

Commitment Course

Borrowed from Corringham Christian Fellowship



Acknowledgements

The Commitment Course that you hold in your hands has traveled many miles to get to you. It traveled from Corringham, England, to Norfolk, England (where I received it), then to Texas, USA, and who knows where else it traveled before arriving at your location in Africa or Pakistan or wherever you may be in the world. This course has traveled many miles to finally be in your hands. Also, it was originally written in English, so if you have a copy that is in your native language, different from English, then know that people have labored to translate it for you. We are so thankful to be able to make this available for your spiritual growth in Jesus Christ.

My name is Steve Howell. I was given a copy of the Commitment Course sometime in the mid 1980's. I was living in England and ministering the Gospel of Jesus Christ there, at the time. As I began to review its pages, I saw that it had great value as a teaching tool for those who are new to the Christian faith and to those who are new members of a local church body. I began to use this course as I ministered to individual people, as part of the discipleship process (learning to obey the Words of Jesus). I also used it to teach small groups of people for the exact same purpose. Each time I taught the material of this course, the students were blessed beyond measure, and I was, as well. This course has been used in our local church (Texas House of Prayer International) for many, many years. We have now made it a requirement for membership in our church body.

I encourage you to be serious about your study of this material. It is filled with the Word of God, and it helps to explain His Word in a way that you can understand it, live it, and then teach it to others. Be committed to the process. Make it your goal to complete this course. Don't let anything stop you. Make every effort to learn and to grow. Be committed to Jesus Christ, to His Word, to His people, and to His kingdom work. May the Lord use **YOU** to help change the world for Jesus.

Our sincerest thanks to Peter Butt and Mike Godward who originally developed this course, in England, in the early 1980's. Peter explained the development of the course to me this way:

"We produced the course as we became aware of the low level of expectation of what it was to be a follower of Jesus and a member of the church. God was moving in the church in the UK and new churches were being established and many were experiencing renewal. We put together the course to challenge those who wanted to walk with us to understand our values and biblical foundations. The result you have in your hands."

Thanks, also, to all who have worked to translate, proofread, copy, distribute, promote, and teach this material. May the Lord be honored and glorified by all the many efforts. May His kingdom be extended through the combined and committed efforts of His people.

Steve Howell

Apostolic Leader and Elder, Texas House of Prayer International.

COMMITMENT COURSE

The most often asked question by new people to our fellowship, particularly those who have joined us from other churches is "Why must I go through a Commitment Course?" The answer to that question is quite easy to give.

1. We believe that all new Christians need an in depth look at the fundamentals of the Christian faith, particularly those teachings that will help them in their new found faith.
2. Many Christians who have been saved for many years have never been systematically taught those important truths. The result being they have never become true disciples of the Lord Jesus.
3. It is important that before you join any fellowship that you know what they believe and what level of commitments they expect from you.
4. Many Christians who transfer their allegiance from one fellowship to another have deep-rooted problems which need to be exposed and dealt with by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God.

We believe that this course will refresh you, enlighten you and challenge you as the Holy Spirit leads you into a deeper commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ. Furthermore, it should help you to find out whether or not God is wanting to plant you here.

Going through this course does not guarantee that the elders of the fellowship will receive you into committed membership.

You are encouraged to ask questions during the course since it is better to learn the answers now than after being committed into fellowship.

Please attend regularly and make each session a matter of earnest prayer.

Also try to answer any questions contained in this course before the 'Clinic' session.

BIBLE READING PROJECT

"The purest water is at the source." We seek, with the Lord's help, to go back to the Bible for the foundations of our church life.

During this period of the Commitment Classes, we would like you to read, at least once, right through the books of Acts, Romans and First Corinthians. These three books give a good picture of the plan and purpose of God as it was lived out in the early church and will be excellent reading for the course.

If you prefer to read from a modern translation then we recommend the New International Version or the New Living Translation. We also recommend that you keep a copy of the King James Version on hand, because it is still preferred by many people, including many preachers and teachers.

Before each reading session, ask the Lord to open your heart to receive His Word, so that it may strike through any prejudices or traditions you may hold. Any questions you may have as a result of your reading may be brought up at the "Clinic" sessions of the course.

Here is a chapter tick-off list so that you can keep a record of your reading. It provides for three full readings of the books concerned, though you may read them more if you wish.

ACTS

| Chapter | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | Chapter | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | Chapter | 1st | 2nd | 3rd |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | () | () | () | 11 | () | () | () | 21 | () | () | () |
| 2 | () | () | () | 12 | () | () | () | 22 | () | () | () |
| 3 | () | () | () | 13 | () | () | () | 23 | () | () | () |
| 4 | () | () | () | 14 | () | () | () | 24 | () | () | () |
| 5 | () | () | () | 15 | () | () | () | 25 | () | () | () |
| 6 | () | () | () | 16 | () | () | () | 26 | () | () | () |
| 7 | () | () | () | 17 | () | () | () | 27 | () | () | () |
| 8 | () | () | () | 18 | () | () | () | 28 | () | () | () |
| 9 | () | () | () | 19 | () | () | () | | | | |
| 10 | () | () | () | 20 | () | () | () | | | | |

ROMANS

| Chapter | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | Chapter | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | Chapter | 1st | 2nd | 3rd |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | () | () | () | 7 | () | () | () | 13 | () | () | () |
| 2 | () | () | () | 8 | () | () | () | 14 | () | () | () |
| 3 | () | () | () | 9 | () | () | () | 15 | () | () | () |
| 4 | () | () | () | 10 | () | () | () | 16 | () | () | () |
| 5 | () | () | () | 11 | () | () | () | | | | |
| 6 | () | () | () | 12 | () | () | () | | | | |

1 CORINTHIANS

| Chapter | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | Chapter | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | Chapter | 1st | 2nd | 3rd |
|---------|-----|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|-----|---------|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | () | () | () | 7 | () | () | () | 13 | () | () | () |
| 2 | () | () | () | 8 | () | () | () | 14 | () | () | () |
| 3 | () | () | () | 9 | () | () | () | 15 | () | () | () |
| 4 | () | () | () | 10 | () | () | () | 16 | () | () | () |
| 5 | () | () | () | 11 | () | () | () | | | | |
| 6 | () | () | () | 12 | () | () | () | | | | |

WHAT DOES COMMITMENT MEAN?

To be committed means that I am:

1. Committed to Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord.
 2. Committed to people of the fellowship in loving service.
 3. Committed to the elders of the fellowship in respect and obedience.
- All of these three areas will be particularly emphasized during this course.

LESSON 1 SALVATION & THE NEW BIRTH

Romans 1:16 "I am not ashamed of the Gospel because it is the power of God for the SALVATION of everyone who believes."

Psalms 27:1 "The Lord is my light and my SALVATION whom shall I fear?"

Acts 15:11 "We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are SAVED."

Acts 16:30 ".....men, what must I do to be SAVED?"

Eph. 2:8 "For it is by GRACE you have been SAVED, through faith, and this not of yourselves it is the gift of God."

Acts 4:12 says, ".....
.....
....."

The words Salvation, Save and Saved as used in the Old Testament and New have more than one meaning. At times the words refer to being saved from some danger, or some imminent national disaster (Exodus 14:13 & 30, 15:2).

Salvation in that respect is a deliverance from enemy forces (cp 2 Chron 20:17-30.) In the New Testament the Jewish nation expected the Messiah to be a Savior or a deliverer from the Roman oppressor (Luke 24:21). Like Gideon or David did with other oppressive powers. But Jesus came to bring deliverance not from Rome but from the power, penalty and presence of Sin.

Matt 1:21 says,
.....
.....

Read also Romans 6:14; 8:1; 2 Peter 3:13

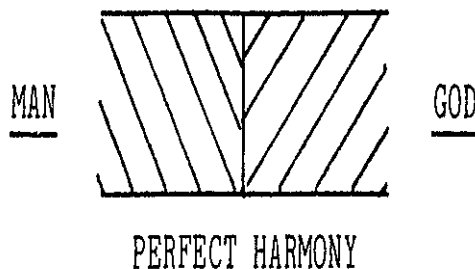
Only those who have experienced a personal salvation from sin can call themselves a Christian. Although you may have been born in a Christian country it did not make you a Christian. Billy Graham once said, "You may be born in a garage but it doesn't make you a car."

YOU NEED TO KNOW JESUS CHRIST AS YOUR PERSONAL SAVIOR

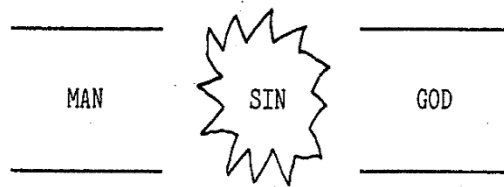
The bible is a book that records the History of Salvation. Its message could be summarized in the following:

1. God made man perfect without Sin. Genesis Chapter 2

But man had a free will because God did not want compulsory obedience but voluntary obedience that sprang up out of love and trust.



2. Man sinned and lost his perfect Environment. Genesis Chapter 3



SIN CAME BETWEEN
GOD AND MAN

Man now has a sinful nature. Psalm 51:5

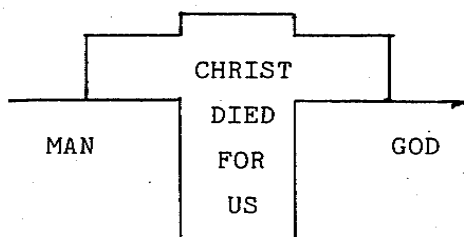
Thus "we all are like sheep and have gone astray." Isaiah 53:6

The end result would be eternal separation from God. Romans 6:23

3. God sent His son to bring man back into perfect harmony.

John 3:16 says, "For God
.....
.....
....."

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates His love for us in that whilst we were still sinners Christ died for us."



READ 2 Corinthians 5:19

When Jesus died, he paid the price for
our sins so that we could be saved.
Isaiah 53:5

God has made the way but man must respond to God's offer of Salvation.

A. We must realize that we cannot save ourselves by our good works or good life.

(Romans 3:23; Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 2:8-9)

B. We must repent of our sins.

Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30

John the Baptist, and the Lord Jesus both began their ministry by calling upon men to repent. Repentance is not just being "Sorry for Sin" - it is a "change of mind" and a "change of attitude" towards sin and God. When we truly repent, we acknowledge and confess our sin to God with a desire for God to help us and change us.

Luke 15:17-21 and Matthew 21:28-29 illustrates what true repentance is.

At times repentance will include restitution. Luke 19:8-9 (Zachaeus).

Anyone who has truly repented before God will have a changed life.

C. We must believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 16:31; John 1:12

Ephesians 2:8 "For it is by Grace you have been saved through faith"

Real faith is not an intellectual assent to historical facts. [I believe that Henry VIII existed but I do not believe in him]

James 2:19 tells us that even the demons believe in one God but they are not saved. Real faith is not temporal faith to get us through a crisis or safely through an operation, or a plane flight to New York. Real faith is trusting yourself to a person.

The Amplified Bible enlarges the word believe to include the meaning of cling to, adhere to, trust in, and rely on. It is trusting Christ and Christ ALONE for salvation. If we are trusting in our own life or our own religious practices to save us then we do not have real faith. The testimony of John Wesley illustrates this.

D. We must call upon the name of the Lord.

Acts 2:21; 22:16; Romans 10:13

We must pray for ourselves and ask Him to save us. It is not the phraseology that counts but the sincerity of our hearts.

E. We must confess and submit to the Lordship of Christ.

Romans 10:9 "Confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead you will be saved."

We must hand over the steering wheel of our life to Jesus. We must make Jesus the 'Boss' of our life.

THE NEW BIRTH

We must repent, believe and call but salvation is something God does for us. It is a miracle performed in our heart by the Holy Spirit. We call this miracle The New Birth (compare Jonah 2:9). We were born once with a sinful nature, a child of hell and of the devil. The only way we can become part of God's family is to be "born again" into it. This new birth is the outcome of the Holy Spirit bringing God's life into our being, thereby producing a "brand new person."

Read John 3:1-15.

Remember our responsibility is to respond to God's word and repent, believe and call. God will produce the new nature inside of us and cause us to become "born again". It is impossible to live the Christian life unless we have been BORN AGAIN.

"HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE IF WE NEGLECT SO GREAT A SALVATION"

Hebrews 2:3

LESSON 2 ASSURANCE & OTHER BLESSINGS OF SALVATION

EPHESIANS 1:3 "PRAISE BE TO THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST WHO HAS BLESSED US IN THE HEAVENLY REALMS WITH EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING IN CHRIST."

To know CHRIST as your personal savior is the greatest experience you can have. To be saved is not only to start the Christian life with a clean sheet but to possess a 'new life.' We also have a completely different relationship with God. Here are some of the wonderful things that happen when we are born again.

1. We receive forgiveness of sins. Colossians 1:14; Luke 24:47.
2. We have been redeemed. 1 Peter 1:18-19.
3. We become a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5:17.
4. We have passed from death to life. John 5:24.
5. We become possessors of eternal life. 1 John 5:11-12
NOTE: IT IS NOT MERELY NEVER-ENDING LIFE BUT A "QUALITY OF LIFE"
6. We become part of a new kingdom. Colossians 1:13.
7. We become children of God. John 1:12-13; 1 John 3:1-2.
8. We become Justified by Faith. Romans 4:1-5; 5:1 i.e. Treats us as righteous.
9. We become indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:9.
10. We have an ASSURANCE that we have eternal life.

1 John 5:13 "I WRITE THESE THINGS TO YOU WHO BELIEVE IN THE NAME OF THE SON OF GOD SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW THAT YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE"

HAVE YOU COME TO A PLACE IN YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE WHERE YOU CAN SAY YOU KNOW FOR CERTAIN THAT IF YOU WERE TO DIE TODAY YOU WOULD GO TO HEAVEN?

It is interesting to observe that there are at least 30 references to the things that we can "KNOW" in the 1st Epistle of John. (e.g. 1 John 2:20; 3:2; 2:14; 4:13; 5:13.) This knowledge is not obtained by mere intellectual ability but by the revelation of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. Salvation is a definite experience, we either have it or don't.

1 John 5:12 "He who has the Son has life, he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

The lives of the early Christians bore abundant testimony to the assurance that they knew who and what they believed and were willing to stake their lives upon it.

Philippians 1:21-22.

Romans 8:31-39.

A man who is married has no doubts about it. A person who is a Christian should have this kind of assurance. We will never be able to move on in the things of God unless we have this assurance that we belong to Jesus. This assurance will grow in us but if based upon our feelings alone will fluctuate like the weather. Neither will a person who is backslidden in heart and mind be able to possess this full assurance of faith.

GOD HAS GIVEN US FOUR PRINCIPLE MEANS OF ASSURANCE OF FAITH

1. The clear teachings of the Word of God which we receive by faith.

John 6:37 Jesus said, "Whoever comes to me I will"

Acts 16:31 Have you believed? So are you saved or not?

John 1:12 Have you received Him? So are you a child of God?

2. The inner witness of the Holy Spirit.

1 John 5:10 "Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this testimony in his heart."

Romans 8:15-16 "By Him we cry Abba Father. The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are Gods children."

3. The desire to become like the Lord Jesus.

Romans 8:29 "For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His son."

The whole of John's 1st epistle underlines this truth "that if we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live in the truth." 1 John 1:6

NOTE: We still fall short of Gods standard yet the desire to be like Jesus will be a motivating factor in our spiritual life.

4. The realization that as we continue with the Lord He is working His purposes out in us.

Philippians 1:6 "..... He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ."

Philippians 2:12 "..... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you to will and act according to His good pleasure."

CONFESSION

Only a person who has the Assurance of Eternal Life can effectively confess his faith before other people.

Matt 10:32 "Whosoever acknowledges me before men I will also acknowledge him before my father in heaven."

Read also 1 John 2:23

We must "Confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord" Romans 10:9

Acts 1:8 ".....
.....
.....
.....

A witness is one who testifies to what he has seen or heard or known. We witness by the words we speak and the life we live. Witnessing is not "Standing on a soap box and thumping the Bible" but it is the natural outflow of our Christian life in our day to day lives.

Paul often witnessed to Christ by giving his testimony of how he found Christ as his personal Savior.
Acts 22:3-21; Acts 26:1-23.

NOTE: He spoke of what he was before he met Christ.

He spoke of how he found Christ as his Savior and Lord.

He spoke of what has happened since that day.

You have a testimony that is unique to you. In no more than 70 words recount here how you found Christ as your personal Savior and what differences He has made in your life.

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LESSON 3 WATER BAPTISM

Matt. 28:19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

Acts 2:38 "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus so that your sins may be forgiven "

Every believer needs to be baptized as it is an integral part of the Christian Faith. It is not a meaningless ceremony that they pass through, but a very meaningful and important expression of our Christian life.

Neither is it a denominational issue. More and more believers of every denomination are seeing that water baptism is a necessary step in their Christian life. To be baptized does not signify adherence to a particular denomination (or church), but is a step of submission to the Lordship of Christ; we are baptized "into Christ" and "in HIS name" not into any particular fellowship.

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF WATER BAPTISM

JOHN THE BAPTIST

As the forerunner of Christ, his ministry was to call the nation to repentance.

Mark 1:4 "And so John came baptizing in the desert region and preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins."

His ministry was powerful in God and some of the twelve apostles were originally disciples of John. Years after his death Paul met twelve men at Ephesus who had been baptized into John's Baptism. (Acts 19:3) - (Note also the ministry of Apollos Acts 18:24-25)

John never performed any miracle; the whole focal point of his ministry was water baptism. It is notable that no man ever questioned John on what he was doing, but on whose authority he was doing it. (John 1:25)

THE MINISTRY OF JESUS

Jesus himself was baptized in water and in this respect is an example to us all. For he had no need to be baptized by John for He has no sins to repent of. (Read Matt. 3:13-17). Jesus taught His disciples to baptize people although He himself baptized no-one in water.

READ John 4:1-2

Why didn't Jesus baptize people in water?

.....

.....

READ Mark 1:8 for the answer.

2. THREE IMPORTANT TRUTHS ABOUT WATER BAPTISM

A. BAPTISM WAS FOR BELIEVERS

Mark 16:16 "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

Acts 2:41 "Those who received His word were baptized."

Acts 18:8 "Many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized."

Baptism always followed repentance and faith. Indeed, the New Testament implies that it was an essential step in salvation. It is doubtful if anybody was considered a Christian in the Early Church who had not firstly submitted to this command of the Lord Jesus.

B. BAPTISM WAS BY IMMERSION

The word baptize is an "Anglicization" of a Greek word, rather than a translation into English. For this reason, its basic meaning to "dip" "immerse" "submerge" has been obscured.

The Greek word was used by Dyers to describe the act of dipping material into dye or of drawing water by dipping one vessel into another, or of drawing wine by dipping a cup into a bowl.

Consider the following scriptures:

Acts 8:38-39 "They both went down into the water, Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water....."

John 3:23 "John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there."

Matt 3:16 "As soon as Jesus was baptized He went up out of the water."

There is no doubt that New Testament Baptism was by immersion, and there is no point of Paul speaking of being buried with Him in Baptism (Romans 6:4) if they did not immerse people in water during their baptism.

QUESTION

What about the sprinkling of infants?

ANSWER

Baptism is not for babies. Not once does the New Testament refer to such a practice. Baptism is for believers only, which implies a certain level of mental development. We have seen children being baptized, but only when they had a clear understanding of Jesus as their Lord and Savior and because they wanted to obey Him by baptism.

QUESTION

Baptism by immersion is not the way the Church had baptized people down through the centuries?

ANSWER

The most important question is whether the Early Church baptized by immersion or not - that is, the Divine blue-print. It is apparent from Church history that other forms of baptism came in later on, but throughout Church history the testimony to immersion still remained, particularly in the Baptist Church.

In 1533 - Elizabeth I was baptized by immersion.

In 1549 - In the Edward VI Prayer Book, immersion held the place of honor - (effusion and sprinkling was allowed for the weak, but even babies were immersed).

In 1641 - Immersion had gone into decline - only the Baptist Churches held true.

In 1664 - The Westminster Assembly said, "sprinkle" or "pour". In these days of Renewal and Restoration, more and more people in historical churches are seeing the plain truth of Baptism by immersion.

C. BAPTISM WAS IMMEDIATE UPON PROFESSION OF FAITH

Acts 2:41 "That day " Acts 16:29-33.

Only Saul of Tarsus appears to have waited three days before baptism - Acts 9:9; 17-18.

3. THE MEANING OF WATER BAPTISM

(a) IT IS A STEP OF OBEDIENCE

It is a clear-cut demonstration that we know how to take orders from our new Lord. It is the "answer of a clear conscience unto God" (1 Peter 3:21), and results in great blessing and satisfaction in obeying Him, and it sets a pattern of obedience to His Lordship in our lives.

(b) IT IS A PUBLIC CONFESSION OF CHRIST

"It is an open declaration for all to see the one baptized has truly enlisted in the service of Jesus Christ" said Arthur Wallis. It was generally held in the open-air and was the New Testament way of saying "I have decided to follow Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord."

(c) IT SPEAKS OF PURIFICATION FROM SINS

In the Middle East the bathing of the body was an important part of daily life. Sin is often described as a moral defilement and its removal as a cleansing. Thus Ananias said to the newly converted Saul of Tarsus "Get up!", "be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on His name." (Acts 22:16). So in water baptism there is an outward cleansing that symbolizes the inward cleansing of the heart from sin. 1 Peter 3:21.

(d) IT SPEAKS OF OUR UNION WITH CHRIST

Romans 6:4 "We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

The baptismal pool is like a grave where we are buried with Christ, our old life is dead and buried (our old nature too) but we are raised out of the water to live in the power of the resurrected life of Christ, we RISE as a new person to live a new life, cleansed not only from sin, but delivered from the power of sin - the power of the old nature.

(e) IT SPEAKS OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART

There is a cutting away of the old nature as the dominant power in our lives. Just as Israelite boys in Old Testament days received physical circumcision, so God's new-born children today receive at their baptism a spiritual

circumcision, or a circumcision of heart. Like all God's blessings, this must be received by faith. Deuteronomy 30:6: "The Lord your God will circumcise your heart so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul." Colossians 2:11-12: (Amp. N.T.) "In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, but in a (spiritual) circumcision (performed by) Christ, by stripping off the body of the flesh (the whole corrupt, carnal nature with its passions and lusts). (Thus you were circumcised when) you were buried with Him in (your) baptism, in which you were also raised with Him (to a new life) through (your) faith in the working of God (as displayed) when He raised Him up from the dead." Therefore, when we sin as Christians, it is not because we have to (on account of our old nature), but because we choose to, "For sin shall not be your master" Romans 6:14.

THREE QUESTIONS

1 Corinthians 10:1-4; Exodus 14. Children of Israel were "baptized" at the Red Sea.

1. What did the Israelites leave behind?
.....
2. Who were they now dependent on?
.....
3. Where were they going?
.....

As water baptism is such an important step in the Christian life, it is a condition of membership of this church that you have received baptism by immersion as a believer, or that you are willing to be baptized at the earliest opportunity.

LESSON 4 BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Acts 2:38 "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

Part of the package deal of salvation is the baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is God's means of placing us into the realm of spiritual power so that we can not only enjoy the new life he has given us, but also be effective messengers in transmitting the gospel to others.

Acts 1:8 "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth."

The importance of the baptism of the Holy Spirit for any Christian can be seen clearly in the life of the Early Church. Before He ascended to heaven, Jesus commanded His disciples -

Luke 24:49 "I am going to send you what the Father has promised, but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Jesus knew that if they tried to fulfill His will in the World in their own strength, they would fail. They needed something or someone to strengthen them, guide them and to enable them to stand for him in an hostile world. That someone was the Holy Spirit - Jesus had said:

John 16:7 ".....unless I go away the Counsellor will not come to you, but if I go I will send Him to you."

John 14:16 "And I will ask the Father and He will give you another Counsellor to be with you forever."

John 14:18 "....I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you...."

The word Counsellor (translated in KJ version "Comforter") is rendered in the Amplified Bible as:

"Counsellor, helper, intercessor, advocate, strengthener and standby."

In the Greek it is PARAKLETOS it means "called to one's side i.e. to one's aid."

We cannot live the Christian life without the power and help of the Holy Spirit. We need Him to "do in us all that Christ did for us" and we need Him to fulfill His mission in the world "to be His witnesses".

The Holy Spirit has taken the place of Christ upon Earth, and all that Jesus did then for the twelve disciples, the Holy Spirit will do today for the Church. In fact, it is only by the Holy Spirit that God is at work in our lives and in the life of the Church today.

1. It is by the work of the Holy Spirit that we become Christians -
1 Corinthians 12:3; Romans 8:9; John 3:5.
2. But, there is an additional experience (though closely associated with Water Baptism and Salvation) whereby we receive the Holy Spirit as a distinct endowment of spiritual power.

Note the following scriptures

The Early Church:

Acts 2:4 but what about John 20:21-23

Saul of Tarsus:

Acts 9:17 This was three days after His experience with Christ on the Damascus Road (v9)

The Samaritan Believer:

Acts 8:12-17 SAMARITANS WERE BAPTISED IN WATER - but it was some days later before Peter & John prayed for them to receive the Holy Spirit.

3. We receive 'Power' in our lives when we receive the Holy Spirit - Greek DUNAMIS = ability, might or power; "the ability to do" or a Divine Enabling" - a divine enabling to do what we couldn't do in our own strength.

It was after Jesus received the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:22) that He began His ministry in the power of that anointing (Luke 4:14-21) Thus –

Acts 10:38 "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and Power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil because God was with Him."

If Jesus needed the anointing of the Spirit how much more do we.

4. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is for all believers.

Write out Acts 2:39

.....

.....

5. We receive the Baptism of the Spirit because we need Him (we will never ever be good enough.)

6. It is good to remember that the Holy Spirit is a 'person' not a 'power' or 'influence'. The scriptures speak of the Holy Spirit as 'He' or 'Him'. (John 14:16-17). Our attitude should be how much of my life have I yielded to him.

7. The Holy Spirit wants to possess us wholly. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled to the full (Ephesians 5:18). Thus the unbelievers on the day of Pentecost thought that the believers were filled with new wine (Acts 2:13). The Holy Spirit wants to be in total possession of our being, not only so that we can have a good time, or just speak in tongues, but in order that He can use us in the service of King Jesus more effectively.

MUST A PERSON SPEAK IN TONGUES TO RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Read Acts 2:4; 10:44-46; 19:1-6. They all have something in common -

What is it?.....

Although there is no record of the apostle Paul speaking in tongues in Acts 9 He obviously did.

Write out 1 Corinthians 14:18

.....

.....

Acts 8:17-19 Simon saw something; we don't know what, but there was obviously some outward manifestation of them receiving the Holy Spirit.

In the light of the previous scripture we would say that:

You do not have to speak in tongues, but when the Lord baptizes you in the Holy Spirit you can do, and will do, provided you do not let prejudice and fear hinder the flow of the Spirit. The tongue is the hardest member of the body to tame (James 3:8.) God wants to demonstrate His mighty power in you by tackling the toughest part first. So expect to speak in tongues when you are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Expect also to prophecy!

When the Spirit descends upon us, our organs of speech are stimulated to form strange syllables or words as we yield to His prompting. Our own natural words seem inadequate to praise God as we should. The Holy Spirit then leads and encourages us but doesn't force us to speak out in tongues.

Once we begin, we should expect the language to be spontaneous and fluent. We will not understand the words we are saying, nor should we expect to, "for one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit." (1 Corinthians 14:2)

In this way we experience for ourselves what happened at the beginning, when "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts 2:4. Henceforth, there will be no doubts as to whether or not we are filled with the Spirit!

Naturally, we do not believe "tongues" is the ultimate Christian experience and we long to see all spirit-filled believers expressing the love of 1 Corinthians 13 and manifesting the fruit of the Spirit (as in Galatians 5:22-23) as well as moving into prophecy etc.

THE BLESSING OF THE SPIRIT FILLED LIFE

1. We should be released into a new dimension of Prayer and Praise.

1 Cor. 14:15 Do not under value the gift of tongues as a means of building yourself up spiritually, 1 Cor. 14:4. Use that gift to defeat depression and doubt and fear in your life.

2. We should become sensitive to the Voice of God.

Acts 10:19; 13:2

3. We become eligible to be a channel through which the Spirit can manifest Himself.

1 Cor. 12:7-11 According to our faith and obedience - so be it unto us!

4. We should be providing the fruit of the Spirit in our daily lives.

Gal. 5:22-23 It is not a question of love or power, but Love AND power. As the Spirit fills us so the character of Christ should be produced in our daily life.

HOW DOES ONE RECEIVE THE BAPTISM IN THE HOLY SPIRIT

Sometimes God baptizes people in the Spirit by a Sovereign act. This is what happened on the day of Pentecost and to the household of Cornelius (Acts 2 and Acts 10.) At other times it is received by the laying on of hands as in Samaria and Ephesus (Acts 8 and Acts 19.) We must remember that Jesus is the baptizer in the Holy Spirit (John 1:33) and not any man. Generally speaking, the believer who wants to receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit needs to have the following (adapted from Arthur Wallis' book 'Into Battle'):

(a) An Uncondemned Heart

We must deal with all unconfessed sin and ask the Lord to cleanse us (1 John 1:9) so that we can approach Him with confidence.

(b) There must be a Thirsty Heart

John 7:37 "If any man is thirsty let him come unto me and drink...."

This must be a thirst for God and righteousness and not just for an experience to keep up with others.

(c) There must be an Obedient Heart

Acts 5:31 ".... so is the Holy Spirit whom God had given to those who obey Him."

If Jesus is Lord, then we will want to obey Him in everything. If there are areas in our life that God has spoken to us about (e.g. Water Baptism), then we must resolve the matter before we can approach God with confidence.

(d) There must be a Believing Heart

The promise of the Spirit is received by faith (Galatians 3 :2) (like all the blessings of God). We must have the faith of a little child that expects to receive.

(e) Finally we must ask Him for the Gift of the Holy Spirit

Jesus said, "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." Luke 11:13. Having prayed, and believing God has heard our prayer, we begin to praise God and worship Him with thanksgiving. This is a powerful means of drawing near to His presence to receive the Holy Spirit "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8)

As we become aware of the presence of the Spirit there is a breaking within us and our spirit springs up to respond to the Spirit of God. At this point, an anointed servant of God may lay hands upon us to impart the Holy Spirit to us, just as "when Paul had laid hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them; and they spoke with tongues and prophesied." Acts 19:6

It is essential that a candidate for membership of this church should have received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit or at least have a real desire to receive. Opportunity will be provided for you to be ministered to, if this is necessary and if you desire it.

Luke 11:9-10

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened to you for everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks the door will be opened."

Ephesians 5:18 "BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT."

LESSON 5 PRAISE AND WORSHIP

Read Psalm 150.

One of the main emphases of our fellowship is our expression of praise and worship. We consider it more than just a ritual or a "time-filler," before the ministry of the word. Indeed, it is a vital part of our fellowship together. Through our worship God is glorified and the church is strengthened and encouraged. Where there is no true expression of worship, the church is "dead" for there is no sense of the presence of God. It is important that every committed member of our fellowship understands why our praise and worship is important and is at perfect ease during our meetings.

WORSHIP IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the times before King David, there is very little expression of praise and worship as we know it today. Worship was made to God through the sacrifice of animals. It was only as the blood of animals was shed that a man could approach a Holy God. Consider the following scriptures:

Genesis 4:4 "Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock" cp Hebrews 11:4

Genesis 8:20 "Then Noah built an altar to the Lord and taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it."

Also consider the story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis chapter 22, particularly looking at verses 5 and 13. The song of Moses (Exodus Ch. 15) and the song of Deborah (Judges Ch. 5) appear to be exceptions during this period.

Later on under the law of Moses in the Tabernacle the sacrificial system was established as the only way by which a man worshipped God. It became very involved and was an imperfect system and later on man thought that God was really pleased with these sacrifices even though their lives were not right. Hebrews 9:1 to 10:18 is a passage that clearly states that all these old testament sacrifices pointed to the one great sacrifice of Jesus as a sin offering.

Worship Under King David

It is clearly noticeable that there came a great change in the mode of old testament worship under King David. After becoming King of all Israel and bringing the Ark of the Lord to Mount Zion in Jerusalem, he instituted (at the commandment of God) a system of worship that included musical instruments, set singers and the writing and singing of Psalms.

The sacrificial system was not yet finished, indeed, when the Ark of the Lord was brought to Zion, they presented burnt offerings and peace offerings at its dedication. During this period in Israel's history there were two centers of worship:

1. Tabernacle of Moses (Mt Gibeon) - DAILY SACRIFICES - a few singers and priests.
2. Tabernacle of David (Mt Zion) - NO SACRIFICES - but a great company of singers and musicians.

Read 1 Chronicles 15:25-29; 1 Chronicles 16:1-3; 39-43; 2 Chronicles 1:2-6.

This was a forerunner to the New Testament when the sacrificial system would be abolished and the worship of God with singing and dancing and all kinds of musical instruments would be the order of the day.

It was during the days of David that most of the Psalms were written. They were expressions of his heart, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Psalms 50:23 says "....."

.....

How radical many of those Psalms seem to be in comparison to the sacrificial system that still prevailed. e.g. Psalm 40.

Consider 2 Chronicles 5:11-14.

Does it seem to you that they knew more of real worship and the presence of God in those days, than many churches do today? Surely we should have something better!

WORSHIP IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

John 4:23 "But the hour is coming, and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and Truth. For such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers."

Worship was no longer going to be limited to a time and place but would be based upon "truthfulness" and "spirituality". The Father is searching for true worshippers - He desires it and requires it from His people. True worship proceeds out of our heart and "rises and falls with our concept of God".

How great is God in your estimation?

How good is God in your life?

How wonderful is the living God in your eyes?

How much do you desire to praise Him?

Have you learnt to praise Him in everything or is your praise dull, lifeless and boring?

The New Testament Church were a praising Church (Acts 2:47); Paul and Silas believed in singing their praises out loud (Acts 16:25)

In the New Testament Church there was a vertical aspect (they praised God) and a horizontal aspect (they encouraged one another) Ephesians 5:18-21; Col. 3:16.

Every renewal in Church history has included a new release in worship. Martin Luther (A.D. 1483-1546) not only translated the Bible into the language of the day, but also gave them Christian songs. He believed that beauty, melody, cheerfulness and joy should be the hallmark of Christian music.

It was the Moravians (18th Century) who were the first Christians in America to freely allow the use of musical instruments in their services (violins, clarinets, trumpets, trombones, harps and organs.)

The Methodist revival (18th Century) was not only due to the preaching of the Wesleys, but also to the emphasis they placed on hymn singing - "Methodism was borne in song. "

The Salvation Army (19th Century) produced their bands to lead the worship in the open air, as well as their own meetings. It brought great opposition from the established churches with their modern tunes, hand clapping and spontaneous expressions of praise!

The spiritual temperature of a Christian can be determined by his attitude during times of worship. A church that is cold and informal in its worship will soon cease to be a church.

Heaven is a place full of worship - "Mans chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever." said the Puritans. If we cannot enjoy the presence of God whilst upon Earth, how can we enjoy it throughout Eternity! (Revelation 5:9-10)

Silent Worship

Although we believe that there is a place for silence and 'waiting' upon God, (particularly in our own private devotions) generally, we believe that people need encouragement to express the worship of their hearts in a vocal way. Reverence is not necessarily silence - Hebrews 13:15 talks about the "Fruit of our lips," Psalm 103:1 talks about "All that is within us" and Psalm 150:6 about "Everything that hath breath" - silent worship cannot build up other Christians. There will be times when the Lord will cause a Holy silence to descend upon our times of worship when He will be speaking to our heart - but generally our duty should be to stir our heart to Praise the Lord.

LOVE IS THE PRIMARY MOTIVATION OF OUR WORSHIP

Read Corinthians 13:1

If our worship does not proceed out of a heart that loves God, then it will be purely mechanical and formal.

Psalm 18 :1 says, "
.....

Out of our relationship with God and our faith and love towards Him, our worship will rise, the psalms clearly illustrate this.

David Watson says, "....the commonest word for worship (proskuneo) means I come towards to kiss. This is the language of intimacy and love. Christianity is a love affair with God and with His Son Jesus Christ."

A.W. Tozer said, "Worship means to feel in the heart."

Every committed member of this fellowship must be a worshipper first and a worker second. Our ministry to the Body will flow out from our worship.

Praise and Spiritual Warfare

When we praise God, we cause the spiritual forces of wickedness to tremble and put them into confusion. It is important that we learn to rise in worship when there appears to be a spiritual bondage upon our gathering. Psalm 22:3 says that God is enthroned upon our praises" (Ezekiel 43:7).

Psalm 149:6-9 says that we bind satanic forces when we praise and worship God with faith in our hearts. Read also Isaiah 30:32-33.

2 Chronicles 20:22-26 illustrates this from the life of King Jehosaphat.

Acts 16:25-26 reveals what happened to Paul and Silas when they prayed and sang praises to God. God can break us out of our prison cells of fear and bondage as we do the same.

As we worship there is a release of the presence of God in the Gifts of the Spirit that ministers to the life of the Church.

Let us not be slack in our worship and praise but determine to enter in with all our hearts.

12 Things to Remember in our Worship

1. We should Praise God for His greatness, Psalm 48:1
2. We should Praise God for all His blessings, Luke 17:11-19
3. We should Praise Him with all our heart and soul, Psalm 103:1
4. We should always have a new song to sing to God, Psalm 98
5. We should Praise Him with a sincere heart, John 4:23
6. We should Praise Him with songs, Psalm 105:1-2
7. We should Praise Him in the dance, Psalm 149:3
8. We should Praise Him with instruments of music, Psalm 149:3
9. We should Praise Him in tongues, Acts 2:11; 10:46; 1 Cor. 14:2
10. We should Praise Him by clapping, Psalm 47:1
11. We should Praise Him by raising our hands, Psalm 63:4
12. We should Praise Him by shouting, Psalm 98:4

CONCLUSION

"Man was made to worship God. God gave to man a harp and said here above all the creatures that I have made and created, I have given you the largest harp you can worship me in a manner that no other creature can. And when he sinned man took that instrument and threw it down in the mud" (Tozer)

We have a great privilege to pick up that harp and worship God - Let us do it!!

LESSON 6 SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY AND WARFARE

"Onward Christian Soldiers
Marching as to war,
With the Cross of Jesus
Going on before "

Many times the apostle Paul reminds us that we are soldiers of Jesus Christ who are in a battle.

2 Timothy 2:3 "Endure hardness with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus."

Ephesians 6:11 "Put on the full armor of God...."

1 Timothy 6:12 "Fight the good fight of faith...."

In the book of Revelation the thought of warfare is never far from the writer's mind (Read Rev. 12:7.)

Every person who becomes a Christian is immediately placed into a battlefield. You cannot be a conscientious objector in this battle, or be granted immunity if you are to be a committed Christian. The more we try to do for Christ the hotter the battle will get. To remain neutral is impossible for we are either in the enemy camp or in the Lord's camp.

Exodus 32:26 "Whoever is on the Lord's side come to me."

Joshua 24:14 "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve."

The good news is that the battle has already been decided; Jesus won it at Calvary!

Coloss. 2:15 "Disarmed the powers and authority...."

1 John 3:8 "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work."

Hebrews 2:14 "By His death He might destroy, him who had the power of death - that is the devil."

Although the battle has been won, the devil is still allowed to work on the Earth until the time of his final judgement; but the devil has no authority over the Christian. We once walked according to the "Ruler of the Kingdom of the air", but that is no longer true. (Read Ephesians 2: 1-6).

1 John 2:13 "I write to you young man because you have overcome the evil one."

1 John 5:4 "For everyone born of God has overcome the world. This is the victory that overcomes the world even our faith."

We are therefore part of the army of the Lord:

We have been:

| | |
|------------------|------------------------------------|
| Called up | (when we got saved) |
| Enlisted | (when we got baptized) |
| Empowered | (when we received the Holy Spirit) |
| Posted to a unit | (when we joined a local church) |

To wage a good warfare, we must maintain a healthy spiritual life. In this lesson we are going to talk about our personal warfare, for unless we can be victorious on a personal level, we will struggle to be victorious as a fellowship.

1. THE CHRISTIAN'S ARMOUR

We need to remember that -

1 Peter 5:8 "Your enemy the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

Therefore, we must not be -

2 Cor. 2:11 "Unaware of his schemes."

and so when Paul speaks of the Christian armor, he is speaking of something that is vital to us as Christians.

Read Ephesians 6:14-18

List the 6 items of the Christian armor -

1. (against lies of the devil)
2. (against evil desires and influences)
3. (against slothfulness and indifference)
4. (against the devil's accusations and attacks of doubt)
5. (against attacks upon our mind and thought life)
6. (an offensive weapon to counter the enemy's suggestions
Matthew 4:4-11)

Please Note: all the armor is basically defensive.

We do not have to win the battle - all we have to do is STAND - we are already VICTORS!!!

Write out Ephesians 6:13

.....

.....

.....

If we have "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" we will be well protected for every enemy attack.

2. THE DEVIL'S TACTICS

Ephesians 6:11 Talks about the "devil's schemes".

At times the devil makes direct approaches to us like he did to Jesus in Matthew 4:8-11, but generally, he comes in a more subtle way like he did to Jesus in Matthew 4:4-7 or like he did to Eve in the Garden of Eden when he said -

Genesis 3:1 "Did God really say you must not eat from any tree in the garden?"

and later

Genesis 3:5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened ... "

In that incident he became an "Angel of Light".

What tactics does the devil use to take us out of the front line of the battle?

(a) TEMPTS US - Temptation is not sin but GIVING IN is.

James 1:14-15; Hebrews 2:18

(b) DISCOURAGE US - Joshua 1:9

.....

.....

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.....

(c) MAKE US FEEL THAT THERE IS NO FORGIVENESS AFTER WE HAVE SINNED AND FAILED

Read 1 John 1:9; Hebrews 4:15-16.

Consider Peter in John 18:15-18; 25-27 and 21:15-19.

Consider also 2 Corinthians 2:6-8 compared to 1 Corinthians chapter 5.

(d) HE CAUSES MINOR IRRITATIONS IN RELATIONSHIPS TO GET WORSE

Ephesians 4:25-27; 2 Corinthians 2:8-11.

We must be always alert to make sure that Satan does not gain a beach-head in our fellowship through disagreements and arguments.

3. THE CHRISTIANS VICTORY

James 4:7 "Submit yourselves then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."

We must resist the temptation he brings into our minds. We must reject evil and wicked thoughts that are not righteous in God's sight. We must dismiss the suggestions and doubts that he seeks to implant in our hearts to destroy our faith.

We must take authority over him in our everyday life - Luke 10:17-19. At times in our life we will have to "Bind the strong man" before the life of the Kingdom can be expressed (Matthew 12:29.)

We must pray in the Spirit on all occasions for all the saints (Ephesians 6:18) so that Satan does not gain an advantage over them.

A WARNING NOTE

We do not believe that every sickness, difficult situation or sinful act is Satanically inspired. We draw a distinction between the "works of the Flesh" and "demonic activity" (Galatians 5:19-21; Matthew 4:24.)

We do not believe that a born-again Christian can be demon possessed unless he deliberately and continually sins by doing things forbidden by God (e.g. Spiritism.)

SPIRITUAL WARFARE AND THE CHURCH

In our meetings together we often will be entering into spiritual warfare during times of worship and prayer. We believe that when we pray and worship we can alter national and international affairs through the intervention of God.

Daniel 10:12-13 gives us an insight into the spiritual world.

Paul said -

2 Corinthians 10:4 "The weapons we fight with are not like the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have Divine power to demolish strongholds."

Many Christians never fulfil all their potential in God because they run away instead of facing up to their problems. If we are to move on as a fellowship and as individuals, we must have the attitude of David when facing Goliath. When men stronger and bigger and older, shivered in their boots, David faced him with faith and courage. It does not matter how big the enemy seems in your sight, face it and conquer it in the name of Jesus. Say with David -

1 Samuel 17:45 "You come to me with a sword and spear and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Hosts."

1 Corinthians 15:57 "But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

LESSON 7 PRAYER AND FASTING

PRAYER

William Temple replied to his critics, who regarded answered prayer no more than a coincidence; "When I pray coincidences happen, when I don't, they don't." It is absolutely true "that more things are wrought through prayer than this world dreams of."

Prayer is vital to the success of the Christian life - a Christian who does not pray is probably not a Christian. Prayer should be the natural outcome of our relationship with our Heavenly Father, we should desire to talk to Him and He certainly desires to talk to us.

Philippians 4:6 - Write out the following verse:

In everything by prayer
.....
.....

Who did and who should pray?

1. Jesus prayed (find one example from Matthew's Gospel)

.....

2. Jesus' disciples were taught to pray (find a scripture)

.....

3. Old and New Testament Saints (find one scripture from the Old and New Testaments)

.....

.....

Prayer should not be a duty that we have to do, but ought to be the most delightful experience of our daily lives.

Consider the Lord Jesus Christ

| | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Luke 3:21 | He prayed as he was baptized in the River Jordan. |
| Luke 6:12 | He prayed before he called the twelve apostles to Himself. |
| John 11:41-42 | He prayed before he raised Lazarus from the dead. |
| Luke 22:39-46 | He prayed before the Crucifixion. |
| Luke 23:34 & Mark 15:34 | He prayed whilst being Crucified. |

AND "Very early in the morning while it was still dark Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place where He prayed. "Mark 1:35.

IF JESUS (THE SON OF GOD) NEEDED TO MAKE TIME TO PRAY, HOW MUCH MORE DO WE

The Apostle Paul prayed in Acts 9:11.

This was significant because he had often prayed before but now he had a new relationship with God!

He mentioned Prayer many times in his New Testament letters: Romans 1:10; Ephesians 1:16; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-14. He must have spent a great deal of time praying for all the people and places that God had burdened his heart for.

HOW DO WE PRAY

Luke 11:1 "Lord teach us to pray...."

It was in response to this request that Jesus taught them the Lord's Prayer (v 2-4) and encouraged them by telling them a parable (v 5-13.)

We only really learn to pray by beginning to pray.

Prayer is simply talking to God as naturally as a child speaks to a father. God does not require special phraseology or posture, just an open heart that longs for His blessing.

1. Remember that He is your heavenly Father who cares for you. Matthew 6:26
2. Begin with a time of praise and thanksgiving. Philippians 4:6
3. Confess your sins and admit your need of Him. 1 John 1:9 (Read Psalm 66:18)
4. Prayer is an exercise of faith not of feelings. Hebrews 11:6
5. Prayer is a two-way communication - give God time to speak to you - particularly if you have asked for guidance. God can speak to you through the Bible, through other Christians, through circumstances or through the "still small voice in your heart".
6. Ask for specific items and expect an answer. James 1:5-6; Mark 11:22-24
7. If our relationship with others is not correct, then our prayers will be hindered. Matthew 5:23-24; 1 Peter 3:7
8. Consider the amazing power of prayer. John 15:7, 16.

ADVICE FOR OUR PRAYER TIMES

1. Set apart a time each day to pray.
2. Get away from people so that you can pray alone.
3. Don't try to pray like some great Christian of the past. Let your prayer life develop naturally in time and content.
4. Use your Bible, when you pray; and mix your prayers with praise, worship and meditation.

Jesus said, Matthew 26:41 ".....

.....

.....

1 Samuel 12:23 reminds us that it is a sin not to pray.

At times we as a fellowship meet together to pray for certain items that may affect us as a fellowship; or for items of national importance. We believe that when we meet together in prayer that there can be an unleashing of spiritual power as we call upon God with one heart and mind.

Consider the following scriptures -

Acts 4:23-31; Acts 12:15.

FASTING

Jesus said to the Pharisees “The time will come when the Bridegroom will be taken from them, then they will fast”.

At that time, when Jesus was with them, the disciples did not need to fast, but when Jesus went back to heaven, then they would need to and would do.

When we fast we go without food for a period of time, so that we can seek the Lord more earnestly. This period of time can be a day or two or much longer, or can just be the missing of one meal.

Fasting is not something we have to do, but will be something we will want to do at certain times in our Christian life. To fast is to abstain from eating food for a period of time.

The early Methodists used to fast twice a week whilst they moved in power across the nation. We do not have to fast like them, but when there are difficult situations confronting us, a day of prayer and fasting will help us to intensify our prayer time and will make us more sensitive to the voice of God.

Fasting is not a danger to one’s health; most people agree that it is of great benefit physically, providing that one drinks water during the period of the fast.

Consider the following scriptures:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Exodus 34:28 | Moses fasted 40 days and 46 nights (this would appear to be a supernatural fast). |
| 2 Samuel 12:16 | Fasting was often a sign of repentance. |
| 2 Chronicles 20:3 | Jehoshaphat called a national fast during a time of national crisis. |
| Esther 3:16 | Esther called for prayer support by asking people to fast for her. |
| Nehemiah 1:4 | Nehemiah fasted because the burden of his heart was so great. |
| Daniel 9:3 | Daniel was a great man of prayer - it cost him a great deal, but what answers he received! |
| Daniel 10:3 | Not a total fast but a partial fast. |
| Acts 13:2-3 | The New Testament Church at Antioch believed in fasting and out of this time of fasting a new era of the Christian mission was commenced. |
| Acts 14:23 | They obviously believed that such decisions were important enough to fast about. |
| Luke 4:2 | If the Lord Jesus needed to fast to enable the power of the spirit to be released in His ministry - how much more do we (compare Luke 4:1 to Luke 4:14). |

There are many more verses that speak of fasting in the Bible (over 50 in total) and as we obey the leading of the Lord to fast, we will find great spiritual benefit ourselves.

Generally speaking, it is not good or necessary to fast for a long period of time (i.e. 40 days) until we have fasted for a day or two and then built up to a longer period.

Finally:

when we fast we will experience certain physical reactions:

1. Headaches

- ignore it and it will go away during the first day.

2. Hunger feelings

- our body is like an alarm clock telling us it is time for food - it's just a habit feeling because our bodies assume that food will arrive at regular intervals. Just ignore it - you won't die of starvation!

3. Weakness

- this is particularly true if you fast for more than one day - but most people testify that they feel stronger at the end of a fast than they did at the start.

4. Bad-breath

- this is a sign of the poisons in our bodies being activated - as soon as our digestive organs are purified our breath will become normal again.

LESSON 8 FAITH

If we are to become strong, mature Christians, it is essential we learn to exercise an active faith in our day-to-day living.

Many Christians are unstable because their faith is based upon feelings and circumstances, instead of God's Word. Our faith in God should act as an anchor to our souls so that we are steadfast and unmovable in our daily lives.

Hebrews 10:32 "But my righteous one will live by faith...."

Romans 1:17 "A righteousness that is by faith from first to last.

2 Corinthians 5:7 "We live by faith not by Sight."

Romans 14:23 "Everything that does not come from faith is sin."

Write out Hebrews 11:6 ".....

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We are called to "fight the good fight of the faith" (1 Timothy 6:12) and to "take up the shield of faith." If the enemy of our souls can suppress our faith, and fill our minds with doubts and fear, then he has won the battle! But if we can rise in faith during the trials and tribulations of everyday life, then we will be a good soldier of the Lord Jesus and a good witness to the outside world.

WHAT IS FAITH?

Hebrews 11:1 "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

Faith is essentially a simple trust in God, and His word, if God speaks to us then we must simply believe Him. Very often there will be a period of time when we have to hold on to the promise of God amid trying circumstances before we see the fulfilment of God's promise in our lives.

Consider the following characters:

Noah (Hebrews 11:7) when he built the ark

Abraham (Hebrews 11:8-12) concerning his pilgrimage and his promised descendant.

Look up Genesis 12:4; 16:16; 17:1 and note particularly the age of Abraham in these passages.

Joseph (Genesis 37:5-6, 9 and Psalm 105:17-22)

True faith is always rewarded but not always immediately.

In defining Faith, we could say that real faith is not an emotional response in a moment of time (like a flash of lightning,) but a constant, persistent trust in the goodness and faithfulness of God. A compass needle will always point north and true faith will always point towards God.

The Amplified Bible says that "faith is the title-deeds of the things we hope for...." Hebrews 11:1

Paul Yonggi Cho says that, "when we have a clear-cut goal, and a desire burning in our heart, we should then kneel down and pray until we receive this assurance" - he goes on to say that it could sometimes take "two minutes, two hours, two weeks, two months or two years, but whatever the length of time, we should pray through until we have this assurance."

HOW DOES FAITH COME TO US?

Write out Romans 10:17 ".....

.....

.....

- (1) We must Hear the word of God and Receive it into our hearts – to receive it into our hearts is to believe it.

Again, consider Abraham in Romans 4:18-25.

Abraham did not ignore the natural facts (that it was impossible for Sarah to give birth to a child), but his faith rose above these facts, based upon the promise God made to him.

- (2) Faith comes as we look to Jesus as "the Author and Perfector of our faith" Hebrews 12:2. Cp Peter as he walked upon the water.

- (3) Faith comes as we spend time with God in prayer, Mark 9:29.

- (4) Faith comes as we respond to God's Word, James 2:17-22.

Consider Hebrews 11:24-32.

Where Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David and Samuel all proved their faith by their actions. It was as they stepped out on God's Word, that their faith was strengthened and confirmed.

- (5) God gives special faith in certain circumstances -

1 Corinthians 12:9 "to another faith by the same spirit."

An example of this would be the faith needed by Daniel and his three friends in Daniel 3 and Daniel 6. This was a supernatural faith - faith for special circumstances.

F.B. Meyer says that "faith grew in Abraham and it can grow in us." If we consider Abraham the perfect example of faith, we will do well to remember the following facts:

- (a) that the birth of Ishmael was a result of unbelief, Genesis 16.
- (b) that Abraham and Sarah both laughed when God again promised them a son (Genesis 17:17; 18:12-14.)

JESUS SPOKE A GREAT DEAL ABOUT FAITH

1. Jesus often tested the disciple's faith, John 6:5-6.
2. Jesus commended faith wherever He found it, Matthew 8:5-13; 15:28; Luke 8:48.
3. Jesus condemned the disciples for a lack of faith, Matthew 17:17-20; Luke 24:25.
4. Jesus told us that if we believe anything is possible (even if we only have a little faith). Matthew 17:20; 21:21.
5. Unbelief will always prevent Jesus working in and through our lives - unbelief is sin, Matthew 13:58; Heb. 3:12.
6. Jesus met the needs of those who had a little faith and those who had apparently no faith, Mark 9:24; John 5:5-9.
7. Jesus even called Peter to walk on water, Matthew 14:29-31, and rebuked him for his lack of faith when he began to drown!

NOTE:

If we tried to walk on water we would drown, but Peter received a specific word from the Lord to 'come' and it was on the basis of that specific word that he stepped out of the boat. There are many things in the Bible which clearly reveal the will of God for our lives which can provide a basis for our faith; but in many instances we need to know that we are really hearing from the Lord before we step out of the boat.

IN WHAT AREAS OF OUR LIVES DO WE NEED TO USE OUR FAITH?

1. For Salvation from Sin - Ephesians 2:8.
 2. For Healing from Sickness - Acts 14:8.
 3. In Prayer and Worship - Matthew 21:22; John 14:12-14; Hebrews 11:6.
 4. To quench the evil suggestions and doubts of the enemy of our soul - Ephesians 6:16.
 5. For our daily necessities - Matthew 6:25-34.
 6. During the crisis situation - Mark 4:35-41.
 7. In the exercise of spiritual gifts - 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; Romans 12:3, 6.
- Matthew 9:29 "According to your faith be it unto you."

LESSON 9 THE WORD OF GOD

Matthew 4:4 "Man does not live by bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God."

A Christian who does not feed upon the Word of God, will never become strong and virile in the faith. In a country where Bibles are easy and cheap to buy, it is apparent that many Christians do not read it regularly and therefore are weak, ignorant and ineffective in their Christian life. The church is suffering from spiritual malnutrition because men do not receive the spiritual strength that comes through meditating on the Word of God.

Joshua 1:8 "Do not let the book of the law depart from your mouth, meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."

Psalms 1:2-3 "But his delight is in the law of the Lord and on His law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither - whatever he does prospers."

Psalms 119:9 "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your Word."

Psalms 119:11 "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

Psalms 119:105 "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."

In considering the previous verses you will notice that by reading and meditating on the Word of God, we will be kept free from sin, and will receive guidance and help in our everyday life. You cannot be prosperous and successful in the Christian life unless you feed upon the Word of God.

Quote: "This book (the Bible) will keep you free from sin or sin will keep you from this book."

THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

2 Peter 1:20-21 "No prophecy of scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

2 Timothy 3:16 says, ".....
.....
.....

The word "inspired" means "God breathed."

God did not literally write the Bible, but through the Holy Spirit guided men as they wrote.

Jesus claimed that the Old Testament Scriptures were inspired.

John 10:35; Luke 16:17; Luke 24:27. He spent a great deal of His life reading and understanding it (Luke 2:46, 4:16.)

Jesus accepted unquestionably the stories and miracles of the Old Testament e.g. -

1. Creation of Man (Matthew 19:4-5)
2. Story of Noah, (Luke 17:27)
3. Destruction of Sodom, (Luke 17:29)
4. Moses and the Brazen Serpent, (John 3:14)
5. David eating the Shewbread, (Matthew 12:3-4)
6. Elijah and the Widow of Zarephath, (Luke 4:26)
7. Elisha and Naaman, {Luke 4:27}
8. Jonah and the Great Fish, (Matthew 12:40)

The Apostles and Other New Testament Writers Claimed the Bible to be Inspired

Acts 1:16 says that the Scriptures were spoken through David by the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament writers quoted from the Old Testament regularly (1 Corinthians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 15:54-55; Acts 15:16-18,) because they based all they believed on the Old Testament Scriptures.

Note: also 2 Peter 3:16, where the writings of the Apostle Paul are considered to be the "scriptures".

It is because we believe that the scriptures (in their original languages) are the inspired word of God that we ensure that all our preaching, teaching and practices are scripturally orientated.

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you believe that the Bible is God's Word?
2. Do you have difficulty in accepting certain stories in the Bible as true? (e.g. Creation, the Flood, Jonah.)
3. Do you recognize the Bible as God's special word to you, or do you find it boring at times?

Most people have found the Bible 'Dry' and 'Boring' until they become acquainted with the author. We must remember that because the Bible is a unique book, that we do not read it as an intellectual exercise, or for its historic interest, but as the 'Living and Abiding' word of God. It is the Holy Spirit who guided men to write it and must be the same Holy Spirit who opens our eyes to see the truths written down. He must quicken it to our hearts and minds.

Consider the following Scriptures

1 Peter 1:23 "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the Living and enduring Word of God."

John 6:63 "The Spirit gives Life, the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."

No wonder Peter said –

John 6:68 "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

The Amazing Preservation of the Word of God

The Bible is the most powerful book that has ever been written. It is because of this power that men have constantly tried to destroy it, ban it, or corrupt it.

King Manasseh (696 BC) was probably responsible for the attempt to destroy all known copies of the Word of God. 70 years later during the reign of the Godly King Josiah, only one copy of the law seemed to remain; it was discovered during Josiah's Reformation and brought forth a great revival (2 Kings 22:8-10).

King Jehoiakim (620 BC) cut the word of God with a pen-knife and burnt it in a fire - but God's word was still fulfilled.

Antiochus Epiphanes of Syria (175-163 BC) desecrated the temple and destroyed the scriptures, killing any who were found with the scriptures in their possession. He died - but the word of God lives on!

The Roman Emperor Diocletian (303 AD) ordered every Bible to be destroyed and its readers slain, but 10 years later he was dead and Constantine the Great made Christianity the official religion of the Empire.

Voltaire said "100 years from my death there will not be a Bible in the earth ... " He died in 1788 - 100 years later a first edition of Voltaire's works were sold for 5p - but on that day the British government paid the Czar of Russia £200,000 for the Codex Sinaiticus (a copy of the Word of God). Not long after his death his very own printing press used to print infidel leaflets was used to print copies of the Bible, and his house was used to stack Bibles of the Geneva Bible Society.

Throughout the Middle Ages (known as the dark ages) the Bible was ignored, but when men began to translate it into the language of the people, then there soon followed the Great Reformation.

Men have been executed, tortured and burnt at the stake so that we may have the right to read the word of God in our own language. Let us not despise our freedom to possess and read the Bible, but let us cherish it, and use it.

If the Bible is not the inspired word of God, then why has it been through so much persecution, and why is it even today banned or opposed in Islamic and Communist countries?

The answer is, the Devil knows how powerful the Word of God is when it is believed and preached under the anointing of the Holy Spirit and will do all he can to destroy it. The enemy of your soul is happy if your Bible is never read (or read only intermittently,) therefore to get the best out of our Bible we must:

- * READ it daily (set a regular time)
- * MEDITATE on it (Joshua 1:8)
- * BELIEVE it (Hebrews 4:2)
- * MAKE NOTES on your findings.
- * PRAY over it.
- * LIVE it out (James 1:22-25)

When we are newly converted it is good to start by reading the New Testament first and then some Old Testament books. It is also good to use some daily reading notes to help you understand it. But when you have grown a little, it is vital that you begin by some systematic program, to go through all of the Bible. Once a year is the ideal aim - this way you will be getting a grasp of all the Bible and you will find that by reading one part it will help you to understand another. The truth of the word of God is revealed to the person with the hungry, humble and open heart, who has the desire to know the truth, and is willing to take the time to read it.

As we read the Bible, it will lay a foundation in our lives that will be able to stand against all the pressures the enemy will bring our way. At times God will 'quicken' a passage to our hearts that will be a source of great blessing to us.

From 2 Timothy 3:16 write down the four ways in which the Word of God is profitable -

1.
2.
3.
4.

How did Jesus win his battle against the Devil in Matthew 4:11?

.....

It is when the word of God is in our heart (not our minds) that it becomes the Sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17).

The Bible and Prophecy

The gift of prophecy was a gift given by God for the general edification and encouragement of the Church. It held a very important place in the life of the Church and operated at different levels (1 Corinthians 14, Acts 15:32; 21:8-11.) The New Testament Church never appeared to make the prophetic word of greater importance than the Old Testament scriptures.

To what did the Apostle Peter appeal to on the day of Pentecost? - Answer - the prophet Joel (Acts 2:16-21)

To what did James make his appeal to at the conference in Jerusalem? - Answer - the prophet Amos (Acts 15:16-18)

To what did Stephen make his appeal to during his trial before the Sanhedrin council (Acts 7)
- Answer - the Old Testament stories.

Generally speaking, prophecy is not of a foundational, teaching character, but is normally a particular word, inspired of God, for a specific person or situation. At times the gift of prophecy may be a quickening of a passage of scripture (or scriptural incident.) Anything that is contrary to scripture ought to be rejected, for we test prophecy by the word of God, and not the word of God by the inspirational gift of prophecy.

The One Great Theme of the Bible

The Bible, is the greatest book in the world, because it tells the greatest story ever told about the greatest person who ever lived (and still lives) - Jesus Christ.

It was written by more than 36 different writers, covering a period of 1,600 years approximately, yet through its pages you have the one theme of World Redemption.

In Genesis you have paradise lost.

In Revelation you have paradise found.

In between you find the story of man's failure to live a holy, righteous life - but in the end, God's own Son not only lived a perfect life, but gave his life for us so that we may not perish but have eternal life.

Many times you see Jesus Christ prefigured in the Old Testament incidents and characters. In the Prophets he is spoken of time and time again as the great deliverer who was to come.

e.g. Joseph is a type of Christ in his rejection and exaltation.

The Ark is a type of Christ.

The story of Abraham and Isaac is a type of Christ.

As we read it let us ask the Lord to open our eyes to see Jesus in its pages.

SIX DESCRIPTIVE PICTURES OF THE WORD OF GOD

- | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--|
| 1. <u>A SWORD</u> | Hebrews 4:12 | "For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." |
| 2. <u>A LAMP</u> | Psalm 119:105 | "Your Word is a Lamp to my feet and light for my path." |
| | Psalm 119:130 | "The entrance of your Word gives light it gives understanding to the simple." |
| 3. <u>A LAVER</u> | Ephesians 5:26 | "To make her holy by the washing of water through the Word." |
| 4. <u>A FIRE</u> | Jeremiah 20:9 | "....His Word is in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones." |
| | Psalm 39:3 | "My heart grew hot within me and as I meditated the fire burned...." |
| 5. <u>A HAMMER</u> | Jeremiah 23:29 | "....is not my Word like fire," declares the Lord, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces." |
| 6. <u>A SEED</u> | Luke 8:11 | "The seed is the Word of God." |

Let us be careful how we hear the Word of God, and ensure that we are like the good ground and not like the hard, stoney or thorny ground.

LESSON 10 THE LORD JESUS CHRIST - HIS PERSON

Matthew 22:42 "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?"

What a man believes about the Lord Jesus Christ will ultimately decide his eternal destiny. If we truly believe that He is God's Son, who gave His life for us, then we have eternal life. If we do not believe that He is the Son of God, we make Him to be a liar, a fraud and an imposter, and cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Mark 16:16 "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, whoever does not believe will be condemned."

Jesus Christ lived for 33 years, was born in poverty, raised in obscurity, ministered for only 3½ years and was eventually nailed to a cross like a common criminal - yet his short life has made more impact upon the world than any other.

Christianity is essentially a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, consider the following verses:

Matthew 4:19 "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Mark 3: 14 "He appointed twelve.... that they might be with Him and.... that He might send them out to preach."

Acts 4: 13 "When they saw the courage of Peter and John..... they took note they had been with Jesus."

David Watson said, "The general concept of discipleship was by no means new when Jesus called men and women to follow him. Unlike the disciples, of Moses or of the Pharisees they were fully committed to their master as well as to the message.... When Buddha was dying his disciples asked how they could best remember him. He told them not to bother. It was his teaching not his person that counted. With Jesus it is altogether different. Everything centers around Him. Discipleship means knowing Him, loving Him, believing in Him, being committed to Him." (Taken from the book - 'Discipleship'.)

Read the following verse: John 21:15-19.

When the disciples began preaching and teaching the good news, they were proclaiming who Jesus was, what he had done, what had happened to him etc. Their message was all about the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is vital that we know who Jesus is and what he has done for us because you cannot build a true relationship unless you know all you can about Him.

Let us consider firstly then:

1 HIS TWO NATURES

Jesus was both human and divine. In this sense he was totally unique. He was not half human and half divine he was fully or totally human and totally divine. He is called the Son of God (Matthew 16:16; John 10:36) and the Son of Man (Luke 19:10).

Isaiah 9:6 "For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given." The child born in Bethlehem was the Son of God.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son...."

Consider the following verses:

John 1:1 and Micah 5:2

John 8:58 and John 12:41

He was completely human as well - note the following human characteristics and fill in the answers:

1. Mark 11:12 Jesus was
2. John 19:28 Jesus was
3. John 4:6 Jesus was
4. Matt. 8:24 Jesus was

He was at times angry, joyful, sorrowful, indignant and in agony.

Read Hebrews 2:14 and note carefully the words "flesh and blood" and "humanity".

It is because of this human nature that He is able to sympathize with us and understand our frailties and to help us in the time of temptation.

Hebrews 2:17-18 "For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in services to God..... because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."

Write out

Hebrews 4:15
.....

2 HIS UNIQUE LIFE

A) HE WAS UNIQUE IN HIS BIRTH

Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-37; Born of a virgin called Mary.

B) HE WAS UNIQUE IN HIS CHARACTER

2 Corinthians 5:21 "God made Him who had no sin...."

Luke 23:41 "We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve But this man has done nothing wrong."

C) HE WAS UNIQUE IN HIS MINISTRY

John 7:46 "No-one ever spoke the way this man does."

Matthew 7:28-29 "When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at His teaching because He taught as one who had authority and not as their teacher of the law."

Mark 1:27 "The people were all so amazed that they asked each other "What is this? A New Teaching - and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him."

Mark 2:12 "...this amazed everyone and they praised God saying "We have never seen anything like this!"

Matthew 22:22 "When they heard this they were amazed, so they left him and went away."

D) HE WAS UNIQUE IN HIS DEATH

Read John 10:14-18

What did Jesus have authority to lay down (He also had authority to take it up again.)

John 10:18 "No-one takes it from me" Jesus said.

Read John 19:10-11

Write out Matthew 26:53

.....

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John 19:30 "When He received the drink, Jesus said "It is finished." With that He bowed His head and gave up His spirit."

Romans 5:8 "But GOD demonstrates His own love for us in this, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Hebrews 10:28 "....Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sin of many people...."

Read Isaiah 53:3-6

E) HE WAS UNIQUE IN HIS RESURRECTION

Other people had been raised from the dead - 1 Kings 17:17-23; 2 Kings 4:32-35; 2 Kings 13:20-21.

Jesus himself raised three people from the dead - Mark 5:35-43; Luke 7:11-15; John 11:1-44.

But Jesus is unique because He will never die again - Romans 6:9; Hebrews 7:24; Revelation 1:18.

Jesus is not a spirit or ghost in heaven - Luke 24:38-39. Jesus was raised from the dead bodily - and through this body could do amazing things John 20:19, 26; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9.

It was still a physical and visible body - Luke 24:41-42; John 20:27; Matt. 28:9.

That is why the gospel writers tell us the tomb was empty - there was no body there – Matthew 28:6; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:12; John 20:12.

WHERE IS JESUS NOW

Read Acts 1:11; Acts 7:56; Philippians 2:9; Hebrews 1:3 for the answer.

3. JESUS AND HIS KINGDOM

When Jesus came he brought the reign and rule of God into the world - He ushered in the Kingdom of God. Matthew 4:17, 5:3, 5:10.

The parables He taught were often called parables of the Kingdom. Matthew 13:31-52.

When He healed the sick He was declaring the power of the Kingdom. Matthew 10:7-8.

The gospel (good-news) we preach is (not only) the gospel of the Grace of God but also the gospel of the Kingdom. Acts 20:24; Acts 8:12.

One day (when Jesus comes again) the fullness of the Kingdom will be revealed Revelation 11:15; 1 Corinthians 15:24-26. But right now Jesus can rule in our towns and villages through the church. Ephesians 3:10.

4. JESUS AND HIS SECOND COMING

Jesus Christ is coming again.

Consider the following scriptures:

Acts 1:11 "This same Jesus will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven."

Titus 2:13 "Looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

1 John 3:2-3 "...when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is, and every man that has this hope in Him purifieth himself."

Write out John 14:3
.....
.....

He will come visibly, bodily and with power to reign upon the earth. It is at this time that the fulness of the Kingdom will be brought in.

The truth of His second coming should be the hope of the church and should be a stimulus to Christian life in both evangelistic zeal and godly living.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Matthew 24.

In between His first coming and His second coming, He is building His church and at the appointed time, will present His church like a glorious bride to Himself. We are privileged to be a part of that church so let us make sure that Jesus Christ has the pre-eminent place in our lives.

LESSON 11 THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

The Lordship of Christ is the most important lesson in this commitment Course. When we studied lesson one, we said that in salvation we have to confess that 'Jesus is Lord.' A person cannot be saved until he has surrendered complete control of his life over to the Lord Jesus Christ. Unless a person is submitted to the Lordship of Christ over his life, he will never be able to submit himself to the authority of the local church. A person who does not acknowledge the Lordship of Christ in his life will never become a good church member; instead of being a tremendous blessing to the other members, they will be a source of grief and contention because of their unsubmitted spirit.

Read Philippians 2:6-11.

It traces the life of the Lord Jesus from His pre-existent days through His birth, and death, and finishes by the great declaration that "God has exalted Him to the highest place and given Him the Name that is above every name that at the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the Glory of God the Father."

We either willingly submit to the Lordship of Christ now, or we will be forced to bow the knee to Him when he comes "In power and glory".

Acts 2:36 "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

When the Apostles preached about Jesus they emphasized his resurrection and exaltation as much as they did his crucifixion, and when they came to their conclusion and application, it was a call to repentance and submission to his Lordship, and not just an invitation to accept the Lord Jesus as the Savior from sin.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST?

In the Old Testament one word rendered Lord is the Hebrew word 'ADONAI' (It is used about 340 times.)

Genesis 15:8 "Abram said "O Sovereign Lord (Adonai) how can I know that I shall gain possession of it?"

It conveys the idea of God being the master or possessor. A slave was the absolute possession of his Lord. Thus men like Abraham, Moses and Joshua acknowledged that God was their master and they were his servants.

Sarah called Abraham Lord or Adonai in Genesis 18:12, in it she was saying that Abraham was her master - not out of slavish subservience, but out of a loving relationship.

In Ezekiel the word is used 200 times as God is revealed as Lord over the nations.

In the New Testament the most common word rendered Lord, is the word 'KURIOS', it is used of one who has power or authority, and is translated "Lord, master, owner or sir."

At times it is clearly seen that the Lord of the Old Testament is the Lord Jesus of the New. Thus we can say without any doubt, that Jesus is God. At other times, it is used as a title of courtesy, or a title of respect, or of a master.

It is worth noting that Caesar was called Lord or 'KURIOS' and those who were under his rule or authority acknowledged him as such, but if a man became a Christian, they could not acknowledge Caesar as Lord, because they were under the Lordship of another - the Lord Jesus Christ.

Note the following scriptures:

Luke 2:11 "A Savior who is Christ the Lord."

John 20:28 "My Lord and my God."

1 Cor. 12:3 "No-one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit."

Jesus himself assumed the title of Lord - Matthew 7:21; John 13:13.

There is another word translated 'Lord' in the New-Testament. It is the Greek word 'DESPOTES' – one who has supreme authority (we obtain the term DESPOT from this word).

2 Peter 2:1 "...even denying the Sovereign Lord who bought them...."

Jude 4 "...they are godless men who change the grace of God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord."

In everyday language, Lord means 'Boss' - the one who gives orders and expects to be obeyed. When we come to Christ we are in effect saying "I no longer wish to be guided by Satan or by my own desires; I want to submit my every thought, word and action to the Lord Jesus."

1. IF JESUS IS LORD, THEN WE ARE HIS SERVANTS

Consider the following scriptures -

1 Cor. 6:20 "You are not your own; you were bought at a price."

Peter 1:18-19 "You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ."

Gal. 1:10 "If I were still trying to please men I would not be a servant of Christ."

Romans 1:1 "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus."

The Greek word for servant is 'Doulos' which means 'to be in bondage to,' and can be translated Bond Servant.

Read Luke 17:7-9 and Matthew 20:25-28.

Colossians 1:13-14 "(God) has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the Kingdom of His beloved Son."

We are in a Kingdom, servants of a King who loves us, and who is totally dedicated to our welfare.

2. A PERSON MUST BE SUBMITTED TO THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST BEFORE HE CAN BECOME A TRUE DISCIPLE

Read the following scriptures:

Matthew 16:24-25; Luke 9:57-62; Luke 14:26-27.

Luke 14:33 "In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has, cannot be my disciple."

Compare Luke 18:22, when Jesus talked to a rich young ruler.

3. JESUS CHRIST IS LORD OF HIS CHURCH

God "raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, which is His body." Ephesians 1:20-23.

The church must receive its orders and direction from its 'head' the Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:18 "And He is the head of the body, the church, he is the beginning and the firstborn from the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy."

4. THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST AFFECTS EVERY AREA OF OUR LIFE

Read Colossians 3:17-24.

Seven times in those verses the Lordship of Christ is mentioned, so that we conclude that the Lordship of Christ should affect our marital and parental relationships, and our business and work relationships.

DOES THE LORD JESUS GIVE ORDERS TO HIS SUBJECTS?

It is a mistake to think there is no law or commands in the New Testament. Grace is not an easy going 'do as you please' concept. We are to do the things that please the Lord.

Let the scriptures make it plain:

Matthew 28:18-20 "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."

Romans 8:4 "... that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the spirit."

1 Cor. 9:21 "I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law."

Galatians 6:2 "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Romans 7:6 "We serve in the new way of the spirit, and not in the old way of the written code."

Under the law of Moses, fear of judgement and death was the primary motivation for obedience. But now, having been justified freely by his grace, our motive as believers for keeping the law of Christ is love and gratitude. "We love him because he first loved us." 1 John 4:19.

The life we live is simply a P.S. that says, "Because you saved me I'll serve you and obey you in everything."

John 14:14 "If you love me, you will obey what I command."

In the following verses, what three things did Jesus command us to do:

Matthew 28:18-20; John 15:12; Luke 22:19-20.

1.
2.
3.

HOW CAN WE LIVE A LIFE THAT IS COMPLETELY PLEASING TO OUR LORD JESUS?

If we are truly 'born again' and love the Lord Jesus with all our hearts, it should not be hard to live a life that is pleasing to our Lord Jesus. At times there may be an internal struggle between our "new nature" and our "old nature," but if we are truly submitted to the Lord we will find that we have a natural inclination to please him.

1. WE MUST RECOGNISE THAT WE HAVE A NEW NATURE

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| Jeremiah 31:33 | "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts." |
| 1 Cor. 2: 16 | " <u>We have</u> the mind of Christ." |
| Matthew 11:29-30 | "Take <u>my yoke</u> upon you and learn from me ... for my yoke is easy and my burden is light." |
| 1 John 5:3 | "His commands are not burden-some." |
| 1 John 2:4 | "This man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him." |

Read Romans 8:1-9.

We are 'programmed' to please the Lord!

2. THEN WE MUST SET OUT TO DISCOVER FROM THE SCRIPTURES WHAT THE LORD WANTS OF US, AND HAVING FOUND IT, DELIBERATELY DO IT, REGARDLESS OF HOW WE FEEL. RIGHT ACTIONS WILL BE FOLLOWED BY RIGHT FEELINGS.

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| Acts 22: 10 | "What shall I do Lord?" |
|-------------|-------------------------|

| | |
|---------------|--|
| Matthew 28:20 | "Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." |
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"To say 'NO Lord' is a contradiction in terms. It is we who wish to have the final word but the truth is uncomfortably clear. If Christ is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all. (D. Watson)

Jesus Christ is King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16). If we have no desire to obey Him then we are not saved and do not know Him or love Him. If we recognize Him as Lord of our lives, then we have to search our hearts to see if there is anything in our lives that is not submitted to His Lordship.

| | |
|--------------|--|
| Matthew 7:21 | "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father in heaven." |
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Finally, let us remember that the Lordship of Christ is a relationship of love - that is entered into freely and willingly!

Read Exodus 21:1-6.

“Following Christ will never 'cramp our style.' Not only does God give all things generously for our enjoyment, but promises to withhold 'no good thing' if we walk uprightly ... The Lord denies us nothing, except that which would injure us.” (A. Wallis)

“MY WILL IS NOT MY OWN
TILL THOU HAST MADE IT THINE
IF IT WOULD REACH THE MONARCH'S THRONE
IT MUST IT'S CROWN RESIGN

(George Matheson)

LESSON 12 THE CHURCH

The New Testament mentions the Church 111 times, but never refers to it as a building where people worship, neither does it refer to any particular denomination. The Church is the body of believers in a given locality, who relate together in love under the Lordship of Christ and the local leadership.

This body of believers is part of the universal church world-wide. Every local church should be an expression of the life and love of God in their locality.

The word that is translated 'church' is the Greek word "EKKLESIA", it means a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place. Therefore the church is a company of people called out of the world, into fellowship with Christ. When a person is saved by the Lord Jesus and baptized, they become part of the Body of Christ (the church.) No-one can be saved who does not eventually commit himself to a local church. David Watson said, "He called the twelve to share their lives both with Him and with each other. They were to live each day in fellowship with one another, losing their independence and learning inter-dependence They were to share everything together, their joys, their sorrows, their pains, and their possessions" What is true of the twelve is true of all of us. There should be no 'Lone Rangers' in the church of Jesus Christ; we are called into a new community; the community of God and we have a responsibility to build loving relationships within that community.

In Ephesians there are three symbols used to illustrate the church:

Ephesians 1:22-23 – A Body

Ephesians 2:20-22 – A Building

Ephesians 5:22-23 – A Bride

The Church was never meant to be an organization, but is to be a living organism, growing and full of life.

Consider the following verses:

Ephesians 4:23 "Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior."

1 Peter 2:5 "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

Ephesians 2:21-22 "In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord, and in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit."

Ephesians 1:22-23 "And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be the head over everything for the church which is His body the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way."

Matthew 16:18 "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

Over the centuries the church has become broken, fragmented and denominationalized, so that today, instead of having one church in each locality, we have many. We believe that all God's people in any town are part of the body of Jesus Christ (providing they know Christ as their Savior,) and that before the Lord Jesus returns to the earth, that his prayer in John 17:21 (when He prayed that 'they may be one') will be answered. We in this fellowship wish to be identified

with what God is doing in the church world-wide. We are not therefore identified to a particular denomination.

THE LOCAL CHURCH

The fact that most of the New Testament letters were written to local churches should be conclusive proof that the Lord Jesus is as concerned for the local church as He is for universal church.

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, John is told to write to seven churches about things that are relevant to their own situations. At times he comforts or commends them, at other times he warns and admonishes them because he desires them to be perfect and mature. The Lord is equally concerned about our fellowship and through the ministry gift men and eldership desires to bring it to the "whole measure of the fulness of Christ." Ephesians 4:13.

THE MINISTRY GIFT MEN

Write out Ephesians 4:11-12
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Who has given and appointed these men

(Read also 1 Corinthians 12:28; Acts 20:28)

These men are under Christ's authority and have authority in the church to "bind and loose" through the ministry of the word and church discipline.

Read Matthew 16:19; Matthew 18:18 (note the context)

Ephesians 2:19-20 "You are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone."

APOSTLES

These men are primarily men who build and establish the church. Note: Apostleship did not end with the twelve. Paul was not reckoned among the twelve. Barnabas was called an Apostle in Acts 14:14, (note also Romans 16:7, Philippians 2:25, 2 Corinthians 8:23). The work of Apostles and Prophets today is to relay a proper foundation in churches that have become broken down and dead, and to spearhead the great extension ministry of the church.

PROPHETS Agabus was a Prophet - Acts 11:27-28; 21:10, 11.
Judas and Silas were Prophets - Acts 15:32.

These men were primarily inspirers and not men who majored in telling future events. They brought encouragement and support to the churches. A present-day prophet does not add to the scriptures or cast doubt on its sufficiency. Everything he speaks must be in accordance to the word of God. Often they will bring direction and the Word of the Lord to the local church.

EVANGELISTS Phillip was an Evangelist - Acts 21:8.

The Evangelist is a man who wins men for Christ. He then moves on, leaving men of Apostolic and Prophetic gifts to structure the church. Acts 8:14-17.

PASTORS

These men are the 'shepherds' of the church. They care and protect the flock of God.

TEACHERS

These men ground the people upon the word of God. Teaching them how to apply the word of God in their day to day living.

We need all these gifts functioning in and through the local church, so that the work of God may grow in a healthy way.

Acts 13:1 "In the church at Antioch there were Prophets and Teachers...."

We believe that the Apostles and Prophets (and the Evangelist to a lesser extent) are not limited in their ministry to one local church, although they will be based locally (like Paul and Barnabus at Antioch.) The Pastors and Teachers are normally resident in the local church unless their ministry develops and they move into an Apostolic or Prophetic calling.

Didn't Prophets disappear when the NT Canon was complete?

NO. Christ gave both apostles and prophets "until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:11-13.) Since that process is still taking place, prophets are still with us.

In this church we recognize clear apostolic and prophetic ministries towards us. They are men who visit us from time to time and, by virtue not only of their personal godliness and wide Christian experience but also their distinctive gift and calling in God, are of immeasurable help and encouragement to the local ministry team and elders.

ELDERS Acts 20:17 "From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the Elders of the church."

The term "elder" is a very broad one, covering oversight of various different categories. At one end of the scale is Peter, who, though an apostle, says, "I exhort the elders among you as a fellow elder..." (1 Peter 5:1.) At the other end is a typical local church elder with a much more restricted area of oversight. Each local church will have a plurality of elders. They work together as a team, each contributing the special abilities given him by God.

Each elder meets the character qualifications listed in the letters to Timothy and Titus. He has a specific area of responsibility given to him, according to his measure of gift.

We believe that amongst the eldership of every local church, there should emerge and develop Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors and Teachers.

HOW ARE ELDERS APPOINTED?

Elders are appointed by the existing leaders from among the local church.

For example, a brother may display over a period of time a loving, shepherding heart for God's people. In time, this is recognized and he is publicly set apart to that ministry.

Acts 14:23 “When they (Paul and Barnabas) had appointed elders for them in every church

Titus 1:5 “I (Paul) left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.”

The laying-on of hands is a normal feature of this setting-apart to ministry in the church.

Acts 13:3 “While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.”

Timothy had hands laid on him both by the elders and by the apostle Paul (1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6.) In this church we also recognize appointments to leadership with the laying on of hands.

The duties and responsibilities of the elders will be outlined in the next lesson.

DEACONS

Philippians 1:1 "Paul and Timothy to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi together with the overseers and deacons.”

Every member of this church serves the body in one way or another. But there are some whom we could term "Leading servants", whose ministry has become especially valuable in the fellowship. Such people in no way govern the church, but help to put into practice the decisions and directives of the elders. As with all ministries in the church, character is more important than gifting (Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-4.) At times these people will be called upon by the elders for consultation about practical issues.

We believe that the New Testament gives us clearly defined yet remarkably flexible principles of church structure. We have sought in this lesson to outline these main principles. It has been said “that the church looks for better methods but the Lord looks for better men”. God's methods are men; men anointed and appointed by the Holy Ghost, the prayer of our hearts is that the Lord would give us and make us 'Better Men.'

"If every member were just like me
What type of church would my church be.”

LESSON 13 SHEPHERDING AND SUBMISSION

Hebrews 13:17 "Obey your leaders and submit to them for they are keeping watch over your souls as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully and not sadly, for that would be no advantage to you."

The task of the elders of the fellowship is to "shepherd" the flock of God.

David said, "The Lord is My Shepherd." Psalm 23:1

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd I know my sheep and my sheep know me." John 10:14.

Although we belong to the Great Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ, and are ultimately responsible to him as individuals, we are also placed under the care of local shepherds in a church fellowship. These under-shepherds are the Elders of the fellowship. Amongst the elders there will be those who have specific 'shepherding' or 'pastoral' ministries, but the remaining elders will contribute their own special ministries so that the people of God can grow to maturity. To tend the flock they need to know who belong to it and who do not. They cannot shepherd sheep who are here today and gone tomorrow. There must be a sense of belonging - a sense of commitment.

Consider the following scriptures:

Acts 20:28 "Guard yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the Church of God, which he bought with His own blood."

1 Peter 5:2 "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers...."

While we all have to give an account to the Lord Jesus of our stewardship and life since we were saved, the Elders will have to give a double account. For they will have to give an account for every person who has been entrusted to their care. (Romans 14:12; Hebrews 13:17.) As shepherds of the flock of God, we take our leadership seriously. We shall seek to be totally honest and straightforward in our dealings with the saints given to our charge; "Speaking the truth in love." Ephesians 4:15.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ELDERS

A) THEY SHEPHERD THE FLOCK OF GOD

Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2 - the word is rendered "feed" and is better translated "tend". To tend all the flock means more than just "feed", it means also to protect and discipline and care for the sheep as David cared and protected the sheep under his care.

B) THEY CARE FOR THE CHURCH LIKE A PARENT

Thessalonians 2:7 "We were gentle among you like a mother caring for her children."

1 Timothy 3:4-5 "He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect, (if anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's Church.)

The word "manage" means "to stand over" which carries the thought that he must "stand over" his children as God's representative. The elders must then depend much more upon an affectionate relationship in the church than an overbearing attitude.

The word translated "care" is only used once more in scripture in reference to the Good Samaritan who cared for the wounded traveler (Luke 10:34).

C) THEY ARE OVERSEERS OF THE WORK OF GOD

Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7.

It means to look or watch over. The Elders (or Bishops) are responsible for watching over the work of God, and guiding it forward.

Note: We reject the government of the church through democracy and believe that the Elders are responsible under God for all decisions that affect the fellowship. The word translated "leaders" in Hebrews 13:7 is the same word as in Acts 7:10 which is translated "governor." The Elders must lead by example.

A SUMMARY OF THE WORK OF THE ELDERSHIP

1. THEY TEACH

1 Timothy 3:2 "Able to Teach" - particularly doctrine that is related to practical living.

2. THEY PROTECT

Acts 20:28 "Guard yourselves and all the flock...." David slew a lion and a bear that threatened the flock of God. So today there are false doctrines and harmful influences that the church must be protected from.

3. THEY GUIDE AND LEAD

John 10:4-5 "He goes on ahead of them and his sheep follow him because they know his voice - but they will never follow a stranger, in fact they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice."

The sheep should recognize the voice of the Great Shepherd through the voice of the under-shepherd. They should be willing to trust in their leadership and counsel.

4. THEY PREPARE THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF THE MINISTRY

Ephesians 4:12 "To prepare God's people for works of sacrifice", the word "prepare" is translated "equipping" in the New American Standard Bible. It means to 'complete thoroughly' 'repair' or 'adjust'. The Greek word is 'KATARISMOS' and in classical Greek has some interesting meanings, one of which is to prepare an army for the purpose of battle.

The object of the Elders is not to do the work of the ministry, but to prepare, motivate and mobilize the army of the Lord for its task of winning the world for Jesus Christ.

5. AT TIMES THEY HAVE TO REPROVE, REBUKE AND ADMONISH, AS WELL AS EXHORT AND ENCOURAGE

1 Thessalonians 5:12 "Respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you."

Titus 2:15 "Declare these things exhort and reprove with all authority."

Titus 3:10 "Warn a divisive person once, then warn him a second time, after that, have nothing to do with him."

At times such pastoral care is needful for the life of the church as well as for the lives of individual Christians. This aspect of pastoral care can be public or private through the teaching of the Word of God. Consider 1 Samuel 2:24 and 1 Samuel 3:13, concerning Eli's failure to admonish and stop his sons' sinful acts.

6. AT TIMES THE ELDERS HAVE TO BRING DISCIPLINE TO THE SAINTS

Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; Matthew 18:15-20.

Discipline is administered to bring the offending Christian to repentance, and also to protect the testimony and unity of the local church.

WHAT AREAS OF LIFE ARE THE ELDERS CONCERNED WITH?

As many areas as the Lord is concerned with, namely every area of life. It has well been said, "If Jesus isn't Lord of all, he isn't Lord at all." The Word of God sees no distinction between spiritual and secular life. When we are in Christ, everything is spiritual.

Meetings, prayer and Bible reading take up a very small part of the average Christian's week. He spends much more time doing his job, enjoying his relationship with marriage partner and children, paying bills and shopping, leisure etc. The King has a lot to say about all these things and it is the responsibility of his officers in the local church to implement his wishes in those areas of the people's lives.

MUST I TAKE ORDERS FROM THE CHURCH LEADERS?

When necessary, yes. Some explanation is needed here, however. A father tells his 3 year old "Do this; don't do that", but as the child grows he gives him an increasing degree of responsibility for his own actions, until the child becomes a responsible adult himself. So in the church, the new-born babe, ignorant of the teachings of God's Word, is helped in those formative stages by being led quite decisively by a godly under-shepherd, yet always with the aim of bringing him to a level of maturity in Christ where his call upon the under-shepherd will be for brotherly counsel only. The important thing throughout is a submissive spirit.

A good parent will not discourage questions. You should feel free to share any questions you may have regarding the leader's counsel. There is not a 'big-stick' authority. But avoid contentiousness at all costs.

Nor will a good parent suppress initiative, indeed, he will rejoice to see it. He may need to step in to re-direct or modify his children's projects at some point, but he will view their initiatives as guidelines to the way in which their young character is developing. It is the same in the church. You do not need the elder's permission before you take a step in serving the Lord, but it is good to talk to them before you do anything in order that they may bless you with their godly counsel.

HOW IS THEIR AUTHORITY EXERCISED?

Not in an overbearing way, glorying in power and position and crushing the people. That is what the scriptures call 'Gentile' authority (Luke 22:24-28). Elder's authority, like the authority of Christ which it represents, is exercised through love, service and example, for the encouragement and building up of the saints.

2 Corinthians 10:8 "Our authority which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you."

1 Peter 5:2-3 "...not as domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock."

The 'obedience' that Hebrews 13:17 talks about is that which comes out of persuasion and not out of fear.

COULD THE ELDERS ABUSE THEIR AUTHORITY?

Because we believe in a plurality of Elders the danger of such abuse is limited, as they seek to be totally honest and submitted to each other. Another safeguard is that they seek to submit to the Word of God in everything. If a church member has any questions, suggestions or complaints, then they are free to talk to the elders.

THE HOME GROUPS

The united meetings of the whole church are glorious times of praise, worship and inspiration. In them you feel that you are part of something big and powerful in the purposes of God. But we also need more intimate fellowship with a smaller number of Christians. The Home Groups satisfy this need. Look at these verses:

Romans 16:3-5 "Greet Priscilla and Aquila greet also the church that meets at their house."

Colossians 4:15 "Give my greetings to the brothers at Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house."

Philemon 1-2 "Paul . . . to Philemon . . . and the church in your home."

Every member of this church is allocated to a Home Group which meets in the house of one of the members. They normally meet for worship, prayer, fellowship, testimony and Bible study. The informal, cozy atmosphere of a house is conducive to a relaxed and easy flow in the Spirit.

Each group is in the care of a HOME GROUP LEADER, who is set into that responsibility by the Eldership. He encourages the people to serve and bless one another in practical ways, and seeks to develop a family feeling among the group members.

The Home Group Leader should be treated with the same respect as the Elders. They are under-shepherds who are looking after you under the authority of the Elders. You are encouraged to share your problems and needs with them. If they feel (or you feel) that they cannot help you over a certain problem, then you are perfectly free to approach the elders.

SUMMARY

The elders of the fellowship do not profess to be infallible or perfect, but seek to 'shepherd' the flock in accordance with the will of God and with the wisdom that God gives. We do not seek to be over-dominant in our dealings with the people of God. But neither do we believe that it is in the best interests of the church to let everybody do 'as they feel led.' A good church member is one whose attitude is submissive to the eldership and who is applying the Word of God into their life.

PLEASE PRAY FOR US THAT WE MIGHT BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY
SPIRIT AND WISDOM IN OUR MINISTRY TO THE SAINTS

LESSON 14 FIVE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH LIFE

Acts 2:42-45 “They devoted themselves to the Apostles Teaching and to the Fellowship, to the Breaking of Bread and to Prayer. Everyone was filled with awe and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the Apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common, selling their possessions and goods they gave to anyone as he had need.”

The Early Church is THE PATTERN FOR ALL CHURCH FELLOWSHIPS TODAY. What they did we should do! They had no special buildings to meet in, or any set pattern of church services, but they were full of life and power. We believe that the FIVE ESSENTIAL principles of the Life in the Early Church present the blueprint for successful church life today. Every committed member of this fellowship should be involved in these five areas of church life.

1. APOSTLES TEACHING

Preaching is a vitally important part of our church services. It is the God appointed way in which the people of God are taught and grounded in the word of God.

1 Timothy 4:13 “Until I come, devote yourselves to public reading of scripture, to preaching and to teaching.”

2 Timothy 4:2 “Preach the word...”

Acts 5:42 “Day after day in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ!”

Acts 17:11 “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

We believe that everyone should have a good translation of the Bible and bring it to the meetings. We believe it is a good thing for people to take notes, and a good sign if people ask questions after the meeting has finished. Let us always have an open and contrite heart to receive the Word of God.
James 1:21 “Humbly accept the Word planted in you which can save you.”

2. FELLOWSHIP

Greek 'KOINONIA' is translated communion, fellowship and 'Sharing in common'. Christians are called into fellowship with the Lord Jesus and with one another! If a Christian is to fellowship successfully it means he must be willing to share his life with other Christians. It means he must seek to be with other believers, and must be willing to 'take the mask off' and be real, and open and honest with others.

It can be easy for us to come to a meeting, sit through it and return home without having any real communication with our fellow Christians. The Home Groups avert this danger to some extent, but the people in this church are encouraged to seek other's company outside meeting times, in order just to get to know each other more deeply. Without such knowledge we cannot hope to help each other or pray for each other effectively.

Hebrews 10:24-25 “Let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another.”

Our reaching out in friendship in this way will mean a breaking down of the barriers caused by differing personality, social backgrounds, upbringing, color, education, etc. Here is an area where we in the Kingdom can show worldly society the way (see James 2:1-4).

Of course, our mutual interest should not make us 'idlers, gadding about from house to house gossips and busybodies (1 Timothy 5:13). On the contrary, it should spring from pure and honorable motives, in particular a concern for each other's good.

1 Thessalonians 5:11 "Encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

3. PRAYER

We have special prayer and intercessory prayer groups that meet every week to pray for specific matters. And at times there are special days or half nights of prayer for the fellowship as occasion demands. But the main place where we pray as a fellowship is in the Home Groups.

4. BREAKING OF BREAD

The Breaking of Bread Service is another name for the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion.

Read Luke 22:17-20 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

Like Water Baptism, the Breaking of Bread is a command of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Luke 22:19 "....do this in remembrance of me."

The Passover was a meal that reminded Israel of the goodness of God in delivering them from Egypt through the blood of the Lamb.

The Breaking of Bread is a simple meal (Bread and Wine) that reminds the church of the love of Jesus in dying for us, on the cross.

It is an important meal that Christians should not take lightly - 1 Corinthians 11:28 "A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup."

It is an indication of our relationship to the Body. A renewal of our covenant with each other and with the Lord. 1 Corinthians 11:29.

It is a meal that should be triumphantly entered into, as it looks back on the triumph of the Crucified one, and not on his failure. We do not believe that the Bread and Wine mysteriously change into the body and blood of Jesus. Neither do we believe that they are merely emblems which have no spiritual significance. We believe that as we eat of the bread and wine in faith, then God will minister his grace and power into our lives. Thus we 'feed upon the Lord Jesus in our hearts'.

5. GIVING

Acts 4:34 "There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time, those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales, and put it at the Apostles feet and it was distributed to anyone as he had need."

Acts 11:29-30 "The disciples each according to his ability decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul."

Write out 2 Corinthians 8:7

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Scripture has a great deal to say about money.

Read Matthew 6:19-24 and Luke 16:1-9.

Luke 16:13 "....you cannot serve both God and money...."

Luke 16:11 "If you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches."

In the modern western world where materialism is a "God", it is vital that a Christian has a proper scriptural understanding of money.

Write out 1 Timothy 6:10

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The love of money has ruined a great many Christians in their service of the King. When we love money more than God, and the possessions they can buy, our spiritual life will start to slide downhill. Before a Christian can be a good steward in God's sight, he must firstly have his own finances in order.

Romans 13:7 "Give everyone what you owe him, if you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor."

GIVING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Exodus 36:3-7 The people gave so much material for the building of the tabernacle that they had to be restrained from giving. What a glorious example of how we ought to give.

2 Chronicles 24:10-11 "The people gave to repair the temple of King Joash's day."

TITHING

Genesis 14:20 "And Abraham gave a tenth of everything" (Read also Hebrews 7:1-2.)

Genesis 28:22 Jacob said, "This stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house and all that you give me I will give you a tenth."

Deuteronomy 14:22-29 Tithing was established in the law as something every Israelite should do.

The word means 'tenth' - one tenth of our income. In the Old Testament, Israelites gave a tithe for their religious leaders, the Levites, who were thereby freed from normal work to concentrate on religious duties.

Malachi 3:10 "Bring the full tithes into the storehouse ... and thereby put me to the test says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing."

Tithing was a way of reminding the Israelites that they must recognize that it was God who caused the harvest to be plentiful in the land. It also set a pattern of giving so that they did not become covetous and materialistic. Also, it placed an obligation on them to take care of the servants of the Lord, the Priests and Levites.

Strictly speaking everything we possess is the Lord's and tithing is merely paying our rent.

Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it."

GIVING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In Matthew 23:23 Jesus supported the principle of tithing. It is clear from passages in Acts 2:45 and Acts 4:32-37, that the Early Church did far more than giving a tenth! Such an example of free-will giving and fellowship is never repeated in the New Testament. It is clear from the scriptures in Corinthians (quoted below) that they did not bring their offering to church every week but stored it at home until a need arose. Also, it is revealed that their giving was:

1. SACRIFICIAL

2 Corinthians 8:3 "They gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability."

2. FREEWILL

2 Corinthians 9:7 "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

3. SYSTEMATICAL AND PROPORTIONAL

1 Corinthians 16:2 "On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up."

If you compare the last verse with the passages in Acts then it does appear that God doesn't expect us to sell everything and bring the proceeds to the local church. At times he did challenge people to do this like the rich young ruler, and CT Studd who gave a fortune away to become a Missionary. We should be released in our spirit to give as much as God wants us to give. However, we strongly believe that every committed member ought to at least tithe. We would base this belief on the following three points:

1. Since Abraham is the father of the faithful (Galatians 3:6-9), his example in tithing is one we would do well to follow.

2. Abraham lived before the law was given. This suggests that tithing (like marriage and one day's rest in seven) is one of those principles which, though later embodied in the law of Moses, are principles of a more enduring nature than the law.

3. Under grace, everything is bigger and better than under the law. Strictly speaking, God has a right to all we possess. But since it is helpful to have some clear guidelines to distinguish what exactly we should give to the Lord, we put into practice the principle of tithing.

Write out and consider the following verses:

Luke 6:38

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Philippians 4:19

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Read Mark 12:42 - it's not how much we give that Jesus is really looking at - but how much we have left after we have given!

WHAT ARE THE OFFERINGS USED FOR?

1. To support the Elders who are full-time in the work of the ministry - Read 1 Corinthians 9:7-14; 1 Timothy 5:17-18.
2. To support adopted missionaries and certain overseas projects.
3. To support church workers involved in approved projects at home or abroad.
4. To help committed members of the fellowship who are in need.
5. To maintain and provide a church building as a meeting place for the fellowship.

REMEMBER "IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE" Acts 20:35

LESSON 15 RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

Matthew 5:13 "You are the salt of the earth...."

Matthew 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world, a city on a hill cannot be hidden in the same way let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Philippians 2:14-15 "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation in which you shine like stars in the universe."

1 Peter 2:12 "Live such good lives among the pagans that though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us."

Write out Romans 12:2

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If the church is to be the "light of the World" then it is vital that the standard of our private lives is in keeping with the Word of God. It is the responsibility of the Elders and church members to ensure that their own lives are such that God is glorified through them. The honor of the Lord is bound up in our Christian profession. If I claim to be a Christian yet act in an un-Christian way, then my friends and associates will soon learn to despise the Lord. Similarly, if I claim allegiance to this church and act sinfully then the name of Christ as represented in this church is brought into disrepute.

The often-repeated cry of the world is that the church is full of hypocrites. Let us not give credence to that charge. It is a sobering thought that the Pharisees despite their knowledge of the scriptures were called hypocrites by the Lord Jesus - read Matthew 23. Let us not be "hearers of the word, but doers."

OUR PRIVATE LIVES

1 Thessalonians 5:22 "Avoid every kind of evil."

Romans 13:13 "Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy."

Ephesians 4:28 "He who has been stealing must steal no longer."

Write out -

1 John 2:15-16

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OUR FAMILY LIFE

Colossians 3:18-20 "Wives submit to your husbands ... husbands love your wives ... children obey your parents."

Read Ephesians 5:22-23.

The home is the testing ground for all Christians. What we are like at home with our spouse and our children is more important than how we act in a church meeting. Being 'spiritual' and affable in church but sour, difficult and undisciplined in our private life is hypocritical - remember "the Lord looks on the heart."

In the home, our attitude should be one of patience, understanding and kindness, especially if some of the family are not Christians. A man, for example, who is neither considerate towards his wife nor patient with his children can hardly be an asset to the church. If we cannot treat our little families lovingly, we shall have difficulty in caring for the larger family of our fellow Christians.

We would stress the following points:

1. THE HUSBAND is the head of every home. He is not a dictator but all his decisions are based upon an attitude of love and consideration towards his family. Consider 1 Peter 3:7
2. THE WIFE should be submissive towards her husband. She is not a servant, neither should she be in fear of her husband, but must learn to obey him and trust him. Consider the following scripture - 1 Peter 3:1-6
3. CHILDREN should honor, respect and obey their parents. We are aware that parents are not perfect; and that at times tension may arise, particularly through the adolescent years. Consider the following scriptures: Proverbs 13:24; 19:18; 22:6&15; Deuteronomy 5:16; Deuteronomy 21:18-21; Matthew 19:14; Luke 2:51-52; Colossians 3:21.

OUR BUSINESS AND WORKING LIFE

Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-25.

In our business and working life, we should be transparently honest and straightforward. We must avoid lying, exaggeration, slacking, empty promises and falling into debt. We should always be the best workers, loyal, true and trustworthy. Consider Daniel and Joseph in this respect.

OUR PERSONAL DEVOTIONS

Ephesians 2:20-22 "...Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord and in Him you too are being built."

Paul tells us that Jesus is the cornerstone which builds the other stones together into one building. If we, as individual stones lose our grip on Him, the whole structure is weakened. We must therefore, cultivate our personal relationship with Jesus.

Write out Matthew 6:6

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In Acts 17:11 what did the Berean's do daily?

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If we meet the Lord regularly in the privacy of our own room, feeding on His word and engaging in prayer then our times together as believers will not degenerate into occasions for idle talk and criticism. Instead, they will be moments for the unleashing of spiritual blessings. If the church was full of Christians just like you, what type of meetings would we have?? What impact would we have on our community?

OUR LOYALTY

By definition, the church is totally separate from the world. Those who are in the church are light; those in the world are darkness (Ephesians 5:8). So our loyalty must be primarily to all fellow-believers and especially to those with whom we have a covenant relationship in the local church. As members of such a community, we must be completely loyal to one another. Consider these scriptures:

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| 1 Corinthians 12:26 | "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored every part rejoices with it." |
| Philippians 2: 4 | "Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others." |
| James 4:11 | "Brothers do not slander one another." |
| Colossians 4:5 | "Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders." |

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE TERMS - COVENANT RELATIONSHIP AND COVENANT?

"The basis of Covenant love is commitment. It has nothing to do with natural feelings and desires. We commit ourselves to our brothers and sisters because we see Christ in them. We give ourselves in loving service, laying down our lives for them, thinking first of their needs and interests rather than ours ..." (David Watson 'Discipleship')

Speaking of the twelve disciples and all the early Church and their human desires and reactions he said, "But never once did Jesus withdraw His love from His disciples whose lives were not perfectly under the control of his spirit."

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| John 15:12 | "My commandment is this. Love each other as I have loved you." |
| John 13:35 | "All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another." |

CHURCH UNITY

Read Psalm 133.

Consider the following verses -

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| Ephesians 4:3 | "Make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit, through the bond of peace." |
| Acts 2:46 | "And day by day continuing with <u>one mind</u> in the temple" (NASB) |
| Acts 4:24 | "And when they heard this they lifted their voices to God with <u>one accord</u>" (NASB) |
| Acts 1:14 | "These all with <u>one mind</u> were continually devoting themselves to prayer..." (NASB) |

The word rendered 'one mind' or 'one accord' in the above verses is the Greek word 'HOMOTHUMADON' (From 'HOMOS' = same and 'THUMOS' = mind) is poorly translated in the NIV as 'together' or 'all' or 'united' and the rendering in NASB is much better.

When we talk about church unity, we must not think of it as that which is produced through an 'emotional feeling' or a 'sentimental' type of love. The unity that we seek is based on a loving, open relationship but will be built on believing the same things and having the same desires and ambitions in God - it is as much of the mind as it is of the heart!

The same word is used in Acts 5:12, 15:25, the early church is an example of what God can do through a united company.

Romans 15:6 "So that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We must be joined in heart and mind, and not just because we happen to meet in the same building.

GOSSIP

Leviticus 19:16 "Do not go about spreading slander among your people."

Proverbs 11:13 "A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret."

Proverbs 18:8 "The words of a gossip are like choice morsels they go down to a man's inward parts."

Proverbs 26:20 "Without wood a fire goes out, without gossip a quarrel dies down."

1 Timothy 5:13 "Besides they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house, and not only do they become idlers but also gossips and busybodies saying things they ought not to."

What would you say gossip is?

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No matter concerning the church, or a church member, should be related to an outsider. Neither should such gossip be entertained within the church.

Matters that are shared in the Home Group (or a church meeting) should be treated in confidence. Once division, rivalry and gossip begin, the whole church is liable to collapse, become a laughing stock to the world, and a source of grief to the Lord.

"You expect gossip from liars, cheats and low street people. You expect it in politics and public life. But no gossip is as vicious, as damaging and as hurtful as that which comes from God's own people out of God's own house. How Satan must laugh with glee when he witnesses 'spirit filled' people passing on lies and filthy stories that originated in Hell itself." (David Wilkerson 'Speaks Out')

How to deal with Gossip -

(1) Stop doing it yourself.

(2) If people are talking about someone else, ask them to say it in front of the person concerned, or alternatively tell them you will go immediately to that person and tell them what they have said.

(3) Remember that if the elders hear any gossip, they will track it back to its source and admonish all who are concerned with passing it on.

Read Matthew 7:1-5.

Consider -

Romans 14:13 "Therefore let us stop passing judgement on one another."

Romans 14:19 "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification."

Ephesians 4:2 "Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."

Ephesians 4:39 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth but only what is helpful for building others up, according to their needs."

Ephesians 4:32 "Be kind and compassionate to one another forgiving each other just as in Christ, God forgave you."

When offences and problems occur let us deal with them in a mature spiritual and scriptural way.

Paul asks in 1 Corinthians 6:7 "Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?"

In some matters this is the best way to deal with them; and then of course you must forgive.

Read Matthew 18:21-22.

In matters that cannot be dealt with this way then we must put into practice Matthew 18:15-17.

This clearly reveals the importance of being in a proper relationship with our brothers and sisters and shows how serious a matter it is when a brother will not be reconciled to another (Read also Matthew 5:23-24.)

If we live up to the standard that Christ expects of us, then the blessing of the Lord will rest upon us as a fellowship.

Acts 5: 13 "No one else dared join them even though they were highly regarded by the people."

Let us walk in the "fear of the Lord"!

LESSON 16 SERVING THE BODY

Read – 1 Corinthians 12.

1. THE CHURCH IS DESCRIBED AS THE BODY OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 12:27 "Now you are the Body of Christ."

Romans 15:5 "So in Christ we who are many form one body."

Ephesians 5:23 "Christ is the head of the church, his body of which he is the Savior."

The 'head' of the church is in heaven, but the Body remains on the earth to fulfil the will and purpose of God.

Without the 'head' the Body will cease to function. As our brain gives our bodies direction as to what to do, so Christ gives instruction to the members of His body as to what they are to do.

The body of Christ on earth should be doing at least all that Jesus did whilst He was upon earth!

Write out John 14:12

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2. WE ARE PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 12:13 "For we were all baptized by one spirit into one body."

1 Corinthians 12:27 "... each of you is a part of it...."

It does not matter how you feel or what you say - YOU ARE PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST AND HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO FULFIL YOUR MINISTRY.

1 Corinthians 12:15-16 Some may feel too superior to belong!

1 Corinthians 12:21-23 Some may feel too inferior to function!

Every member is important

Every member is inter-dependent on the other members (even the elders!)

Every member should be concerned for the other members - 1 Corinthians 12:25-26

3. EVERY MEMBER OF THE BODY HAS A FUNCTION, BUT NOT NECESSARILY THE SAME FUNCTION

Every part of our body has a function, we can live without some parts, but can't live without others. If a part ceases to function, we get ill and either take medicine to get it well again or in some way have an operation to remove or replace that part. Our heart and liver do different jobs. So do our eyes and ears.

Paul says -

1 Corinthians 12:29-30 "Are all Apostles, are all Prophets, are all Teachers. Do all work miracles. Do all have gifts of healing, do all speak in tongues, do all interpret?"

1 Corinthians 12:18 "God has arranged the parts of His body."

1 Corinthians 12:24 "God has combined (composed, blended or mixed) the members of the body...."

We are not in a local body of believers by accident, we are here by the will of God to contribute our ability and talent to that local church.

If everybody was a preacher there would be no congregation!

If everybody was an evangelist, there would be no shepherds!

If everybody was a caterer, there would be no treasurer! etc.

If everybody tried to do the same thing, the body would be hampered and useless.

4. WHEN EVERY MEMBER FUNCTIONS THEN THE BODY WILL GROW

When all the parts of our body function we are healthy, if our kidneys or heart cease to function, then we are in real trouble.

Ephesians 4:16 "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."

Similarly, if the body of Christ is a healthy, functioning body, then the church will grow naturally. The early church needed no special events or crusades to win the lost, all they had was the power of the Spirit moving upon a united and loving community. Every part of the body is important. Every ligament and every 'cell' must build the other parts up - then the body will grow.

When one becomes a member of this body it is not to become a member of a club with certain rights, but to be a limb of the body which has a job to do.

Each member of the body is given a measure of grace that they may function efficiently. If every member fulfils that ministry, then the church will truly be filled with the fullness of God.

5. WHAT AREAS OF MINISTRY DOES THE BIBLE SPEAK ABOUT?

1 Corinthians 12:28-30

1 Corinthians 14:26

Note: A functioning body is not a free for all where everybody does their own thing. There is a responsibility on each member to make sure that his ministry is strengthening and building the church up in love. Every member must be in submission to the Elders, in whatever way they may wish to function. (When placed in a department they come under the authority of the department head, and when in a Home Group they must submit to the Home Group Leader.)

Romans 12:6-8

1 Peter 4:10-11

1 Corinthians 12:7-11

Ephesians 4:11

THERE ARE LEVELS OF MINISTRY - some are Pastors and Teachers to the whole body, whilst others may be able to teach or shepherd a small group in the church.

THERE IS DEVELOPMENT IN OUR MINISTRY

As we wait upon our ministry and use it faithfully in the local church it should develop into a much more useful ministry. Our confidence and faith will increase and we will learn how to function more effectively.

THERE ARE A VARIETY OF FUNCTIONS IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

There are the ministry gifts - that feed and guide the whole work forward.

There are those who are leaders at different levels - Romans 12:18.

There are those who are servants - consider the seven in Acts 6:3 and Phoebe in Romans 16:1.

There are those who are gifted in giving to the needs of others - Romans 12:8.

There are those who are good at helping other people - Romans 12:8.

There are those who are gifted in showing mercy and compassion - Romans 12:8.

There are those who are good singers and musicians and those that can teach songs and lead in worship.

1 Chronicles Chapter 15.

6. THERE ARE SOME MINISTRIES THAT WE SHOULD ALL BE FUNCTIONING IN

We should all pray.

We should all witness.

We should all be given to hospitality.

We should all be involved in New Convert Care.

We should all desire spiritual gifts so that the body of Christ will be edified and that signs and wonders may follow the preaching of His word.

7. HOW DO WE FIND OUR MINISTRY IN THE BODY OF CHRIST?

(a) BY PRAYING

James 1:5 "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God."

(b) BY MEDITATION AND OBSERVATION

What do we desire to do? What moves our heart? (e.g. Dr. Barnardo) do children, or old people touch our hearts? or the sick or handicapped?

(c) BY EXPERIENCE

How has God used us in times past? What is our natural gifting? (Playing the piano, electrician, organizer, accountant.)

(d) BY VOLUNTEERING TO FULFIL A NEED IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

Many have filled a need temporarily, only to find that they liked it so much they kept at it permanently.

(e) BY COUNSEL AND SUGGESTION FROM THE ELDERSHIP

They will have observed you in the fellowship and will often feel they know where you could be most useful.

FINALLY

Luke 19:11-26 tells of the Parable of the Mina's (pounds of silver)

Matthew 25:14-30 tells of the Parable of the Talents

Although these parables are different, they do have two things in common.

(1) There will be a day of reckoning for all the Lord's servants. 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

(2) The servant who did not use what his master gave him was accused of being wicked and lazy.

Let us not be ashamed when we stand before the Lord but be determined to have the same testimony as the Apostle Paul.

2 Timothy 4:7-8 "I have fought the good fight and have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge will award me on that day!"

Now write out an up-to-date testimony of what God has been doing in your life in the last four months, and the areas He has been challenging you about!

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