future.
2. It will stop us reaching a lot of people.

Being flexible does not mean compromise. Learn to be flexible and flow with the move of God.

2. JEALOUSY

Satan plants the seed of jealousy. As assistant pastors you will see this. Pastors jealous of other pastors or jealous of their associates. Satan uses a sense of inferiority against ministers.

Jealousy Destroys. Therefore:

- Don't make comparisons.
- Don't compare success with numbers.
- Don't compare yourself with others. (II Cor. 10: 12).

3. UNCONTROLLED TONGUE

Uncontrolled tongue will chase a congregation. Life and death is in the tongue. (Prov. 18: 21). Therefore:

- Don't play a person down.
- Don't stain somebody else his reputation - even if it is in your power to do so.
- Don't spread garbage.

4. IMPROPER PACKAGING

Package yourself properly. Therefore take careful note of your appearance: before the Lord, but also to the world outside.

Realise that your appearance affects your testimony.

- Ladies – not too much make-up.
- Dress-code-necessary. Not necessarily follow every fashion and design. Look descent in dressing.
- Avoid getting overweight – lose it by exercising self-control in your eating habits, and do necessary work-outs and physical exercises. (I Tim. 4: 8a).

5. FAILURE TO ACCEPT CRITICISM

Un-teachable spirit.

- Being teachable is part of growing up. Let fellow ministers and your congregation members minister to you. It is a good sign of humility.

- Being teachable will teach us to keep our mouths shut and to accept criticism. Learn to accept it graciously. There may be some truth in it for your improvement. Don't blow up in anger!

6. **UNCOMMITTED MATE**

- An uncommitted mate or life- partner will bring you down.
 - You will never rise any higher than your companion allows you to.
 - No matter how classy or cute she may be – she is deadly to your ministry.
 - If you are obsessed with the ministry and have a real burden to go on for God – you will become a real burden to her.
- An uncommitted mate will cause loneliness.
 - Loneliness is being married to someone who does not see the vision you see.

In your marriage commitment is important. Your wife must be:

- a Spirit-filled believer and sold out for God.
- committed to you and to God.

7. **FAILURE TO GROW MENTALLY, SPIRITUALLY, AND EMOTIONALLY – AND IN OUR FRIENDSHIP CIRCLES**

- A person must grow in order to maintain the motivation and enthusiasm for God and their ministry. There must be constant intake.
- A person who does not dig for the message from God for his people – will die spiritually.
- Keep building relationships.

8. **FEAR OF PEOPLE**

- In communicating the Word. Preach, teach and believe what God lays on your heart and let it fall where it will.
- In the congregation or the church. Fear of losing people. Don't worry. God will give you enough people who have a desire to know the truth.

9. **IGNORANCE ON PEOPLE HURTS AND NEEDS**

- This stops growth. When preparing the Word always remember: people who are hurting financially want answers. People with marriage problems want answers. People with job problems want answers. People with guilt problems want answers.
- Don't fail to feel the hurt of people. They don't want to be preached at. They want to be loved and cared for.

10. **LOVE OF POSITION**

A. Pride and position.

Learn not to promote yourself, but instead depend on the call of God. Self-exaltation is pride. It will bring you down.

B. Dishonesty.

Learn not to twist the truth or to exaggerate, even when sharing testimony or giving statistics!

TWENTY-TWO SNARES TO AVOID IN YOUR MINISTRY

1. **Do not be lover of money.**

“Do not be covetous to make filthy, treacherous or forged gain; do not make use of wrong methods in order to raise money so that your personal income may increase.” (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7). 1 Peter 5:2b says, “...not greedy for money, but eager to serve...” Never let money govern decisions on where and when you will minister. God is your source of support. Always trust Him to provide. (Phil. 4:19). Isaiah 56:11 contains austere words about this matter. “They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain.” To these God says, “I was enraged by his sinful greed; I punished him and hid My face in anger, yet he kept on in his willful ways.” (Is. 57:17).

This is why Paul warns and exhorts us in 1 Timothy 6:5-11 about some, “...who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain. But 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.” “People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.” (1 Tim 3:3). You must not desire leadership in the church for personal financial gain. “And who is equal to such a task? Unlike so many we do not peddle the Word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.” (2 Cor. 2:16b- 17).

“As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign Lord because My flocks lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because My shepherds did not search for My flock but cared for themselves rather than My flock, therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the Lord. This is what the sovereign Lord says: ‘I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for My flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue My flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.’” (Ezek. 34:8-10). Although you have a godly right to receive your living from the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:14), it would be wiser to follow Paul’s example when receiving support creates a problem for the Gospel. Note what Paul said: “But we did not use this right. On the contrary we put up with anything, rather than hinder the Gospel of Christ.” (1 Cor. 9:12b). The Word of God warns us in Ezekiel 34:2b: “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care for themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?” And yet again the Scripture warns and exhorts us: “Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’” (Heb. 13:5).

2. **Do not be fighter.**

“...not a trouble maker; not someone who is ever ready to hit back (with words!) when somebody displeases him; not someone who will persecute others because they differ from him.” (1 Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7). You must also not be belligerent, or as the Greek put it, “...not quarrelsome, but calm, restful, composed and sedate, a seeker after peace.” (1 Tim. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:24). “Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the

truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.” (2 Tim. 2:23-26).

Quite a few times we have had to speak to brothers who were not walking in righteousness. Sometimes they keep quiet during such discussions, but afterwards they tie an element of untruth to an element of truth. And so the “contention” is continued. If we walk in sincerity, in righteousness and in the light, much suspicion will be removed.

3. **Do not consume alcoholic beverages.**

Total abstinence from alcohol was required of the Nazarites in the Old Testament. By abstinence, you set an example that may save others. Some become alcoholics, even if they start out as moderate consumers of table wine.

Romans 14:19-21 lays down guidelines wisely and beautifully: “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All food is clean, but it is wrong for a man to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble. It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or to do anything else that will cause your brother to fall.”

That’s why I do not take any alcoholic beverages. I am not willing to be stumbling-block to a weaker brother or sister. For instance, I heard about a recovering alcoholic who saw his minister drinking a glass of wine during a wedding feast. “Well”, he reasoned, “if my pastor can drink wine, so can I.” And his previous misery started all over again.

4. **Do not make church leaders of new believers.**

Because of the danger that such new believers can become self-exalted, smug, self-important and conceited because of the position of leadership, avoid giving this responsibility until the believer has two or three years to grow spiritually. Like Satan who became self-exalted, the new believer who leads will fail. (1 Tim 3:6).

We learned a costly lesson in this respect. We placed two young evangelists in leadership positions at one of our young congregations in the mission field. Up till then they were two beautiful Christians. The leadership role given them caused them to become very proud. They subsequently started criticizing our leadership of the ministry. We fasted and prayed for them, and visited and counseled them, but they refused to listen. Ultimately God’s Name, His flock and work suffered and we had to discharge them from their duties.

5. **Do not be unreasoning and stubborn.**

“...not stubborn, self-willed, callous and self-righteous.” (Titus 1:7). If you are stubborn, you’re like a mule that stops and refuses to go in the direction in which it is steered. Jesus never followed His own will. He only spoke and acted in perfect accord with His Father’s will. “By Myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and My judgment is just, for I seek not to please Myself but Him who sent Me.” (John 5: 30). And when He came to the culmination – and also the most difficult part of his ministry – He again cried out, “Yet not as I will, but as You will.” (Mat. 26:39b).

6. **Do not be short-tempered.**

A church leader dare not be quick-tempered, angry, hasty, raging or furious (Titus 1:7), but a person who can control himself (Titus 1:8). Meditate on Proverbs 16:32: “Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.”

Proverbs 17:27 teaches us: “A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.” Proverbs 14:29 reinforces this, “A patient man has great understanding, but a quick –tempered man displays folly.”

7. **Do not become a ruler over God's flock.**

Leadership is not Lordship. You must be an example to those God has called you to lead and feed (1 Pet 5:3). To be a leader you must lead, not lord it over the flock! "Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors, but you are not to be like that. Instead the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves." (Luke 22: 24-27). Jesus did not only serve when He was physically on earth, but He still serves today by means of His body, the Church. For instance, it is as if those we serve with the Word are sitting at a table and we are serving them with spiritual food. Note Jesus' pertinent questions in verse 27: "...who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one serves? Is it not the one who is at the table?"

Jesus yet again emphasized this to His disciples (apostles) when He, as their Lord and Teacher, washed their feet. By this He demonstrated that a true leader must serve His disciples in humility, and not desire to be served himself: "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them." (1 John 13:15-17).

It is also noteworthy that Jesus calls a leader who lords it over others a hypocrite (Matt. 23:23), and gives a solemn warning in Matthew 23:11-12. "The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Therefore, do NOT desire to be served – especially not by your co-workers and congregation or church members. Rather prove you are a servant by serving. Will you, for instance, take a tray of tea and serve your guests? Are you willing to help prepare the meal and wash up the dishes after you have preached or taught the Word, or do you feel it is your "right" as leader to now sit down and be served?

Do you walk in front when you and others enter through a door or do you let those with you enter first? During the meal at Simon the Pharisee's house, Jesus illustrated how we should serve others and not ourselves. Mary (sister of Martha) anointed Jesus' feet with the costly spikenard salve (John 12:3). Because she humbled herself and served Him, Jesus exalted her right there in front of everybody and caused her to be remembered ever afterwards.

8. **Do not build "your / my" church or kingdom.**

Many Christian leaders start their ministries in answer to Luke 10:2 - as workers in His harvest field. But after a while it's not the Kingdom of God that's being built anymore.

They have changed and started building their own kingdom. Unfortunately we find them doing what the religious people in Jesus' time were doing (see Mark 12:1-9). They were using God's gifts to build for themselves. They were using God's vineyard to grow a harvest for themselves. The field belonged to God but they were taking all the increases for themselves and not giving God what was due to Him. Note the significant distinction that is made here between the laboring tenant farmers (tenants) and the bond-slaves. The tenant-farmers are in the ministry for their personal benefit. The bond-slaves are willing to endure hardship and persecutions, and even to lay down their lives for the King and the Kingdom of God.

Let us therefore take heed to the sober warning in verse 9: "What then will the owner of the vineyard do? (the owner is God – not you) He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others."

There is the beautiful promise God makes to His bond-servants who do His perfect will. Those who obey, no matter how great the trials and tribulations that result, have a special

reward. “The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding Your servants the prophets and Your saints and those who reverence Your Name, both small and great...” (Rev 11:18b). Denominational pride can cause personal, carnal “kingdom building.” Paul warns the Corinthians: “For when one says, I follow Paul, and another, I follow Apollos, are you not mere men?Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly – mere infants in Christ.” (1 Cor. 3:4; 3:1). In God’s eyes you’re immature – even though you might be a leader – if you are building your denomination or following a human leader more than Christ.

“What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe – as the Lord has assigned to each his taskThe man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.” (1 Cor. 3:5,8). “Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, Do not go beyond what is written. Then you will not take pride in one man over against another. For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?” (1 Cor. 4:6-7).

The rot caused by spiritual competition is unfortunately still present within the church. The underlying reason for this is spiritual pride. This comes from a lack of spiritual maturity and from insecurity.

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? (Ezek. 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)
- (vi) 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)
- (vii) 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)

9. Stay open to rebuke and correction.

The leaders who serve themselves instead of Christ (the tenant-farmers in Jesus’ parable – Mark 12:1-9) are not open to the admonition, warnings and sharp rebukes from God (see Titus 1: 13). Paul puts it bluntly: “For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers.” (Titus 1:10) God in His long-suffering and grace, hoping that they will admit their error, confess and humble themselves, sends His bond-slaves to them to make them repent. But as is often the case, they not only reject His Word, but also besmirch the names of His bond-slaves as well as their characters and ministries: “...and treated him shamefully” (Mark 12: 4). There are still many places in the world where the Lord’s bond-slaves are struck, stoned and killed. (Mark 12: 5).

The seriousness of the situation is underlined in verse 9 and in Revelation 11:18b. “Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in His kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.” (Rom. 11: 22). “For we know Him Who said, “...The Lord will judge His people. It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Heb. 10: 30b - 31).

Despite all this, God encourages these people to the very end to confess their sin and to become true bond-slaves to Him: “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time.” (1 Pet. 5: 6).

I need to warn you that as the Lord uses you more and more, the temptation to fall into pride may increase. If you give in to this and do not resist pride, it will cause you to become unteachable. Because the Lord uses you so much, you may think you have progressed so far in the Lord that you are beyond the need to learn anything more! If you think that way, you end up thinking that spiritual growth and spiritual fruit are the results of your own spirituality. You can be misled into thinking His gifts and power are the result of your own business or goodness. Teaching is a gift; healing the sick is a gift; the word of knowledge or wisdom is a gift; to minister a prophetic word is a gift; the discerning of spirits is a gift; etc... Thus, if the Lord is using you mightily in the gifts, it certainly doesn't mean that you have achieved some great state of spirituality or attained far beyond your brethren who are leaders.

For example, the working of spiritual gifts in your life and ministry can be intensified and multiplied merely by fanning it into flame time after time. (2 Tim.1: 6). Like the Corinthians, you may excel in the spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 1: 7a) while you are still a spiritual baby, while there is still a lack of the fruit of the Spirit in your life (1 Cor. 3:1-3a). Thus it is not the flow of spiritual gifts in your ministry that determines your spiritual growth. Rather it is what you do with the gifts – in other words what your motive is. Is your motive to appear great in the eyes of men, to be esteemed by them, or is your heart burning for the gifts to flow so that the Body of Christ can be built up?

Paul admonishes in I Corinthians 14:1a, 3b: “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts...for their (“the members”) strengthening, encouragement and comfort.”

Here is an example to illustrate my point: I have attended many services where the Holy Spirit worked sovereign and the congregation was strengthened and encouraged. On the other hand, I have also attend services where the minister, in order to appear great in men's eyes, has continued to pray until the person for whom he is praying falls over. It is a wonderful privilege to receive a gift such as the gift of the word of knowledge or discerning of spirits. But in God's eyes it is also a tremendous responsibility He has entrusted you with.

Do you misuse this gift to criticize and gossip about what the Lord shows you about people, another leader or a church? Or do you immediately begin to intercede with God for them and only speak out when and if the Holy Spirit clearly leads you to do that?

A prayer I often pray for myself is that God will reveal the motives of my heart to me and that He will renew a right (steadfast) spirit within me (Ps. 51:10). I pray that I will perceive false motives within me (Eph. 1:17-18) and ruthlessly (without self-pity) have His grace to get rid of them from my life. “When the Lord comes, He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.” (1 Cor. 4:5b). Let us pray that God will begin to reveal to us and bring to light the dark, hidden motives of our hearts so that we will be able to stand before Him without condemnation on the day of judgment.

10. **Do not preach out of envy or selfish ambition.**

In Philippians 1:15-17a Paul highlights another snare that ministers of the Word must guard against. Once again hidden motives are the reason: “It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love...The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely...”

WRONG MOTIVES

- Out of envy and rivalry
- Out of selfish ambition

RIGHT MOTIVES

- Out of good will
- Out of love.

Discord and strife enter a ministry when fellow-workers come into open rebellion against God's chosen authority and leadership structure. Often a rift occurs as in the case of Paul and Barnabas.

It can also work the other way around. The Lord may send someone across your path (to your ministry) who will point out dangerous practices or imbalance. This happens because you are starting to claim the Lord's vineyard for yourself (like the tenant-farmers in Mark 12:1-9). These people will reveal the situation to you by the ways I have mentioned in the preceding paragraphs.

Your reaction to what they do or say will reveal to you (and the others) if you are in danger of self-serving practices. May be you began your ministry because of a love and burden for the people, but now you are jealously trying to hold onto the ministry God has given you.

This is a normal part of your growing process and also a temptation which will come to you time and time again when you are in the ministry. When the Lord makes your situation clear to you, your reaction (within and without) to the situation will determine how you should respond and what actions are required to deal with it.

What are you to do under such circumstances? Let us take a look at what Moses did when Miriam and Aaron, fellow-leaders, wanted to take over his calling: "Miriam and Aaron began to talk against Moses because of his Cushite wife, for he had married a Cushite. 'Has the Lord only spoken through Moses?' they asked. 'Hasn't He also spoken through us?' And the Lord heard this." "(Now Moses was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth.) At once the Lord said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, 'Come out to the Tent of Meeting, all three of you.' 'So the three of them came out. Then the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud; He stood at the entrance to the Tent and summoned Aaron and Miriam. "When both of them stepped forward, He said, 'Listen to My words: When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal Myself to him in visions. I speak to him in dreams. But this is not true of My servant Moses; he is faithful in My house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the Lord. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?' The anger of the Lord burned against them, and He left them. "When the cloud lifted from above the Tent, there stood Miriam – leprous, like snow. Aaron turned towards her and saw that she had leprosy; and he said to Moses, "Please, my lord, do not hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed.'...so Moses cried out to the Lord, 'O God, please heal her!" (Numb. 12: 1-11, 13). Because Moses was a humble man before God and before the people (verse 3), he was true bond-slave of God and consequently faithful in His whole house (verse 7). When his ministry was opposed, he did not defend himself against the criticism of his opponents and their jealousy, but left it to God. Moses must have reasoned thus: It was God's house and God put him in charge of it. Consequently God would defend, justify and vindicate His calling. Moses did not need to defend himself.

In this, Moses gives you and me an example of how we should respond to personal criticism and attacks made against us. Let the Lord defend you. Do not become defensive and try to make yourself look good. Do what Jesus said, "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad."

The extent of Moses' faithfulness to God's household shows us that he did not revel in Miriam's punishment, but called from his heart to God to heal her. Aaron's actions and words are very enlightening. He didn't ask God for mercy and forgiveness. Rather, Aaron spoke to Moses and confessed his and Miriam's injustice and rebellion towards Moses. Aaron asked Moses: "Please, my lord, do not hold against us the sin we have so foolishly committed." (verse 11). Moses' response provides us a great lesson. If Moses had not been so humble, and consequently full of love and forgiveness, the punishment for their sin would have remained. We need leadership with these God-like qualities of Moses today! (God-LI-ness is God-LIKE-ness).

11. **Do not implement "good ideas" that come from your own mind and will.**

Our job is to find out what the Lord wants and do that. Good ideas from other team-members in your ministry can be wrong too. Unless the Holy Spirit has very clearly instructed you to do so, be very cautious about launching projects. "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." (John 3:6).

At times one sees men in ministry who attempt to imitate other ministers of God. They preach the sermons of others with the same facial expression and gestures and even imitate their voices. Let it be understood. We all learn from others and it is not wrong to pass along the wonderful Biblical teaching we have received from others (2 Tim. 2:2). But if we seek to gain fame and fortune by such tactics, or prophesy "...thus faith the Lord" when we are borrowing others' words, then we are in dangers of displeasing the Lord. Jeremiah 23:30 warns in this regard: "Therefore, declares the Lord, 'I am against the prophets who steal from one another words supposedly from Me.'"

If you quote others, give them credit by revealing the source of your quotation. But when quoting others, beware of saying, "The Lord showed me" or "The Lord spoke to me", etc. Acknowledge your source and you are safe.

12. **Do not instruct others in God's Word unless you "Practice what you preach."**

Jesus warns against this in Matthew 23: 3, "So you must obey them (the teachers of the law) and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach." I have observed this spiritual rule: If I teach about those principles and concepts which I have proven work in my own life, it will also work in the lives of those who hear me. If you give teaching about something that is only intellectual knowledge to you, but you have not yet proved it works in your own life, it will become a snare and trial to others. You and your hearers will be tested after the teaching because God's anointed Word is always subject to testing (Luke 8:13,15).

Paul understood that if he preached discipline, holy living and separation from sin and the world, he had to practice what he preached. Otherwise he was in grave danger of divine judgment. "No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize." (1 Cor. 9: 27).

13. **Do not grow lazy and neglect prayer and Bible study.**

Some ministers of the Word start off as "the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants of his household to give them their food at the proper time." (Matt. 24: 45). But as time goes by, they lose their vision and become lazy and easy-going. They dish up the reheated food from yesterday and the day before and no longer seek the Lord's face to hear His Word for today.

At other times the food is very meager because they are too lazy to spend time in the Word and to seek God's face for fresh "revelation-knowledge". The consequence: the flock they are supposed to feed suffers from hunger. To such leaders God says, "At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps and punish those who are complacent, who are like wine left on its dregs, who think, 'The Lord will do nothing either good or bad.'" (Zeph. 1:12). God the promises: "Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will lead you with knowledge and understanding." (Jer. 3: 15). In other words, God will replace you!

14. **Do not mistreat God's flock.**

Others again are like "...that wicked servant" who "...begins to beat his fellow-servants" (Matt. 24: 48-49). One way in which they can do this is to become legalistic. (This means you use the Scripture to beat, abuse and condemn God's sheep – instead of teaching, feeding and instructing them lovingly and with patience and kindness.) You control the people by producing only fear of judgment.

Paul taught a better way. "But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code." (Rom. 7: 6). Paul calls those who are legalists, who preach the law (circumcision), "deceivers, who talk nonsense" (Titus 1:10; 1 Tim. 1:6- 7a), "who have wandered from the truth (the true Gospel)" (1 Tim. 1:6- 7a; Gal. 2:14). Because they preach "...a gospel other than what God has given, they should be eternally condemned" (Gal. 1:9).

Such leaders are characterized by “do’s” and “don’ts” – teaching standards of external appearance and dress instead of true holiness (Gal. 1:9- 10; 1 Tim. 4:1 – 5). They have all sorts of regulations which bring those who have been free in Christ into bondage. They present legalistic demands as deep spirituality and as the true Gospel, while in truth they are prevented from “being obedient to the truth” (the Book of Galatians should be read in this regard.).

In Matthew 23 Jesus calls them hypocrites and gives a somber warning in verse 13: “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the Kingdom of heaven in men’s faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.” And in Ezekiel 34: 2b, 4b: “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: ‘Woe to the shepherds of Israel...You have ruled them (the sheep) harshly and brutally.’”

15. Be careful how you build on the foundation.

The Lord used Paul, as an apostle, to lay the foundation for the Gentile church. We, as leaders, have tremendous responsibility before God as to how we are going to continue building on this foundation: “By the grace God has given me (Paul), I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

“If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is; because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.” (1 Cor. 3: 10-15).

16. Guard against using deception or distortion when presenting the Word of God.

(See 2 Cor. 4: 2; Zech 10:2). 1 Timothy 6:20-21 admonishes us, “...guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith.” Many of us who read similar texts (e.g. 2 Cor. 11:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:16-17; 2 Tim. 4:3- 4; 2 Tim. 3:8) think they just have to do with sectarian groups and their leaders. Paul, however, opposes every teaching which is not fully supported by the Word of God. In the same breath it may be said that Scriptural truths which are not counter-balanced by contrasting, complementary truths from Scripture, lead to a lack of balance in one’s faith life.

Examine the following example. This illustrates truth that is counter-balanced. In Matthew 3:12 we read that Jesus, Who is an inextinguishable fire, will burn all the chaff out of our lives: “His winnowing fork is in His hand, and He will clear His threshing floor, gathering His wheat into His barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire.” This passage is based on Deuteronomy 4:24: “For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.”

(see also Hebrews 12:27-29). Scriptures such as Deuteronomy 4:29-31 supply the balance to this text: “But if from there (that is, the place of judgment and discipline) you seek the Lord your God, you will find Him if you look for Him with all your heart and with all your soul. When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in latter days you will return to the Lord your God and obey Him. For the Lord your God is a merciful God;

He will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant...” This passage illustrates the counter-balance of discipline and judgment with mercy and restoration.

The danger we face is to base a teaching or revelation on only one text of Scripture – without counter-balancing it with other Bible verses that address the other side of the teaching.

The Word of God is very clear that “a matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” (Deut. 19:15; Matt. 18:16b).

17. **Avoid self-exaltation and self-promotion.**

In 2 Corinthians 4:5 Paul says, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake.”

Some preachers profess they are seeking to establish Christ’s Kingdom. But when they get in the pulpit, they indulge in self-advertisement, boasting and showmanship and “proclaim” themselves instead of Jesus. Christ is sometimes completely over-shadowed.

18. **Avoid self-importance and the “How Great I Am” trap.**

There are quite a few church leaders who have become so important in their own eyes they will not associate with the “common” believer. Satan is fond of encouraging a servant of God who receives a great deal of publicity and attention to think: “I am God’s special ambassador.” Such a man falls in to the same trap that Lucifer did – spiritual pride. He thinks he is elevated above other servants of God. He thinks, “because my ministry is larger than yours, I am superior to you.” To converse with someone “smaller” than himself is tragically beneath his dignity.

In this process such people completely lose sight of 2 Corinthians 10:12: “We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some who commend themselves. When they measure themselves. When they measure themselves by themselves... they are not wise.” They claim to be promoting the Kingdom of God, but fail to understand that Christ expresses Himself through a Body of believers – not just a few prominent church leaders.

Paul makes this principle clear when he writes “But in fact God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them just as He wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are un-presentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other.” (1 Cor. 12:18-20, 22-25).

Jesus always took time to empathize (identify) with the individual no matter how tired, overworked, hungry or thirsty He was (John 4:6-22; Matt. 14:13-14).

Leaders who are lifted up in self-exaltation are like the hypocrites in Matthew 23:6-7 who “love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues (churches), and wish to be welcomed and treated according to their importance.” May our hearts not seek to be seen and acknowledged, but to see and serve those who are in need.

19. **Don’t do good deeds to receive praise from men.**

Guard against being like the Pharisees of whom the Scripture says, “Everything they do is done for men to see.” (Matt. 23:5a).

If you are like this, you are not only a hypocrite, but you have also received your reward (the praise of men). “...do not announce it (that is, your good deeds) with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.” (Matt. 6:2; compare verses 3 and 4).

Someone made this insightful comment: “Those in ministry who seek the honor of men and fall into pride are insecure.” Let us then seek God’s praise and conduct our lives in a way that is acceptable to Him.

20. **Immorality will stain with shame forever.**

Unfortunately some leaders are guilty of, “...having a form of religion without the force of godliness.” (2 Tim. 3:5). They “worm” their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires.” (2 Tim. 3:6).

Occasionally the newspapers and magazines publish the tragic details about some traveling evangelist or preacher who had extra-martial relations with a “Christian” woman. Many homes and marriages are broken by this terrible sin. The woman is taken captive by the man telling her to come and see him in private because God has given him such wonderful revelations about her. Ignorant and unstable women fall for this.

They think because there was such an anointing on the man during the service, he can do no wrong. They do not realize that, “God’s gifts and His call are irrevocable.” (Rom. 11:29). This means that even if a preacher goes bad and becomes morally rotten, he still retains the gifts God gave him, and can use them wrongly.

21. **Guard against dependency and discouragement.**

Sometimes you will feel there are more questions than answers in your ministry. Take encouragement from Psalm 126: 5- 6, “Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.”

When a person is depressed, there is a temptation to grumble against God. Paul warns us in 1 Corinthians 10:10, “And do not grumble, as some of them did – and were killed by the destroying angel!” We serve a God who does not grow tired or weary. Since He has plenty of emotional, physical and mental reserves, He can give strength to the weary and increase the power of the weak.

22. **Never Give Up.**

Often tiredness and weariness accompany despondency, and this can make you lose the desire to continue in your calling. Be prepared for this! This is a temptation that each person will experience in his ministry at different times and in different circumstances.

This is why Jesus praises the Ephesian church in Revelation 2: 3, “You have persevered and have endured hardships for My Name, and have not grow weary.”

When one considers what God requires of a leader and what snares await him, one comes to a sober realization of how great the responsibility of leadership is. Unfortunately this may make one feel that it is unattainable. However, we can rejoice with Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:4-6, “Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.”

We shall make mistakes, but it is through them that we will learn to be true leaders and bond-slaves to God. In addition to this, our mistakes will enable us to identify with others and have compassion for people going through similar experiences.

HOW TO DEAL WITH FAILURE AND WEAKNESS

In God’s Kingdom there are no failures; only learners! If the Lord delights in a man’s way He makes his steps firm; though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with His hand.” (Ps. 37: 23,-24). “But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weakness, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Cor. 12:9-10). When you fail – look to the Lamb (Jesus). “And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lords’ glory, are being transformed into His likeness, with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, Who is the Spirit.” (2 Cor. 3:18).

When we fail, we should spend time in His presence. Beholding Him and letting His glory shine on us (in times of meditation prayer and praise), we are changed into His likeness. If you ever find that you have stumbled into a snare, I recommend that you read Romans 8:26-39 again and again. When you fall, God doesn’t accuse you. Because He has already justified you through Jesus Christ,

He will not condemn you (verse 33). Christ does not condemn you either – on the contrary, He pleads your cause before our Father in heaven (verses 34, 26-27). “No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom. 8: 37-39).

There are so many wonderful promises of God’s help, power and grace when He elects us, calls us, sets us apart and sends us out:

“Yet I am always with you; You hold me by my right hand. You guide me with Your counsel, and afterwards You will take me into glory.” (Ps. 73: 23- 24). “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength...He considered me faithful, appointing me to His service.” (Phil. 4:13; 1 Tim. 1:12). “You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. 2:1). “But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.” (2 Tim. 4:17). “Hebrews 11:34 speaks of those “whose weakness was turned to strength.” “To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY” (Col. 1:27). Furthermore, Hebrews 6:10 says, “God is not unjust; He will not forget your work and the love you have shown Him as you have helped His people and continue to help them.”

Therefore, brother and sister, you who are sitting with so much pain, rejection and a feeling of failure, you who are deeply unhappy and live in isolation: Through the years you have built a bulwark around yourself and no longer allow anyone to come close to you. Despite this your heart cries out for love and acceptance. Oh! my brother, my sister, you are needed in the vineyard of the Lord. God wants to give you a new, sharp sickle to bring in the harvest, which is ripe in the lands. Won’t you take off your mask today, put your pride in your pocket and see or phone someone you know, respect and can trust? Get rid of the hurt and feelings of failure. Wounded soldier of Jesus, come to the cross. Jesus is waiting for you there. Even Paul, the “greatest” apostle of all times, was deeply hurt and wounded. “for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me...” (2 Tim. 4:10a); “Alexander the metal worker did me a great deal of harm.” (2 Tim. 4: 14a); “At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me.” (2 Tim. 4: 16a); “Then some Jews came... They stoned Paul and dragged him outside of the city, thinking he was dead.” (Acts 14:19). Despite all this Paul could affirm: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim. 4:7).

Brother, sister, in the Name of Jesus, stop measuring yourself by the standards of others. Measure yourself by the standard of how God sees you – Jesus Who said to Simon (“the reed”, which bends in every light breeze) at their first meeting: “Simon, you are Peter,” (“the rock”, the immovable, the stead-fast). Stop pretending to be someone you aren’t. Stop trying to do things to prove that you are a servant of God. Oh! Come and kneel at the cross. Kneel at the feet of the waiting Jesus. Confess what is in your heart and experience His presence, forgiveness, cleansing, peace and love. Allow the tears to flow freely – it brings healing. Jesus, who saved, called and sent you, says to you, “DO NOT FEAR, ONLY BELIEVE!” God has forgiven you. Others have forgiven you. Now forgive yourself! Paul says, “But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 3:13b-14).

Stand up, brother. Stand up, sister. It is not how you begin your spiritual life and calling that counts with God, but how you end it! You may feel as if you are on the floor of the boxing-ring and the referee has already counted to eight, but get up in the Name of Jesus!

Into a new dimension of His love; into a new walk with Jesus as Lord; into a new meeting with His dominion; into a new anointing of His Holy Spirit; into a new vision of the land which are white unto harvest; into a new purpose to please Him; into a new motivation in His work.

Yes, Jesus puts His glory in the place of your ashes, and success in the place of your failure. The heavenly Potter has recreated you. He is “EL SHADDAI”, the God of abundance, the God who satisfies in every respect – THE ALMIGHTY!

HOW TO OVERCOME PROBLEMS IN LEADERSHIP

1. THE PRICE

- (a) Loneliness through being 'out front' (1 Kings 19:9-10)
- (b) Perplexity (2 Cor. 4:8) and the weight of others' problems (2 Cor. 11:28-29)
- (c) Hardships of circumstances (2 Cor. 11:23-27). Causing weariness and pain.
- (d) Pressures on one's time (Mark 3:20)
- (e) Criticism and rejection (2 Tim. 1:15)

2. THE PERILS

- (a) Self righteousness, pride and ambition (1 Tim. 3:6)
"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock" (Acts 20:28)
- (b) Jealousy (Numb. 11:28-29)
- (c) Flattery (1 Cor. 3:4-9) as followers' play off one leader against another.
- (d) Infallibility (Gal. 1:8)
- (e) Indispensibility (Ex. 18:13-26; Acts 20:28-29, 38)
- (f) Depression (2 Cor. 4:8)
- (g) Impossible situations (Ex. 14:10-14)
- (h) Compromise (Ex. 8:25-27)
- (i) Intolerance (Numb. 20:10-11)
- (j) Independence (Gal. 2:1-9)

RESPONSE TO LEADERSHIP

1. Appreciate and esteem them (1 Thes. 5:12-13).
2. Support them financially (1 Tim. 5:17-18); even 'part-timers' deserve expenses.
3. Reject unsubstantiated rumour and hearsay against them (1 Tim. 5:19).
4. Submit to them (1 Cor. 16:16).
5. Obey them (Heb. 13:17). Someone observed: "When you say that you agree with a thing in principle, you mean that you have not the slightest intention of carrying it out in practice!"

Authority is the basic controversy of the universe, and God intends to manifest His authority to the world through a submissive Church. Satan is glorified whenever we serve the Lord in a rebellious attitude. As Samuel told king Saul when he proposed to offer the fruits of his disobedience as sacrifice to God, "Rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry." (1 Sam. 15:23). Submission is an attitude and must be absolute; but obedience is a matter of conduct and is therefore relative. In most instances submission expresses itself through obedience, but only God can receive unqualified obedience (Dan 1:8-20). And obedience can be learned (Heb. 5:8). Submission is only consistently possible as we are continually being refilled in our inner man with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18-21).

May the song of Deborah become the evident testimony of our churches:

"That the leaders led in Israel (Israel means 'Ruled by God'), That the people volunteered, Bless the Lord." (Judg. 5:1-2).

NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH LIFE

In approaching the subject, “New Testament Church Life,” it would seem wise to first determine why it appeals to us as a point of study, and what motivates our involvement.

WHY ARE WE INTERESTED?

1. Because deep inside our heart is the conviction that the first century Church generally experienced a vigor, a vitality, a purity and a simplicity at a dimension and with a continuity that we generally do not.
2. Because we are, at least consciously, open to the discovery of those traits of their life, fellowship and understanding which made possible the atmosphere which the Holy Spirit worked so freely.
3. Because we are confident that there is an authoritative resource for our study: the eternal Word of God. This resource makes it possible for us to believe we can find both: (a) the illumination of truths to direct us further than mere ideas, and (b) the principles guiding toward practices which convey more substance than mere fads.

WHAT MOTIVATES OUR INVOLVEMENT?

1. We are New Testament people. We live in the covenant of Calvary, and have received of the promise of the Father. In these two realities – forgiveness unto the adoption of sons, and fullness unto the anointing of the Spirit - our circle of life is cast.
2. We are aware of the Holy Spirit’s present workings. It is clear to any objective observer that widespread revival is rising. It is not unlike that which birthed our own movement, but neither is it just like it. We want to know (a) how to respond, (b) what we can receive, and (c) what we might offer to this present working of the Lord.
3. We are available to the Lord of the Church. We want to be in touch with what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church. We also are willing to have every unworthy motive scrutinized by Him, and to receive that insight and revelation which the Holy Spirit seeks to make wisdom to us.

Let us seek to discern between:

- A. Wanting to better build our flocks, edify the Church, and wanting to build our churches and our reputations.
- B. Wanting to see people brought to saving life in Jesus, and wanting to see an increase in the number who attend.
- C. Wanting to know what areas of our lives need change, and wanting to learn some new techniques we can use.
- D. Wanting to move with where the stream of the Spirit is moving, and wanting to fault the imperfections in the present renewal.
- E. Wanting to discover what positive truths we may gain, and wanting to dissect some theological concept we may not understand.
- F. Wanting to know the Spirit of the Word which sets us free, and wanting to defend the letter of the law which will bind us where we are.
- G. Wanting to receive the benefit of one man’s offering, and wanting to sit in judgment of one man’s weaknesses.

A growing wealth of experience in ministering to pastors has enlarged my awareness of our (we pastors) vulnerability to multiple temptations.

The three greatest points of attack on men and women appointed to ministry leadership are:

- (1) Material security: looking on things, “the lust of the eye.”
This may affect attitudes toward money, property, and possessions.
- (2) Moral failure: particularly sexual, “the lust of the flesh.”
This may be either imaginary or actual adultery and fornication, but it becomes binding.
- (3) Personal esteem: concerns about what others think, “the pride of life.”
This is more often manifest in fears than in arrogance.

These three, oft-discussed and oft-observed points of potential attack and failure need little definition or development. To them we could also add a fourth which is actually less of a threat than might be supposed, but it does exist: doctrinal error. But the greatest problem in terms of doctrine is the tendency we have to fail to discern between the truth of the Word and the traditions we develop around certain truths.

Beyond these four, however, there is a vast realm of subtle temptations, comprising pitfalls and snares that have captured hosts of us. None of us are alien to some of these experiences.

1. The temptation to seek a method which will serve our purpose, without seeking the Maker to find how we are to serve Him.
2. The temptation to distrust that authority God has ordained relative to us, while wondering why those to whom God has made us authority fail to trust us freely.
3. The temptation to manipulate circumstances or maneuver within situations, without simply confessing our fears that God might not be able to place, provide or prosper us without our help.
4. The temptation to be comforted in the weaknesses or failures of fellow-pastors, rather than prompted to prayer for them.
5. The temptation to measure our fruitfulness by the standard of numeric gain rather than by the standard of Biblical maturity.
6. The temptation to disobey the command to “rejoice with them that rejoice,” particularly when the rejoicing would be over a fellow-worker’s enrichment, promotion or enlarged ministry.
7. The temptation to reject dogmatically what we may not understand, rather than to pray humbly concerning what we might learn.
8. The temptation to make “being right” the ground for our authority, rather than simply “being given” by the Hand of Christ to the Church.
9. The temptation to justify our mistakes before both our own reasoning minds as well as outside observers, rather than to honestly confess our shortcomings.
10. The temptation to suppose that because we have received something from the Lord that we have permission to formulate it into a rule for others that is to control everything.

UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL SAFETY - SUBMISSION

We are living in a time when all kinds of voices are clamoring for our attention and there are all kinds of directives. Not all wisdom comes from God, some comes from demonic sources, some comes from man. I believe every true Christian, everyone who is committed to Christ, everyone who loves the Lord, wants to be guided by the Lord in their life. They also want to have safety in their leading and in the counsel that they give or the counsel that they receive. They want safety in understanding and in properly judging the gifts of the Spirit when they are in operation. We need spiritual safety. Spiritual safety comes from the Lord. It is the only place we are going to find safety spirituality. Psalm 4:8, "I will both lay me down in peace and sleep for you Lord only make me dwell in safety."

To begin to develop safety in our lives, we must begin with a commitment to His Lordship. We have to deal with the subject of submission. You cannot have spiritual safety outside of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. If you are not willing to stay within the boundaries that He places around your life, if you are not willing to follow His directives or leadings, if you are not willing to be obedient and submissive to Him, then by definition you are going to step out of His leading. This will be outside of the area that He has designated as safe for you, and you will enter into a realm that is spiritually dangerous, outside of the realm of spiritual safety.

I want to look at what submission to His Lordship means in the light of a couple of examples that will begin to give us a feel for what the Scripture means by submission.

Ruth 1:16-17, "The Lord do so to me, and Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave you or to return to following after you, for where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people and your God my God. Where you die will I die, and there will I be buried. The more also if anything but death part you and me."

What is happening here is that Ruth, her sister in law, and Naomi, her mother in law, are all widows. Naomi's two sons have also died. They had married Gentile girls and Naomi is saying, "I am going back to my homeland of Israel and you can go ahead and stay here with your relatives, your family. There is nothing left for me in this Gentile land, my boys are dead, and I am retuning to Israel." Ruth declares that she is going to follow Naomi because she has made Naomi's God her God. Ruth is a Gentile (Non-Jewish) believer, according to the pattern of coming into the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament. And she said, "I am going to make your God my God. I am going to serve the Lord God of Israel. First, she has made that commitment to God, a commitment of Lordship. Secondly, she had committed herself to her husband's family when she was married and she said, "You know, I am not going to leave you, your sons are gone, you do not have anybody, I am not leave you Naomi, I have taken you as my own". In this way she shows commitment to her mother in law, and to remain with a people committed to follow God.

This is the beginning of submission to the Lordship of Christ. She is going back into Israel. She is entering into relationship with God and we see commitment as a foundation for which she will find guidance and spiritual safety. If she did not have this commitment, she would have fallen back into the old ways in that heathen land as Naomi left.

Romans 12:1-2, "I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that our present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be you transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove (or demonstrate) what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

This is the New Testament counterpart of commitment as illustrated by Ruth. If you want spiritual safety in your walk with God: in what you believe is the leading of the Lord, safety in counsel, and your interpretation of the Word (the Scripture) then you must begin by a full, one hundred percent commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Without that kind of commitment there is no Biblical guarantee for you to find spiritual safety in your life. You must begin with a commitment to His Lordship. As Ruth made this kind of commitment, a commitment that was unto death, it was one hundred percent, unreserved, and a commitment that was once and forever. Therefore it settled the issue. It put her in a position that many questions would not even be entertained anymore. A lot of

questions might come to her life and those questions would not even be entertained because the answer had already been given when she made her commitment to God and the God of Israel. When you make your commitment to Jesus Christ, and it is a once and for all commitment to His Lordship, then there are many questions that you will never have to deal with again, because the question will have already been answered. You will not have those choices, because you have already made your choice and made your commitment to Him.

Ruth 2:12, "The Lord recompense your work and a full reward be given you of the Lord God of Israel under whose wings you have come to trust." The wing here is a picture of God's protection and safety. Under the wing of the Lord she is found where the Lord has responded to her causing her to prosper and to receive reward. We find that as she has made this commitment, the Lord helps her in her travels back to Israel.

Ruth 2:3, "So she went out and began to glean in the fields behind the harvesters. As it turned out, she found herself working in a field belonging to Boaz, who was from the family of Elimelech." This is what we call unconscious guidance. It is something that begins to happen in your life after you have made a commitment to His Lordship. Ruth came and gleaned in the field after the reapers and her happenstance was to work on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz who was of the family of her husband, Elimelech. Her husband had a kinsman redeemer. His name was Boaz.

Boaz, being the kinsman redeemer, was in a position in the law of Israel to marry Ruth, redeeming her from her plight as a widow into a life where she would have financial provision, be taken care of, and also be fulfilled as a person. Boaz ended up marrying Ruth and together they became the father of Jesse who was the father of David. She was redeemed out of her plight into divine purpose because of this unconscious guidance. She just happened to land in the field of Boaz. It was not just luck. Ruth had made a commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. She had made Him Lord of her life. As a result, the Lord for her life caused the truth of the Word to come into effect.

Psalms 37:23, "The steps of a righteous man are ordered of the Lord." There are times when you are consciously led of the Lord and there are times when you are unconsciously led of the Lord. This was an unconscious guidance where an unconscious intervention began to take place in Ruth's life. She happened to come into the field of what would become her husband, her kinsman redeemer, who would bring her into divine purpose.

When we make the commitment to His Lordship we find it releases something spiritually where God begins to providentially work in our circumstances to bring our lives in contact with key people in divine purpose and to cause things that He has intended for us to come into the realm of opportunity.

Now of course we have to actualize those opportunities when they come. We need to recognize them when they come. Ruth was not very mature in God at this point in life. She went back and told Naomi where she was, and whose field it was, and Naomi saw the hand of the Lord right away. She asked Ruth, "Do you know who that is? That is your kinsman redeemer, Boaz, who can do much for you." She then began to share with Ruth that this was the hand of God and how to respond.

Here we find that there was another blessing that came because of her commitment in relationship to the family members. God used this relationship as a channel through which Ruth would receive understanding about what was happening in the unconscious guidance in her life. This counsel would eventually lead her into divine purpose. I want you to see a foundation here, that if she had not made that commitment she never would have happened upon Boaz's field. She never would have had the interpretative counsel of Naomi. She would have missed the opportunity and the purpose of God for her life.

Another example of the role of submission in terms of spiritual safety and guidance comes from the life of Abraham and his servant seeking out a bride for his son, Isaac.

Genesis 24:26-27, "And the man bowed down his head and worshipped the Lord. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who has not left destitute my master of his mercy and his truth: I being in the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren." A very

important statement here is, "I being in the way, the Lord led me." There is something about being led of the Lord. It is like driving in your car. If you are going to guide the car, it first of all has to be in motion. You can sit in the parking lot and turn the wheel all day. It will not go anywhere until that car gets in motion. Then it can be guided.

So we find this first principle of guidance. While being in the way the Lord led me. We often have a lot of strange ideas about how guidance should be worked out in our lives. We say, "God just tell me the whole story right now. I want to know the end from the beginning. I want to know every step along the way and how to work it out and how it is going to come to pass. If you will give me all that knowledge Lord I will be guided, I will walk on that pathway. In fact I will have so much knowledge about it, Lord I could walk without You." That is what happens if we walk by knowledge, isn't it? We walk independent from God. That is why God never lets us really know that many of the details.

The Scripture teaches us in this passage that as we go, the way will be opened up for us step by step. That means that one must remain in communication with God. That means that one must be attentive to the communication of God and dependent on God. As we remain in communication with God, we find this principle of being in the way the Lord led me. He opens up the way step by step. He causes it to unfold before us. If we do not continue to pay attention, we may miss a turn or adjustment and head off in a wrong direction.

There are three principles listed in this story that help us to understand how this servant was led in this way. Genesis 24:3-4, "I want you to swear by the Lord, the God of heaven and the God of earth, that you will not get a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I am living, but will go to my country and my own relatives and get a wife for my son Isaac."

1. This was Abraham's directive to enter into a covenant with his servant. His servant promises a separation from this world. Once again we go back to commitment. We find that the servant is committed to his master and he is in submission to him.

This was the eldest servant that ruled in all of Abraham's house. It tells me something about this man's character. First of all he had been proven. He was not just any old servant who happened to arrive on the scene. He was the eldest. He ruled in the house and he had been proven as a man that was faithful, in submission, and concerned about his master's concerns more than his own. He carried out the task as he was supposed to carry it out. It was this kind of a commitment that was foundational for him to come under the guidance of the Lord and have spiritual safety.

We also see him given a responsibility to choose the bride. This responsibility was granted to him by Abraham as a delegated authority because he was a servant who had been proven and trusted. The only time you find a proven servant is when you find one who is in submission. If you have a servant that does not submit to your directives, who does not have submissive spirit that is in unity with your directives, then you do not trust him with things of importance. This is because you do not know what he is going to do. He might do something else. This man is trusted because he is proven; there was submission in his spirit.

2. The next thing we learn in this principle by which this servant was led is in verse 7. Genesis 24:7, "The Lord, the God of heaven, who brought me out of my father's household and my native land and who spoke to me and promised me an oath, saying, 'To your offspring I will give this land' ---He will send his angel before you so that you can get a wife for my son from there." Now Abraham is saying God spoke to him that He would send an angel before the servant to take a wife for his son. And the servant believed God's Word. This is very important if we want spiritual safety.

Proverbs 29:25, "The fear of man brings a snare but whosoever puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe." There was safety because he trusted in the word of the Lord. Not only did the servant trust in the Word of the Lord, but he put his trust in this man, Abraham, and the Word of the Lord through him. He did not just have a direct word. In fact, in this point in time he had no direct word from God. He had a word from the Lord passing through the life and the lips of his master Abraham. But he heard the word of the Lord. He recognized

the word of the Lord and he believed the Word of the Lord. And if you will hearken unto the word of the Lord and trust Him you shall be safe. There is safety in Him.

3. The third thing that we see is this servant's response to this task is in verses 12-14. Genesis 24:12-14, "And he said, O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the en of the city come out of draw water; And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, let down your pitcher, I pray, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give your camels drink also: let the same be she that you have appointed for your servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that you have shown kindness unto my master. Not only was this servant a faithful man who had been committed and was in submission, he was a man of faith, he believed the word of the Lord and he soaked the whole task in prayer. He went to the Lord and he prayed about it. He prayed and he asked God to lead and to prosper him on his journey and the purpose for which he went. He asked God to help him. And when he got there at the well in this area of the country where Abraham's relatives were, once again he prayed. That is why he says, while being in the way the Lord led me.

Several things must have happened along the way, we do not have all the details, but he began with a commitment to God. He has a commitment with Abraham. He was in submission, had a submissive spirit to God's authority and to God's delegated authority in his life. He believed the word of the Lord because it came through his delegated authority and because God bore witness to it and being in the way the Lord was leading him. When he got there, he was still being led by the Lord because he constantly was in communication with God praying about the journey and the purpose for which he was sent. As a result of that continuing flow of prayer, he had the experience while being in the way the Lord led me. God is not too interested in leading you if you are not willing to follow. God is not too interested in directing you if you are not willing to hear.

So then the first prerequisite for spiritual safety and guidance, or in leadings, in counsel, and in gifts of the Spirit is that we are going to be willing to hearken unto the Lord. Proverbs 1:33, "But whosoever hearkens unto me shall dwell safety and shall be quiet from fear of evil. Whosoever hearkens unto me shall dwell safely."

We see then that submission is necessary for safety. You have to submit to the voice of God to hearken unto him. Leviticus 25:18-19, "Wherefore you shall do my statutes and keep my judgments and do them and you shall dwell in the land safety and the land shall yield her fruit and you shall eat your fill and dwell therein safety. Leviticus 26:3-5, "If you walk in my statutes and keep my commandments and do them. Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield her fruit. Your threshing shall reach unto the vintage and your vintage shall reach unto the sowing time and you shall eat your bread to the full and dwell in your land safety."

Every one of us has the boundaries of God's Word as directives. If we are going to dwell safely we must be submissive to His Lordship and His commands through His Word. That involves things like church attendance and participation, finance, prayer, things you do, and things you do not do. Commandments such as to love one another as He has loved you. If you cannot obey the kind of directive that is written in the Word, then we should not expect God to give us the specific leadings of the Holy Spirit. If we are not submissive to the outward commands of God, there will be no expectation of us being submissive to the directives of the Spirit.

It is like that elder there who is the particular servant that Abraham chose for the task. He had been proven. He had done these outward things. He had been in submission. He had been faithful, now he could give him some other kind of directives and trust him with it. If you have not proven yourself in submission and proven yourself not trustworthy, God will not be giving you His leadings. How do you know when God is directing you this way or that? You learn to know the voice of God and when He starts speaking to your life He has a way of making it known to you that it is Him.

I do not think we can look for the Lord to really direct us as we want in our life if we are not willing to embrace the kind of outward submission to the general commands of the Word that we have mentioned.

Submission is a word that strikes fear in many people's hearts. Everyone gets quiet. There are reasons for that. The reason we have that sense of intimidation when we use the word submission is because we do not know what submission is in God's Kingdom. It is because many times the authority figures we have had in our life have had authority that was domineering, that was exercised by force and through fear and intimidation. As a result of that kind of authority, there has been a sense of rebellion that has been fostered in our lives. Whenever you have a domineering authority that governs by fear and governs by force, it produces rebellion in the heart. If you have a loving leadership then you find that submission is very different. You yield the easiest to the one you love the most.

Submission is in the spirit and obedience is an action. You can get one to obey without getting them to submit. The army has you do it all the time. They could care less whether you submit. The only thing they want you to do is obey. Whether you like it or not, they do not care so long as you do it. A father said to his son, "Son I want you to sit down". The son says, "I do not want to." He says, "Son, sit down." The son sits down and says, "Daddy I am sitting down on the outside, but on the inside I am standing up." Now, the son has obeyed but he has not submitted. We can obey without submitting. You can never force submission. You can only force obedience.

A lot of men trying to get submission out of their wives have been very harsh in demanded obedience, and wives have obeyed out of a sense of duty, but there has been no submission. They cannot submit to that kind of leadership and they end up full of resentment. On the other hand, loving leadership and the authority of loving leadership will work in such a way that a wife will voluntarily obey because she wants to, that is submission and it is from the heart. You cannot force submission.

When we say that one of the main keys for spiritual safety in your life is submission, you begin to understand that we are not talking about a sense of duty to obedience. We are talking about submission that comes from a heart that voluntarily submits to the one you love the most. When you love Him, and He loves you and has convinced you of that love you find it easy to submit. He cannot force submission. You win a person's heart and they submit voluntarily. We discover then, that Biblically, the word submission is a love word. Without love you will not get submission. You may get outward obedience, but submission is a love word.

We must recognize authority in our life to submit. Without recognizing authority in our life we do not submit it. Submission is important for spiritual safety. Through submission you have the key to divine provision. As you submit to Him and to His Lordship and His pattern there is provision for your life. There is also direction for your life, and through God's provision and God's direction you have safety.

Now every locksmith when he makes locks has what they call a master key for the kinds of locks they make. But a locksmith also has what he calls the grand key. And for a specific kind of lock that grand key will open every lock they make for that kind of lock. It is beyond the master key. Submission is God's grand key to every door in the kingdom of God. That is the way you are going to find entrance and access. Without submission, everything else that we have to tell you about spiritual safety will have no effect in your life. It will not work until you have used this grand key of submission.

You can succeed in what you are doing and not have spiritual safety. You can be a successful pastor and a successful evangelist, or attorney, and not have spiritual safety. So we can have the wrong focus. Our faces can be to succeed in what we are doing, when it should be to walk with God's in safety. God's authority represents God Himself. His power stands only for His actions. You come against the power of God and you may get zapped. But you come against God's authority and you are going to be destroyed. Satan's intent of setting his throne above the throne of God was the thing which violated God authority. It was a principle of self-exaltation. He was going to exalt his throne above the throne of God. Wherever we have self-exaltation, what we have is accusation against God's authority and when that happens God must bring you down to maintain

His authority. You leave Him no choice. When you try to usurp authority over God, God will put you in your place.

Any action that lacks obedience is a fall. And any act of disobedience is rebellion. How can that be true? How can an act that lacks obedience be a fall. I want freedom, I thought that when I got saved, that “where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty” and I want freedom to do what I want. People do not understand that freedom means restraint. The only reason that we have legal contracts for most of our business transactions today is because people are not honest. They do not restrain themselves to follow through with their commitment and to back them up. They mislead and they try to deceive. Therefore to protect everyone and the transaction, we have it all written out and spelled out in great detail so that everyone can be protected. Now we would not need such laws, we could have freedom if we had an inner restraint. The only reason we need laws in our society is because of the lack of inner restraint. The reason we do not have as much freedom in our society is because we do not have enough discipline and character in the heart.

Any loving parent is not going to take their child and give them a rifle, a motorcycle, a chainsaw and just turn them loose. Why? Because, if they loved their child they do not want their child to injure themselves or someone else. They will take that child and they will train him, they will observe him, they will know his character and when he demonstrates enough knowledge and enough discipline and self-restraint and character to take responsibility for those things then the parent might delegate to him the authority to take the car when he wants to or use the chainsaw when he wants to or go hunting with the gun when he wants to. But until he has demonstrated his responsibility, and has understanding of safety, a loving parent would never allow such a thing.

So the freedom to choose we have from our heavenly Father only comes as we have been trained, developed, prepared and qualified to have the kind of freedom which means we are not usurping authority. We only have that authority because God has granted to us. Therefore, even the freedom of choice is an act of obedience in carrying out that authority. Any action that lacks obedience is a fall. Any act of disobedience is rebellion.

Now as faith is the principle by which we obtain life, so obedience is the principle by which that life is lived out. The life of Christ is received by faith. But we live it out in obedience. Many times we do not want to be related to God’s delegated authority. That is where the problem is. Who are you to lift yourself up above the congregation? Leviticus 10:1-2, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them a censor and put fire therein and put incense thereon and offered strange life before the Lord which he commended them not. And there went out fire from the Lord and devoured them and they died before the Lord. Severe judgment. What happened here? Nadab and Abihu served as priests because they were chosen by the family of God. Aaron was the high priest and the high priest was the chief in all that was being done. He was in charge of all matters and some were helpers serving beside the altars, serving in obedience to God and Aaron.

God never meant for the sons to serve independently, He placed them under the authority of Aaron and offering sacrifice by themselves, outside of the authority that Aaron delegated to them, was an offering of strange life. Like taking the gun and using it when mom or dad say you cannot do it unless I am there to watch. That was their action, only it had to do with the things of God. The meaning of “strange fire” is: to serve without an order, without obedience to authority. They failed to see who represented God’s authority and when they took that usurping, self-exalting place in the things of God, corrective judgment came. It was severe, but it was because it was dealing with a challenge to God’s authority.

True service than is initiated by God under God’s authority. Spiritual authority is not something we obtain by effort. It is given by God as He qualifies us in divine purpose. It is the only way spiritual authority comes. God gives it.

All who hearken unto God’s direct authority, but reject delegated authority, are none the less under the principle of rebellion. There is no spiritual safety in our life if we do not learn how to submit to God’s authority. There are all kinds of authorities in our lives. As children we have parents. As adults, or as we have grown up we have had employers. We have had teachers. Wives have husbands. Christians have pastoral authority. There is government authority. Thus there are all kinds of authorities in our lives. We have to learn how to relate to authority.

Now there are exceptions. If an authority in your life asks you to sin, you do not do it.(Acts 5: 29). But you can disobey authority and be in submission and be right with God. But you can not be right with God and not be in submission.

The grand key to open every door in the kingdom of God for you is the key of submission. Submission is a love word. We submit best and easiest to those who love us. We begin by submitting to God, secondly to His delegated authority. When delegated authority slips or fails or goes the wrong way, we do not obey them in sin. We do not obey them in a wrong directive in that sense. But we have to still maintain a submissive spirit. The Bible says in Proverbs 11:14 and 24:8 that there is safety in a multitude of counsel. The keys that I will give you are unusable and inaccurate measures in the life of one who has not first developed a submissive spirit to God. If you are not submissive in your spirit to God, these other keys will not work. The grand key is of delegated authorities that God has put on your life.

Remember the parental pattern that God has given in the family. We are in the family of God but remember it in the natural family. You do not have authority over your neighbor's children. You do not have relationship with them. But as parents, you have authority over your own children because there you have a committed love relationship. That authority comes out of love. Sin has disrupted and destroyed this beautiful expression. God gave parents that would love their children, that would have maturity and understanding to help them to be trained and developed in all they were intended to be. There is an authority that comes from committed love. So we understand, that as we relate to authorities with a submissive spirit, it is love relationship.

The grand key is submission. Without submission none of the other keys will work. So we need submission in the heart.

Every Christian wants to be guided by the Lord and wants to have safety in the leadings that they sense, the counsel that they give or receive, and the operation of the gifts of the Spirit that they may flow through them. We need safety in these areas to walk with God. One of the major things that is happening in this hour is that God is allowing many things to come to maturity and completion in the kingdom of darkness, as well as in the Kingdom of Light. This means that there are problems with heresy, wrong understanding, mixed streams that are being taught that can get us in trouble, and wrong understandings that can cause us to miss God when we are trying to walk with Him.

But, God has made a full provision for safety in walking with Him in our lives. It is important that we understand this provision so that we can apply it in our walk with Him. We have learned that we must begin with a commitment to His leadership, that without a commitment to His leadership we are authentically disqualifying ourselves from spiritual safety. The Scripture says that safety is of the Lord, and when we are not willing to walk with the Lord, then automatically we walk outside of His protection and His carry of safety. That means, that we must begin with a commitment to His leadership, and that also means submission. We learned that submission does not necessarily mean what our society has projected it to mean, but it is really a love word. We can obey without submitting, and we can submit sometimes without obeying. We learned that submission is the grand key that opens up all the doors in the Kingdom of God. Without submission the following principles that we are going to share will not be applicable or workable in your life. We learned that submission to the Lord also has its application in submission to His delegated authority.

Now we want to focus our attention on how to judge leadings, counsel, and gifts of the Holy Spirit so we can understand whether they are of God. There are safety patterns that we must follow to abide in His will and not get caught up in something that is not of the Lord. We want all the fullness of the Spirit of God. We want all that He has under the full discipline of the Word, we want the full expression of the Lord, but we want it to be Him, to be genuine and not something less. The Truth always stands up under investigation so do not be afraid.

We must lean that not one particular principle of safety alone is sufficient if we want to learn to walk in safety, but together they create a network of patterning that will expose error and cause us to walk safely with God.

SUBJECT TO THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD

The next principle of safety that we use after our understanding submission, is to be subject to the written Word of God. Every leading, every counsel, every manifestation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit must be subject to the written Word of God. For some this is a problem, because people will say, "Well, you can open the Bible, you can open the Word of God and cause it to mean anything you want it to mean." A lot of people have said that. I challenge such a statement. 2 Peter 1:19-20, "And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation." The context is that Peter has just shared about his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration with the Lord and where the Father spoke audibly from heaven at that time. After he has shared this experience, which happens to agree with the Word, he says that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. A private interpretation is that you open it up and say, well I think that this passage means so and so, that is a private interpretation. Our opinion, my personal opinion, your opinion is meaningless. What God is saying is what it means, and like every other body of literature, the Scripture is not of private interpretation, it follows laws of interpretation. If you violate those laws, you end up with misinterpretation, and you end up with heresy. Every heresy that has come in Christianity has come by violating the laws of interpretation in the Scripture. (There is a whole subject that deals with that in theology called Hermeneutics.)

One well-known law of interpretation is that you do not take things out of context. To take it out of context will violate the validity of interpretation. For example, I am telling you today that the Bible is not of private interpretation that it is to be submitted to the laws of interpretation like every body of literature. I am saying that now, and I can say there are some that think the Bible is of a private interpretation and that you can make it mean anything you want and that is valid and that their opinion is correct, but that is not true. Now with this last paragraph, you take the introductory sentences and the concluding sentence off of it and quote me, and you will misrepresent what I am saying. You will mean the exact opposite of what I am trying to communicate to you.

By way of illustration, if you take anything out of context, you cannot properly understand it. There is not only the context of the body of verses that it is found in or the book that it is found in, there is the context of the entire Word of God. Besides, there is the context of the culture of the day, there is the context of who is speaking to whom, there is the context of what those people believed and what events were taking place in their life. All of these things just help to break out the meaning of context. Context in this passage, context in its history, context in the people, context in the circumstance in which the Word was brought, all of these things create the context in which any passage must be interpreted. That is just one law of interpretation.

Key words are another law. You could take a word and say, "Oh, I know what that means." Language evolves over time, and the meaning today must be understood by the meaning of the word at the time it was recorded. We have all kinds of connotations to words. Unless we understand the meaning of the words at the time that they were used, we still do not comprehend what the meaning of the word is. We cannot take our twentieth century mentality and project it into the Word of God. We have to see it from the context in which it originated. There are laws of interpretation within the Word of God. There are principles of interpretation that are stated such as the natural first, then the spiritual. So, you have the picture of it in the natural in Israel, and then the manifestation in the church.

As a result, when we say that the leadings that we receive, the counsel that we receive, or the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit in our life, or to our life, must be subject to the Word of God, we are also saying that the Word of God is a body of interpretation that is valid and can be verified and is reliable.

Often one meets several contradictory interpretations of the Scripture. You can find out what it means if you will learn how to interpret the Word of God and do your homework. Most people do not do all their homework. Either that or they do faulty homework, and are faulty scholars. We can understand in the Word of God very clearly if we will follow the laws of interpretation.

Subjecting our leading to the Word of God, subjecting our experience to the Word of God for proper understanding is a Biblical principle.

- 1 Corinthians 14:37, "If any man think himself to be prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."

- Deuteronomy 4:2, "You shall not add unto the Word which I command you, neither shall you diminish anything from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."

- Revelation 22:18-19, "For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

We find safety for you in another important statement concerning the Word of God in Proverbs 30:5-6, "Every Word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Add not unto His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar." The Word of God gives us principles of the Kingdom, a revelation of the Kingdom, a revelation of the Person of God, a revelation of His ways. Any leading or directive that you feel is from the Spirit of God that would violate the revelation of God and His Kingdom, and His Word, must be rejected. 2 Timothy 3:16, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." We need the Word of God to work in our life. We need to receive from the Word an objective standard by which we judge the leading of the Spirit. Proverbs 29:25, "The fear of man brings a snare: but who puts his trust in the Lord shall be safe." We have to put our trust in God and in His Word. One of the things that happens is that as we do so, we have to learn from the Word how to judge a subjective word in our life. You have the objective Word here, and you can judge your subjective word by the objective, and know whether it is God or not.

Many people, when they receive an impression in their spirit that they believe is a leading of the Lord, get hung up on a problem where they think it is from God when it actually is not. One of the symptoms of this is when they have a sense of compulsion. "I have to do or say that, or I have got to do it and I have got to do it now." The fear of what will happen if I do not do it now, and the panic of it and the driving, compelling form in which that word has come is evidence of a spirit of fear. That is enough to show you that it is not of God no matter what the word says. From the Scripture, in measuring such experience, says: James 3:17, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

If a word, leading or impression is coming from God, it is not going to be something that panics you, that causes you to suddenly feel compelled to react and uncontrollably be driven. The word that comes from God is easily entreated. It is something that you can embrace. It is gentle, pure, truth; it is peaceable, and has life in it. You can learn to understand and recognize the reality of these distinctions. An example is in a fellow I knew that was in the high school I grew up in. He became a so-called Christian one day, but he was not really a believer. He was high on drugs and had a hallucination where he looked up into the cloudy night and saw the clouds open up and the baby Jesus fell out of the cloud into his arms. He thought that made him a Christian. Whatever spirit he was involved in was the one he was following. Some time later I got a call and had to go to the hospital to meet him there. What had happened is that he had been starving himself to death. This spirit that he thought was God was leading him, and he thought he was too selfish in overeating and the spirit was saying that if you really love me you will not eat anything so that the starving people of the world will have more to eat. He was not eating anything to the point that he had been hospitalized. He was so close to death that when they put the sucrose into his veins, his body was rejecting it and would not receive anything to respond nutritionally. This is when the hospital called me. I had to go down to that hospital and pray that man out of his death bed.

He got back to health and restored but refused counsel. The next thing you know, I get a call a couple of months later from the police Department. What had happened was this guy had been a long distance runner in high school. He was going for a run, and the spirit said if you love me, you will love me with all your heart, and I want you to prove that you really love me, so I want you to start running and run with all your heart. He was running and the spirit kept driving him and the spirit kept saying you are not running with all your heart, you are holding back. Give yourself more to it, run harder and harder. He ran and ran until he collapsed in front of the Police Station.

This is an extreme example. I use extremity to illustrate principle. Principles are easier to see. Error that is just one or two degrees off, you do not see too well up close. You run it out a few thousand meters, and it makes quite a gap. Anybody that navigates will understand what I am talking about. What happened is that this principle of what we see in James 3:17 is illustrated. The word that he received was not pure, it was not peaceable, it was not gentle, it was easy to be entreated. It was compulsory, it was driving, it was disturbing, it was fearful, did not minister love, it ministered fear. It was not God.

Every leading that we think is of God must be subject to the written Word of God. You may have leading to do all kinds of things, but learn to be humble enough and measure it up by the Word!

SUBJECT TO THE OVERSIGHT MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH

Your leading, counsel, gifts of the Holy Spirit, should be subject to or confirmed by the oversight ministries of the Church. This is frightening to many people due to misuse.

Ephesians 4:11-15 says: "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets, and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect unto the measure of the stature fullness of Christ. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, who is the head, even Christ." We see that God has given ministries to bring us on into maturity and into the full knowledge of the Son of God. That is one of His means of bringing us into completion.

Hebrews 13:17 says: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you." James 3:1 continues with: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnations." Acts 20:28-30 states: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them."

We find the concept of oversight ministry here for the purpose of safety. I want to draw the distinction for your understanding of what is correct oversight ministry and what is not.

An oversight ministry might tell you what to do in this context. You come in and are counseling and are sharing with them, and you say, "I am just full of resentment towards so and so." It would be appropriate for them to say that God tells you that you need to forgive and you need to do so. But, you come in and say, "I feel that the Lord wants me to change my career or I want to move to a new location." In these situations oversight ministry is not to tell you what to do and what not to do. If you find oversight ministry telling you what to do and what not to do, then you know that it is not from the Lord, because it does not line up with the Word of God. What is supposed to do, is help you determine the will of God, and when necessary, to show you where you are thinking in ways that contradict the Scripture.

You are going to be accountable for the decisions you make before the Lord. You will have to give an account to God for them. You are also the one that is going to make the decision. You are the one that is going to have to live with the decision you make. Therefore, you are the one that needs to know whether it be the will of God or not. My function to you as an oversight ministry or as a

brother in the Lord is to help you to determine for yourself the will of God, and that is not telling you what to do. But it may involve doing some of the things I am doing right now, helping you to understand how to know the will of the Father. That may mean, how did you come to such a decision? Why do you believe this is the Lord? I may ask you and have you share with me. I would be able to show you principles by which you could understand guidance and safety in the Word of God and be able to see those applied to your life so that you would have a basis of knowing that yes, God is directing me in this way or He is not. That is what the oversight ministry is to do.

By so doing, the oversight ministry can say it is all lining up according to the pattern of God's Word and on that basis you can have confidence that you are being led of the Lord. Or, he could say, I am concerned because of this and this of what you are saying, it does not line up with the Word, and I am concerned about that, and it makes me think that is not the Lord.

The Lord is not going to tell you, for example, to marry an unbeliever. The Bible says not to be unequally yoked together with an unbeliever. If you are a single person, and you are going to be married, you do not marry unbelievers. Do you know why? It is not because God is trying to keep you from something that is good, it is because you cannot have intimacy. If you are a believer and your walk with God is the most important thing in your life and you cannot share Him with someone with whom you are supposed to be sharing the essence of your life, then you are not going to have very fulfilled, intimate relationship; and you will fall far short of what God has intended the marriage to be. He is not trying to rob somebody of something; He is trying to keep them from years of pain, frustration, hurt and emptiness.

SAFETY IN THE MULTITUDE OF COUNSEL

Proverbs 11:14, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counselors there is safety." Proverbs 24:6, "For by wise counsel you shall make war: and in the multitude of counselors there is safety." The Lord has provided many checks and balances in the body of Christ. They tend to operate like a thermostat that will put something into motion when one crosses a threshold. This activity is meant to bring things back into balance and into the mainstream. This provides a real network for safety. There is no such thing as authority in the Body of Christ without accountability. Pastors, church leaders, and all believers are to be under accountability in their lives to protect them and others that they may influence. This is to bring a safeguard against error and provide true safety in the spiritual lives of those who are committed to follow Christ.

Some of these lines of accountability are parents, spouses, pastors, teachers, and other proven leaders that are serving Christ. These people to whom we are accountable in our spiritual lives are all to be strong believers, Christians who are serving God. Some of these people may be in a natural place of leadership in our lives, but without committing their lives to Christ they are not qualified to speak into our lives regarding spiritual truth.

In a spiritual relationship there are two important parameters to consider. One is that the level of relationship is limited by the level of commitment given to the relationship. The other is the capability of the individuals to fulfill their commitments. A wrong appraisal of these two parameters will ultimately lead to injury.

Over time Jesus was able to lead the disciples into an intimate relationship where there was full disclosure between them. John 15:15, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his Lord does: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." Mutual commitment to God's best for each other is necessary to build a relationship with full disclosure. This will lead to various times of encounter in love regarding needs in each others lives, exposure to sensitive parts of our lives, and the necessity for change and development if the relationship is to grow to full potential. Such a relationship of transparency, speaking the truth in love, and mutual commitment to God's best in each other's life helps to produce spiritual safety. Out of this kind of relationship two people can come into true harmony, unity, and agreement. This produces a place of tremendous power with God. Matthew 18:19,

"Again I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven."

INTEGRITY

Learning to walk in the will of God with safety is learning to walk in intimate fellowship with God. Matthew 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Colossians 1:9-12, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, who has made us capable of being partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

Most people are self-pleasers but as we mature in God we learn to live to please our heavenly Father. This is an important part of true integrity, for in living to please the Father we must learn to live righteously. Proverbs 11:3, "The integrity of the upright shall guide them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them." Proverbs 18:10, "The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runs into it, and is safe." Psalm 112: 4, "Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous."

Integrity guided Abraham. In Genesis 14 we have the story of Abraham who had won a victory over marauders. Yet he refused to take advantage of his position to exploit the situation and make himself rich, trusting rather in the provision of the Lord for his life. He recognized it was the Lord who gave him the victory in the battle. This was an example of integrity as it guided Abraham in his circumstance. Genesis 14:22-23, "And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth. That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelace, and that I will not take any thing that is yours, lest you would say, I have made Abram rich."

Integrity guided Boaz. As Ruth placed herself at the foot of the bed of Boaz in a time of need, Boaz did not take advantage of the situation for his own gratification, but protected Ruth and her reputation. Ruth 3:11,14, "And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to you all that you require: for all the city of my people know that you are a virtuous woman. And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came into the floor."

Integrity guided Joseph in Potiphar's house. When his master's wife sought to take Joseph to bed, his integrity guided him to avoid her dishonor and the dishonor of his master. Genesis 39:7-10, "And after a while his master's wife took notice of Joseph and said, "Come to bed with me!" But he refused, "With me in charge," he told her, "my master does not concern himself with anything in the house; everything he owns he has entrusted to my care. No one is greater in this house than I am. My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?" And though she spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her."

Integrity guided David when he would not defile his worship and service unto the Lord by avoiding personal cost. 2 Samuel 24:24, "But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen and paid fifty shekels of silver for them."

REVIEW

We have seen that the leadings of the Spirit, the counsel we receive, the gifts of the Spirit operating through our lives or to our lives, need to be subject to the written Word of God. They need to be subject to or confirmed by oversight ministries of the church. We learned that there was safety in the multitude of counsel and that there are certain relationship whereby we can submit that to counsel. We learned that integrity will guide us. The Scripture says that the integrity of the upright will guide them, so we look at those four keys.

It is important that you understand that every one of the keys that we are giving to you, if applied by themselves without the other keys, can fail. You can misinterpret the Word of God. You can misunderstand counsel. You can have difficulty in understanding the oversight ministry of the church. However, the network together of each of these truths in the Scripture provides a safety net for spiritual safety. If one strand on the net fails, the others will hold you.

THE WITNESS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The witness of the Holy Spirit or the hearing of the Voice of God. This is often difficult for some, but very very important. Acts 8:29, " Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." 1 Samuel 3:10, "And the Lord came, and stood and called as at other times, Samuel, Samuel. Then Samuel answered, speak, for your servant hears." How did the Holy Spirit speak to Philip or how did the Holy Spirit speak to Samuel? That is a question that we all often struggle with. Sometimes God may speak audibly. However, it is a very rare occasion when God speaks audibly. When we use the term "the Voice of God", we normally are not referring to an audible voice, or even what seems to be an audible voice, but a voice in our inner man. We are referring to the Voice of God as any means by which God communicates His will to us. Whether it be by vision, by impression, through the voice of the counsel of another, through listening to the preaching of the Word, or through an inner voice. If God is successfully communicating something of His mind and will to your spirit, we are calling that the Voice of God.

The Lord communicates to me on a regular basis, however, this communion has been cultivated over years of walking with God. People have often asked me, how did you know God was saying that, how did you know God spoke something to your life? I have asked different individuals who have moved in words of knowledge and divine guidance in their ministry and asked them how they knew these different things. Every one of them have told me different distinctive features by which they recognize the Voice of God. I have begun to conclude that it is highly individualistic. I discovered there was a common denominator, however, that almost always a person would describe the different distinctive features of how they knew the Voice of God. I recognized it would come through a channel that was characteristic of their personality: A person that was extremely empathetic would pick it up through the empathetic channel. A person that was very intellectually or mind-oriented in their personality would get it through their mind or intellectual channel.

All I can say is that you will have to learn to know the Voice of God by growing experience in the Word, counsel, in integrity, in submission to oversight ministries, and through maturation in your life.

When God begins to speak to our heart and to speak to our life, we begin to recognize Him over time. At first you may miss it, and you think, well, that was not the Lord. You thought it was the Lord and discovered that nothing came to pass as you thought, and you discovered you missed it. Then once in a while you find that it was really right on, that it was God. You begin to pick up on that which was characteristic of God communicating to you with a little more accuracy. You go through a stage where you are not always quiet sure. The more you walk with God and get to know the Voice of God, the more confident you become and the more accurate you become in discerning His Voice.

One of the things we have to recognize is that receiving guidance depends greatly on our ability to recognize the Voice of God when He communicates to us. One of the characteristics that James gives us when God speaks is this, he contrasts the wisdom that comes from the earth and the wisdom that comes from above. (Jas. 3: 15-17). He says that the wisdom that comes from above is first peaceable, it is gentle, and it is easily entreated. So we know that when God speaks to our heart, it is not going to give a sudden alarm; it is not going to give us a sense of driving reaction; we are not going to be forced into anything, but it is going to give us a release of peace and understanding. We may know we need to take some action, that it is vital, it is urgent, it is important even at times; but with the Voice of God coming to our hearts will come a sense of peace, and it will be easily entreated. Now this obviously is related to the whole experience of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said that it is necessary for Him to go or the Comforter would not come. Jesus said that He would send a Comforter who would guide us into all truth, who would

not speak of His own mind, but whatever He would hear He would speak to us. Then He told the disciples that they were to wait in Jerusalem until the Holy Spirit came upon them and they would receive power from on high. I believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit coming in our life is a very important part of learning to be guided by the Spirit of God. If we cannot receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit then we are going to have a hard time receive the leading of the Holy Spirit.

One of the things that come with the baptism of the Holy Spirit is what I would characterize as a turning up of the volume. When God speaks you hear it a little more clearly, a little more loudly. Your vision becomes a little clearer and the fog seems to lift and you can discern more detail. It seems that with the baptism of the Holy Spirit comes this extra measure of sensitivity. I do not believe it is the only means by which God increases the sensitivity of our life, but it certainly is one. Part of what happens as we learn how to hear the voice of God and discern the witness of the Spirit in our life is that we must go through a stage of trial and error. I believe that can be documented Biblically.

Hebrews 5:14, "Strong meat belongs to them that are of all full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." There is a sensing that comes because of use and exercise. We learn to sense what is happening with hypersensitivity by reason of experience, by reason of training, by reason of concentration. I believe that that is true with anything that we do. A successful man was asked how he got to be a success. He answered, "Very simple, two words: right decisions." How did you learn to make right decisions? "Very easy, one word: experience." How did you learn to get experience? "Real easy, two words: wrong decisions." That is the way it often works. If you go out and make some wrong decisions and you learn they were wrong, if you do not learn anything else you learn what not to do. Of course some people do not learn it until they make the same wrong decision a dozen times, but eventually they get the idea. Along the way we learn to find our sensitivity sharpened.

I believe that walking with the Spirit, learning to know His voice, comes to us progressively and comes to us through experience. When you know God has spoken to you in a certain way and it has proven to be Him again and again you can begin to recognize that it is in the voice of God with a certain measure of confidence.

How will that voice come to us in principle? Uniquely individual, but in principle always the same. One way is that the Holy Spirit may restrain us. Acts 16:6, "Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region and Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia." Here Paul is about to go into Asia and he says that they were forbidden of the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. The Spirit of God restrained him. I believe that behind the sense of restraint was a commitment to the truth of: Proverbs 3:5-6, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." Paul was seeking the will of the Lord while he was doing what he thought was the best thing to do. But the Spirit of God restrained him and his path was redirected. If we are not going to lean on our understanding, but continually seek the guidance of the Lord then I believe we can expect God to guide us.

A SENSE OF PEACE IN OUR HEARTS

How do we know when God is beginning to adjust our direction, that leading of the Spirit, that witness of the Spirit? One way is a sense of peace in our hearts. We must be committed to the will of God for this to work. If you are not committed primarily to the will of God in your life this particular principle will not work. Colossians 3:15, "Let the peace of God rule in your hearts to the which also you are called in one body, and be thankful." The word "rule" means: to govern, as with a gavel like a judge does in court. We have something that sounds an alarm when we are in danger. In other words, when that supernatural rest that is in the midst of us is disturbed, God is trying to warn us. When your peace is disturbed, the Lord is wanting to guide you. When your peace is disturbed, it means something is not as it ought to be, and you need to check it out with all the other means of guidance and safety that we have been sharing with you. For this to work however, we do need to meet some prerequisites.

Isaiah 48:18, "Oh that you had listened to my commandments then had my peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea." We cannot know the peace of God if we are going to be disobedient to His law. If we are going to be disobedient to His law the peace of God will not be in our hearts. Psalm 119:165, "Great peace have they which love your law." If our commitment is not to the will of God, and we are not being obedient to God, we cannot have the peace of God which is necessary for this to work in our life.

So we find that there is that prerequisite once again of submission, the master key, the guard key that opens every door in the Kingdom of God. As we have that submissive spirit to the Lordship of Christ and to the law of God, then we find that there is the peace of God that comes into our heart, and He can awaken us as to what is wrong or right in a situation by lifting that peace or releasing that peace in our life.

Disturbing your peace is for a reason. Do not ignore that, but inquire of the Lord as to what He is wanting to communicate to you. You cannot qualify for the peace of God to help you until you are first of all committed to the will of the Father no matter what – so that the direction does not matter to your heart. The issue needs to be: the will of the Father, and you need to be committed to the point that you will say whether it is yes or no, I do not care, it is Your will that I am interested in Lord. When you are in that place of commitment, then as you contemplate yes, and the peace is disturbed and the conflict rages; and you contemplate no, and the peace of God is released in your spirit, then you can allow that to be witness of the Holy Spirit to guide your choice.

This principle is illustrated by a statement Jesus made in Matthew 10:11-13 when He sent the disciples out and He said: "And into whatsoever city or town you shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till you go from there. And when you come into a house, salute it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you." In other words, there was an experience that the Lord was telling these disciples to walk in as guidance. They would come into a house and release their peace, the peace of God through their lives, in that house. If that peace of God returned to them, it would indicate that something was wrong in that place; and they were to respond accordingly. It was a means of guidance. There would not be the witness of the Holy Spirit that they were in the right spot. Once again, we have this picture of peace.

Sometimes we learn by contrast, so I want to look at the contrast in Deuteronomy. What happens when we are outside the will of God. This is a statement that God is making for Israel if they broke the covenant and were outside of His will. Deuteronomy 28: 65-67, "And among these nations shall you find no ease, neither shall the sole of your foot have rest (no ease and no rest); but the Lord shall give you there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind (trembling heart is fear; falling eyes is dim vision or confusion, and sorrow of mind, that is depression). And your life shall hang in doubt before you; and you shall fear day and night, and shall have no assurance of your life. In the morning you shall say, Would God it were evening! And at evening you shall say, Would God it were morning! For the fear of your heart wherewith you shall fear, and for the sight of your eyes which you shall see." In other words, it is saying, when you are outside of the will of God, you will have no ease, no rest; you will have fear, you will have confusion, and you will have depression. If those things are in your life, you are outside of the will of God. You missed it somewhere.

On the other hand, we have the contrast that if we are abiding in Him and in His Spirit and being led by His Spirit, we have the peace of God that rules in our life. When we start to miss walking in the Spirit and step out of it, the peace of God gets disturbed. When we start to come back into the flow of the Spirit, the peace of God is affirmed in our life. We are to allow this to rule as one of the guidelines for safety.

PROVIDENTIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The next guideline I want to bring to you has to do with circumstances. This is probably one of the most confusing areas for many people. It is here that we often are looking for confirmation when we should be finding it in the Word and through oversight ministry and counsel. A lot of people misunderstand circumstance.

Once we commit our lives to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and we are really committed to Him without reservation, than we are no longer in our own hands, our lives belong to Him and are in His hands. As a result, in our circumstance we are not really dealing with man, and we are not really dealing with the devil, but we are dealing with our Heavenly Father. You say, well how can that be? In the book of Job we see that Satan was attacking him, yet God allowed it in divine purpose, for something He was accomplishing. Job's key to victory was not dealing with his Heavenly Father.

The Lord has given us a great teacher in the life of Joseph. As a young man, God had given him a vision of his calling and life work. As Joseph shared this with his brothers, they became jealous and sold Joseph into slavery. Over the next few year Joseph suffered as a slave, false accusation that placed him in prison, and separation from his family. However, as Joseph grew into the fulfillment of God's word to his life he became second only to Pharaoh in rulership in Egypt. It was while in this position that Joseph was restored to his brothers. When Joseph met them he had a pure heart of love, freedom and forgiveness. This was because he correctly saw his circumstance. Genesis 50:20, "But as for you, you thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive." God had given Joseph the ability to relate to his Heavenly Father above the circumstance and see that God was using this situation to further His purpose in Joseph's life. At the same time, he was quite aware of the evil intent in the heart of his brothers. For this he was able to find place of forgiveness and grace.

Sometimes to test our trust in Him, He has to be hidden from our view for a little while. As you pray that God will help you to see His Hand in what is taking place and you understand that you are not dealing with man, you are not dealing with the devil, but you are dealing with your heavenly Father, you can be free in your spirit. This is the first thing to know when you look at circumstances. If you do not accept this as truth, in your adverse circumstance you will never be able to recognize what is really taking place. Ultimately, as a Christian regardless of the intermediary involvement of man or the devil, you are dealing with your Heavenly Father.

This is readily seen in a study of the lives of Joseph and Job.

There are four kinds of ways that we misinterpret a circumstance according to our personality orientation. Each of these errors involves misapplying something that is often true in our lives.

- 1) We look at our negative circumstance and say, God is putting me through a test. Sometimes that is true, but not all of our circumstances are caused by God. Sometimes they are caused by our own behaviour or by the actions of other people.
- 2) I am being chastened for my disobedience. Sometimes we use this thought to accept things that we we should never accept.
- 3) The devil is after me. This is a good one to use when we do not want to be responsible.
- 4) I am being persecuted for righteousness' sake. Many times we use this thought to avoid responsibility for our own shortcomings and failings. Problems arising from our failings are not persecution for righteousness sake.

We make those kinds of mistakes when we look at our circumstance, and we need to understand what is really happening. We have to learn to recognize God's hand in a circumstance. Circumstances alone are not a sign of being in or out of the will of God. Many people think a circumstance is positive, and say, "Glory to God, that is confirmation." Another person sees the circumstance as negative and says, "It was not the Lord." Such an orientation is wrong.

An example of God working through circumstances is found in Number 22, the story of Balaam. Balaam was the prophet who sold his prophecy gift for money, prestige and opportunity for himself. As he was going to prophecy against the directive of the Lord God sent a series of circumstances to hinder him. He had a rebellious donkey that rammed him into the wall in a narrow passage and crushed Balaam's foot. An angel stood against him with a drawn sword at the edge of the pathway, and Balaam was meeting divine resistance. But the problem was that Balaam was not looking for divine guidance. He was running from God.

Circumstances are used to confirm guidance. There are some illustrations in the Bible, and they have common principles. I want us to see how circumstances can confirm guidance from these common principles. Jeremiah 32:6-8, "And, Jeremiah said, The word of the Lord came unto me, saying. Hanameel the son of Shallum, your uncle shall come unto you saying, buy my field that is in Anathoth for the right of redemption is yours to buy it. So Hanameel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the Lord, and said unto me: buy my field, I request, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin; for the right of inheritance is yours, and the redemption is yours; buy it for yourself. Then I knew that this was the word of the Lord." God spoke to Jeremiah about a circumstance telling him that this was something he was supposed to do, when the circumstance began to come to pass, he knew it was God.

We find the same principle in Acts. Peter had received a vision about clean and unclean animals. He is not sure what it is all about. Acts 10:17-20, "While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there. While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them." What happened here was that these Gentiles (Non-Jews) were coming asking Peter to go into their house and speak to them about the gospel, which is something that a Jew would not do. It is alien to his thinking, that is why he had the vision, God was preparing him. Then God told him three men were going to come and seek him, and when they arrived, he knew it was God.

For example, if you believe that God is showing you that on your way home from the worship service next Sunday you are going to see a major accident and there will be someone there you are to lead to Christ before they die, then on your way home you do not see any accident. You will know that was not God showing you this accident. If on the other hand, on your way home, you see the accident just as envisioned, then you will know God was communicating to you, and you should look for the person that you need to lead to Christ before they die. In that way, circumstance is conformational. God tells you about it ahead of time, and then He confirms it as it comes to pass.

Adverse circumstances do not necessarily mean that God is not in it. Mark 4:35-40, "That day when evening came, He said to His disciples, "Let us go over to the other side." Leaving the crowd behind, they took Him along, just as He was, in the boat. There were also other boats with Him. A furious wind came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly sank. Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. He said to His disciples, "Why are you so afraid?" Do you still have no faith?" The point is that as they met the adverse circumstance of the storm it did not indicate that they were out of the will of God. They were in the will of God in the face of that adversity.

It is also true that a positive circumstance does not necessarily mean that you are in the will of God. There was a prophet named Jonah. He was asked of God to prophecy to Nineveh. He said, I do not like those Ninevites, and I do not want to go prophecy there, because what will happen is they will repent, and You will forgive them, and I want You to judge them. So, I am not going. That was Jonah. So, he goes down to the harbor and said I am getting out of here, and there just happened to be a ship leaving that day, and there was one ticket left. He got on and said that must be the Lord, but it was the devil setting him up, because it was not the Lord's will for him to run from Nineveh. Jonah 1:1-3, "The word of the Lord came to Jonah son of Amittai: "Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it, because its wickedness has come up before me." But Jonah ran away from the Lord and headed for Tarshish. He went down to Joppa, where he found a ship bound for that port. After paying the fare, he went aboard and sailed for Tarshish to flee from the Lord." Positive circumstances do not mean that we are in the will of God. Neither does a negative circumstance mean we are outside of the will of God. We learn that the only way circumstance becomes confirmational is when God tells us something about it beforehand, and then it comes to pass. Then we can say, that was God speaking to me, that was Him.

YIELDING TO GOD

The seventh principle for safety is the principle of yielding to God. We can state that another way – we do not use the Spirit, the Spirit uses us. Romans 6:13, “Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourself unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” When Israel crossed the River Jordan on dry ground into the Promised Land, they did so because God spoke to Joshua and told him that the priests were to bare the ark on their shoulders into the river. The priests picked up the Ark of the Covenant, stepped out into the river, and they got ankle deep in the water and the river stopped flowing, the wind came, dried up the ground, and they crossed over on dry land.

Joshua 3:14-16, "So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge. The water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the Vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho." Matthew 14:28-29, "Lord, if it's You," Peter replied, "tell to come to You on the water." "Come," He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus." Peter acted upon the Word from the Lord, not upon his own desire. This is an example of yielding ourselves to the Lord. You do not use God. God uses you. You do not use the gifts of the Spirit; God operates them through you. The gifts of the Spirit do not operate at the believer's will to exercise at any time he wants (I Cor. 12: 11), but faith moves on a sure word from God. This is a very important principle of safety. Whenever you are in the place of trying to use the Spirit of God, you are already outside the canopy of safety in God. You have opened yourself up for all kinds of demonic imitations.

Finally, along this line of the principle of yielding to God, we do not require a sign to move with God. If we do not wait for God's initiation and we try to plan it all out according to our will, then we are presumptuous. But, when God speaks to us and we say God, if it is You, I want You to give me a sign, then we're full of unbelief. The Scripture says in Mark 16:17, "Theses signs will follow them that believe." The signs are to follow believers!

Of course, if you are an unbeliever, you need a sign, that is what the signs are for. These signs will follow them that believe. God gives signs following the believer to convince the unbelieving world that they are speaking the truth of the gospel and that God is real and Jesus Christ can forgive sin. The only time that we ever see this approach of seeking a sign from God that God honored is in the Old Testament. It is in the story of Gideon and the fleece. First of all, we have to understand Gideon. He was not born-again, because Jesus had not resurrected. Christ did not dwell in his spirit. Secondly, because Christ was not resurrected the Spirit of God could not indwell Gideon, but could only come upon him. So, he did not have the indwelling peace of God to guide him. His fleecing was just an example of his stubborn unbelief, and God only accommodated man's weakness in this instance, because:

- 1) He needed a man.
- 2) the man was in unbelief and He was trying to bring him to faith.

Judges 6:17-18, 20-22, "And he (Gideon) said unto Him, If now I have found grace in Your sight, then show me a sign that You are really talking with me. Depart not, I ask, until I come unto You, and bring forth my present, and set it before You. And He (the angel of God said unto him, Take the flesh and the unleavened cakes and lay them upon this rock and pour out the broth. And he did so. Then the angel of the Lord put forth the end of the staff that was in his hand, and touched the flesh and the unleavened cakes; and there arose up fire out of the rock, and consumed the flesh and the unleavened cakes. Then the angel of the Lord departed out of his sight. And, when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the Lord, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord God! For because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face." Now he recognized that God had been speaking to him about the coming deliverance that he was to bring for Israel. Time passes, he is getting ready for all these things, and he begins to doubt and have unbelief.

“And Gideon said unto God, If You will save Israel by mine hand, as You have said. (if you are not just putting me on and lying to me.) Behold, I will put a fleece of wool on the floor; and if the dew be on the fleece only, and it be dry upon all the earth beside then shall I know that You will save Israel by mine hand, as You have said. (if you are really not lying to me.)”

Can you see that the whole fleece request of Gideon was born out of unbelief? He recognized what God had said but he does not believe God to be a truth speaker, or that God really said anything. Either way, it is unbelief. What happened. It came true. Verse 38, "He woke up early on the morning and thrust the fleece and wringed the dew out of the fleece, a bowl full of water, and it was dry around. That was not enough. So, Gideon said again in verse 39, “Let not your anger be hot against me, and I will speak but this once; and let me prove, I ask, but this once with the fleece; let it now be dry only upon the fleece, and upon all the ground let there be dew. And God did so that night.” Fleecing, then, is a form of confirmation for guidance that comes from an evil heart of unbelief. It is not a God-ordained pattern for guidance. In fact if God chose not to honor it, he would not have obeyed God.

The moment you start fleecing for confirmation before God you are automatically setting yourself up to be deceived and led astray and outside the will of God. That is the process of trying to use God your way instead of yielding to God and letting Him use you. It is a way of telling God how to do it, when to do it, and what way to do it, and then you will understand it. Remember, that if you want to walk in spiritual safety, God is the sovereign, we are the servants.

DEALING WITH DIFFERENCES AMONG CHRISTIANS

God has graced our church with great unity inspite of its members coming from different backgrounds and view-points. We do not always agree on each and every point, but we don't tear up the church because we disagree. We value the unity of the church more than we value our individual preferences.

Where God allows variety and liberty, general Biblical principles guide Christian behavior. From these principles a believer draws godly attitudes and character. These attitudes equip the believer to respond with Christ-like actions when personal opinions, preferences and convictions clash. Where mandates are not available, principles do help Christians walk in line with the truth of the Gospel, deal with difference and maintain unity. Without lines or principles to follow, chaos and anarchy rule and people get hurt. Believers who enjoy variety sooner or later collide with each other. The liberty of one man offends another.

Romans 14 shows believers with different personal convictions how to relate to each other and to avoid conflicts. Romans 14 shows us how to fulfill the Golden Rule, "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them." Romans 14 shows us how to fulfill the second-greatest commandment, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Here are nine principles from Romans 14 giving guidelines for us to follow as we deal with differences between believers:

1. RECEIVE THE WEAK BROTHER.

In the church at Rome, some believers did not eat meat. Some chose to eat only vegetables. According to the original Greek text, a quarrel (Greek: "*Dialogismos*") erupted over thoughts and opinions. The apostle Paul found no fault with the personal convictions of either party and allowed them the liberty to eat whatever they chose. However, he warned them not to confuse a personal conviction with a Biblical mandate. Paul drew a line separating the two issues and warned them not to think their personal convictions about diet had any impact on their salvation, which clear Biblical teaching describes as a gift. Abstaining from meat does not earn anyone's salvation. Paul restrained both sides from substituting their personal opinions for faith in Christ as a means of receiving salvation.

Rigid restrictions against eating meat marked the man weak in faith. Where faith is weak, saints take a legalistic approach to life. Under a legalistic system, people learn to earn acceptance and approval by their works, but it is always wrong to make rules and regulations a means of salvation. In fact, it is heresy. In the church at Rome, believers who had been raised under Judaism had a tendency toward legalism. Their value system had been built on hundreds of restrictions placed on their lives under the Old Testament economy.

Romans 14:1 charges us to "receive one who is weak in the faith." We are to welcome him and accept him just as God welcomes and accepts us. God receives us graciously. When a brother makes personal choices in life different than the choices you have made but not in violation of Biblical mandates, receive him without criticism, argument or judgment. Paul told both these men, "Don't judge one another. Allow God to judge because He is the judge of all."

In the church today, believers sometime demonstrate weak faith. We hear people say, "I go to church" as if going church gives them salvation. Getting up every Sunday morning and going to church does not make you right with God. It does not make God love you. God loves you even when you are disobedient. He is committed to you.

The love relationship you have with the Lord leads you to do good works, but the relationship comes first. Good works follow. (Eph. 2: 8-10). Christ initiated the relationship by shedding His blood on the cross to pay the penalty for your sin. Depending even slightly on works is a characteristic of weak faith. You are accepted by Christ because of His atoning work. Period! Full stop!

2. DO NOT DESPISE AND JUDGE OTHERS.

Paul told the weaker saint and the stronger one not to view each other with contempt (Romans 14:3-4). God himself has received both of them. Both are the Lord's servants. Both are accepted in the beloved. God is at work in both of their lives. "He who has begun a good work in you will complete it." (Philippians 1:6). "I am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed unto Him until that day." (II Timothy 1:12). God keeps both saints and makes both complete. Both have a secure position in the Lord. Their works do not keep them or make them complete. They are complete in the Lord and should not look down on each other.

3. BE FULLY PERSUADED OF RIGHT AND WRONG BEHAVIOUR.

If a believer holds a personal conviction, he must have inner peace and confidence that his conviction is pure. Others will not necessarily hold the same conviction, so he must be "fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5).

In Rome, believers in the church differed over how to observe the Sabbath. Hot debate centered on whether one day had special significance or whether every day was the same. Paul did not condemn the celebration of a certain day. He cautioned against worship of the day itself and emphasized worship of the Lord regardless of the preferred day. I think the strong position sees every day as the Lord's day. To a Christian, every day is the same. Every day is the day the Lord has made. Every day is special.

4. WATCH OUT WHAT YOU DO.

Exercise care in your conduct toward others. The saint with whom you have differences also belongs to the Lord. Christ died for both weak and strong saints. Both are accepted by God (Romans 14:8).

5. LEAVE THE JUDGEMENT TO GOD.

Everyone will stand before God's judgment seat and will give an account of himself to the Lord (Romans 14:10-12). God will judge all by His standards so why look down on another person who does not measure up to your standards? Allow the Lord to judge. We must be willing to receive those with others views in the Lord.

The person who has Christian liberty has no problem leaving the judgment to God. He allows God, in His infinite wisdom, to settle the problem.

6. LAY NO STUMBLE BLOCKS IN THE PATHS OF OTHERS.

Judge your own conduct. Ask yourself, "Am I a stumbling block, a trap, a snare, an obstacle that causes someone else to sin?" Your job is not to justify your conduct by comparing it to others' conduct. Your job is to ask yourself, "Am I hurting my brother?" Romans 14:13-15 gives three guidelines to help us judge ourselves and our conduct.

First, respect other Christians' convictions. Ask yourself, "What does my brother think is unclean? What would cause him to stumble? We must be sensitive to other people's convictions and not purposely offend them by behavior you know they consider "unclean" or sinful. Being careless and insensitive you could say, "I'm strong. He is weak. That's his problem, not mine. I can do these things. I can go to these activities and still love and worship God. I'm not going to be in bondage. I'm going to have my Christian liberty." But what have you done to your weaker brother?

The Corinthian church was divided as believers took sides in a controversy over meat offered to idols (I Corinthians 8:1-13). One segment of the church considered the meat unclean and unfit to eat. Another group in the church had liberty to eat the meat. They simply took it and said, "There is no power in idols. This is just plain meat." When you consider how your brother views your behavior and ask, "what does my brother believe is unclean?", then you see the issue in an entirely different light.

Second, do not destroy your brother with your liberty. The Bible says we must walk in love toward our brother (Roman 14:15). We are not to distress or grieve him. It is frightening to

think our liberty actually could destroy a brother, a sister, a child, a young person or a teenager.

Eating meat given to idols may not bother us at all because we are strong believers. We could feel very good about it, but God says, “Do not destroy your brother with your food.” This is not just a good suggestion. This is a clear command.

Third, handle your liberty in a faithful, responsible way. All things are pure in themselves (Romans 14:14), but man perverts pure things. He makes them impure, evil and destructive by irresponsible handling.

Grape juice is wonderful. It is pure, but man makes intoxicating drinks that cause drunkenness. Nothing is wrong with vegetation, but most drugs, legal and illegal, are produced from vegetation. Fellowship is wonderful. It is taught in the Bible. Fellowship is clean, but if it becomes a sensual party with suggestive or sexual involvement, then the fellowship is no longer clean and pure.

With a clear conscience one believer may knowingly do things which other saints consider sin, but if the other saints stumble over his liberty, he has caused them to sin. “When you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.” (I Corinthians 8:12).

7. GIVE NO OCCASION FOR CRITICISM.

Liberty can be abused. Christian brothers and sisters can be tripped up by our liberty when we seek our own pleasures and desires more than we seek the Kingdom of God. If other believers do not share our liberty, they will not view our conduct as balanced and acceptable before God (Romans 14:16). The Kingdom of God is our first concern, and we put the spiritual welfare of others before our own pleasures.

Strong believers should be willing to sacrifice a degree of their liberty to help weak believers. Strong believers may enjoy their liberty with a clear conscience, but if their liberty causes their brother to fall, they are to avoid the liberty that brought the weaker brother down.

8. PURSUE THINGS THAT BRING PEACE AND EDIFICATION.

If your first priority is the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, you will seek to edify a weak brother. You will not do anything to bring confusion to his spirit or mind. You will say, “I’m going to help him stand. I won’t tear him down by taking liberties in things to which he objects.”

The Bible says we are to “live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18), and that we are to edify or build up one another (Romans 14:19). This will not put you in bondage if your priorities are right.

Because Paul loved his brethren, he surrendered his liberty and made a concession. In a sense, he said, “If eating meat will hurt my brother, I’m not going to eat any more non-vegetarian food until the world ends. Take it off my menu.” (I Corinthians 8:13). Paul realized weak saints could not handle his liberty.

9. DO NOT CONDEMN YOURSELF.

“Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves.” (Romans 14:22). Do you feel your liberty allows you to do a particular thing you know offends another segment of God’s people? Here are three ways to keep yourself from being self-condemned:

A. Keep your faith. Your activity must be acceptable to God and you must be able to do it faith. “Whatever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). If you can offer this activity to God with thanksgiving then you can do it. That is where you start, and that eliminates a lot of the questionable areas.

If God does not mind you doing it but it offends others, then Romans 14:22 directs you to do it privately before God. Do not publicly parade it. That is being a hypocrite. That is

loving your brother and protecting his weakness. It is protecting his conscience and preventing him from stumbling over your liberty.

B. Do not go against your own conscience. If your conscience says an activity is wrong, you cannot do it in faith. Do not condemn yourself by violating your conscience. Can you give thanks for the activity? Can you pray before you read it, put it on, watch it or do it? If so, your conscience is clear before God. Remember, your children and your spouse will be influenced by what you do and by what you allow in your home.

C. Act on faith from a conviction that God approves of the activity. Make your behavior consistent with your confession. This is clear teaching. You may not like it. Some would like to let their liberty rip through the church. They would like to say, "Let the weak fall if they can't stand. I'm not going to be legalistic like they are. I believe that Jesus saves and it doesn't really matter about my activities. All that matters is just Jesus and me. Church, get out of my way."

The Lord is positioning us to reach the harvest. We have to be very careful that our personal lives do not block the harvest. We have to be sensitive to one another. We cannot be offensive. We cannot cause a brother or sister to stumble. We cannot cause the unbeliever to stumble. I am my brother's keeper.

BIBLICAL STANDARDS ON CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

When I am senior pastor, the other elders and I set the community standard for the fellowship to follow. This does not mean that we do not listen to other members of the church in making those decisions, but as parents in a family, the leadership must set standards. Some of our standards have earned us the outstanding reputation that we as a fellowship enjoy in society today.

Here are some of the community standards we currently follow.

MOVIES

We discourage believers from making a habit of watching movies, especially in a movie theater where the believer has no control over the atmosphere. We do not teach it as a Biblical mandate, but we do have a right to evaluate movies and establish community standards for the church of God.

Trying to find a clean family movie is one of the most frustrating things. It is almost impossible to find a film or video you can watch all the way through without being embarrassed or having to turn it off. The majority of the movies made today are unprofitable to the spirit, soul and mind of the Christian. I do not think enough decent movies have been made to see them on a regular basis. You can watch a movie and have your emotions excited, but if you feast on garbage, you will become spiritually sick. Something deep inside will say, "Boy that was a waste, a real waste." What you watch and listen to is very important. It is as important as what you eat. You would not think of eating filthy, moldy food or poison, yet we often devour it through our eyes and ears. Then we wonder why our spirit is so weak.

SOCIAL DRINKING

Our standard is total abstinence from alcoholic beverage. Here again we do not have a Biblical mandate. Rather, our standard reflects the curse alcohol has been for so many people around the world. Drinking is involved in many divorces, homicides and traffic deaths.

One out of four people who drink socially will be hooked and become an alcoholic. In many nations drinking and alcoholism invariably lead to poverty and all of its related misery.

Why nibble away at something that poisons our society? You may be able to do it and not offend yourself or the Lord, but the person next to you will stumble over your liberty. If you want to drink and have a clear conscience before God, then do it privately as Romans 14:22 instructs. Do not drink in front of anyone. Your liberty is not more important than the unity of the Body. We ask our people to please respect the unity of the church body and do not cause division (Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-33; 31:3-7; Isaiah 5:22; 56:10-12; Luke 1:15; I Corinthians 5:11; 6:12; 8:12).

MUSIC

I do not think a Christian should listen to hard rock music. It does not belong in your ears and your mind. Music is one of the highest expressions of the soul. When you listen to music, you need to ask, "What is it doing to me?" What is it doing for me?" Hard rock music has become a tool of Satan to destroy the moral fiber of man. The strong, and often sensual, beat has the power to lower human inhibitions and God-given modesty. It promotes the notion of letting yourself "go" with no consideration for restraint. Under its influence, people are tempted to do things that they might otherwise not do, such as taking drugs and / or alcohol and engaging in promiscuous sexual relations (see Philippians 4:8-9).

Our lives should be filled with godly music that will edify, like praise and worship songs and hymns. Everything that we do in word or deed should be to the glory of God. (I Cor. 10: 31).

GAMBLING

Gambling has no place in the life of a believer. It is a get-rich-quick scheme, and the people who suffer most are the poor who think they are going to hit the jackpot. Get-rich-quick schemes are condemned in the book of Proverbs (28:20,22).

TOBACCO

Believe it or not, the world has finally caught up with the church on the tobacco issue. The world has finally agreed that smoking is bad for you, that it corrupts your lungs and gives you cancer and many other diseases. Thank God for what has happened in the last decade.

Our bodies are temples of God and we must not do anything that will defile them (I Corinthians 3:16-17; 6:15-20).

DRESS

Every two years, I put an article in the church bulletin. It says, "We encourage our sisters to wear dresses (or whatever local respectable dress for women might be) on the Lord's Day and for men to be well-groomed ..." Most people receive it well and I get some lovely letters, but I also get some resistance. "It's none of your business what I wear!" some say. "You are meddling, pastor. Preach the Word and stay out of this area." I can understand their reaction if they think I am saying I have a Biblical mandate that speaks to dress. I do not. It is a believers' community standard.

When we come to the house of God on the Lord's Day, we have one thing in mind and that is to meet with the Lord's Jesus Christ, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. He is the most important person in our lives. We want our children to know it is not just another play day. This is a special day. It is sanctified. It is set apart as a day to the Lord to come and worship Him. We should look nice. The extra effort to clean up, put on a tie or dress or polish your shoes is excellent discipline for your whole family. It does not make us more spiritual. It is just a good presentation.

If you had an audience with the President of your nation, how would you dress? You would look your best and present yourself with dignity. That is not pride. It is showing respect. Modestly and moderation are the believers' guidelines in dress. The Bible requires modesty in clothing (I Timothy 2:9). What you and I call modesty may be different but our judgments will be influenced by the sensitivities of others in the church if we consciously try not to offend them. We are charged to "give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God" (I Corinthians 10:32). The only way to avoid offending people from such diverse backgrounds is through moderation in everything we do (Philippians 4:5). We do not need the latest fashions from Paris, but neither should we wear clothes that were fashioned for the church.

We discourage the wearing of clothes that expose the human anatomy. Revealing clothing is immodest. Clothing should draw attention to a person's face rather than to his or her body. God never intended for us to draw attention to our bodies in a sensual way, which can be especially distracting in the house of the Lord.

We fully expect guest and visitors to dress any way they please. We love them. We do not hold ourselves in a superior position, but we do not believe our believers' standards must conform to theirs. We want to be relatable, but we also want to teach them a certain respect for the corporate gathering of God's people.

WORDLY FORMS OF DANCING

Our standard is total avoidance of all forms of one-on-one social dancing. Modern forms of dance clearly violate the Scripture by deliberately exciting sexual desire in those who participate and in those who observe. Dancing is the prelude to sexual indulgence in all cultures. It is the same in the most primitive of cultures of the world as it is in the cities of developed nations. Two words in the Bible describe this activity:

1. Lasciviousness (Ephesians 4:19). This word refers to the arousal of sexual desires in another person which cannot be honorably fulfilled.

2. Concupiscence (Colossians 3:5). This is the unlawful desire of sexual pleasure. (Also see Romans 7:8 and 1 Thessalonians 4:5).
The discotheque, dance hall, night-club, dancing, etc. is not a proper place for the believer to be. Many a young person has been enticed into sin through their involvement in such activities.
Husband and wives dancing together may be fine and acceptable, but what does that say to your sons and daughters? What about the single person? Will our liberty be a stumbling block to others?
We are our brother's keeper. We will do nothing that would cause a weaker believer to fall.

RECENT TRENDS

Recently I have noticed another trend in the house of the Lord which are not proper. First, men and boys wear baseball caps and athletic gear to church. When coming to church it is like coming before the King of the Universe. In most societies it is a sign of honor and respect to remove your hat in the presence of a dignitary. It would be impolite to wear a hat and sit at someone's dinner table. This practice, in my opinion, is just as inconsiderate in the worship service.

Again, visitors and strangers can come any way they wish and we will love them, but we should not treat the house of God so common or casually. If the visitor decides to stay, he will accept the standards set as a testimony and live by them.

We are not to let our liberty cause a brother to stumble. We are not to do anything that is deliberately offensive. These requirements are from the Lord.

No, there is no Biblical mandate concerning the above, but just common courtesy would be enough reason to avoid these activities.

The church is a godly standard setter for our community. If we lose our way in godliness and courtesy, what hope has the world? Jesus came to give us life, hope and a future. The believer should radiate the life of Christ by his or her lifestyle. "Whatever we do, we do it all for the glory of God."

REPRODUCING MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP

JESUS CHRIST our:

<u>SAVIOUR</u>	<u>BAPTISER</u>
I	I
Repent	Receive
I	I
LIFE	POWER
I	I
Grown-FRUIT- Cultivate	Given-GIFTS-Excel
I	I
<u>CHARACTER</u>	<u>CONDUCT</u>
(being)	(thought-word-deed)

Purpose: To become like Jesus.....and express His life

Place: Born into God's family.....baptized into Christ's Body

Calling: To function in the Church.....and to the world

The Importance of Reproducing Ministry

"It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:11-16).

1. One of the most important aspects of leadership is the ability to identify and recruit leaders and a work force to carry out the work of the ministry. This ability is the principle missing link in the non-growing church today.
2. It's key to healthy growth: you can only grow (both in numbers and in spiritual maturity) as your leadership capacity expands.
3. It is easy to get bogged down in meeting needs directly. In the long run, the most effective way for us to meet the needs of our people is to equip more and more people for leadership and ministry.
4. We must make it a priority!
5. In our chain of churches we examined the reasons why some of our church planting efforts were unsuccessful. The number one reason was the pastor's inability to identify, recruit, train, deploy, monitor, and nurture people into the ministry of the church.

RECRUITING

- A. Looking for leaders.

We are working from the premise that we can't make leaders, we can only find them (by learning how to look and discern), given them opportunities to serve as workers (2 Timothy 2:2) and release leadership to them as God gives it.

- B. Why recruit?

1. God recruits. (You were recruited!) Throughout the Word, God went after men and women (Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Prophets, etc.)
 2. Jesus recruited the twelve: "Follow me!" He called them to himself and to serve. Matthew 4:18-21.
 3. We are called to serve.
 - a. To be a member of the church is to participate somewhere as a servant. Understanding that our callings will be defined and proven as we serve.
 - b. People are healed as they minister; service is a very necessary component to healing.
 - c. "Army vs. Audience" mentality is the philosophy of the church (because we believe it to be Biblical.)
 4. As pastors, we are called to equip the saints to serve. God gives us vision for programs and programs don't exist without personnel. Ephesians 4:10; Matthew 9:35-38.
 5. Volunteerism doesn't work for leadership.
 - a. The wrong people volunteer (out of needs to lead, immaturity, impure motives, etc., then you have to deal with them!)
 - b. Or no people volunteer (since the church tends to be trained spectators!).
- C. Who to recruit?
1. Everyone to work and serve.
 2. "David's" for leadership. 1 Samuel 16:7.
 - a. Consider that you'll reproduce the lives of those leaders in the church.
 - b. Consider that you'll be giving yourself to the leaders. (Who do you want to be with all the time?)
- D. Selection of the right workers is fundamental to developing leadership within the church.
1. Recruitment consists of letting people know the vision, goals, and plans.
 2. Selection must depend on initiation of Jesus. Mark 1:16-17.
 3. Recruiting is matching those called by God to work in the church to the job God has called them to do.
- E. Guidelines in identifying workers and leaders.
1. Notice who are naturally leading. Who do people talk about?
 2. Listen to and observe what people like to do.
 3. Distinguish between genuinely interested people and opportunists.
 - a. Don't be in hurry! Time is on your side.
 - b. Watch what people do, not only what they say.
 4. Be objective! Don't be over or underwhelmed by a person's giftedness, appearance, education, or background.
 5. Build genuine relationship with them.
 6. Be familiar with the needs to be met and the job to be filled.
 7. Give them a true picture of the job.
 - a. Write out guidelines and requirements.
 - b. Expectations of time commitment.
 - c. Let them know the cost
 - d. Draw them to commitment
- F. Character signs.
1. **Family** – How does the person treat his or her spouse and children? Does he or she honor, value and verbally appreciate his/her family? What a person does with his family is what the person will do with the church. Family is a testing ground for effective leadership.
 2. **Speech patterns** – Speech is the microphone of the heart. Is the person slow to speak and quick to hear (James 1:19)? Observe how one talks about others. This is the way

he or she will talk about you and the church when you are not around. Look for loyalty, watch out for cynicism.

3. Appearance – appearance is not a register of social classification, as in the world, but it may tell us what the person thinks about himself or herself and how life is viewed.

4. Conduct with others – Does the person work well with a team? Submission is one of the visible assurances that a person has been filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18-21), as well as a register of the ability to work with others.

5. Money – How a person manages money tells us what is transpiring in their heart. Check their giving records.

6. Worship – Do they show their devotion to God through worship?

7. Prayer – Do they speak to God as if they had relationship with Him or do they simply say meaningless repetitions not unlike the Gentiles in Matthew 6:7? Are the prayers spoken as a demonstration of honesty and integrity about life?

8. Word of God – Are the realities of Scripture, not just doctrines and arguments, coming from them?

Note: External areas need to be considered along with any religious or spiritual evaluation. Many times leaders are appointed because of the way they prayed or ministered to people in a public setting. Many people who fail in ministry are those who appear religiously to have it together, yet in the area of everyday life, they are failing as authentic disciples of Christ. The functional side of life may be a better reflection of spiritual life than religious behavior.

G. Workers and their needs.

1. They must feel their job is meaningful to the whole.
2. They need to be rewarded.
3. They need to hear thanks.
4. They need recognition.
5. They need to be treated courteously.
6. They need to be nurtured and pastored.

Recruiting Survey

1. Who is faithful?

2. Who seems to understand your vision?

3. Who is eager to learn more?

4. Who is the Father pointing out to you?

5. What person/couples seem to be the natural leaders of the group?
Person (Couple) _____ Capacity _____
6. What specific skills do they have?
Person's Name _____ Skills _____

7. What types of ministry settings do you encounter on a regular basis?
- Hospital
 - Street
 - Ministry Trips
 - Fellowship
 - Counseling
 - Homes
 - Seminars
 - Kinship
 - Churches
 - Other
8. Who would be good candidates for going with you on these excursions?
- Person (Couple) _____ Activity _____

Evaluation Form

NAME: _____

1. Criteria
What criteria are you going to use to determine who you release?

Do they demonstrate:

- Commitment _____
- Loyalty _____
- Character _____
- Social skills _____
- Ministry skills _____
- Effectiveness _____

Are they:

- Teachable _____
- Eager _____
- Self motivated _____
- Humble _____

Well liked and respected by their peers _____

Do they have:

Strong marriages and/or personal relationships? _____

Strong working relationships with others? _____

2. Character
How do you see the individual in the following categories?

- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|----------------------------------------|---------------|
| a. | Nervous | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 | Composed |
| b. | Depressive | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 | Light-hearted |
| c. | Active | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 | Quiet |
| d. | Expressive-
Responsive | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 | Inhibited |
| e. | Sympathetic | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 | Indifferent |
| f. | Subjective | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 | Objective |
| g. | Dominant | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 | Submissive |
| h. | Hostile | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 | Tolerant |
| i. | Self-
disciplined | 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10 | Impulsive |

3. Commitment

a. What level of commitment do you feel the individual has overall?

Weak 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10 Strong

b. What level of commitment do you feel the individual has to family?

Weak 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10 Strong

c. What level of commitment do you feel the individual has to the values, practices and priorities of the fellowship?

Weak 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10 Strong

e. What level of commitment do you feel the individual has to the particular ministry they feel called to do?

Weak 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10 Strong

e. What level of commitment do you feel the individual has to you as their leader?

Weak 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10 Strong

f. What level of commitment do you feel the individual has to change?

Weak 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10 Strong

g. What level of commitment do you feel the individual has to on-going relationship?

Weak 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 – 7 – 8 – 9 – 10 Strong

TRAINING

A. Occurs over a period of time.

Both information and transformation are necessary in developing a leader.

B. Focus of training / equipping the worker and leaders is to help them become informed, articulate and skilled in their ministry area.

C. Three vehicles for training:

1. Formal
2. Informal
3. Modeling

D. Learning Climate.

1. People usually have greater thirst for training as the need arises.
2. Hot Climate: exposing a learner to something more than they have experienced.
3. Greenhouse learning climate is when the learner is exposed to a hot climate over a long period of time.
4. Hands on learning.
 - a. Process of going to trade school versus college.
 - b. Formation versus information.
5. How do we then train?
HOT CLIMATE + GREENHOUSE + HANDS ON = A DISCIPLE
6. Cool climate.
 - a. School model which focuses on mastery of data.
 - b. No expectation of doing the stuff.
 - c. Hot climate cooled by lack of relationship and hands on experience.

E. Learning process loop which provides a hot climate.

1. Do the ministry yourself.
2. Find others to observe as you minister.
3. Let them minister while you observe.
4. This step sends us to the next area of work.

F. Summary

1. Pray for workers and leaders.
2. Observe their character and behavior over a period of time.
3. Spend time with them, have them over for dinner, and develop relationship.
4. Ask for input from other staff leaders.
5. Communicate vision and direction to them and observe their ongoing response.
6. Make them “Interns.”
 - a. Have regular time with them prior to a meeting for input, discussion or intercession.
 - b. Meet monthly to gain their observations and reflections on the group and give them opportunity to ask any questions.
 - c. Model ministry for them, include them, then encourage them to minister.

DEPLOYMENT

- A. To send someone out to minister is certainly a part of the training mission. Jesus participated in this. After intimacy came enablement and empowerment.
 1. The discipline were selected by Jesus, shown how to minister and then sent out. Matthew 10:1-15.
 2. He tells them where to go, what to preach, what to do, how to travel and what to expect.
 3. This is the beginning of cutting the umbilical cord. They are on their own for a short period of time. They have to succeed or fail. Either is okay.
- B. Deployment has to do with administration and placement of people to carry out the task or goal.
 1. The new worker / leader must have a clear idea of their calling and gifts.
 2. Each new leader must receive a clear and complete description of expectations and responsibilities.
 3. The new leader and his Overseer must know what they can legitimately expect from one another, so unmet expectations don't lead to resentment and bitterness.
 4. Reporting relationships must be clearly defined. The new leader must know who is “over” them and accept limited relationship with the Senior Pastor.
 5. Ongoing training, reading, listening, ministry trips, etc. need to be an understood aspect of service deployment.
 6. Continue to give feedback as you work with your workers / leaders through the training phases.
- C. You must be committed to the success of those you delegate and deploy.
 1. Involves a commitment to pray for them.
 2. Be available to listen and give ministry, for both personal and family counsel.
 3. Maintain contact.

MONITOR

- A. The Overseer, leader and pastor need to keep watch over the new worker / leader and their ministry. Responsibility and accountability are inseparable twins.
 1. Evaluation and feedback must continue.
 2. All new leaders / workers need to feel appreciated and part of the team.
 3. They need to see how their efforts fit into the larger scheme of things.
- B. Monthly or agreed upon meetings and other contacts are essential.
 1. Personal needs addressed.
 2. Performance evaluated. Catch them doing something right!
 3. Relationship developed.

NURTURE

- A. God is our example of nurturing. He initiates nurture. Isaiah 27:2-3.
- B. Nurturing has to do with genuine friendship, with giving value to and meeting personal needs through counsel and prayer.
- C. Model of Jesus nurturing His disciples: Luke 10:1-20
 - 1. Jesus made time for them.
 - 2. He rejoiced in what they accomplished.
 - 3. His giving of time was one way of saying. "Thank you."

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."

PREREQUISITES FOR LEADERSHIP

- 1. Sincere love for and pursuit to know Jesus Christ more intimately demonstrated through regular personal worship, meditation on the Word, and prayer. Philippians 3:7-10.
- 2. Leadership is an active function and not merely a title or position in the corporate structure of the church. Leadership is an obligation to God of service and self-sacrifice yet not ministering from duty, but eagerly, and voluntarily from love. 1 Peter 5:2.
- 3. Unity with and commitment to the purpose, values, priorities, practices, and convictions of the Church – both the movement and the local church is essential. This unity and commitment would be demonstrated through regular participation in church programs, conferences and outreach ministry. All leaders are expected to demonstrate loyalty to the Pastor and success of the church. Personal loyalty to the Pastor and his wife is one of the highest qualifications for co-laborers and leaders. Ephesians 4:3.
- 4. Leaders must be committed to and have love for people and for Jesus without the desire to benefit personally at the expense of the sheep. John 21:17; Ezekiel 34
- 5. A leader must trustworthy. Trustworthiness is the result of a proven track-record in the things of the Spirit and affairs of related church ministry. Leaders must have the ability to resist being bought, bribed, manipulated, or intimidated by those seeking to be divisive and/or destructive. 2 Corinthians 4:2.
- 6. Leaders must be "team players" and help one's associates to succeed. Philippians 2:3-4.
- 7. Leaders must be capable and respected, nature in the faith, with proven ministry capability. 1 Timothy 3:2.

8. Leaders must have a strong, loving marriage in which both the husband and wife sense the call to minister. Ministering as a couple and ministering in teams is an integral part of the effectiveness of our ministry. Acts 18:26; 1 Timothy 3:2.
9. Leaders must be teachable and have the ability to take correction. The true test of character in any leader is their ability to receive instruction and reproof. Any student must be receptive to the sometimes radical requirements of being a student in the kingdom.
10. Leaders are committed to equipping others for ministry through active recruiting, training, developing, monitoring, and nurturing people. Mark 3:13-15.
11. Leaders are committed, cheerful givers who tithe and give regularly to the local fellowship Malachi 3:8-10.
12. Commitment to the Barnabas (Son of Encouragement) style of leadership. That style would be one of open and loving communication, solving relational problems, processing anger constructively, encouraging and building up one another, and maintaining confidences strictly.
13. Free from ambition (“An eager or inordinate desire for preferment, honor, superiority, power or personal attainment; strongly desirous of fame”). Philippians 2:3-4; Jas. 3:13-18.
14. Purity of heart and character as exemplified in Timothy, Titus and Galatians 5:16-25. These qualities include:
 - a. Being above reproach.
 - b. Temperate
 - c. Self-controlled
 - d. Respected
 - e. Hospitable
 - f. Not addicted to wine (or bound by any habit)
 - g. Not violent but gentle
 - h. Free from the love of money.
 - i. Not contentious
 - j. Home life in order
15. Why do we have such requirements for leadership?
 - a. The Lord charges us to be careful. James 3:1; 1 Timothy 3.
 - b. The pastor is responsible to the Lord for the sheep, so he must take sure they are receiving proper care. 1 Peter 5:2-3.
 - c. The enemy will attack the leader wherever he/she is vulnerable. 1 Peter 5:8-9.
 - d. The leaders model the ministry, values, and ultimately the Kingdom to the church. Who we are and what we do is far more important than what we say. 1 Corinthians 4:15 – 16.
 - e. Prerequisites and requirements separate those truly called and qualified from those seeking to have needs met through position.
 - f. Note: These are only basic, general requirements for leadership. Individual ministry areas may have additional requirements.

The Three C's of a Cell Group Church

There are three words beginning with "C" which summarize the Cell Group Church: Cell, Congregation, and Celebration. The most important of the three is the Cell. For those who are conditioned to think of the Congregation as the focal point of church life, this will require radical adjustments.

A. Celebration

The Celebration is a mass gathering where every cell member of the church gathers for a demonstration of their life together in a giant celebration to worship God. This city-wide or area-wise meeting is used for praise and worship, solid Bible teaching, evangelism, and is a vital part of the public witness of the people of God. There is no limit to the size. In fact, the slogan here is probably, "The more, the merrier!"

Music focuses upon worship of the Godhead. There is much singing. The place is usually charged with joy. A full hour of praise and worship may not be enough.

B. Congregation

An average church member needs a circle of friends around him or her. The key word here is: fellowship. This is where activities for group size between 50 to 100 are organized. Large group interaction takes place here. Mass teaching or information transfer happens here quite effectively. The congregation may set aside half a night of prayer, or sometimes several days of prayer.

Here the leader is one among equals, but loved and respected for the spiritual maturity which provides direction to the younger servants. This pastor is usually the person who is assigned to a congregation of cells and ministers among them. He or she is gifted in the areas of counseling, administration and evangelism, but not in preaching or teaching. In no sense of the word does he become the senior pastor of the area cells and congregation he serves. His ministry is people-orientated, not pulpit-orientated.

C. Cells

Cells are the basic building blocks of all life forms. Following Biblical patterns, the cell is also the basic life form of the church. Participation in these cell churches takes place by joining the cell.

The cell group is where people are nurtured, equipped to serve, and where members build up (edify) one another. It forms a community where believers are called accountable to each other, and where they can be totally transparent with one another.

There are limits to the activity within a cell group. While it may begin its session with a brief time of praise and worship, that is not its primary purpose. While it will use the Bible freely for its lifestyle, it is not the place for Bible study. These needs are fulfilled at a different level in the life of the church. Thus it is not necessary for the cell leader to be a great bible teacher, or even a strong communicator. Instead the cell leader must have a love for the flock and a desire to minister to their needs. He or she serves on a pastoral level, caring for the needs of the sheep. The primary activity of the cell group is edification, building up one another. This joint ministry is directed by the Holy Spirit, built upon the Scriptural teaching already received in a Congregation or Celebration assembly.

Since intimate friendship or the pouring out of one's heart does not and cannot happen in a large group, the cell group meets this need. The key word here is: kinship.

Group dynamics research reveals that there are two critical number which will affect the multiplication process. The maximum size of a group should be not more than 15 regular members. Communication lines between members become too complicated with more than 15 members. There is also a need for a critical mass before a group can function efficiently. When groups stabilize at around 15 members, then they should be multiplied into two groups of 7 and 8 members respectively each with a leader.

CHURCH GROWTH PRINCIPLES

INTRODUCTION

God chooses men! Men who are first humbled, broken and then utterly led by His Holy Spirit. These same men then become the ones who are emblazoned with passion to take up the dare to do what God desires them to. Finally, against all opposition and difficulty, these men go ahead and accomplish God's task, in God's way, for God's glory!

History is spangled with such men, and the Scriptures are filled with them. They constitute the cloud of witnesses for the coming generations ahead. Men birth movements, and movements in turn change lives and shake nations. God does that in every generation to accomplish His will and purposes in the hearts and lives of His Church. Movements need to be birthed and bathed in visionary passion, and raised up with the milk and meat of His Word; such a church will become a movement of the Holy Spirit that can touch and influence nations.

This will not happen overnight. Years of hard labor and heart rending prayer, mixed with faith and hope, taking step by step in His plans. Each step becomes a miracle. Every miracle becomes a lesson of learning through different dimensions of the school of the Spirit. All this will bring you to a point where powerful principles of His Kingdom begin to work effectively.

We do not claim to have formulas or ideas that can cause churches to grow and multiply. Neither do we have any short-cuts and quick-fix remedies to growth and developments of leaders. What we have is merely what the Holy Spirit has imparted to us over the years. These are His principles, that He shown us as we were faithful to learn, and to walk in, step by step.

Let us share with you a few of these awesome principles:

1. The first principle that the Lord showed us was: to have a passionate vision for the lost, win them to Jesus, and then plant them into House or Cell Churches.

The key has been to effectively impart vision into our leaders and members. Habakkuk has indeed taught us rightly. Make the vision clear, write it down in a simple form, and whoever reads it will be motivated to accomplish the **vision!!!**

- A clear vision comes from God when we wait on Him.
- A clear vision makes us think positively upon the facts and takes up the challenges we face.
- A clear vision motivates the forces that stand with us.
- A clear vision will accomplish the purposes of God's heart for the lost.
- A clear vision will bring in His provision!

We have a very clear three-pronged vision, which continues to be fulfilled.

1. EVANGELISING the nations (ethnic groups) of our land and beyond its borders.
2. ESTABLISHING local, Spirit-filled, indigenous, self-supporting churches in cities, towns, villages and tribal areas all over the nation.
3. EQUIPPING saints to become effective, fruit bearing and result oriented disciples to do the works of the Kingdom.

As we spend time seeking the Lord in prayer and fasting, God gave us a vision to touch one-tenth of our city, and to move out into house groups. The vision began to burn in our hearts even as the first house groups began to be planted. Short term and long term goals were born, and the whole church was motivated to do what the Lord had so clearly showed us. God miraculously provided us with tons of literature in different languages. Systematically teams went out combing the city with tracts and Gospels. House groups sprang up, and soon signs and wonders began to happen in our midst. God was moving and we are amazed. The growth of the house groups ignited the Word in our hearts. People found fulfillment in finding their place in the local Body of Christ. In spite of the quick growth, relationships developed and a family-like atmosphere of caring and sharing began to become common place in our midst.

Intensive outreach programs were carried out with mobilizing most of our members along with strategic follow-up. Thus the church grew as a large number of souls were added, almost on a daily basis. Subsequently, God spoke to us a very clearly of House-Churches during the weekdays, and Celebration Centres on Sundays. The House Churches really began to stabilize the people. We saw a high level of commitment, a greater zeal for evangelism, and a drastic increase in tithes and offerings. Suddenly leaders began to rise up joining hands to strengthen the force to reap the harvest. God had promised us, "Ask of me, and I will surely give the nations as thine inheritance. And the very ends of the earth as thy possession." Psalm 2:8.

Today, daily evangelism brings many to faith in Christ. The power of God is seen in lives being transformed. Drug addicts, rag pickers, gangsters and the underprivileged and being radically changed by God. Broken lives and devastated families are coming back together again; it thrills our hearts to see the power of Jesus working in human lives. Healing is coming to a city. We also touch another dimension of the human faculty. Health, education, employment and housing are relevant areas where God uses us in reaching the lost. Together with several other Christian organizations, we persevere looking to the Lord for manpower, material and money progressively, to fulfill the mandate and message of the great commission. With God all things are possible!

We have long-term goals too, and we are pressing on to the mark of our high calling. We are challenged to move on in the anointing that God has given us to possess the land. At present we have divided the city into Units. Each Unit contains a certain number of population. We have then divided each Population Unit into Areas Centers, and have further sub-divided each area center into Blocks. These Population Units will be networked together to form a powerful covering of intercessory Houses of Prayer. At any given moment hundreds of intercessors can be mobilized to get into high level spiritual warfare against the enemy. Accurate and intelligent intercession, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit can do the miraculous!! Only men look for mandates, but God is looking for men! Men of passion, men of vision, men who can set nations afire with a blazing torch of godly vision. Arise and Shine! We can reach our nation for Jesus!

2. The second principle that God revealed to us was that: there needed to be a drastic change in leadership styles, mentality and training.

There is a heart cry for leadership in the world today. Why is the question of leadership looming so large at this juncture in many nations' history?

- The decay of our culture has left a leadership vacuum. There is not enough virtue, not enough character being produced to turn out men and women with the stature to guide the affairs of men and nations. It is time that leaders of quality and character would stand up to affect our nation.
- The challenge of the new century has prompted an examination of current styles of leadership in the world and the types of societies they produced. Is the National Leader capable of effecting a change in our society nationally? Yes! It is possible. We need to strengthen our foundations first, then come into a covenanted unity, and move ahead with qualitative leadership to possess the land.
- The "Information Age" is upon us, and it will usher in an era of great change and potential for productivity and progress. The best leadership the world has ever known will be required to guide us through the greatest era and invention yet seen by men.

It is true that leaders determine the climate of the nation. It is time for us as the church in the land to produce leadership of passion, purity, and perseverance. We are recognizing men with God-given gifts and anointings, training them with Biblical principles and ethics, and releasing them to function to the best of their abilities.

One of the unique aspects that we have, in doing this, is that the men and women we train and release have definite goals and foresight. Their interest therefore is in what is to come rather than what is in the past, in the possibilities and opportunities that lie in the time horizon rather than the things that have already been accomplished. The desire to do better, aim higher and hit harder is a process that can be put into four steps:

- Identify your capacities and strengths.
- Analyze whether you are neglecting them, misusing them or making only partial use of them.
- Learn the correct or find most effective ways to use and develop your capacities.
- Endeavor to improve your skill, increase your capacity and better your results with every performance.

Out of the need now to train leaders, the Discipleship Training Centre was birthed. Many workers from different parts of the country were trained and equipped. Character-changing practical courses continue to be designed, along with several other short-term courses for laymen in different local training centers in the city and other parts of the nation. In training leaders we have discovered vital perspectives to sharpen their output and their cutting edge. We have taught them how to discover their giftings, then go on to develop themselves into maturity, by systematic study of the Word and finally teach them to learn how to effectively impart and delegate responsibility to faithful men.

Teamwork is not easy. It takes effort to walk in unity with one another. We look upon ourselves as a team of anointed men that God has uniquely combined by His Spirit. Each man has upon him a calling and ability that is recognized and so room is made for one another to fully function in the area of his or her personal anointing.

We have decided to excel in our roles as leaders.

3. The third principle is: the need for a continuous motivation to the leaders who are on the job and in the field.

We have learned that the motivational task is never done once and for all. An essential part of the function of leaders is to continually:

- Re-iterate growth, priorities and commitment
- Re-inforce foundations, fervor and charity
- Re-define goals and achievements

In difficult time the vision tends to fade and enthusiasm needs to be rekindled. In changed circumstances God has taught us to restate goals differently and in the light of experience to revise or modify our aims. A course on a map may be a straight line drawn with a ruler, but actual travel on the ground is never like that, it is rather a continual series of steps and starts and short scale course adjustments around obstacles. The presentation of the vision or goal is like a route map of the direction to be taken, but actual progress towards organizational goals requires constant navigational corrections!

Motivation helps us to constantly “change our guard”. The changing of the guard can be our shift of thinking, a physical change where we move to another place, a new position, or a fresh shift of thinking, or a fresh understanding of what the Holy Spirit is doing in this hour. Jonathan loved David and was in covenant relationship with him (1 Sam 18:1). However, it was a soulish covenant. When God changed the guard and anointed David in Saul’s place, Jonathan stayed in the old guard and died with it. The church needs to see prophetically and motivate her leaders to “change guard”; if one doesn’t move to the new thing it is death. Death of vision, death of relationships and even death of our very lives.

God taught us to keep the level of motivation high. Success is what we are created for. We may lose a few battles but we have already won the war. The prophet aptly said, “Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them. Is. 42:9.

4. The fourth principle is: the dire need for leaders to become ‘fathers’ to the ones who are sent forth.

The Apostle Paul aptly said to the church that there were many teachers but only a few fathers! Fathers have an uncanny way of imparting themselves into their children. We father spiritual

children. Just as in Gen. 1, each seed brought forth its own kind, so will be bring forth who we are in the sons we birth in our ministry. Physical sons would definitely be an asset to any minister of God, but it is blessing to see hundreds of spiritual sons being raised up every year. The principle of ‘fathering’ is truly a God given one.

We believe the key to fatherhood is relationships. We emphasize and teach that relationships are the key to effective communication and mobilization within different levels of leadership.

All relationships contain 4 elements that are the basic building blocks of birthing and growing sons in God. They are:

1) Trust

To trust men and release them has been our desire all the time. At times we have become vulnerable and have been hurt especially when those we trusted have let us down. Trust is a risk we take, trust is a choice we make.

2) Love

To care for our leaders. To see them through their hard times, their loneliness and difficulties. To love them, in spite of their weaknesses and failures. To give them another chance to prove themselves yet again and building a lasting growing and maturing relationship with them. Loving them will make them accountable and men of integrity. We have learnt to care for our leaders’ families, to look to their personal needs in the home, and to see that they live comfortably and decently. God has taught us to financially support our leaders with a good salary. No wonder our leaders dress well, live well and work hard!

3) Respect and honor

By this I mean that we accept each other. Making each one feel that they are recognized in our midst. Not to make our people feel bad about themselves but to affirm their strengths and abilities so as to work together as a team, rather than an authoritarian overseer, We have learned how important it is to appreciate our leaders. This brings better working partnerships and enhances the vision to become possible all the time. Lastly acknowledging them for their good work and hard labour are valid in God’s presence and in line with what God is doing and saying.

4) Understanding one another

Jesus repeatedly emphasizes this essential relationship between leaders and the led; and he modeled it in His own leadership. (John 10:14).

Let me share 5 key factors that the Lord taught us, that are critical for understanding the nature of individuals who are gifted.

- Every individual is unique and cannot be put in boxes and classified or categorized or measured by statistical averages.
- The mark of God’s gift in a person’s life is that they work. Nothing effective is ever accomplished anywhere by anybody without using God’s gift.
- Successful people are those who have found what their strengths are and then get better to excel at what they are good at doing. Each of us is created to fulfill his purposes.
- God has created us in such a way that when we are pouring ourselves out to serve Him through the very capacities He himself has given us to do it with, there is joy built into it for us.
- We are most productive when we are fulfilled in what we do.

As we seek to walk together in unity and love, as a father understands his children, so has God called us to walk in understanding and an open heart to serve one another.

CONCLUSION

Let me recapitulate the transferable principles in the multiplication of churches that the Lord has shown us: (1) Get a passionate vision for reaching the lost; (2) Bring about a drastic change in your leadership; (3) Continue to motivate and encourage those who are working hard in the field; and (4) Become ‘fathers’ to the ones under you. Love them, serve them and nourish them; they are His gift.

CELL CHURCH OR HOUSE CHURCH SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

Please submit the report to your Church leader next week.

Your name: _____

Week: beginning Sunday:_____ to Saturday_____

A. About your life

Day	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Time in prayer (mins)							
Time with Word (mins)							

Significant things for you in the week gone by: _____

What has the Lord spoken to you lately?_____

Whom have you witnessed to this week?_____

Have you handled your finances in a godly way?_____

Do you have any unresolved relational issues?_____

How is your relationship with your wife and children? (if applicable)_____

B. About the Cell or House Church meeting you attended

CC visited:_____ Leader's Name _____ Date_____

Your comments and observations on the Cell or House Church leader:

Was he punctual?_____

Did he take leadership?_____

Did he dominate the meeting?_____

Was he prepared? _____

Was he sensitive to the members? _____

Did he involve everyone?_____

Did he point people towards the Lord?_____

Was he open about his own strengths and weakness? _____

Did he succeed in his objective for the meeting? _____

Your comments on the CC leader's wife & family (if applicable):

Was his wife his helpmeet? _____

Did you sense any family tensions? _____

How did his children behave? _____

Do you have any concerns in this area? _____

Your comments on the Cell or House Church meeting itself:

What was the overall atmosphere like? _____

Did you sense the presence of God? _____

Did people seem to enjoy being there? _____

Was the meeting challenging? _____

How were visitors treated? _____

Were segments delegated to others? If so, write down your comments on how they handled them.

C. About the Cell or House Churches under your care

Comment on your relationship and involvement with each of the Cell Church Leaders you supervise. Please mention any hospitality, specific encouragement, counsel of confrontation which took place:

CC Leader:	Comments:
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

Write down the attendance figures during the last week at each of the Cell Churches you care for:

CC Leader's Name	Adults	Children	Visitors	
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				

CELL CHURCH OR HOUSE CHURCH LEADER'S REPORT

Please submit the report to your Church leader next week.

Your name: _____

Week: beginning Sunday: _____ to Saturday _____

A. About your life

Day	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
Time in prayer (mins)							
Timewith Word (mins)							

Significant things for you in the week gone by: _____

What has the Lord spoken to you lately?: _____

Whom have you witnessed to this week? _____

How is your relationship with your wife and children? (if applicable) _____

Is your relationship with your CC supervisor growing? _____

B. About the Growth Team Meeting

Date: _____ Time Spent: _____ hours _____ mins.

What was your objective? _____

Overall, how was the meeting? _____ Give details of each segment below:

Welcome: _____

Worship: _____

Word: _____

Witness: _____

Next week's plan and objective: _____

Have you delegated responsibility for a segment at next week's meeting? Write their names below:

Welcome	Worship	Word	Witness

Names for next foundation course: _____

ACCOUNTABILITY

Name _____

Month and year _____

Please answer the following questions as honestly as you can, with A,B, C or D for each week, where:

A = Yes, definitely

B = Overall, I think I'm doing, OK

C = I think this could be a problem

D = No, I need help!

		W E E K of the Month				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Have you spent personal, quality time with God this week?					
2	Has the Lord spoken personally to you this week?					
3	Are you diligently living in good of what the Lord has spoken to you?					
4	Have you spent adequate, quality time this week communicating with your wife?					
5	Have you been consistent in communication, training and discipline of your children?					
6	Have you been diligent in your use of time on working days and other times, too?					
7	Are you reconciled to all people "as far as it depends on you?"					
8	Have you avoided, with God's help, sexually explicit material and situations with a woman (or man) that might be considered promising?					
9	Have you handled your finances in a godly way? E.g. tithing, offerings, not overspending, avoiding debt, etc.					
10	Have you used your spiritual authority gently, not manipulating or intimidating anyone?					
11	Have you confessed all known sin in your life?					
12	Have you told the whole truth?					

NEW YEAR OVERHAULING

Self-examination to put things in order is the best preparation to enter the New Year. Spend a day or two exclusively for this exercise, using the following questionnaire.

1. Personal Life

Did I excuse myself of any secret sin last year? Have I learnt any bad habits? Did I ever grieve the Holy Spirit by defiling my body? Did I yield my mind to evil thoughts and lustful desires? Did I waste time in questionable pastimes?

2. Devotional Life

Did I neglect the daily quiet time? Were there days when Bible reading and prayer were simply rushed through? Was I irregular in fasting? Did I harden my heart about anything God convicted me of? Was I proud?

3. Family Life

Were there instances of unfaithfulness to my spouse during last year? Did I neglect family prayer and other responsibilities? Did I fail to spend sufficient time with my children? Have I caused any relationship problem in the family? Did I disobey my parents or talk back anytime? Did I fail to help in the household chores? Was I responsible for any unpleasantness at home?

4. Social Life

Did I ever fail to wear a smile before my neighbors? Did I do tit-for-rat for any wrong done to me? Did I try to overhear the conversations of others? Was I curious to know what others were doing? Was I unconcerned about the salvation of my neighbours? Was I indifferent when someone was sick? Was my tongue loose? Did I lie or exaggerate or tell half truths?

5. Work

Was I irregular or casual in my work anytime last year? Did I disrespect or backbite my superiors? Did I despise or abuse my co-worker? Did I ill-treat my subordinates? Did I steal anything from office or factory? Did I murmur when a hard work was assigned to me? Did I fail to set an example as a Christian? Was I jealous over another staff? Was there love of money and lust for things? Was I dishonest in business?

6. Country

Did I forget the national leaders in my prayers? Did I disrespect the rights of others in travel and public facilities? Did I cheat the government in tax-payment and the like? Did I violate any civil law?

7. Church

Did I neglect church? Did I reject any godly counsel? Has bitterness entered my heart against any fellow-believer? Did I fail to reconcile with the one I have wronged? Did I criticize any servant of God rudely instead of praying for him? Did I disrespect my pastor or any minister? Did I ever manifest a better-than-you attitude? Did I play a hypocrite?

8. Ministry

Did I feel lazy to go for evangelism? Was I stingy in giving to God? Did I fail to pray regularly for the lost? Have I failed to keep my commitment to any mission? Did I neglect to help the poor or the aged and relieve their suffering?

9. For Students

Did I copy in the exam or adopt any malpractice? Did I disrespect my teachers? Did I speak lies or twist facts? Was I rude to juniors? Was I lazy? Did I waste my parent's money? Did I damage any property of the institution? Did I silence my conscience to please my friends? Did I read or watch filth?

10. For Women

Did I covet masculinity in my dress or hair style or behaviour? Have I neglected home-making? Did I fail to happily accept my husband's leadership? Did I hen-peck? Did I gossip and reveal secrets? Was I dissatisfied with God's provisions?

An affirmative answer to any of these questions indicates sin. Sincere confession brings cleansing by the Blood of Jesus. (I John 1: 7- 9).

SELF – EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

1. PERSONAL PURITY

Do I keep myself as a clean vessel to be used by the Lord?

Do I live in any secret sin?

Do I wholeheartedly desire holiness?

Do I run away from all sources of temptation?

Is my conscience clear?

2. DEVOTIONAL HABITS

Do I keep my quiet time regularly for Bible meditation and prayer?

Do I delight in God's Word?

Is my prayer life getting deepened?

Do I value praying with my co-workers and other believers?

Do I substitute work for worship?

3. SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Am I an easy person to live with?

Am I a habitual fault-finder and an unloving critic?

Do I willingly accept corrections or justify myself always?

Do I find it difficult to appreciate others openly?

Am I dead to distinction based on caste, creed or social status in order to maintain the oneness of the Spirit?

4. FAMILY LIFE

Am I faithful to my spouse?

Do I keep a distance with the opposite sex?

Do I endeavor to spend quality time with my spouse and help her/his growth?

Am I ministering to my family? Praying together as family?

Am I free and friendly with my children?

Do I motivate my children by word and deed to pursue a missionary career-if I believe that serving the King of kings is the greatest of all professions and privileges?

5. GOD'S MINISTRY

Do I serve the Lord with the first love and maintain the initial enthusiasm? Am I becoming lazy?

Am I easily discouraged by fruitlessness in the ministry of difficulties in the work? Am I patient and kind towards people?

Am I a men-pleaser?

6. HONESTY IN DEALINGS

Am I honest in reporting or do I exaggerate?

Am I faithful in financial matters?

Are my words dependable?

Can my co-workers and fellow believer trust me that I will stand with them in any situation?

Is the reputation of others safe in my hands?

7. SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Do I periodically evaluate my spiritual life?

Do I give my fellow-workers, fellow believers, juniors or seniors, the liberty to correct, warn and develop me?

Do I obey the voice of the Lord as it comes through personal meditation, sermons and literature?

Am I too proud to confess my weaknesses and failures?

Am I ready to sacrifice my personal interests in order to edify and strengthen my co-workers?

8. ORGANISATIONAL LOYALTY

Am I loyal to my organization?

Do I submit myself willingly to the leaders?

Do I backbite my leaders when their decisions do not please me? Do I have a party spirit?

Am I grateful to God and the organisation for the blessings or do I murmur?

9. LOCAL CHURCH VISION

Have I understood the vision of the church?

Am I consistently praying for the fulfillment of the church vision?

What contribution am I making towards its fulfillment?

Am I using my spiritual gifts for the glory of God?

10. MISSIONARY VISION

Is my heart burdened with God for those who have not yet heard the Gospel?

Am I interested in updating information about what God is doing all over the world?

Do I pray for the persecuted church and those ill-treated unjustly?

Is my concern for the poor practical?

Do I appreciate the good work done by other organisations and cooperate with them wherever possible?

11. FUTURE HOPE

Do I trust God for my future or worry unduly?

Do I compare myself with the affluent and turn material-minded?

Do I hesitate to take up the cross of misunderstanding and loneliness?

Do I turn a deaf ear to the voices that call me to come down from my missionary vision and commitment?

Am I conscious of the welcome and the reward that await me in Heaven if I serve the Lord of the Harvest faithfully till the end?

DO I FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS?

Even though the call to live like Jesus is sprinkled all over the New Testament, there's only one place where we are specifically told to "follow His footsteps." It relates to suffering. The one who wrote it is Peter, a disciple who watched Jesus closely in His trial and death. I Peter 2:21, "To this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should FOLLOW HIS STEPS." Here are a few questions to examine ourselves.

Spend a few hours in quietness before God going through this questionnaire, and examine your life afresh.

1. Do I get upset with my friends when they are indifferent towards my aches and sorrows?

When Jesus was sweating blood in the Garden of Gethsemane, His closest disciples went off to sleep. Even after repeated requests they failed to share with Him in His soul agony. But He did not get angry with them. He simply exhorted them to be watchful in prayer and said, "Rise, let us be going!" (Matt. 26:36-46).

2. Am I casual in prayer / Do I blame others or circumstances instead of my prayerlessness for my failures?

Jesus was subject to all sorts of temptation to sacrifice godly virtues while He was abused and ill-treated. But He won the battle in Gethsemane itself in prayer. On the other hand the disciples failed miserably in every instance. A "willing spirit" is no guarantee to overcome a "weak flesh" unless there is watchfulness in prayer (Mark 14:35-39).

3. Do I insist that God should answer prayer in my own way? Am I afraid to say, "Not my will but Yours, O Lord?"

It was not easy for Jesus to wholeheartedly accept the cup knowing how bitter it was. True He prayed thrice that He might be spared, but each time His prayer concluded with the words, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will" (Matt. 26:39,42,44). The Father God was so pleased with this kind of surrender that He immediately sent a special angel from Heaven to strengthen His Son (Luke 22:42-43).

4. Do I publicize or criticize anyone's weakness instead of praying for him?

Peter's weakness was stronger than his willingness. Jesus not only forewarned him but also prayed for him sincerely. He even encouraged him foretelling of his future ministry to his associates (Luke 22:31-34).

5. Do I hate someone because he has betrayed me? Do I forget that man is man and none but God is 100% trustworthy?

Jesus trusted Judas Iscariot with the money bag even though he had been a thief. Judas did not avail the opportunity Jesus gave him to change his heart. Nevertheless, when Judas betrayed Jesus with a false kiss, Jesus addressed him as "Friend!" (John 12:4-6; Matt. 26:50)

6. Do I use carnal weapons against my enemies? Don't I realize that no man can do anything against me beyond what God has permitted?

The healing of Malchus by Jesus was a rebuke on Peter's carnal act of cutting his ear. Refusing to use the sword even though we may have one is true spirituality (John 18:10-11; Matt. 26:51-52). Jesus told Pilate, "You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from Above! (John 19:10-11).

7. Does my reaction to an offense convict the offender or condemns him?

What Jesus predicted about Peter came to pass. Peter not only denied Him but also cursed Him. Imagine how hurting it would have been to Jesus! But His look at Peter was so full of understanding and compassion that it broke him to tears of remembrance and repentance (Luke 22:61-62).

8. When I am accused falsely, do I defend myself or leave it to God to fight my battles?

When the high priest asked Jesus, “What is it these men testify against You?”, He kept silent (Matt. 26:62- 63). When Pilate asked Him the same question, Jesus answered him not one word! (Matt. 27:13-14). Rather He witnessed to Pilate about the Kingdom of God and the Truth (John 18:36-37; 1 Tim. 6:13).

9. Do I ask God to punish my enemies or pray that they may be blessed?

Jesus practiced on Mount Golgotha what He had preached on the Mount in Galilee (Matt. 5:44; Luke 23:34).

10. Do I forget the needs and pains of others because of self-sympathy?

Jesus told the women who mourned for Him, “Do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and your children” on whom difficult days were coming (Luke 23:27-29). In spite of His intense physical suffering, He ministered to the spiritual need of a robber who was crucified with Him (Luke 23:39-43). He also provided a care-taker son in His place for His mother (John 19:25-27).

11. Do I use prayer and spiritual gifts to impress people of my spirituality or glorify God?

If Jesus had prayed to His Father for angelic protection, battalions of angels would have been instantly dispatched from Heaven for Him. How then could the Scriptures concerning His suffering be fulfilled? (Matt. 26: 53-54). Also it would not have been impossible for Him to accept the challenge of the ridiculers to come down from the cross. How then would a perfect sacrifice for sins be made before the Father? (Mark 15:29-32).

12. When I come out successfully through a trial or crisis, do I make those who did not fully support me feel awkward and guilty?

In spite of the fact that Christ’s disciples betrayed Him, denied Him, cursed Him, and forsook Him, He never once reminded them of their failures after his resurrection. Rather He promised them beforehand, “You are those who have continued with Me in My trails. I bestow upon you a Kingdom ...that you may eat and drink at My Table in My Kingdom, and sit on thrones” (Luke 22:28-30). He sent them all over the world and went with them (Mark 16:15-20).

AM I A TRUE DISCIPLE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST?

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

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

- Jesus said to His disciples:
“If any man would come after me, (and be my disciple), let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it.” (Mark 8:34-35)
If any one comes to me and does not hate (meaning: love less and give secondary importance to) his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26-27).

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

- Paul concluded the following:
“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20)
“And Christ died for all, so that all those who live might live no longer to and for themselves, but to and for Him who died and was raised again for their sake.” (II Cor. 5:15).

Thus, in light of the above:

⇒ What is your true response?

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

SAMPLES OF: A STATEMENT OF FAITH

SAMPLE ONE

While we realize that we cannot confine God to mere articles of faith, we also recognize the importance of doctrine in these days when people are being led astray by false teachings. To avoid being blown about by winds of doctrine, it is important for every believer to have a firm foundation on the basic fundamental doctrines of the Scriptures. We offer the following statement as a summary:

1. We believe that the Bible, as we have it in the sixty six books of the Old and New Testaments, is divinely inspired and the only infallible and authoritative Word of God. 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; Matt. 5:18; 1 Cor. 2:13.
2. We believe that there is one God, creator and Lord of the universe, eternally existent in three persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, distinguishable but indivisible. Deut. 6:4; Is. 44:5-8; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 2:13.
3. We believe that Jesus Christ is God the Son Incarnate, conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary, truly man. He died on the cross of Calvary as a substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of all mankind. He was buried, rose from the dead bodily, and ascended into heaven, where He is now the interceding High Priest, at the right hand of the Father. John 1:14; Lk. 1:34-35; John 3:16; Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Cor. 15:3-5.
4. We believe that man was created in the image of God. He fell into sin and was consequently separated from God. All men are sinners, both by birth and choice. As a result, man is by nature depraved, under condemnation and unable to attain to divine righteousness. Gen. 1:26; Ezek. 18:4; Rom. 3:10-18; 5:12 – 18.
5. We believe in the salvation of sinners by grace, through repentance and faith in the perfect and complete work of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. The blood of Jesus Christ is the only basis for the remission of sins (Eph. 2: 8-9; Heb. 9:12, 22; Rom. 5:11; Acts 4:12). While it is essentially spiritual in nature, the benefits of salvation embrace the needs of the total person – spirit soul and body. (1 Pet. 2:24; 3 John 2: 2: Cor. 8:9; 1 Thes. 5:23)
6. We believe that the Holy Spirit is instrumental in:
 - Regeneration – that is the new birth of every person who responds to God’s Word and accepts Christ as Saviour and Lord. John 3:3-8; Rom. 10:9-10.
 - The experience of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:1-4; 19:1-6.
 - Sanctification – a life of separation from the world to live a life of holiness, producing the fruit of the Spirit. Heb. 12:14; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 5: 22-23. The operation of the gifts and ministries of the Spirit as manifested in the early church. 1 Cor. 12:14.
 - Divine healing of the spirit, soul and body. Jas. 5:14; Mark 16:18.
 - Deliverance from the power and influence of evil spirits. Mark 16:17.

7. We believe in the reality and personality of Satan and the eternal judgment of him and his angels. Lk. 4:1-13; Eph. 6:12; Matt. 25:41.
8. We believe that the church is:
 - The redeemed community of God's people for all time.
 - The priesthood of all believers. Jesus Christ is both the Head and the Chief cornerstone of the Church.
9. We believe that the essential functions of the church are:
 - To worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. John 4:23-24.
 - To build itself up in love and unity of the faith and grow up in all aspects into Christ, the Head of the church. Eph. 4:11-16.
 - To actively engage in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ among all nations. Acts 1:18; Matt. 28:19-20.
10. We believe in the necessary of water baptism by immersion for believers. Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:36-38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:1-15.
11. We believe in the communion, commonly known as the Lord's Supper, or the breaking of bread as instituted by the Lord for believers. Matt. 26: 26-29; I Cor. 11: 23-30.
12. We believe in giving of our substance to the Lord as part of spiritual worship. The Bible teaches that our tithes and offerings must be brought into the storehouse (local church). Which is then used for the work and support of the ministry. 1 Chron. 16:28; Mal. 3:10; 1 Cor. 16:2; Matt. 23:23.
13. We believe in the resurrection from the dead of believers to eternal life and unbelievers to eternal judgment
1 Cor. 15:50-54; 1 Thes. 4:6-17; 2 Thes. 1:8-9.
14. We believe that Jesus Christ will return to this earth personally, visible and bodily in power and glory to establish His Kingdom.
John 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; Acts 1:11.

SAMPLE TWO

1. We believe in the plenary-verbal inspiration of the accepted canon of Scriptures as originally given. The Scriptures are infallible, inerrant and the sole and final authority for all matter of faith and conduct. (2 Tim. 3:16, 1 Cor. 2:13).
2. We believe in the Eternal Godhead who revealed Himself as One God existing in Three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, distinguished but indivisible (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).
3. We believe in the creation, test and fall of man as recorded in Genesis; his total spiritual depravity and inability to attain to divine righteousness (Rom. 5:12, 18).
4. We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior of men, conceived of the Holy Spirit born of the Virgin Mary, very God and very Man (Luke 1:26-35, John 1:14-18; Is. 7:14; 9:6).
5. We believe Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again the third day, and personally appeared unto His disciples (1 Cor 15:1-4; Rom. 4:25).

6. We believe in the bodily ascension of Jesus to heaven, His exaltation, and personal, literal and bodily coming again the second time for His Church (John 14:2-3; 1 Thes. 4:13-8).
7. We believe in the salvation of sinners by grace, through repentance and faith in the perfect and sufficient work of the cross of Calvary by which we obtain remission of sins (Eph. 2:8-9, Heb. 9:12-22; Rom. 5:11).
8. We believe in the necessity of water baptism by immersion in the Name of the Eternal Godhead in order to fulfill the command of the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 28:19; Acts 3:34-36; 19:1-6).
9. We believe in the baptism in the Holy Spirit as real experience at or subsequent to salvation with the Scriptural evidence, namely, speaking in other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance (Acts 2:1-4; 8:14-17; 10:44-46; Gal. 3:14-15).
10. We believe in the operation of the Gifts of the Spirit as enumerated in 1 Cor 12-14, as manifested in the Early Church.
11. We believe in the Spirit-filled life, a life separation from the world and perfecting of holiness in the fear of the Lord as expressing the true Christian faith (Eph. 5:18; 2 Cor. 6:14; 7:1).
12. We believe in the healing of body by divine power, or divine healing in its various aspects as practiced in the Early Church (Acts 4:30; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 12:9; Jas. 5:14).
13. We believe in the table of the Lord, commonly called the Communion or the Lord's Supper for believers (1 Cor 11:28-32; Matt. 26:26-28).
14. We believe in the reality and personality of the Devil and eternal judgment in the lake of fire for the Devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41, Rev. 20:14-15).
15. We believe in eternal life for believers (John 5:24; 3:16), and eternal punishment for the unbelievers (Mk. 9:43-48; 2 Thes. 1:9; Rev. 20:10-15).
16. We believe that there is one true universal Church, made up of genuine believers, but this one universal Church is also composed of many local churches in given localities. These churches are under the sovereign Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, exercising autonomous government under Him administering all its local affairs and ministry, as well as the propagation of the Gospel (Acts 15:22 with Matt. 16:18; 18:15-20).

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