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PREFACE

We thank God for this edition of the Believer's Development Programme. It is for the grooming of all believers, and especially new converts.

This booklet comprises studies that take convert systematically through the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith. It lays the foundation of bible instruction upon which a victorious Christian life and fruitful ministry can be based.

The programme is divided into three parts. **Part One** lays the foundation of repentance and faith in Christ. It deals with issues of true repentance, assurance of salvation, restitution, etc. This is comparable to the 'Baptismal Class' in some Churches with the intention to make the participant understand the basics of the Christian faith. The participant can be baptized as soon as salvation is assured. The study does not qualify one for salvation; neither is there any scriptural basis to withhold one from water baptism who has not followed it. What is essential is to be truly born again and to live for Christ. However, there have been cases of baptized 'converts' who turned out not to have been born again after all! It is for this reason that we are careful to ensure people understand the meaning of the experience and totally give their lives over to Christ before they are baptized.

Part Two deals with issues like victorious living, prayer, Christian fellowship, separation, sanctification, etc. The aim is to take the believer one step deeper into commitment to the Lord so that he can live a truly fulfilled Christian life.

Part Three aims at bringing the experienced believer into complete identification with Christ in terms of life priorities and total dedication to divine service. At the end of this section, the candidate should be eligible for admission into the working team of the Church after the due process of admission has been followed.

I hope that you will keep the required focus to make your participation in this programme worthwhile. I pray that the Lord will strengthen you and grant you the grace to make the best out of this unique opportunity.

Yours in Christ's love,
Overseer,
Deeper Christian Life Ministry
The Netherlands

PART ONE: FOUNDATION

STUDY 1: GENUINE REPENTANCE AND SAVING FAITH

The fallen man can only profit from the atonement work of Jesus Christ through repentance and faith towards Christ. While on earth, the primary duty of Christ was to call sinners to repentance (Mark 2:17). In the Old Testament, to repent meant to be penitent (Job 42:6; Jonah 4:2) and this was often characterised with fasting, self-humiliation, remorsefulness, rending/tearing of garments. By the time of Joel, people had made it more of outward show than inward change, hence the prophet needed to challenge them to rend their hearts and not their garments (Joel 2:12,13). The gospel dispensation equally advocates true repentance, which goes beyond outward penitence and demands also a change of mind and attitude (having another mind concerning sin, the world, self and Christ) (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19; Luke 13:3). Thus, repentance is not remorse for sin, sense of guilt, regret over evils done, conviction of sin and strong fears of hell or spankings of conscience; it demands a change.

THE NATURE OF REPENTANCE

Matthew 3:8; Luke 3:8-14; Joel 2:12,13; Psalm 51:1-4,12; Acts 3:19; Zech. 1:4.

Repentance is a change of mind regarding sin. This goes beyond a change of views about sin; it includes a change of attitude and feelings towards sin. Repentance always implies hatred for sin. It is a deep work and a heart work that results in a new man. It extends to the whole man: the mind, the members of the body, the notions of sin and the world. He that formerly thought there was little hurt in sin now comes to see it to be the chief of evils. The intentions of the will are altered, choice is changed, the lifestyle and practices are also affected. The repenting soul leaves the world to seek Christ and he now takes a new course in life (Acts 9:2,3,6,20-22). Christ becomes the sweetest, most loving, most kind, most dear, most precious, and most desirous to him. Nothing but Christ appeals to him that has genuinely repented of his sins. Have you repented of your sins?

THE NECESSITY OF REPENTANCE

Romans 3:23; Matthew 3:2,7; Luke 13:3; Hebrews 10:31

Man (after the fall) is altogether without any virtue in which he may glory before God. He has no righteousness at all of which to boast of (I Corinthians 1:29). Repentance is not optional but obligatory for sinners to be delivered from sins and be reconciled unto God. Why is repentance necessary?

1. To be saved from sin. Through repentance and faith in Christ, a sinner is brought to Christ to accept Him as the only means of life (Saviour).

2. Religion is vain without repentance because it assumes one has not sinned (Isaiah 1:10-18; I John 1:10).
3. To escape divine judgement and eternity in hell fire (Hebrews 10:31).
4. It is unreasonable and destructive to contend against the Lord or to harden yourself in your sinful state (Job 9:4; Isaiah 45:9).
5. To be free from Satan's captivity (II Timothy 2:25,26; Ephesians 2:2).
6. The coming of Christ is imminent and the door of grace will not always remain open (I Thessalonians 5:3).
7. The conscience cannot be truly pacified until there is thorough repentance (Heb 10:22; Isa 54:8); it is needed for God's mercy and pardon (Psalm 51:1).
8. To live for a good purpose on earth and live eternally. An unconverted soul is a burden to himself, wife/husband, family, society and the Church.

FAITH FOR SALVATION

Mark 1:15; Romans 10:9-13; Eph. 2:8; Isaiah 53:1; 55:7; Heb. 8:12; Acts 20:21.

Repentance is a necessary step to salvation, but it is not sufficient on its own. Salvation is not by any merit; it is by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. No one is good enough to save himself and no one is so bad that God cannot save. He justifies freely by His grace those who have been redeemed by His Son (Romans 5:1). To cry endlessly and bemoan one's sinful state may satisfy religious piety but will fall short of the requirement for salvation. Coupled to repentance is faith in the finished work of Christ on the Cross of Calvary. Saving faith is believing Jesus as Lord and trusting that His sacrifice satisfies the divine requirement for one's salvation personally. This faith entails:

1. Believing that Jesus died for your sins.
2. That God forgives and remembers no more all your sins.
3. That salvation is available to you regardless of your load of sins.

Salvation is not based on feeling but on the scripture truth and faith in Christ. You can be saved now if you repent of all your sins and believe in Christ. What will your sins profit you that you should be married to them? They will only open hell for you and pile up fuel to burn you. You cannot be married to Christ except you are divorced from sin. You must part with your sins or part with your soul: spare but one sin and God will not spare you!

STUDY 2: ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

1 John 5:9-13

Salvation by grace is a conscious, voluntary and definite experience. Just as it is obvious when a child is born into the world, so is it very clear when a person is saved from sin. It is wrong to give assurance to a person that he/she is saved

because you can judge prematurely. The best assurance is personal assurance. It is not a mark of humility to always doubt one's salvation. A persistent doubt of your salvation may be an indication that the work of salvation is not thorough. A settled hope (assurance of salvation) in Christ is indispensable for your consistent walk with God, steadfast growth and usefulness in the kingdom of God.

ERRORS CONCERNING SALVATION

Some common errors concerning the experience of salvation are:

1. That a sinner must suffer a considerable time under conviction as a kind of punishment before he can be saved (Luke 18:10-14). The bible emphasises both repentance and faith.
2. That a sinner must have different feelings at salvation and or afterwards. The truth is that salvation is not based on feelings but on the fact of the Scripture that **"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"** (Romans 10:13). Our feelings are variable and fallible; God's truth is unchanging and infallible.
3. That sinner is doing God a great favour by repenting. The truth is that sinner's guilt is much deeper and more damning than he thinks, and his danger is much greater than he thinks. **"The soul that sinneth, it shall die"** (Ezekiel 18:4). The sinner is doing himself an eternity of favour by repenting.
4. That conversion is a progressive work and that a sinner can get better gradually, by degrees. The truth is that regeneration or conversion is an instantaneous work of grace (Acts 9:1-7; 2:37-41).
5. That salvation can be earned or merited through man's good works, morality, religious observances and self-righteousness (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:20; Hebrews 10:1-4). Only the blood of Jesus can atone for sins.
6. That the experience of salvation cannot be lost. The truth is, God is unsparing in His justice and whosoever sins against Him cannot escape His wrath except he repents and turns back to God (Romans 11:17-22).

EVIDENCES OF TRUE SALVATION

II Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:23-32; Galatians 5:22-23; Acts 22:1-15; 26:4-19. True repentance affects the heart and the whole man. It always brings a great and fundamental change in the repentant soul. A cursory look at his past and present life reveals that a great transformation has taken place. Now as a Christian, he is free from sin (1 John 3:9). He loves and keeps the commandments of God (1 John 2:3); he walks righteously, honestly, wisely and humbly (Colossians 3:7-9). He keeps company with believers (Psalm 119:63) and lives to glorify God in all things; and his affection is set on things above (Colossians 3:2; Philippians 1:21). Based on these evidences of newness of life and a new relationship with

God, the fruits of righteousness are clearly visible in the life of the new convert. This great transformation makes it clear that a Christian is not a sinner and a sinner is not a Christian. Are you a sinner or a Christian?

ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

Romans 8:1, 14-16; Ephesians 1:13; II Timothy 1:12; 2:19; II Corinthians 5:17; I John 3:1; John 9:24,25.

Assurance of salvation is a conscious knowledge of the work of grace (conversion) which has taken place in a person's life. It is an unwavering confidence of an intelligent faith in a present salvation. Following true conversion, there is the inner witness of the Holy Spirit that a person has become a child of God. The newness of life of the convert is another assurance that he is saved (Matthew 3:8). It is not presumptuous to profess assurance of salvation. Believing the scriptural facts on forgiveness of sin and justification by faith is indispensable for an assurance of salvation. It is not until when one has wept profusely or subjected to a Paul-like (dramatic) salvation experience that he can be sure of being saved. The essential thing is that the life of the new convert should show fruits of repentance: upright walk, chaste lifestyle, thirst and hunger for God's word, open identification with Christ and God's people, separation from the world and obedience to God's commandments.

STUDY 3: JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

Romans 3:19-28

The basic religious question is that how can sinful man be just with God? Must guilty man then remain eternally under wrath? Is there no hope? These questions necessitate a complete reversal in our relation to God. Justification is the answer. Justification is the act of God's free grace, whereby man can stand before God as if he never sinned. The atoning blood of Jesus justifies the believer.

MEANING OF JUSTIFICATION

Romans 3:24,28; 5:15,16; Deut. 25:1; Galatians 2:16; 3:8,9; Jeremiah 31:34.

To justify means to make or declare right. This implies that right relationship or relationship already made right is essential for justification. God justifies those who have been redeemed by His Son (Romans 3:24,26). Through justification, God constitutes a new and righteous judicial relation with man. The justified sinner then stands before God as if he never sinned. The redeemed is justified or declared righteous by God without the law or any human performance but through the righteousness of Christ which is imputed (charged or credited) to our account and we are accordingly accepted as righteous in God's sight (Romans

3:20; 5:15). Justification includes remission (taking away or forgiveness) of all sins (Luke 7:47) and condemnation (Romans 8:1). God forgives sin and He remembers them no more (Isaiah 43:25). Basic facts about justification are:

1. It is by faith (Romans 3:28; 4:2; 5:1). We are justified freely (Rom 3:24). Christ has paid the price.
2. It is an act of God's grace and of God alone (Romans 3:24,30; 8:33).
3. It is through Christ's sacrificial and redemptive work (Romans 3:24; 5:9; 8:33,34). The ground for our justification is Christ's righteousness.
4. It is in Christ that we are justified (Acts 13:39; Romans 8:1).
5. It is a judicial act, the act of God in His character as a Judge and it does not effect a moral change as is the case in regeneration.

FRUITS OF JUSTIFICATION

Romans 5:1-5; 8:1

Regeneration is an act of God in us; justification is a judgement of God with respect to us. Justification is by faith through the grace of God so that all glory is due to Him (Rom 3:27). Fruits or effects of justification include:

1. Peace with God (Romans 5:1,2; James 2:23). Justification takes away the guilt, and so makes way for peace with God. Peace in this context consists in an appeased conscience and confidence before God (Ephesians 2:14).
2. Access to God and His grace (Hebrews 4:16; Romans 5:2).
3. Hope of the glory of God (hereafter) or a title to eternal life (Romans 5:2; II Corinthians 5:1).
4. Joy in tribulation (Romans 5:3; II Corinthians 4:17; Acts 5:41).
5. Boldness in prayer (Romans 8:15; Hebrews 4:16).

Though justification is free by God's grace, it is the responsibility of the redeemed or repented soul to believe. Without faith there is no access through Christ to God's gracious remission of sin and justification. Unbelief is an evil thing before God, and it debars anyone from enjoying the inexhaustible riches of His grace. To remain in unbelief regarding God's gracious provision for full salvation through Christ is to risk the danger of hell!

STUDY 4: RESTITUTION

Repentance must lead to a change of conduct, for a change of mind must produce a change of action; repentance and reformation of life are inseparable. Repentance and faith produce new life and the fruit of righteousness. In this study we look at restitution, which is the act of making amends for wrongs done against our fellowmen. It entails restoring stolen things to their rightful owners, paying

just debts, giving back where one has defrauded, making confessions to the offended and apologising to those slandered so one can have a conscience void of offence toward God and man (Acts 24:16). The scriptures teach the necessity of restitution along with repentance. Restitution is an evidence of true repentance.

THE ANCIENT LANDMARK

Proverbs 23:28; Genesis 20:1-18; Exodus 22:1-15; Leviticus 6:2-5; Judges 17:3; II Samuel 16:5-8,13; Luke 19:8-10; Acts 24:16; Philemon 7-21.

We live in age of modernism where everything of old is regarded as irrelevant and unnecessary. But no matter the changing trend of events in the Christendom, biblical doctrines remain the same and they are to be believed, affirmed, obeyed and preached just as before. The ancient landmark of restitution is scriptural, and it is not invalidated by the dispensation of grace (Matthew 5:23,24). This doctrine has been established before the Mosaic institution. It was practised in the time of the Patriarchs, commanded in the law of Moses, upheld by kings in Israel (Proverbs 6:30,31), preached by the prophets (Nehemiah 5:6-13), emphasised by the Lord and obeyed by the apostles. The law of moral consciousness (Romans 1:19,20) and the rule of righteous living (Matthew 7:12) require straightening up our crooked past. It is not a self-righteous act to merit pardon.

ADMONITION FOR TODAY'S BELIEVERS

Matthew 5:17,23,24; John 2:5; Acts 23:1-5; Revelation 22:18,19.

It is not enough to know about restitution or talk about it; we must practise it. We have no excuse for disobeying any scriptural injunction because God's grace is sufficient for us. Therefore, we must be of the company of them that love the law of God. You need to avoid some hindrances such as fear (I John 4:18), procrastination, unbelief, self-will, public opinions and ungodly counsel. Restitution should be done with deep contrition, in faith, promptly and sincerely. Avoid any tactics to underestimate the weight of injury inflicted on others. However, it is necessary to seek counsel from a faithful, experienced and matured Christian minister in cases of restitution that could implicate others.

BLESSING IN OBEDIENCE

Acts 24:16; Matthew 5:23,24; Genesis 20:17; Deuteronomy 28:12; John 13:17.

Making restitution ensures that we have right relationship with our fellowmen after we are reconciled with God. Obedience to any of God's commandments attracts His blessing. Some blessings that accrue by doing your restitution are: (i) A clear and free conscience. (ii) Boldness in preaching the gospel and prayer. (iii) Peace through obedience to God's will.

Resolve to do your restitution today and act without delay. Delayed obedience could amount to disobedience.

STUDY 5: DAILY QUIET TIME

The Christian life is sustained by living continually in the presence of the Lord. Little wonder David, out of his wealth of experience in walking with God wrote, **“... in thy presence is the fullness of joy”** (Psalm 16:11). The subject of Quiet Time deals with the *how* of entering God’s presence and abiding there continually. Quiet Time is a definite time, preferably early in the morning, set apart for meaningful communion with God and meditative study of the scriptures.

THE NECESSITY OF DAILY COMMUNION

Mark 1:35; 6:31; Psalm 42:1,7; I Peter 2:2; II Peter 3:18.

There is no substitute for daily communion with God. No believer can rise above the quality and effectiveness of the quiet time. Our Lord Jesus Christ set the example for us in Mark 1:35, which we (Christians) are expected to follow. Besides, there is no other means of spiritual growth and power for service than having a regular, lively and purposeful devotional period. How do we receive divine guidance and grace to live a victorious Christian life? It is simply through the Quiet Time. Daily communion with God is also necessary for spiritual freshness and intimate relationship with God. Therefore, when the quiet time is faulty or non-existent, a Christian is on the pathway to backsliding.

EFFECTIVE METHODS OF DAILY QUIET TIME

Mark 1:35; Daniel 6:10; Psalm 119:97; Luke 18:1.

The Quiet Time is an appointment with God. It is not a daily ritual; it is rather something to look forward to. When we treat it as a ‘duty’, then it becomes lifeless, boring and dry. The best time for Quiet Time is early in the morning. Our Lord Jesus Christ woke up a great while before day and departed to a solitary place to pray. The experiences of many believers support this time of the day as the best hour. This period is recommended because distractions are minimal, the mind is fresh, and the day is still young. You can thus start your day with God and receive the grace necessary for the day. However, there must be discipline in keeping fully awake. An environment void of distractions is necessary for concentration and for a meaningful quiet time.

A complete Bible, preferably King James Version (KJV), is necessary for a meaningful Quiet Time. Bible aids such as commentary and bible dictionary are also useful for explanation on difficult passages of the Bible. You also need a

notebook to write down lessons from your meditation, prayer points and specific instructions from the Lord.

Start the Quiet Time with thanksgiving and praises. Also pray for understanding of the selected passage for the day. Then read and meditate on it. Meditative study of the Bible is a rich source of divine inspiration and a means of plunging into the inexhaustible riches of Christ. To help your understanding, it is advisable to ask questions on what you have read, such as: What are the lessons I can learn from this passage, and how do they affect my life personally? What does the passage say about Christ? Are there any commands to obey, any examples to follow, any sins to avoid, any promises to claim, or any challenges for the day?

Having meditated on the Word of God, then pray earnestly on the lessons or instructions that you have received. The morning Quiet Time should not be the only devotional period of the day. The Evening Devotion, which can also follow the format of the quiet time, is equally important and rewarding. The Quiet Time is thus the key to the day while the Evening Devotion is the lock for the night.

REWARDS OF DAILY COMMUNION

There is no limit to what you can receive from the Lord through a purposeful quiet time. Your expectation determines your realisation. The rewards of daily communion with God include divine and human favour, spiritual renewal (Isaiah 40:29-31), grace for victorious living (I Kings 19:5-8), intimate relationship with God, preservation of physical and spiritual life (Psalm 91:1-4), material blessings and answers to prayers (I Kings 3:4-13).

STUDY 6: WATER BAPTISM

Matthew 28:19

Water baptism is essential to our obedience after reconciliation with God. It is one of the two ordinances that the Lord gave to His church (Holy Communion is the other). Water baptism is compulsory for every believer in the Lord Jesus (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16). Our obedience to the gospel is not complete without water baptism.

BIBLICAL VIEW REGARDING WATER BAPTISM

Romans 6:3-4; Acts 8:36-38; Matthew 28:19; Acts 16:25-34; 2:40-42

Water baptism is symbolic. It symbolises, to the believer, identification with, and partaking of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6:3,4). It does not cleanse anyone from sins. Water baptism is the answering of a good conscience

toward God (I Peter 3:21). When we submit to water baptism, it is an acknowledgement of Christ in a public way. It is a proclamation to the world that we believe in Jesus Christ who died for our sins; and that He was buried and rose again on the third day according to the scriptures. In summary, water baptism symbolises a public declaration of our faith in Jesus Christ. It is a command to be obeyed after repentance. Evidently, the scriptures stress the need to be baptised quickly after conversion. For example, in every detailed case of conversion found in the book of Acts, converts were baptised immediately after conversion.

SCRIPTURAL METHOD OF WATER BAPTISM

Matthew 28:19; 3:16; John 3:23; Acts 8:38,39.

Water baptism is one immersion (not three), **“In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost”**, as Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; Acts 2:38,39; 19:1-6). Both the baptizer and the one to be baptized must be born again. Therefore, infant baptism is unscriptural because a baby who is not conscious of right or wrong cannot repent of sin and exercise saving faith. Water baptism is by immersion, not by sprinkling or pouring water or making a sign of the cross on the forehead by water. If you have been wrongly baptised or baptised before you were born again, you must be re-baptised (Acts 19:3-5).

LIFE AFTER WATER BAPTISM

Romans 6:3-13; Galatians 3:26,27; Acts 8:38,39; 16:32-34.

After we are baptized, we should walk in newness of life. The old life thereby buried must not be revived again. As we have submitted to the ordinance of water baptism, we must continually live in submission to Christ. In addition, we must be dead to sin, be in unity with different members of the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13), and maintain a good conscience toward God (I Peter 3:21) and men, and live to proclaim Christ that has been publicly declared through water baptism. Every convert is enjoined to yield to this important ordinance.

STUDY 7: THE LORD’S SUPPER

Luke 22:17-20; I Corinthians 11:23-30

The Lord’s Supper was instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ who commanded that all believers (all members of God’s family) should partake thereof regularly to **“show the Lord’s death till He come”**. It is an ordinance given to the church and it is unquestionably binding upon all believers and churches. The institution of the Lord’s Supper is clearly shown in the gospels (Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:1, 7-20).

THE ORDINANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Luke 22:17-20; Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; I Cor. 11:23-26; Exodus 12:3-20.

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus Christ the very night wherein He was betrayed. The Lord's Supper in the New Testament is the antitype of the feast of the Passover/unleavened bread in the Old Testament (Exodus 12:1-28, 40-51). Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper at the last Passover for New Testament believers, thus signifying the end of the latter (Luke 22:1-20). Our Lord Jesus Christ is our Passover Lamb (I Corinthians 5:7). He has delivered us from the bondage of sin and Satan. The Lord's Supper is also called Sacrament (which means holy ordinance, I Corinthians 11:2), the Lord's Table, or the Holy Communion (I Corinthians 10:16). Those who participate in eating of the Lord's Supper are called the "communicants". The universal name is the Lord's Supper as used by our Lord. The emblems used are unleavened bread and the juice of the fruit of the vine which symbolise the Lord's body and His blood that was shed for the remission of our sins, respectively. They are not the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ. The ordinance should be observed as frequently as practicable. This ordinance is perpetual – till the Lord shall come. The ordinance was instituted to show forth Christ's death, to declare and publish it. It is to commemorate His glorious condescension and grace in our redemption. We declare His death to be our life, the spring of all our comforts and hopes. We are also to observe the ordinance in remembrance of our Lord till He comes (Matthew 26:17-30; 1 Corinthians 11:26). It was appointed to keep fresh in our mind His dying for us; the greatest act of kindness. We look forward to the Rapture and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9).

ORDERLINESS IN OBSERVING THE LORD'S SUPPER

I Corinthians 11:27-34; 10:21-31; 14:40; Matthew 5:23,24; Exodus 12:43-49.

Like the feast of Passover, the defiled and the uncircumcised strangers (strangers to the family of God) are unworthy to partake of the Lord's Supper. **"Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils"** (I Corinthians 10:21). Anyone who eats and drinks unworthily brings damnation, punishment and chastisement upon himself (Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:17-20; I Corinthians 11:23-30). It is great guilt and great hazard to violate this sacred institution. To eat and drink unworthily of the Lord's Supper is to despise the body and blood of Christ, and in a manner crucify the Lord Jesus afresh. Indecency and impurity should be avoided at the Lord's Table. You are to eat for hunger and pleasure at home and not to change the Holy Supper to a common feast. Holy things are to be used in a holy manner, or else they are profaned. It is a heinous sin to profane the holy ordinance. Therefore, self-examination is necessary to a right attendance at this holy ordinance. Those who upon fair trial, have just ground to charge themselves

with impenitence, unbelief, and alienation from the life of God are by no means fit to eat of this bread and drink of this cup. There should be grace in habit and grace in exercise to be qualified for this holy ordinance. If you always feel disqualified to partake of this ordinance, it is not certain that you will be qualified for the Rapture and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-18). Adults, youth and children who have current testimony of salvation and holy living can partake of the Lord's Supper.

STUDY 8: VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

Mathew 4:1-11; James 1:13-15; 1 Cor 10:12-14; 1 John 4:4; 5:4,5

Temptation is suggestion or enticement to do evil. Temptations come often to all people; yielding to them brings defeat, sorrow, suffering and eternal punishment. Temptation often comes not at our strongest, but our weakest moments. To be tempted is no sin; only yielding to temptation is sin and sin brings judgement. Any Christian can be tempted. Even our Lord Jesus Christ was tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1-11).

SOURCES OF TEMPTATION

Genesis 3:1-5; Matthew 4:3-11; I Corinthians 7:5; Acts 5:3; James 1:13-15.

The chief agent in temptation is Satan. He has been long in the business, tireless, subtle and tactical. He is behind every subtle attempt to make us fall from grace and fail God. He targets everyone in his plan to hinder us from life eternal. In his temptations, he uses all means, people, things and circumstances available to him. Satan may tempt through the corruption of the human heart (Joshua 7:21), entice through the mind and the eye gate (Genesis 3:1-6), influence through the behaviour of evil companions (I Corinthians 15:33; Proverbs 22:24,25) or lead into temptation and sin through the carelessness of others (2 Samuel 11:2-5). Very often, the tempter targets the areas and time of our peculiar weakness. The world, the flesh, an ungodly environment, evil association, self-indulgence, and an unbridled tongue always provide opportunity for the tempter to tempt us.

PROMISE OF VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

I Cor. 10:13; Hebrews 2:18; 4:13-16; Philippians 4:8; Eph. 6:10-18; II Peter 2:9.

God never leaves us alone to fight the tempter and his temptations. He has promised to help us. As we resist temptations, separate ourselves from the tempters and temptresses, close channels through which temptation is coming and pray for God's sustaining grace, we shall be kept in victory. We should not pull temptations or expose ourselves to temptations unnecessarily. Whichever temptation God allows to come on our way, it is because we can overcome it.

HOW TO OVERCOME TEMPTATIONS

Matthew 26:41; Proverbs 1:10-15; Job 2:9,10; Jeremiah 35:5,6; Daniel 1:8; Romans 6:13; II Peter 3:17.

Our Lord Jesus Christ was victorious over every temptation because He was committed to pleasing God. He recognised the tempter as God's enemy and His enemy. He resisted all the temptations with the written Word of God, and He overcame. It is our duty to resist every temptation. Temptations to covetousness, lust, fleshly gratification, inordinate ambition may come to us strongly, but we must resist in Christ's strength. Temptation may come through a respected leader, like Jeremiah (Jeremiah 35:1-6), through influential woman, like Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39:7-15), through your own appetite, like Esau (Genesis 25:29-34) or through other source; you must resist and pray to God for victory. The following suggestions are helpful in overcoming temptations:

1. Keep the word of God in your heart and resist every temptation thereby (Matthew 4:4; Psalm 119:11).
2. Resist the devil (Matthew 4:10; James 4:7). Be instant and persistent therein.
3. Watch and pray (I Peter 5:8,9). Watch over your eyes, heart, tongue and feet.
4. Flee every object of temptation (Genesis 39:11). Never assume you can outwit the devil (I Corinthians 10:12).
5. Avoid idleness (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; II Samuel 11:1-5).
6. Put on the whole armour of God (Ephesians 6:11).

STUDY 9: PERSECUTION AND THE TRIAL OF FAITH

Matthew 5:10-12; Daniel 3:1-25; 1 Peter 4:12-16

Persecution means suffering for Christ or suffering for righteousness sake. It is not suffering for sins a person has committed or punishment due to wrongdoing. Persecution is normal and expected for all righteous-living people. **"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"**, (2 Timothy 3:12). There are several accounts of persecutions of godly people in both the Old and New Testaments. Our Lord Jesus Christ suffered persecution from the religious people of His time. The early church believers also experienced it. It is certain for all Christians. Therefore, when persecution comes, do not count it a strange thing. Trial of faith is from the Lord for a specific purpose in our lives. Like persecution, the trial of faith is not also due to sin (Job 1:8-12).

FORMS OF PERSECUTION

Matthew 5:10-12; 10:22; 2 Cor. 4:11; Jeremiah 20:1,2; Daniel 3:20; 1 Cor. 4:10
Persecution can come in diverse forms. It can be verbal assault (reviling), false accusation, slander, hatred without a cause, denial of rights and privileges,

rejection by loved ones, mockery and scorning, imprisonment, beating, scourging and martyrdom. Examples of people killed for righteousness sake include John the Baptist (Mark 6:27), Stephen (Acts 7:58) and James (Acts 12:2).

Persecution may come from the unbelievers, religious people, ungodly rulers, unconverted colleagues and even from the loved ones. However, these people are empowered by Satan to the end that we may deny the Lord. Persecution can sometimes come from ignorant believers and false brethren. Whatever form persecution takes, it can only kill the body and not the soul.

TRIAL OF FAITH

1 Peter 4:12-16.

Behind every trial of faith is a divinely designed purpose to be accomplished in the life of the afflicted believer. Ignorance of this purpose often makes people to grudge or murmur when being tried! The purpose of trial of faith may be:

1. To refine and purge us to be a holy vessel unto the Lord (Mal 3:3; Job 23:10).
2. To prove us and know what is in us (2 Chronicles 32:31; Proverbs 17:3).
3. To make us fit for heaven (James 1:12) by keeping us in the narrow way.
4. To humble us and make us depend only on His grace (Deut 8:2,3; 2 Cor 12:7).
5. To mature us and develop some spiritual qualities in us (1 Peter 1:7).

Trials can be in various forms: persecution, reproach, tribulation (Acts 14:22), sickness, affliction, imprisonment (Psalm 34:19). Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivers them in all.

SCRIPTURAL ATTITUDE TO PERSECUTION AND TRIAL OF FAITH

Acts 5:41; Matthew 5:10-12; Isaiah 43:2; Dan 3:17.

Our attitude will determine the outcome of our persecution or trial. Trial of faith is not to break us but to mould us into Christ's image. If there is no sin in your life, then you have reason to rejoice under persecution or trial. The following suggestions are helpful in overcoming persecution and trial of faith:

1. Endure patiently (James 1:12; 5:11; 1 Peter 2:20).
2. Stand firm on your biblical conviction (Daniel 3:16-18).
3. Remain prayerful and always give thanks (Philippians 4:6; Romans 5:3). Pray for your persecutors (Luke 6:28).
4. Have faith in God's ability to deliver (Daniel 3:17); fear not (Matthew 10:28).
5. Be submissive to the will of God (Matthew 26:39).
6. Do good to your persecutors (Luke 6:27; Rom 12:20-21). Never retaliate (Romans 12:17).
7. Let your words be few (Ecclesiastes 5:2).

8. Keep serving the Lord faithfully despite your situation (Romans 8:35; 12:11).
9. Always remember that God will never leave you alone.

STUDY 10: THE FINALITY OF THE WORD OF GOD

The finality of God's word (the Bible) implies its absolute authority on every issue of life – spiritual, secular, social, material etc. The Bible has the 'final say' on any subject. Its verdict is final; it is incontestable, indisputable and irrefutable. The Word of God is our rule for living and the divine map for heavenly journey. It is the standard of faith and duty (John 12:48; Galatians 1:8). Its author is God (2 Timothy 3:16,17). The Word of God is relevant to all man's need and it speaks extensively of God's will for mankind.

BASIS OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:20,21; Psalm 19:7-11.

The authority of the Bible comes from its divine inspiration (2 Timothy 3:16). It is an infallible Book of books. It is the one and only Book; no book can be compared to it. The Bible is unique in continuity. It was written over 1,500 years span, by over 40 authors from every walk of life, in different places and yet there is perfect harmony and uniformity in its contents. The Bible is unique in circulation. It has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book. It is unique in its survival. It survived through time, through persecution and through criticism. The Bible has outlived its critics. It is unique in its teachings. There are hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament that are already fulfilled. It is unsparing on the faults or sins of its writers, for example, David's adultery with Bathsheba. The Bible is unique in its influence on mankind. Millions of people have been changed through the Word of God. Other books are written for information, the Bible is written for transformation. The Bible is mighty in its influence on people and places. It is a devouring flame and purifying fire (Jeremiah 5:14), a crushing hammer (Jeremiah 23:29), a life-giving force (Ezekiel 37:7), a defensive weapon (Ephesians 6:17), and a probing instrument (Hebrews 4:12).

SCOPE OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

2 Timothy 3:16,17; Psalm 19:7-11.

The scope of the authority of the Bible is unlimited. The Bible speaks convincingly and decides comprehensively on all issues of life. Whereas science and philosophy cannot answer several questions on creation, the functioning of the created world, human eccentricities, the events after physical death etc., the Bible provides answer to practically all man's questions. Some of these are:

1. The creation of all things (Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-2).

2. The fall of man (Genesis 3:3), its consequence (Romans 3:23) and man's need for a Saviour (Romans 5:6-8).
3. The eternal destiny of man after physical death (Hebrews 9:27); hell fire for sinners (Matthew 25:41,46) and heaven for the righteous (Matthew 25:34).
4. Divine blueprints for marriage and family life (Genesis 2:18,24; Matthew 19:3-9; Ephesians 5:22-33; 6:1-4).
5. Insatiability of earthly things (money, wealth, power, knowledge etc; Ecclesiastes 2:1-11,17)
6. Wars and rumours of war, general insecurity, famine and hardship, as Christ's coming approaches (Matthew 24:6,7).
7. The origin of life (Gen 2:7), its brevity and uncertainty (Psalm 90:9; Job 14:1; James 4:13,14).

SUBMISSION TO THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

Psalm 119:9,11,47,60,93,127; Matthew 26:39; John 2:5; 1 Timothy 4:16.

Considering the strong, indisputable authority of the Bible on all issues of life, believers' attitude to the Bible should be whole-hearted submission. Prompt obedience is expected of all Christians to the instructions of the Bible. The Bible should be approached in a reverent attitude of mind, regarding it as the inspired Word of God, and not as an ordinary literary production. Our delight and love for the Word of God should know no limit. We are to esteem the Word of God higher than all things on earth. Love the Word and you will enjoy the abundant blessings therein. Keep the Word of God in your heart (not in your head) and you will be kept from sins. Defend the Bible zealously. Let the Word of God be first in every sphere of your life – family, vocation, education, decision etc. Go over its vast fields of truth; descend into its valleys; climb its mountains of vision; follow its streams of inspiration; enter its halls of instruction; visit its wondrous portrait galleries. Dig deep into the Bible to uncover the best for your life.

STUDY 11: PRIVILEGES IN CHRIST'S KINGDOM

Citizenship in a nation or kingdom confers certain privileges. The same also applies when a person comes into Christ's kingdom or the family of God. Coming into the fold of Christ promises many privileges or benefits for a Christian. These benefits not only cover the immediate need of forgiveness of sins and justification for the repenting soul but also the physical, material and spiritual needs. Where salvation of the Lord enters, there abounds an unspeakable joy. He is truly rich who has Christ. To heed the Saviour's call to salvation is entering a kingdom of unlimited opportunities in time and eternity. To come to Jesus is to come to the love of Jehovah. Jesus Christ is our precious Friend and unchangeable Priest.

He is sweeter than honey, brighter than the morning star and dearer than our most beloved. How great is the goodness He has laid up for them that fear Him. Christ is the bounteous giver of all good things. Without Him we are poor.

POVERTY OUTSIDE CHRIST

Luke 12:15-21; Ecclesiastes 2:1-11; Mark 8:36.

Poverty prevails outside Christ. This may not necessarily imply material poverty but it is certain that spiritual emptiness and desolation, moral bankruptcy, insecurity, fear and satanic attacks/oppression abound outside Christ. Whatever anyone acquires without the blessing of the Lord is bound to attract and multiply grieves and sorrows (Proverbs 10:22). Man's soul can never find rest until it rests in God. It is great foolishness to trust in earthly gains or the works of our hands (Psalm 62:10) because they are: (i) Perishable (John 6:27), that is, they have a short shelf life; (ii) Unstable (Proverbs 23:5). It is a common story to be once rich and be poor again or to be powerful and still fall and be consigned to the footnote of history; (iii) Corruptible (1 Peter 1:18), that is, liable to contamination and bound for destruction. (iv) Unsatisfying (Ecclesiastes 5:10). It is paradoxical that the more we have, the more unsatisfied we become! As Christians, we should be conscious of the dangers in worldly riches (Proverbs 30:7-9) in order not to be deceived and be hindered from following the Lord.

PRIVILEGES IN THE KINGDOM

Matthew 11:28-30; Acts 8:8,39; John 9:25; Galatians 5:1; Philippians 4:13.

There are inexhaustible riches in Christ. An all-sufficient grace is in Christ for all believers. Some of the privileges we have in Christ's kingdom are:

1. Peace (both in life and at death) Rom 5:1; Isaiah 26:3; John 14:27; Phil 4:7. This means inward serenity, calm repose, inward satisfaction and peacefulness of temper and behaviour regardless of the occurrences around us. Believers' peace is peculiar. It flows from Christ; it is heavenly.
2. Joy 1 Peter 1:8; Phil 4:4. This means cheerful disposition, and constant delight in God.
3. Access to God and answer to prayer Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 5:14,15; Mat. 7:7.
4. Fellowship (1 John 1:3). We have fellowship with God as our Father, fellowship with Christ as our Friend, fellowship with Holy Ghost as our Comforter, and fellowship with believers as our brethren.
5. Guidance Psalm 32:8; Isaiah 58:11; Acts 13:2. There are many ways on earth, and they can lead us astray. We need divine guidance to know the way in the wilderness and to walk therein.
6. Provision for our needs Psalm 34:10; Phil 4:19. God will supply our needs and not our wants. Our needs will always be met if we walk according to His will.

7. Protection and preservation from all evils Psalm 91:3,9-11.
8. Hope in life and death Proverbs 14:32; Col 1:27. Christ embraced is the hope of glory. Death to sinners is an irreparable loss because they are forever lost but to believers, it is a glorious passage to eternal bliss.
9. Healing and perfect health 3 John 2; Exodus 15:26.
10. Dominion and power Luke 10:19; Jeremiah 1:10.
11. Eternal life John 3:16, 36.

PATHWAY TO KINGDOM'S PRIVILEGES

Matthew 11:28-30.

The conditions for enjoying the benefits in the kingdom are as follow: (i) Partnership with God (2 Chronicles 26:5); (ii) Obedience (John 2:5); (iii) Prayer (Jeremiah 33:3; Psalm 121:1); (iv) Faith (Hebrews 11:6; Jam 1:6-8) and Patience (Lamentation 3:26; Hebrews 6:12; 10:36; Luke 21:19). Nothing on earth can guarantee us so many privileges as in Christ. O come and taste of the Lord, and you will affirm that *"The Lord is good"* (Psalm 34:8).

STUDY 12: CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Acts 2:44-47; 1 John 1:1-10

It is natural for man to crave for association or companionship because man is not created to live alone. Fellowship is indispensable for our preservation and healthy living in the household of faith. The Scripture warns against isolation from the brethren (Hebrews 10:25). The word 'fellowship' comes from the Greek word *koinonia*. This is interpreted as partnership (1 John 1:3), contribution (Romans 15:26), distribution (2 Corinthians 9:13) and communication (Hebrews 13:16). Christian fellowship implies partnership with God and fellow believers, contribution to the welfare and upkeep of needy brethren and communication with the brethren. In the early church, brethren were strongly bonded together by communion with God and fellow brethren. Therefore, they achieved great things in their time. Today, we cannot over-emphasise the importance of Christian fellowship. Love is central to Christian fellowship. Without love, fellowship of the brethren becomes cold, formal, hypocritical and unprofitable.

BASIS OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

1 John 1:5,10; Acts 2:44; Amos 3:3; Hebrews 11:6; Acts 13:14-16.

Christian fellowship is based on the common relationship believers have with God. It begins when the penitent goes to the Lord confessing his sins and asking for pardon through Christ's redemptive work on the cross. Without relationship with God, there cannot be Christian fellowship. This requirement distinguishes

Christian fellowship from a social club, association or union. Besides, the word of God is central in Christian fellowship. There is sharing together of the word of God and the life of Christ amidst people of like precious faith. Other activities in Christian fellowship include singing (Matthew 26:30), ministration to the needs of people (2 Corinthians 8:4), giving of tithes and offering (1 Corinthians 16:1,2), sharing of testimonies (Acts 15:4) and praying (Matthew 18:18,19).

PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

1 John 1:6; Acts 2:44-47; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8,13.

Fellowship with God and fellow believers extends to practical issues of life. Christian fellowship cares for both the spiritual and physical welfare of the people. Christian fellowship is expected to care for the total being of man (body, soul and spirit). Some of the practical aspects of Christian fellowship include:

1. Caring for and sharing with one another what we have (Acts 4:35; Rom 12:13). We are to give to the needy brethren (1 Corinthians 12:25).
2. Praying for one another (Jam 5:16; Col 4:12,13).
3. Love one another (Rom 13:8; 1 Peter 1:22). Love is an essential ingredient of Christian fellowship. It is practical, sacrificial and selfless. Love is the badge of Christian identification ((John 13:35).
4. Regular attendance and active participation in weekly meetings of the church (Heb 10:25). It provides an opportunity to learn more of Christ and how to grow in grace and love for the brethren.

Evidence of partnership with God should be seen in our daily walk (1 John 1:6; 2:6). Partaking of the nature of Christ is the principle of Christian fellowship. Believers should not have fellowship with the devil (1 Corinthians 10:20) or have intimate relationship with sinners (2 Corinthians 6:14-17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-11).

BENEFITS OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

1 John 1:7; Acts 4:34; 2:44-47; Psalm 16:11; 84:10; 133:1-3.

There are many benefits in fellowship with God and the brethren. Some of these are: (i) Encouragement and strength from one another (Proverbs 27:17), (ii) Spiritual growth (Ephesians 4:11-14), (iii) Provision for the needy (Acts 4:32-35), (iv) Companionship (Ecclesiastes 4:9,10), (v) Spiritual guidance (Proverbs 15:22), (vi) Opportunity to serve the Lord (Acts 13:1-3), (vii) Preservation from errors and backsliding (Proverbs 11:14), (viii) Comfort through God's presence and enhanced praying power (Matthew 18:19,20), and (ix) Preparedness for heaven.

We live in a selfish world; only in Christian fellowship could we enjoy selfless, sacrificial love and care. Come along with us, and our God shall do you good.

PART TWO: FULFILMENT

STUDY 13: SIN – MAN’S MAJOR PROBLEM

The existence of sin is an undeniable fact. No man can examine his own life or observe the conduct of his fellow men without having the conviction that there is such evil as sin. Sin is the greatest evil on earth. The universal sinfulness of man had its origin in the fall of Adam (Rom 5:12). God’s great design in sending Jesus Christ into the world was to conquer and destroy of sin (1 John 3:8). The purpose of redemption is total freedom from sin (1 John 3:8). The standard of the gospel and expectation of God for every Christian is to live above sin (Romans 6:12-18).

THE DESCRIPTION OF SIN

1 John 3:4; 5:17; Pro. 24:9; Rom. 14:23; James 4:17; Rom. 1:29-31; Gal. 5:19-21. Sin is the transgression of God’s law. Whatever is contrary to God’s holy nature is sin. All unrighteousness (fornication, adultery, uncleanness, backbiting, covetousness, murder, idolatry, anger, etc.) is sin. Besides, sin is neglect of doing good. The catalogue of sin is endless. Sin is a moral evil for which man is to be condemned, and not a calamity for which he is to be pitied. Sin is not a necessary evil, human weakness or limitation as propagated by philosophers and some theologians. Sin is voluntary. It has its origin in the act of the will. Sin is exceedingly and intrinsically evil. There is no good thing in sin. Sin is a deadly poison. A sip of it is as poisonous as a cup! Sin is like the plague of leprosy (Lev. 13:1-3), which starts in an unnoticeable way, but eats very deep into the flesh and soon covers the whole body. Like leprosy, sin is contagious. It is deadly and destructive.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF SIN

Gen. 3:6; Jos. 7:20-21; Exodus 23:2; 2 Sam. 11:1-2; 13:1-5; Heb. 3:13; Titus 3:3. Sin is extremely deceitful. It is always enticing, appealing and pleasant to the eyes and the flesh. Gains through sin (financial, fleshly satisfaction, position, power, fulfilment of ambition etc.) usually appear bright, just and promising. Sad still, sin is pervasive and popular in every community and nation. In our present world, it is even odd not to commit sin! Today, sin is hardly called sin. Lying is regarded as being diplomatic; stealing and deception as smartness; fornication, adultery and drunkenness as enjoyment; pride and arrogance as being manly and assertive; riotous living and revelling as being sociable. It is then not a surprise that sin is commonly advertised in the superlative. Are you already deceived by sin?

DAMNATION THROUGH SIN

Genesis 3:24; Isaiah 59:2; Joshua 7:11,12,24,25; Ezekiel 18:4; Mat 25:41; Revelation 20:11-15; 1 Cor. 10:5-11

The consequence of sin always appears light and insignificant while the sin is being committed; but in reality, it is damnable and far-reaching. The end of every sin is more bitter than gall and highly undesirable. Sin brings curses and attracts the wrath of God. It separates man from God, brings defeat by the enemy and hinders prayers (Psalm 66:18). Sin also brings physical and spiritual death (eternal separation from God). The final destiny of all sinners is hell fire. Certainly, one reigning sin will be to your everlasting ruin. The divine judgement on every sinner is certain (Proverbs 11:21). The only escape route is to repent of all sins and turn to Christ. Sin is never a toy to play with; it is a fire that destroys.

DIRECTION FOR A SINLESS LIVING

1 John 3:4-10; Psalm 119:9,11,60,63.

Total freedom from sin is possible by the grace of God. The prevalence of sin in our community is not a limit to the possibilities of grace. To live a sinless life, the following steps are necessary:

1. Repent of all sins and forsake them (Acts 3:19; Matthew 3:8). Renounce your bosom sins and destroy all links to them (Hebrews 12:1; Acts 18:18,19).
2. Separate yourself from the world and evil associations (2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Acts 2:40; Ephesians 5:18). Watch over your heart (Prove 4:23), tongue (1 Peter 3:10,11), eyes (Job 31:1) and time (Ephesians 5:16).
3. Avoid isolation and idleness (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 2 Samuel 11:1,2). Be regular in fellowship and make friend with believers (Hebrews 10:25).
4. Meditate on the word of God and set your affection on heaven (Psalm 119:9,11; Colossians 3:2).
5. Avoid deliberate exposure to temptation and pray always for power to overcome (Proverbs 6:27,28).
6. Depend always and only on the grace of God (2 Corinthians 9:8; 2 Peter 3:18).

STUDY 14: CONSISTENT CHRISTIAN LIVING

John 15:1-10

A believer is a pilgrim to the land of glory. When someone comes to know the Lord at salvation, he has only begun a lifelong journey of living the Christian life. It is important to begin the Christian life with the foundation of genuine repentance and call upon the Lord early; yet much more important is how one continues and ends it. Not all who start well also end well. Some believers begin with great joy, enthusiasm and zeal only to fizzle out too soon. The love of a believer can wax cold because of increasing iniquity the love of the things of the world. The Christian must adhere to scriptural guidelines for daily living to run the race successfully. He must be steadfast in the faith, consist in Christian living, and

fruitful in the ministry of the Word (I Corinthians 15:58). Having entered the Christian faith through genuine repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, daily communion and Christ-like walk are indispensable for a consistent Christian life.

ESSENCE OF DAILY COMMUNION

John 15:1-7; Mark 1:35; Joshua 1:8; 1 Peter 2:1,2; Psalm 5:7; 32:8; Job 34:32.

Daily communion or **Quiet Time** is the means of claiming the grace of God for victorious living. The quiet time is a definite time set apart for meaningful communion with God and meditation in His word. It is customary to rise early in the morning, like our Lord did. Besides, to benefit maximally, quiet time should be observed in an environment free from distractions. The main components of quiet time are Bible reading, meditation, and prayer. It is normal to begin by praising the Lord. This is followed by reading a definite passage of the Bible, meditation on the passage read and prayer on the lessons learnt from the passage. It is also necessary to pray for one's daily activities and for other prayer requests. Apart from daily quiet time, regular personal and corporate prayers, and regular self-examination are necessary for consistent Christian living.

EXHORTATION TO CHRIST-LIKE WALK

John 15:8-10; I John 2:3-6; Eph. 5:1-16; I Timothy 5:22; Genesis 17:1.

Our walk speaks of our character and conduct. A sinner does not know the Lord; therefore, he walks contrary to His laws. Believers are expected and commanded to walk like Christ every day. A Christian is known by his lifestyle before God and his fellow men. The scriptural standard for every believer is to walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8), uprightly and righteously (Isaiah 33:15; Psalm 15:2), honestly and holily (Rom 13:13). We are to walk by faith (II Corinthians 5:7), in love (Ephesians 5:2), in the fear of the Lord (Acts 9:31), in God's commandments (II Chronicles 17:4) and in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16). How is your walk with the Lord?

There is great gain in consistent Christian living. The believer who walks consistently in the Lord will enjoy victory at all times, will be established in the faith and will be fruitful in Christian service. In addition, such a Christian will be ready to meet the Lord at the rapture (2 Peter 1:4-11).

STUDY 15: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE – A LIFE OF GRACE

Titus 2:11-14

Grace is unmerited favour from God. We are saved by grace (Ephesians 2:8) and we can only live the Christian life by grace. We need God's grace for our spiritual growth and Christian service. Without the grace of God brought into being

through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, man would have been eternally lost. Salvation is a gift, which God in His loving-kindness offers to man (Rom. 6:23; Titus 3:3-7). We can never earn nor merit salvation. And it is not enough just to experience God's grace in forgiving our sins; we must grow in grace. The grace of God is made available to us to perfect the work of righteousness, empower us for service and for good works.

THE SUPPLY OF GRACE

Titus 2:11; II Corinthians 9:8; Psalm 84:11; Acts 11:23; 1 Peter 5:5; Rom. 9:16.

God gives grace and He can multiply His grace upon us. He bestows His grace freely; no one can afford it. He is willing to grant us more grace if we are going to be good stewards of it; we should not receive it in vain (Jude 4). Grace, in contrast to law, enables us to overcome sin and live godly in this present world (Titus 2:11,12). Being partakers of the grace of God, we are enjoined to grow in it (2 Peter 3:18). The means of growing in grace includes prayer, study of the Bible (Acts 14:3), meditation on the word of God, and fellowship with the brethren (Heb. 10:25). Grace is promised to the humble (1 Peter 5:5).

THE FRUITS OF GRACE

Titus 2:12; II Corinthians 9:8-11; 8:9; I Timothy 1:12,13; II Timothy 2:1.

God's grace produces newness of life after salvation. Its other fruits include benevolent character (II Corinthians 9:8,9; Psalm 112:9), Christian virtues (Phil 4:8), righteousness (II Corinthians 9:10), fruitfulness (Phil 1:11), self-sacrifice or humility (II Corinthians 8:9), appreciative attitude (II Corinthians 9:11,12), and spiritual growth (Ephesians 4:15). Graceful life is always fruitful, beneficial and flourishing. A heart full of grace is always a large heart – liberal. And a gracious tongue is a well of life. Check up if these fruits are in your life.

SUFFICIENCY OF GRACE

Titus 2:11-14; II Cor. 12:8-10; Ephesians 4:7; 2:7; I Timothy 1:14; Philippians 4:19.

The grace of God is sufficient for all human needs. There are abundant riches in Christ which are available to us through His grace. The grace of God is sufficient for the redemption of all sinners (Romans 2:4; Ephesians 1:7; 2:7) and justification of saved souls (Titus 3:17; Rom 3:24). By His grace, we have provision for all our needs (Phil 4:19; Titus 1:14), access to God (Hebrews 4:16; 12:18-24), confidence in God (Hebrews 13:6) and hope (1 Peter 1:3,4; 2 Thessalonians 2:16). What an amazing grace! It can transform a poor and wretched sinner to a saint. In all situations of life, His grace is sufficient unto us. We can do all things through Christ that strengthens us. We must ask for fresh grace daily and faithfully use the grace we have received.

STUDY 16: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE – A LIFE OF FAITH

Hebrews 11:1-16

We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8) and we can only live the Christian life by faith. Christians walk with God by faith (II Corinthians 5:7; Heb. 11:6). To remain with the Lord, we must have faith in Him, His Word and His ability to keep us. Faith is also indispensable to victory over sin, Satan and the world. In our Christian journey, we are bound to come across many difficulties, trials and problems of life and we can only overcome by faith. Walking by faith is not just mere mouth confession but believing God's promises and living out these promises regardless of the contrary circumstances.

EVIDENCES OF WALKING BY SIGHT

Numbers 13:26-29,31-33; 2 Kings 5:9-12; 7:1,2; John 20:24-29; Hebrews 11:6.

To walk by sight is the opposite of walking by faith. You must first identify evidences of walking by sight in your life and eliminate them. Some of them are:

1. Unbelief (Luke 1:20; 24:11).
2. Worldly wisdom and practices (Acts 5:1,2; 2 Kings 5:6,7; Genesis 27:18-24). These include lying, unfaithfulness in financial matters, questionable investment, reliance on men, etc.
3. Pride (2 Kings 7:2). It can be due to knowledge possession, or position in the society. Pride is manifested through unwillingness to submit to God's will.
4. Self-centredness or dependence on one's ability (2 Kings 7:2; 5:11,12).
5. Fear, worry and anxiety (Genesis 26:7; Matthew 14:29,30). Real or imagined, fear implies lack of trust in God. He that trusts in God is always calm.
6. Prayerlessness (James 1:6-8). Faith in God always provokes unceasing communion with God. Want of it makes prayer boring.

DANGERS OF WALKING BY SIGHT

Heb 3:12-18; 4:2; 11:6; Num 14:11,12,20-23.

Without faith, it is impossible to please God. Besides, it is impossible to enjoy God's full blessings. Some of the dangers of walking by sight are:

1. Compromise or sin (Genesis 26:7; Judges 14:1-3; II Chronicles 18:1-3).
2. Defeat by the enemies (II Chronicles 18:29-34).
3. Unanswered prayers and delayed miracle (2 Kings 5:13,14; Matthew 13:58).
4. Backsliding and apostasy (II Timothy 4:10; Heb. 3:12).
5. Sudden death – spiritual or physical (Heb. 5:5,10; 2 Kings 7:2,17).
6. Multiplication or worsening of one's problem (Genesis 27:41).
7. Disorganised and unstable spiritual life (Genesis 49:4).
8. Wrath or disfavour of God (Num. 14:11,12,28-34; Heb. 11:6).

ABC OF WALKING BY FAITH

II Corinthians 5:7; Heb 11:1.

It is simple to walk by faith if we know and believe God's promises. Walking by faith is not based on feeling, excitement or breeze of impulse but founded on the written word of God. The ABC of walking by faith is:

1. Acknowledge God's promises as final in all situations (Matthew 22:29; Psalm 89:34; 119:89).
2. Believe and behave the promises of God. Live as if the promises are already fulfilled in your life (Mark 9:23; 5:36; John 9:38; Psalm 125:1).
3. Cast all your cares, fears and troubles upon the Lord, and confess positively (1 Peter 5:7; Psalm 56:3; Heb. 13:5; Matthew 6:25-31).

Let go and let God: He will solve any problem you take to Him; but the one you keep to yourself will increase. God can use you to do great exploit for His kingdom if you believe. The only limit to your usefulness for God is your faith in Him.

STUDY 17: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE – A LIFE OF PRAYER

Luke 18:1-8; James 5:13-18; Esther 4:13-17

The importance of prayer in Christian life and ministry is generally acknowledged but not generally demonstrated. Aversion to praying leads to a broken altar. If your prayer is limited to corporate prayer meeting, your spiritual life will be cold, and your ministration will be dry and boring as a Christian worker. As Christians, prayer is our business. Whatever we do without prayer cannot receive heaven's stamp of approval. Prayer is a privilege. It is also a duty. It is an obligation most binding, and most imperative. Prayerlessness is a sin (1 Samuel 12:23). Prayer is a solemn service due to God, adoration and worship. It is the Christian's vital breath. To pray well is to do all things well. To fail to pray is to fail in all things. We learn to pray by praying. It should be the delight of every child of God to pray.

ESSENTIALS OF PRAYER

James 5:16-18; Matthew 7:7; Luke 11:2; 18:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:17; Psalm 66:18.

Acceptable prayer rests on essential conditions. These are:

1. Relationship with God (Luke 11:2; Psalm 66:18). Without a definite relationship with God (John 1:12), a person cannot gain access to God in prayer. Besides, sin is a barrier to prayer. A sinner's prayer is abomination before God.
2. Holiness (1 Timothy 2:8; Malachi 1:11). Prayer is lifting up holy hands or giving a pure offering unto God; He delights in holy men for the work of praying.
3. Humility (Luke 18:10-14). Prayer to God is on the merit of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. This necessitates praying to the Father in the name of Jesus.

4. Faith (James 1:6-8). Faith gives birth to prayer. The background of prayer is unwavering confidence in God that answers prayer.
5. Integrity of character (Daniel 6:4). Prayer is based on character. What we are with God gauges our influence with Him. The character of the inner affects effectual praying. An inconsistent spiritual life will hinder fervency in prayer.
6. Thanksgiving (Luke 11:2; Philippians 4:6; I Timothy 2:1). Giving thanks is the very life of prayer. It is its fragrance, music and its crown.
7. Persistence or importunity (Luke 11:5-8; 18:5). Those who have prayed and influenced their generation for good are known for their persistence in prayer. Tarrying long in prayer is the only way to enjoy God.
8. Agreement with God's will (I John 5:14). Your heart must align with His word.
9. Fervency (James 5:16). Fervency is the soul of prayer. True prayer must be aflame. The whole man – heart, mind and spirit – must pray. Prayer must be habitual. Cold prayers have no claim on heaven.
10. Right motive (James 4:3). The highest motive in prayer is: "Thy will be done!"

EXPLOIT THROUGH PRAYER

James 5:16-18; Matthew 7:7-11; John 14:13,14.

Exploit through prayer knows no exception. Prayer is a powerful weapon, placed by God in the hands of His saints. Men are bettered by praying; the world is bettered by praying. Prayer is practical, with lots of testimonies of exploits by saints of God such as Moses (Exo. 32:30-32; Num. 12:3), Elijah (James 5:17,18; 1 Kings 18:36-38,42), Daniel (Daniel 6:5-11; 9:1-4,17-19), Paul (Eph. 1:15,16; Phil. 1:4) and Epaphras (Col. 4:12,13). There is no substitute to prayer in doing God's work. Prayer will make you useful in God's hand. Possibilities through prayer include:

1. Change of destiny, history and circumstances (Gen. 32:24-28; I Chr. 4:9,10).
2. Practical realisation of God's promises (Matthew 7:7-11).
3. Biological and spiritual fruitfulness (1 Samuel 1:9-15,19,20; Galatians 4:19).
4. Personal renewal and revival (Luke 5:15,16; Mark 6:31).
5. Dominion over your world and influence over the course of nature (James 5:16-18; 2 Kings 6:8-18).
6. Promotion and prosperity of the gospel (Acts 8:4-8; Isaiah 62:1,2).
7. Divine revelations and supernatural experiences (Dan 9:21-27). He cannot be an ordinary Christian who is extra-ordinary in prayer.
8. Victory and dominion over Satan and the evil spirits (Acts 16:16-18; 19:15).
9. Favour before God and man (Nehemiah 1:11; 2:1-8).
10. Divine guidance and miraculous provision (Phil 4:6,19).

Possibilities through prayer are countless. Prayer moves the hand that moves the world. Prayer has in it the possibility to affect everything that affects you.

STUDY 18: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE – A LIFE OF SERVICE

Matthew 25:14-30; Luke 19:13

We are saved to serve. No Christian should be idle in the kingdom of Christ. We are stewards of His manifold grace (1 Peter 4:10). A true Christian is a spiritual tradesman. Our concern and pre-occupation should be the business of the kingdom of God. It is a great privilege that we are employed in the divine service. Therefore, it is expected of us to be occupied till our Master comes! You can do something in God's house: do it cheerfully, willingly, faithfully and continually.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR SERVICE

Matthew 25:14,15; Luke 19:13; I Corinthians 12:4-11,28-31; Ephesians 4:11-13; Psalm 84:10; John 20:21; Matthew 28:19,20; II Timothy 1:6.

From the parable of the talents in our text, we can conclude that every servant of Christ is given at least one talent to trade with. We are given different talents or gifts to work for Christ. These talents are given to us for spiritual investment. We are Christ's servants, purchased by His blood (Acts 20:28) and employed for His kingdom business. As Christians, we have a lot of work to do, so we must set about it promptly and with focus. In the church of Christ, there are different areas of service: soul-winning, help, visitation, follow-up of new converts, prayer, singing, teaching etc. We have different gifts according to the grace that is given to us (Rom. 12:6-11). Find out your gifts, stir them up and use them to the glory of God. Gifts multiply through constant use. Those gifts that are not used or buried will rust and decay. Spiritual service provides opportunity for spiritual investment and growth. Little wonder, the Psalmist says **"... I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness"**. There is no vocation on earth that is as noble and rewarding as God's service.

FAITHFULNESS IN SERVICE

Matthew 25:16-18; Luke 12:47,48; 19:17; Ecclesiastes 9:10; Galatians 6:7,8; Revelation 22:11,12; Col. 3:17,22-23.

In our text, two of the three servants were faithful in trading with the talents that were given to them while the third was unfaithful. The faithful servants were diligent in the use of their talents and consequently, they succeeded and brought profit to their master. The hand of the diligent makes rich in grace, comfort and treasure of good works. Good stewards have something to show for their diligence. Our works will surely follow us (Revelation 14:13). Faithfulness in service implies that you work the best way you can either with or without supervision. Nobody is too good for the least service in the house of God. Do your work heartily. One of the evidences of faithfulness is fruitfulness. Other evidences include

diligence, timeliness, prompt obedience, wise and judicious use of your privileges and resources, perseverance even when the task is difficult, humility and availability. Symptoms of unfaithfulness seen in the servant with one talent include laziness, fear, excuses, indifference, pride and self-will. Nothing hinders our duty to God as slavish fear. He that is careless in God's work, is near akin to him that is busy in devil's work. To do no good is to incur very serious blame. Those who think it is impossible to please God and it is vain to serve Him, will do nothing to profit the kingdom of God. Those that are afraid of doing too much for God will do too little for Him. Very often, those who have least to do for God do least of what they have to do. We are expected to be profitable servants; if we are not, Christ will not own us as His servants.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN SERVICE

Matthew 25:19-30; 12:36; Luke 12:20,48; Rom 14:12; 1 Peter 4:4,5.

Whatever abilities and advantages we have, they are not our own. We are but stewards of them; we must give account to our Lord. Divine reckoning will surely come, and it will be according to our faithfulness, not according to our fruitfulness; our sincerity, not to our success; to the uprightness of our hearts, not to the degree of our opportunities. Generally, a sincere and faithful servant will be fruitful and successful. The smallness of our talents or gifts will not excuse us from reckoning. We are accountable to God on the use of our life. The faithful servants of Christ shall not be put off with bare commendation; all their works and labour of love shall be rewarded. In the day of reckoning, wicked and slothful servants will be left without excuse; frivolous pleas will be overruled, and every mouth will be stopped. Those who now stand upon their own justification will not have one word to say for themselves. For the faithful servants, the work we do for God in this world is but little compared with the joy set before us.

STUDY 19: PROFITABLE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURE

Acts 17:10-12; Matthew 13:1-23.

Profitable study of the Scripture requires adequate preparation, especially of the heart. The heart is the soil upon which the seed of the word is sown. The principle of grace in the heart, is that which makes men of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and in the faith of Christ. The nearer we draw to Christ, the better acquainted we shall be with the word of God. Preparation for Bible study also includes having necessary resources such as complete Bible (preferably the King James Version) with cross-references. For personal study of the Scripture, other aids are necessary. These include concordance, commentary and Bible dictionary. It is the duty of every believer to diligently search the Scripture, understand

it and live up to its demands. The Scripture is our oracle and touchstone; we must consult it daily. The word of God is a law by which we must be ruled and governed. Regular and profitable study of the Bible is essential to our growth in spiritual knowledge and grace, deeper relationship with God, victorious living, usefulness in divine service, and fitness for heaven.

HINDRANCES TO SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING

Matthew 11:16,17; 13:13-15,19-22; James 1:22-24; II Corinthians 4:4; Jeremiah 17:9; Luke 10:38-42; John 16:12.

The main hindrance to spiritual understanding is the condition of the heart. Man's heart is the soil for the seed of God's word and consequently, the growth medium for the word. The hearts of men are differently qualified and disposed to the word of God, and the success of the word varies accordingly. Heart conditions that will prevent us from understanding the Scripture include hardness of heart (Matthew 13:14,15), a double-mind or unbelief (James 1:6-8), stubbornness, and impatience (Jeremiah 6:10). It is a sad condition for a man to sit under the living word of God with a dead and untouched heart. Other hindrances to profitable study of the Scripture are: (i) Instability (Proverbs 24:21; Jeremiah 2:36; Galatians 1:6; 2:12). (ii) Lack of interest for God's word (Acts 17:16-18). (iii) Self-will (Jeremiah 6:16). (iv) Cares of life (Matthew 13:22). (v) Prayerlessness (Matthew 13:20,21). (vi) Lack of purpose in studying the Scripture (Proverbs 20:18). (vii) Traditions of men and errors (Colossians 2:16-23; Ephesians 4:14). (viii) Satanic opposition (Matthew 13:19; II Corinthians 4:4). (ix) Negative spiritual environment and evil association (Proverbs 13:20; 1 Kings 11:2; 2 Thessalonians 3:14). (x) Immaturity (John 16:12; 1 Samuel 3:3-7) and, (xi) Multiplied activities or busyness (Luke 10:38-42; 1 Kings 20:39,40).

The careless, mindless and trifling hearers of the word of God are an easy prey to Satan, who is the great thief of the Word. The devil is a sworn enemy to our profiting from the word of God. Worldly cares are great hindrances to understanding of the Word. They eat up our commitment to the Word, divert us from holy duty and eventually quench the fire of holy affection.

HELPS FOR PROFITABLE STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURE

Matthew 13:23; Isaiah 66:2; 1 Samuel 3:10; Ezra 7:10; Acts 11:23; 17:11; Hebrews 10:25; John 2:5.

A prepared heart is always a fertile ground for the word of God. Willingness to hear, reason, admit and subscribe to the truth of the Word of God is vital to profitable study and understanding of the Scripture. Besides, searching the Scripture and meditation on the law of the Lord should be our daily delight (Acts 17:11).

More than the study and understanding of the Bible, we should be ready to do whatever is commanded. Happy are we if we do what we learn in the word of God (John 13:17). To profit maximally from personal or corporate study of the Scripture, the following suggestions are useful:

1. Accept the Word as God's revelation and the ministers of the Word as God's servants (II Chronicles 20:20; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Isaiah 53:1).
2. Have a teachable attitude (Ezra 8:21; Acts 17:11). This is evident in the life of the disciples (Matthew 13:36; Mark 4:10) and the same is expected of us.
3. Have a positive disposition to the word of God (I John 5:3; Psalm 19:7-11). The commandments of God are not grievous (burdensome). The Scripture is not a book of dos and don'ts. It is a mine of inexhaustible riches, which are ever relevant to every need of every man. Be excited about the study of the Scripture. If you are unexcited, you will be unmoved by its message.
4. Be inquisitive (Matthew 5:3,6; John 5:39). Ask questions on whatever you don't understand. Seek to know and understand different passages of the Bible. Dig deep. The doctrines of Christ do not fear a scrutiny.
5. Reflect on and revise the Bible studies you have had (Acts 17:11). How much of a study you will retain depends on your reflective thinking on the study.
6. Pray on what you have studied (Psalm 119:27,33-40).
7. Apply the Word to your life (2 Samuel 12:1-7; Rom 15:4). Bible Study is not just to gain knowledge but for personal spiritual development. Therefore, always carry out whatever you have learnt (James 1:19-25; Psalm 119:63)
8. Persevere in the study of the Scripture till you find something precious (Psalm 11:97; 2 Kings 13:4-13).

STUDY 20: THE CHRISTIAN AND THE WORLD

I John 2:15-17; II Corinthians 6:14-18

We are called out of the sinful world into God's marvellous light. Though we live in the world, we are not of the world. The Spirit of Christ in us is opposite to the spirit of the world. We must be separated from the world. You cannot serve God and mammon (Matthew 6:24). The world has nothing to give the Christians; therefore, we have no reason to entangle ourselves with the affairs of the world.

ATTRIBUTES OF THE WORLD

I John 2:15-17; 5:19; Galatians 1:4; Rom. 1:18-32; Isaiah 3:16-24; II Cor. 4:4.

The world in this context refers to the social systems, fashions, cultures and values that are contrary to the word of God. Worldliness is to embrace any other principles or practices outside the will of God (1 Sam 8:4-5,19-20). It also entails managing our affairs without taking God's will into consideration (James 4:13-

16). This world is characterised by wickedness or evil (I John 5:19), corruption (James 1:27; 2 Peter 1:4), darkness (John 3:19), vain imaginations (Rom 1:21), offences (Matthew 18:7), deceits (II John 7), rebellion against God (Rom 1:28), falsehood (Jeremiah 13:25) and sorrow (II Corinthians 7:10). Satan is the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4) and his angels (evil spirits) are the princes (Ephesians 6:12). This world is dark and deceitful, poor and empty, tempting and defiling. It is given to change and is passing or fading away. The things of the world are distinguished into three categories: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life (I John 2:16). The lust of the flesh includes the humour and appetite of indulging fleshly pleasures and all those things that excite and inflame the sinful tendency in man. The lust of the eyes includes immorality (Matthew 5:28; Job 31:1; 2 Peter 2:14) and covetousness (Luke 12:15). The pride of life includes self-righteousness, thirst after honour and applause of men. Although the world is filled with sin, believers are in this world as salt and light. As salt, we are to uphold God's standard in a fast disintegrating and putrefying world. As light, we are to shine by showing godly examples thereby leading men to Christ.

DANGERS OF WORLDLINESS

I John 2:15-17; James 4:4; Song 2:15; Luke 17:32; 21:34-36; Neh. 13:23-26.

Worldliness is sin; it is open rebellion against God. It is revolt to set the world on the throne of your heart rather than God. The world instigates and inflames our vile affections. It draws away the heart from God; the more the love of the world prevails, the more the love of God decays. Other evil effects of worldliness are:

1. It weakens and destroys the influence of God's word in us (Matthew 13:22).
2. It deludes men into a state of false security (Matthew 24:38,39).
3. It makes earthly affections and pursuits supreme (I Corinthians 7:32,33).
4. It rules and dictates lifestyles of people (Ephesians 2:2).
5. It leads to backsliding and religious apostasy (II Timothy 4:10).
6. It blurs our vision and pursuit of eternal things (Luke 17:32).
7. It brings us into danger of enmity with God (James 4:4).
8. It limits our spiritual progress and effectiveness (Matthew 24:12).

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDE TO THE WORLD

I John 2:15; II Cor 6:14-18; Deu. 7:1-6; Isa. 52:11; Gal. 6:14; Mat. 16:26; Rom 12:2.

Christians are to be separated from worldly affections and desires. The world has no attraction for a Spirit-filled Christian. We cannot lead men to the Saviour if our example does not recommend them to the Saviour. To overcome the world and its negative influences, we must (i) Not love the world (I John 2:15). (ii) Not be conformed to this world (Rom 12:2). (iii) Not be entangled or carried away with the affairs of the world (II Timothy 2:4). (iv) Live soberly, righteously and

godly (Titus 2:12). (v) Be crucified to the world (Galatians 6:14) and dead to its ways (Col. 2:20). (vi) Set our affection on things above (Col. 3:2). (vii) Lay our treasure in heaven (Luke 12:33,34), and (viii) Watch and pray (Mat. 24:42; 26:41).

STUDY 21: SANCTIFICATION: A DEFINITE CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE

Sanctification is indispensable for the believer. It is the gracious work of the Holy Spirit whereby the believer is freed from sin and exalted to holiness of heart and life. It is the thorough purging of the heart of everything that is not of God and a filling with the nature of God. Theologically, it means the removal of the adamic nature. The experience brings the heart and life into conformity to God's will. It is a definite Christian experience like salvation. It is erroneous to think that the experience is for a set of people. Sanctification is not progressive, and it is not potential (that we cannot be holy on earth, Titus 2:12) as erroneously taught in some Christian assemblies. It is also not positional (that we are sanctified at the point of salvation) and it does not mean an absolute mental or angelic perfection.

[21A] THE MEANING OF SANCTIFICATION

Jn 17:14-20; Mt. 5:8; Ep. 5:25-27; De. 30:6; Rm 6:6; I The. 5:22,23; II Tim. 2:19-21
To sanctify is to separate or set apart for holy use. It is to make sacred or holy, to make free from sin, to purify, to cleanse from moral corruption and pollution (Rom 6:6). It is triumph over the principle of sin that remains after the heart is regenerated. The Scripture teaches the double nature of sin: actual committed sins (John 5:14; 8:11; Rom 6:13,15) and the indwelling or inbred sin (Rom 6:6; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9). At salvation, the actual committed or outward sins are dealt with. At sanctification, inbred sin is removed. A saved but unsanctified life is a life of conflict or struggle between the will and act, desire and deed, corruption in the heart and outward piety, old life and new life. It is characterised by contending principles, ceaseless uprising of the flesh (sinful tendencies) and dominion of self. There are traces of pride (Matthew 20:24), envy (Luke 9:49,50), division or contention (I Corinthians 1:11-13), and vengeful spirit (Luke 9:53-55). Ego is unbridled and love for Christ is limited. He consents to, and desires holiness, but his carnal nature drives him another way. Sanctification is the experience that removes this disharmony between the inward and outward life.

[21A] THE NECESSITY OF SANCTIFICATION

John 17:12-21; Eph. 5:25-27; Rom 7:24; Heb. 12:14; 1 The. 4:3,7; 1 Pet. 1:14-16.
Sin is first inherited before it is committed; therefore, real freedom from sin is triumph over the inbred sin. Every believer is called unto holiness (1 Peter 1:15,16). Holiness of life is necessary: (i) To enjoy the matchless beauty of the

Christian life (Rom 6:11-14; Genesis 17:1). (ii) To experience real oneness with the brethren (John 17:19-21). (iii) To have true liberty (Galatians 5:13; John 8:36). (iv) To enjoy uninterrupted communion with God (Exodus 19:22). (v) To have lasting joy and peace (John 17:13). (vi) To enjoy abundant life in Christ and experience the fullness of God (John 10:10). (vii) To be useful to God (II Timothy 2:21). (viii) To be fit for heaven (Heb 12:14; Matthew 5:8). (ix) To enjoy the continual presence of the Lord (Deut 23:14). (x) It is God's will for us to be sanctified (1 Thessalonians 4:3) and Jesus already prayed for our sanctification.

[21B] EVIDENCES AND EXPERIENCE OF A SANCTIFIED LIFE

John 17:20-23; Deut. 6:5; I Cor. 13:1-13; Phil 1:21; Gal. 2:20,21; Psalm 133:1-3.

A sanctified life is characterised by: (i) Perfect love (I Cor 13:4-13; Deut 30:6; John 13:34,35). The sanctified heart is rooted in love, is perfect in love and walks consistently in love. (ii) Right motives (Phil 1:21; 2:5; Gal 1:10; John 5:41). A sanctified believer has a single eye to please God in all things – in private or in public. (iii) Oneness or unity (John 17:20-23; Heb 2:11; Eph 4:3; Psalm 133:1-3). The sanctified believer finds fellowship among other brethren, identifies and unites with the body of Christ, perfectly joined in the same mind and in judgement. (iv) Inner victory and freedom (Eph 5:26,27; John 8:36; Phil 1:9-11). Sanctification makes one holy, so he becomes part of the pure, glorious church. (v) Pure benevolence (Mat 26:19; Jer 26:14). There is willing submission to God. (vi) Humility and obedience (Psalm 25:9; 119:60; Isaiah 66:2; Rom 6:17; Phil 2:3-10).

To experience sanctification, you need to: (i) Have a burning desire for it. (ii) Consecrate your all to God (Rom 12:1,2). (iii) Pray fervently. (iv) Exercise faith (Acts 26:18). The experience can be lost through unprofitable company, self-indulgence, deliberate exposure to temptation, and lack of sobriety. To keep the experience, you have to: (i) Watch and pray (Mark 13:32-37; I Cor 10:12,13; 1 Peter 5:7-10). (ii) Abide in Christ (John 15:1-5; Mat 6:25-33). (iii) Beware of compromise in 'little things' (Song 2:15). (iv) Lay all on the altar and keep all on the altar of consecration (Mat 6:19-21; Phil 3:7-17). (v) Maintain a prayerful life of complete dependence on God (Mark 1:35; Luke 18:1; 1 Thes 5:17; Mat 7:7). Are you sanctified? **"Without holiness, no man shall see the Lord"** (Heb 12:14).

STUDY 22: A VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE

I John 5:1-15

Every person on earth desires victory in all areas of life: vocation, spiritual, family etc.; but most people are victims of circumstances. What is a victorious Christian life? It is a life of dominion over sin, Satan, the flesh and the world (Rom 6:12-

14). It is a life fit for heaven. On the dying bed, one can rejoice for a life well spent and be certain of an eternity of bliss. Many Christians desire a mountaintop spiritual experience while they can barely lift their heads in the valley of spiritual stagnation. As long as you are laden with the cares of life, the love of money, a life of ease, fleshly lusts and worldly gains, a victorious Christian life is impossible. Victorious living is God's will, and He has provided for it. Therefore, rather than falling and rising in sins; caged and being tormented by Satan, march on triumphantly, because **"Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world"** (1 John 4:4). You are supposed to be a king and a priest (Revelation 1:6).

THE FOUNDATION OF A VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE

1 Jn 5:4-5; Jn 1:12,13; 3:3-8; Luke 13:3,5; II Cor 6:17,18; I Cor 3:11; I Timothy 5:22. Jesus is the foundation of a victorious life. Being born again is the primary condition to a victorious spiritual life. Being born of God is not by natural birth, therefore, salvation cannot be inherited. To be born again is also not by the will of the flesh. No one can be saved through self-righteousness, good works, personal resolution or determination and morality (Isaiah 64:6). Salvation is also not through indoctrination with ideologies and philosophy of men. To be born again is to be born of God. Salvation comes from God and He has made it available through His Son. Without knowing God, victory is impossible. Many people depend on other things for victory in life. These include self, family background, money, occult power, religion, and man (Psalm 33:16,17; 60:11; 20:7). Any foundation other than Christ is sinking sand. We need the victorious Christ to live a victorious life.

THE FOES OF A VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE

1 John 5:4; Gal 4:29; 5:17; John 10:10; Exo 15:9; 1 Thes 2:18; II Cor 7:5; John 16:33 The chief adversary against a victorious Christian life is Satan. He wages his war against believers through the world, the flesh, sin and evil spirits. He is tireless, subtle, fierce and opportunistic in tempting believers. Through the world, the devil uses seemingly satisfying pleasures of sin and deceitfulness of riches to hurl in his fiery darts at Christians. Through the flesh, he constantly resists our inner man or spiritual being. Through sin, he aims at severing our relationship with God and blocking our way to heaven. He uses evil spirits to seduce and deceive believers. The heart is the chief target of Satan, being the fountain of life. Once the heart is conquered, the whole body is razed with the fire of sin.

THE FEATURES OF A VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIFE

1 John 5:4; John 10:10; 14:30; Rom 6: 1,2,12-14; 8:37-39; Genesis 39:7-12. A victorious Christian life is characterised by the following features: (i) Faith (1 John 5:4; Rom 1:17; II Cor 4:18). It is a life of faith, absolute trust in God and His

word, and rest in Him. Faith trusts in Christ, cleaves unto His promises, and separates from the world. Faith sanctifies the heart and purifies it from sensual lusts. It sees an invisible world at hand, with which this world is not worthy to be compared. (ii) Grace (John 1:17; 1 Peter 3:7). A victorious life constantly acknowledges and depends on the grace of God. (iii) Holiness (1 Peter 1:15,16; 1 Thes 4:7). Without holiness, all other gifts that we may manifest are nothing before God. Holiness secures and sustains spiritual victory. (iv) Prayer (1 Tim 2:8; 1 Thes 5:17). Prayer is indispensable to victory over Satan and his agents. (v) Watchfulness (1 Peter 5:8,9; Mat 24:42). This is necessary to avoid many temptations or overcome temptation at its first appearance. (vi) Crucifixion of the flesh (Gal 2:20; 6:14). (vii) Discipline (1 Cor 9:27). To keep our Christian experiences, we must be disciplined in the use of our tongue, talent, time and treasure. (viii) Praise (Habakkuk 3:17,18). A victorious life is appreciative of God's blessings and remains confident of further favours from the Lord. Are you a victor or a victim?

STUDY 23: DIVINE GUIDANCE

Psalm 23:1-6

In the many details and complexities of life, we need the guidance of the Spirit of God. Our wisdom is too limited, and our vision of life too defective to guide us through this howling wilderness. This affects all areas of life: education, business, marriage, family life, child training and Christian service. The Bible is the Christian's point of reference in all decisions. It provides us principles, precepts, prohibitions and promises for our counsel. God is never in a hurry and He is never late. His timing is perfect, because He has control of all that happens. He is ready to lead us (Psalm 32:8,9). God designs our circumstances for His glory and our highest good. His guidance is personal (Psalm 23:1). It is our duty to be sensitive and responsive to the Shepherd's call and follow His leading.

CONDITIONS OF DIVINE GUIDANCE

Psalm 23:1; 25:9; 32:8; Exodus 13:20-22; Isaiah 58:9-11; John 2:5; 16:13.

Divine guidance is neither mechanical nor automatic because God deals with us as intelligent beings. He never imposes His will on any man. As Christians, we should allow God to freely lead us, because we are limited in ourselves (Jeremiah 10:23). For us to enjoy divine guidance there are conditions to be met:

1. Personal relationship with God (Psalm 23:1; John 10:2-4,14). Without salvation, you cannot enjoy divine guidance. You must be a sheep in His flock.
2. Faith (Psalm 23:1,4; Heb 11:6). Perfect trust in God's ability to guide and lead you to the green pasture is an essential condition for divine guidance. He never makes mistakes; therefore, you can safely entrust your life unto Him.

3. Humility (Psalm 25:9; 32:8; Proverbs 3:5-7). The Lord will only guide the meek and the humble. Those who are wise in their own ways will be left alone even when they are going astray.
4. Knowledge of God's word (John 8:32; Isaiah 5:13; Eph 5:17). Very often, God speaks through His Word, the Bible. Therefore, ignorance of the Scripture will keep a believer in darkness as regards the will of God.
5. Surrendered will (Matthew 26:39; Acts 9:6; Jeremiah 6:16). He will seek for divine guidance in vain who has already made up his mind on what to do in a particular situation. A surrendered will implies that we are willing to have our plans vetoed as to have them confirmed by our heavenly Guide.
6. Prayer (Isaiah 58:9-11; Acts 13:1-3). Prayer and guidance go together.
7. Obedience (Gen 24:27; Exodus 13:21,22; John 2:5). There is no divine guidance for those who are not willing to do God's will. Very often, God speaks but many do not hear His voice because of the inclinations of their heart.

PRINCIPLES OF DIVINE GUIDANCE

Psalm 23:1-3; 25:9; Job 33:14-16; Heb 1:1,2; John 16:13; Genesis 24:27.

God's methods of guidance vary with the degree of our spiritual maturity. For Israel, God provided a set of rules and regulations for their daily activities and service to God. For us today, our Lord Jesus Christ has given us great moral and spiritual principles for our inter-personal relationships and walk with God. One of these unchanging and foundational principles is that our Guide will never depart from the precepts of the word of God. Where Scripture speaks clearly, no further guidance need be sought. Other principles of divine guidance are:

1. God guides believers through the inner voice of the Holy Spirit, prompting, directing, influencing or checking us (John 14:26; 16:12,13; 1 Corinthians 12:8; Rom 8:14; 1 Samuel 9:14-21). When the Holy Spirit leads, He does not make mistakes because He is God and the Spirit of Truth.
2. God may guide us through direct revelation: dream, vision or hearing an audible voice (Job 33:14-18; Joel 2:28,29; Acts 11:12; 9:10-15). These direct revelations are given at the discretion of the divine wisdom. We must diligently compare whatever is revealed with the Scripture. If any revelation contradicts the Scripture, we must reject the revelation, vision or dream as false.
3. God may guide us through the counsel of experienced Christian ministers (Exodus 18:13-27; Proverbs 19:20). Advice is as good as the one who gives it, therefore, check up whatever counsel you are given in the word of God.
4. He may also guide us by creating desires in our hearts that accord with His sovereign purpose and moral will (Phil 2:13). Because of our natural tendency to be biased in favour of our own view, we should carefully scrutinise our own desires.

5. God may guide us through inward constraint or restraint, as He did with Paul and his companions in leading them to Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10). He orders circumstances that facilitate, confirm or obstruct our plans.
6. Divine guidance may come on the path of duty (Genesis 24:27; Acts 16:6-12).

Shun any guidance that is based on superstition, forbidden arts or traditions of men. The Scripture is very clear on this (Deut 18:10-12; I Chr 10:13-14). Be alert to the possibility of mistaking the leading of God (1 Samuel 16:6,7). We should be suspicious of any purported leading that would help us to avoid a difficult choice that may be the will of God. God's will never lead us into any course that does not fit the character and teaching of Christ. Never allow anyone to pressure you into action. An age-long proof of divine guidance is peace (Colossians 3:15). When we move in the will of God, both mind and heart will be at peace, even when we meet lions in the way.

STUDY 24: WALKING WITH GOD

Genesis 5:21-24

Enoch excelled and distinguished himself from the common men of his time by walking with God. As he did not live like the rest of his time, he did not die like them (Heb 11:5). Our walk with God is an indication of our character. The more intimate our relationship with God is, the more Christ-like we become. Christianity simply consists in walking with God. However, our walk with our fellow men is a real test of our relationship with God. We are really doing our duty to God when we are faithful in our duty to men. We are God's witnesses because the world may not read the Bible, but they are reading our lives. Therefore, the worth of our religion is the worth of our character.

EXPLANATION ON WALKING WITH GOD

Genesis 5:22-24; 6:9; Mal 2:6; John 8:29; I Cor 10:31; Acts 24:16; Revelation 3:4. Walking with God begins at conversion, when a sinner repents of his or her sins and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ as his or her personal Saviour. To walk with God is to set God always before us, and to act as those that are always under His watching eye. It entails communion with Him. It is to make God's word our rule and His glory our end in all things. Walking with God is living to please Him, and in nothing offend Him. To walk with God the following conditions are to be met:

1. Acquaintance with God (Job 22:21; Genesis 5:22; 12:1,4-5). It is difficult to walk with a stranger. A sinner is a stranger to God and he cannot walk with Him. The starting point in walking with God is conversion.

2. Agreement (Amos 3:3; Matthew 26:42). Except we are in agreement with God as regards His word (biblical injunctions), and His will we cannot walk with Him. This implies surrendering our will to His. We must accept His own terms of the divine partnership, and His absolute ownership of all things, including our lives (Jeremiah 26:14; Acts 9:5-6; Psalm 24:1).
3. Association (Luke 11:2; I John 1:3; 1 Samuel 3:10; Heb 10:25). We are to talk with Him daily as our Father, listen and hear His voice and do His will. Communion with God is vital to the sustenance of our relationship with Him.
4. Assimilation (John 2:5; 13:16; Matthew 4:19,20; Acts 4:19,20). We become part of God's household; we are to follow Him in all things and we are to follow Him continually. We are to walk at His pace. Those that walk ahead of God often walk into devil's snare. Those that walk at a far distance behind Him often backslide (Matthew 26:58, 69-74).
5. Continual dependence and trust in God (Heb 12:2; Psalm 121:1-4). Walking with God necessitates continual dependence on Him for grace and guidance. A step without Him leads to an instant fall.

BELIEVERS' DAILY WALK

Gen 5:22,24; 17:1; Eph 4:1, 22-32; Col 3:8-25; I Jn 1:7; 2:3-6; Mat 26:58, 69-74.

Our walk speaks of our character. The primary elements of a good character are good principles. We are 'little Christs' and are therefore expected to walk like Christ. **"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked"** (I John 2:6). Christians should be man's best guide to Christ. In view of our noble calling and vocation, there is no aspect of our lifestyles that could be considered unimportant. Therefore, we must be chaste and gracious in conversation (Ephesians 4:29), decent and modest in dressing (1 Peter 3:3-4; I Timothy 2:9), disciplined in taste and in use of time (I Corinthians 9:24-27; Ephesians 5:16), honest and upright in business, and sacrificial in love (Rom 12:9-18). In our interpersonal relationships, we are to follow peace with all men (Heb 12:14), forgiving one another (Ephesians 4:32; Mark 11:25,26), showing mercy and compassion (Col 3:12). We must be separated from the world (Rom 12:2; I John 2:15-17; James 4:4) and set our affection on things above (Colossians 3:2). Our daily Christian living must be characterised with newness of life (Rom 6:4; 8:1), fear of God (Acts 9:31), faith (II Corinthians 5:7), humility (Micah 6:8; Dan 4:37), love (Ephesians 5:2), righteousness and purity (Psalm 15:2; Rom 13:13; John 11:9).

BENEFITS IN WALKING WITH GOD

Genesis 5:24; 9:1; 12:1-3; Heb 11:5,6; II Timothy 4:6-8; Revelation 22:11,12.

If we walk to please the Lord, there is no doubt that He will bless us richly. Walking with God always brings a believer into a world of great possibilities and

supernatural blessings. He cannot be an ordinary believer who has an intimate relationship with God. Some of the benefits in walking with God include:

1. Friendship with God and its guaranteed divine favour (Genesis 12:1-3; II Chronicles 20:7; James 2:23).
2. Unhindered access to God (Num 12:8; Deut 34:10; Exodus 33:11).
3. Boldness before God and preservation from evil (Heb 4:16; Isaiah 43:2).
4. Divine guidance and companionship (Genesis 28:15; Heb 13:5).
5. Fruitfulness and positive spiritual influence on our family and immediate community (II Chronicles 29:17,18,26-28; Acts 13:36).
6. Usefulness in God's service and spiritual power (II Timothy 2:21-22; Exodus 34:30).
7. Fulfilled life on earth and endless bliss in eternity (Genesis 5:22-24; II Timothy 4:7,8; John 3:36).

PART THREE: FOCUS

STUDY 25: PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

Luke 9:23-26, 57-62

A disciple is an ardent and faithful follower of someone. Discipleship suggests close relationship between the leader and the follower, agreement (Amos 3:3), a definite task to perform, and an open identification with the master's cause. To be a disciple of Christ is unique in its call (Matthew 4:19), commission (Matthew 10:1-4), cause (Matthew 28:19,20) and the consequence of the assignment. To be Christ's disciple is therefore a great and rare privilege.

MEANING OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

Luke 9:23-26; Matthew 4:19; 8:9; Malachi 1:6; John 13:13-16.

A Christian disciple is addressed in various ways in the Scripture, which explains the meaning of discipleship. Some of these appellations are:

1. A follower (Matthew 8:23; 1 Pet 2:21-23). He is a follower of Jesus Christ. He follows the footprints of the Master closely, consistently and continually.
2. A servant (John 13:16). He is at the service of Christ and is always available. His pre-occupation is the Lord's work; his goal is to please the Master always.
3. A steward (1 Cor 4:2). He is a steward of grace and spiritual riches. He manages these heavenly resources to maximise gain to the Master. He acknowledges the ownership right of Christ over all that he is, has and can be.
4. A student (Matthew 11:29). He is a lifetime student in Christ's college. He is teachable and inquisitive. To preach Christ, we must first learn of Him.
5. An ambassador (2 Corinthians 5:20). He is expected to represent and honour Christ everywhere. His primary allegiance is to Christ.

PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN DISCIPLESHIP

Luke 9:23-26, 57-62; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; 2 Timothy 2:3-5; John 2:5.

There are principles, rules guidelines, to which we must strictly adhere, to be and remain true disciples of Christ. They are coined from the word '**DISCIPLE**'.

1. **DECISION.** A disciple is a decided follower. There must be a definite decision to renounce or forsake all and follow Christ (Matthew 4:18-22; Luke 14:25-33). Believers who cleave to some other things (money, ambition, self, parents, the world, etc.) cannot be a true disciple of Christ.
2. **IMITATION** (John 13:13-16; Hebrews 12:2). Jesus is our perfect example (model) to imitate in all things. The goal of a disciple should be to have more of His Master reproduced in him.
3. **SELF-DENIAL** (Matthew 16:24). Discipleship is a call to self-denial. There are pains and a cross to bear while on the pathway of duty. A life of ease or self-

indulgence is incompatible with Christian discipleship (2 Tim 2:3,4; 1 Tim 5:6). The call to discipleship is a call to walk on Calvary's rugged route.

4. **CONSECRATION** (Rom 12:1-2; 2 Cor 12:15). Commitment is the hallmark of Christian discipleship. Idlers, busybodies and lazy people cannot be a disciple. Christian discipleship connotes active service and tireless labour.
5. **INQUISITIVENESS** (Matthew 13:10,36; Luke 11:1) Disciples are expected to be excited and eager to know about their Master. This will motivate you to study the Bible diligently. Poor knowledge of the Master and His cause makes one ill-equipped to defend and advance His business.
6. **PRODUCTIVITY** (John 15:16). Fruitfulness is an evidence of commitment to our Master's cause. A disciple cannot afford to be barren.
7. **LOYALTY** (Acts 4:19,20; 26:19; 1 Corinthians 4:2). Loyalty or faithfulness to the Master is a prime virtue of a true disciple. Faithfulness precludes eye service, insincerity, covert rebellion and private rejection of the Master.
8. **ENDURANCE** (Lk 9:58,62; 1 Cor 9:24-27). Without endurance, we cannot follow Christ to the end. As good soldiers of Christ, we are to endure hardness.

STUDY 26: A BALANCED CHRISTIAN DISCIPLE

Romans 12:11

A Christian disciple should be balanced in all areas of life – secular, personal and spiritual – to be the best for the Master. However, it is common that many Christians are far from the best. Over-involvement in the secular life has rendered many believers a spiritual mediocre. Over-concentration on 'self-life' often leads to insensitivity to others' need while a 'holier-than-thou' attitude will hinder effective witness of the gospel. Who then is a balanced Christian disciple? He is a disciple whose secular life is exemplary, personal life is well ordered and spiritual life is characterised by an expensive devotion to God.

SECULAR LIFE

Rom 12:11; Ecc 9:10; Pro 6:6-11; 2 Thes 3:6-12; John 14:30; Acts 24:16.

The secular or public life of a Christian disciple should be exemplary. Diligence is his watchword in vocation. His life is unique in the working place (Matthew 5:13,14). As Christian disciples, we are to expose unfruitful works of darkness and never to be partaker of other men's sin (1 Timothy 5:22). Eye service, deceit, lying, laziness, stealing, corrupt practices, and unfaithfulness should not be mentioned of any Christian disciple. Laziness is a blot on our royal name as Children of God. Secular ambition should be secondary to our spiritual goal at all times. In summary, in our secular life, we should be diligent, inimitable, sincere, interactive, purposeful, loving and enthusiastic.

PERSONAL LIFE

Rm 12:11; Lk 12:15; Ps 45:13; 1 Tim 6:6-11; 1 Cor 9:27; Jn 14:30; 1 Sam 12:3-5.

Our personal life must be well ordered, disciplined, goal-oriented, and heaven-directed. The inward life of a Christian disciple should never be in want of purity, chastity, spiritual fervency, freshness, godly contentment and moral integrity. True spiritual wealth is a pure inner life. There cannot be happiness without holiness. Modesty is the norm in taste, dressing and material acquisition for a Christian disciple (Phil 4:5). The mind, speech, manners, tastes and intellect must be cultured (Proverbs 4:23). Since we are as strong as the state of our inward life, we must painstakingly care for and nurture it. If you neglect your inner life, your whole being will deteriorate (Song 1:6). A worldly stamp upon the private life of a Christian disciple always hinders effective witness for Christ.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Rom 12:11; Eph 6:7,8; Phil 2:21; Mark 1:35; Acts 21:11-14; Mat 25:19-23.

A disciple's spiritual life is to be a living testament of expensive devotion to Jesus. Active voluntary service to God is a delight to a true disciple. The life of service must be supported by a corresponding level of spirituality, otherwise barrenness will set in. Prayer and diligent study of the Bible are indispensable for spiritual upkeep and growth of disciples. Total and continual dependency on God is also essential (2 Corinthians 3:5). You can do great things for God if you are balanced as a disciple. **"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord".**

STUDY 27: DAILY CROSS-BEARING

Luke 9:23-26; Galatians 6:14-17; Romans 15:3

The call of Christ involves daily cross-bearing and following Him with true allegiance. The early church recognised this; therefore they produced genuine disciples. The scriptures still clearly recommend every good soldier of Christ to voluntarily carry the cross (a symbol of devotion to Christ), bear the yoke (a symbol of discipleship) and put his hands on the plough (a symbol of service).

BELIEVER'S SURRENDER AND BROKENNESS

Mt 16:24-26; Rm 6:5-11; Gal 2:20; Ph 2:5-8; 2 Co 4:7-12; Ps 51:17; 34:18; Isa 66:2.

The measure of surrender at salvation is limited to the penitent's appreciation or understanding of the cross. The believer is thereafter called to a higher and deeper life of absolute surrender. This is unconditional, complete and voluntary surrender of our rights, privileges and position. It is crucifixion of self without recoil or regret. In His dealings with us, God allows events to prove the extent of our surrender. This can be when we are misrepresented, misunderstood,

unjustly blamed or persecuted. Our disposition and reaction at such times reflects the level of our surrender. If we recoil from bearing the cross, avoid its shame and suffering, and relapse into self-defence or self-pity, then our surrender and identity with Christ are limited, though we may sing “I surrender all” many times.

THE DISCIPLINED AND SPIRIT-CONTROLLED LIFE

Lk 9:23; Gal 5:22-24; 6:14,17; 1 Co 9:24-27; Ph 4:12,13; 2 Tim 2:3-5; Rom 13:14.

Scriptural discipline is different from an imposed external control. Rather, it is inward, self-imposed control of appetite, desires, and entire body by the help of the Holy Spirit. Most temptations are addressed to the body. Therefore, we must put it under control lest it usurps authority over the spirit. A Spirit controlled life will aid us in spiritual warfare and Christian living. This is reflected in: (i) Regular and consistent quiet time and family devotion. (ii) Control over our appetite. (iii) Control over sleeping habit. (iv) Wise spending of time and money. (v) Modesty in taste and fashion. (vi) Listening to and obeying the Lord. (vii) Gracious disposition to persecution, trial and disappointment. (viii) Refusal to withdraw our commitment in God’s service when the going becomes tough (Psalm 15:4; 2 Timothy 2:3,4; 1 Corinthians 7:30,31; Luke 9:62; Hebrews 10:38; 12:4,5).

PARTAKING IN CHRIST’S SACRIFICE AND CRUCIFIXION

2 Sam 24:24; Isaiah 58:10; John 12:24; Rom 15:1-3; 1 Cor 15:30-32; Gal 5:24; Eph 5:2,3; 1 Peter 2:21-24.

Beyond the joy of forgiveness, abiding peace and assurance of eternal life, Christ also expects the disciple to follow His example of sacrifice through which the blessing of salvation will flow to others. Christ voluntarily relinquished His comfort, glory and position, and took on the form of a servant. In the same way, cross-bearing entails sacrificing our comfort, convenience, time, resources, fortune, privileges, position, worldly achievement to choose, like Moses, to suffer affliction with the people of God, identify with Christ’s suffering and condescend to men of low estate. The crucified believer no longer lives to please self, but to go at Christ’s bidding. He who does not crucify self will find Christ being crucified by self in his life. And he who avoids the cross risks incurring God’s displeasure.

STUDY 28: DIVINE OWNERSHIP

Psalm 24:1; Ezekiel 18:4; 1 Corinthians 6:19,20

By creation, God owns the earth and the fullness thereof (man, beast, plant etc.). Through His redemptive work, He owns the believer. God has the right of ownership to our life, time, talent and possession. Nothing offers so practical a

test of our love for Christ or others, as does our attitude to God's claims on our life and possession. Our love for God is questionable if there is anything we hold back from Him. God owns us and we are expected to be His willing subjects.

SCRIPTURAL FACTS ON DIVINE OWNERSHIP

Psa 24:1; Eze 18:4; 1 Cor 6:19,20; Deut 10:14; Psalm 50:10-12; Hag 2:8; Isa 43:7,21; Acts 17:28.

The earth, the fullness thereof and the people therein belongs to God by creation. Also, as believers in Christ, we are not our own: our bodies, our soul, possessions are not ours. Those who refuse to give themselves to God through Jesus Christ do rob God of what rightfully belongs to Him. We are created to fit into a divine plan. Our life and talents are God's gift. Justice demands the dedication of yourself to your Lord. To take what belongs to God is sacrilege. Our redemption is even a greater source of obligation to God than creation or preservation. We are spiritual debtors to God. Whatever we have is given by the Lord (1 Corinthians 4:7; Romans 1:14). If you resolve to be your own, you must renounce your Redeemer and die a sinner. God's claims over us come first in all things.

IMPLICATIONS OF DIVINE OWNERSHIP

1 Cor 6:19,20; Rom 14:8; Luke 12:42-48; 16:1,2; Jer 18:1-6.

Christians are stewards of life (Luke 12:20), grace (1 Peter 4:10) and the gospel (1 Cor 9:17; Gal 2:7). We should not waste our lives in idleness, amusement, service to self or another master or speculation. Divine ownership implies:

1. We are God's. Therefore, we should dedicate our all to God's service.
2. We are always God's. The price once paid, we are forever His. Therefore, we should be available for His service at all times.
3. We are not to use our lives and resources as we like; we should always find out the Owner's interest before investing the resources at our disposal.
4. We are stewards; we must make a wise use of our present opportunities.
5. God's interest must be ours. We should use what entrusted unto us for Him. There should be a passion and abandonment to the Lord and to His service.
6. Faithfulness is needed in the use of our lives, talents and treasures (1 Co 4:2).
7. There is divine reckoning (Romans 14:12). You will give account before God. Everyone is responsible to God for what he does with his life and resources.

DECISION OF TRUE STEWARDS

Ph 1:20,21; Jer 26:14; 1 Cor 15:10; 10:31; 2 Cor 12:15; Isaiah 6:8.

As stewards of life and grace, we must be faithful, submissive and available for God's service. No sacrifice should be too great to render unto our God. We are to glorify God in our body by chastity, temperance, industry, self-denial, patience

and cleanliness. We are to glorify God in our spirit by holiness, faith, zeal, love, humility and prayerfulness. As true stewards, we are expected to be doing something for our Master. We are to spend ourselves prodigiously in God's work. The proper use of God's time, talents and money is an indication of faithfulness in stewardship. Where does your time go? What are you living for? Is there anything you are holding back from God's service?

STUDY 29: TITHE AND OFFERING

The tithe is the firstfruits of all our increase. It is one tenth of our income or profit. Anything above this is offering. The tithe is not just a tenth, it is the *first* tenth; you give it before any other thing! God is not interested in our leftovers and miserly tips; He is great God and His name is dreadful among the heathen (Malachi 1:6-14). Our earthly government will not wait to take the civil tax from leftovers; it is deducted 'at source'. Why should you then treat God less than an earthly government? (Malachi 1:6-8). The principle of tithe and offering is timeless. Today, it is our duty and reasonable service to give tithe and offering to the Lord.

SCRIPTURAL TEACHING AND GOD'S ORDINATION

Genesis 14:18-20; 28:20-22; Levi 27:30-32; Numbers 18:21; Deut 12:6; 14:28; 26:12-16; Malachi 3:8-10; Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12-16.

Tithing is a scriptural practice started before the Law, established and enforced by the Law, ratified and endorsed in the New Covenant. Abraham tithed. He had no godly tradition to follow but he knew intuitively that tithing was important and right. Jacob promised to tithe from God's future provision for him. The promise was his spontaneous response to God's love and care (Gen 14:18-20; 28:20-22). God established tithing in the Law as His principle for all mankind, not a personal preference of Abraham and Jacob. The tithe is holy: it belongs to God (Lev. 27:30-32). Withholding it is robbery (Mal 3:8). Christ affirmed the need to tithe while rebuking failure to live up to God's word in other areas (Mat 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12-16). We live up to the total revelation of the scriptures. The tithe is a material testimony to our spiritual commitment. It is our testimony that God owns us and all that we possess (Acts 17:28; Psalm 100:3; 95:7; Jer 23:1-4).

SCRIPTURAL TEST OF GODLY OBEDIENCE

John 14:15; 15:10; 2:5; Matthew 7:24-27; 12:50; 23:23; Luke 11:28,42; 6:46-49; Malachi 3:8-12; Proverbs 3:9,10.

It is not enough to give mental accent to bible teaching; obedience is the evidence of love (John 14:15; 15:10; 2:5). Doing is what separates the foolish from the wise, the loafing from the serious (Matthew 7:24-27; Luke 11:28; 6:46-49).

We tithe in obedience to God's word (Malachi 3:8-12; Levi 27:30-32). We must not be guilty of hiding behind on 'the weightier matters of the Law' while we disregard God's commandment to tithe (Matthew 23:23; Luke 11:42). **"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse"** is not to be debated but obeyed.

PROSPERITY THROUGH GIVING

Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 9:6,7; Malachi 3:10,11; 1 Kings 17:14-16; Joel 2:23-29.

Giving is the secret of prosperity. What we give to God, He multiplies; what we keep to ourselves shrinks. God gives where He finds an open hand. Selfishness and unfaithfulness in tithing will rob you of blessings. God will open the windows of heaven and pour us out overflowing blessing as we give our tithes. Our blessing will be evident to others. Some see their tithe as a debt they owe and view God as a taskmaster, a stern debt collector who is ready to discipline the rebellious. This is not so. Rather, our tithe is a seed sown, which God multiplies. It is God's invitation to abundance. It is the scriptural track to gracious overflow. Therefore, give it willingly, cheerfully, expectantly, consistently and faithfully.

STUDY 30: PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Acts 8:26-39

Personal evangelism is God's ordained commission for every believer. It entails bringing the saving gospel or the good news of God's gracious provision for the salvation of man to someone on a personal basis. If effectively done, it is the most potent method of soul-winning. The focus is not just to develop relationship with someone but to preach the gospel to bring him to genuine salvation.

REQUIREMENTS OF A SOUL WINNER

2 Timothy 2:6,15; Romans 10:15; 1 Corinthians 15:15; Ephesians 6:17; Acts 17:16; 6:8-10; Proverbs 11:30; Ecclesiastes 10:10.

A soul-winner needs certain qualities. First, he must be born again. One must experience the power of the gospel before he can effectively witness it to others. Second, he needs passion. This is driving affection for the salvation of sinners. Without passion or burden, preaching will be dry and dull. Third, he should be filled with the Holy Spirit. That is only when he can be led of the Holy Spirit and his words will probe the hearts of people. Four, he must study to know the Bible and be able to answer sinners' objections intelligently. Five, wisdom is essential. To know what to say at a particular time requires divine wisdom. **"He that winneth souls is wise."** Six, he should be prayerful. Preaching becomes potent when borne out of many prayers. And seven, there must be clear purpose and steadfastness in the presentation of the gospel irrespective of the sinners' response.

THE SOUL WINNER'S MESSAGE

Acts 8:35; 1 Corinthians 9:26; John 8:34; 1 John 3:8; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 10:9-13; John 3:16; Acts 17:30; 16:30,31.

The gospel message is very clear: we must preach Christ. The universality and sinfulness of sin must be stressed. Man is naturally depraved and lost: he cannot please God in his fallen state. Secondly, God's judgement is certain for every sinner. His wrath consumes as fire. It is fearful thing to fall under the wrath of the living God. To escape this judgement, there is the necessity for repentance and faith towards Jesus Christ. No man can be justified without genuine repentance of sin and the exercise of saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It must also be emphasised that Jesus Christ is the only appointed way of salvation (John 14:6) and that no man has power of self-regeneration. The certainty of forgiveness and Christ's salvation should also be stressed for every sinner who sincerely repents of sin and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. Salvation is assured for whosoever will turn away from his or her sins and turn unto Christ.

WISDOM IN SOUL WINNING

Acts 8:26-35; Proverbs 11:30; John 1:40-46; 4:5-25; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

Winning a soul requires skill and wisdom. The soul winner must be very clear in his goal, which is to win sinner to Christ. It is not to make an interesting sermon, change the sinner's view about church or denomination or invite him to church. The first step is to establish contact with the sinner. This can be by a special leading of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:26,29), by a deliberate decision (Acts 8:5), through an inquirer's comment or question (Acts 16:30,31), by coincidental meeting (Acts 17:17; John 4:5-7), or by the house-to-house approach (Acts 20:20,21). It is always advisable to preach to a person at a time. Having established the contact, you should try to know the spiritual state of the sinner. Is he awakened, religious, or hardened? This will help in identifying the best way to present the message. Then, preach the gospel message. You must guide the conversation (Acts 8:30-35; John 4:1-26) and allow the sinner to respond. However, you should avoid irrelevant detour. Answer questions carefully and discard non-essentials wisely. Be firm, plain and gentle. There must be pungency and a persistent, desperate drive towards a definite positive decision (Acts 2:37-40; 3:19; 17:30,31).

STUDY 31: EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

The gospel must be preached effectively to achieve positive result. A wrong approach to sinners or poor communication will likely result in failure. As a spiritual salesman, you must be wise and lively. You must be familiar with the message, enthusiastic and zealous in sharing it, and straightforward in its presentation.

Philip the evangelist exemplified this in presenting the gospel to the religious but confused Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-38).

WINSOME APPROACH OF SINNERS

Matthew 10:16; Acts 8:30; John 8:10,11; 9:35; 4:7-26; 1 Corinthians 9:20-23.

Your first contact with a sinner is critical his/her response. A dull and timid approach may provoke instant rejection. Besides, it enables the sinner to dominate the message. An impolite or judgmental approach often leads to argument and hardness of heart. You should also be presentable in appearance and enthusiastic. After establishing contact with sinner, you should introduce the message. Methods of introducing the gospel include: (i) Asking specific question on sinners' views on Christian faith, religion, etc. (ii) Illustration from global problems, daily activities, hot news in the nation or city, or present engagement of the person (John 4:7-14; Acts 17:22-31). (iii) Direct presentation of the gospel (John 3:3; 8:10-11; Matthew 11:28-30). (iv) Ministration to the immediate problem of the sinner – praying for the sick, help (Matthew 10:7,8). (v) Exposition of the scripture concerning salvation through Jesus Christ (Acts 2:14-36; 8:32-35). This approach is relevant to sinners that are familiar with the Bible, for example, churchgoers and false professors. (vi) Personal testimony (Acts 22:6-15; 26:4-19).

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION OF THE GOSPEL

Acts 8:35; 26:27; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 10:9-13; John 3:16.

The gospel message is simple to understand if effectively communicated. It centres basically on the love of God for sinful man, which was demonstrated by giving His only begotten Son to die for our sins. Through Christ, there is reconciliation with God and eternal life. Elements of effective gospel communication are:

1. Simplicity (Acts 3:19; Romans 10:9-13; John 3:16). This is required in language, presentation and illustration. Tell the story simply as to a little child.
2. Clarity (Acts 3:19; 8:35; Ephesians 2:8,9). Be clear in your message: Sin is universal and leads to damnation. Fallen man is helpless. God has provided salvation through Jesus. Salvation is by grace through faith in Christ. Repentance and faith are necessary for salvation.
3. Consistency (Acts 2:36; 3:19,20; 4:10-12). The gospel is the same old story. Repeat and emphasise **“this same Jesus”** who is ready to save. Whether sinners accept or reject our message, we must keep preaching it (Acts 5:42).
4. Dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:29, 30).
5. Feedback (Acts 2:37; 8:30-31). Allow sinners to respond to your message. Be a good listener.
6. Positive disposition (Acts 5:41,42). Be not discouraged. Be positive and expectant.

LEADING SINNERS TO DECISION

Proverbs 11:30; Acts 8:35-37; 2:37-38; 16:30-31; Ecclesiastes 11:1,4-6; Psalm 126:5,6; 1 Corinthians 3:6; John 4:10-28,39; Ephesians 2:8,9.

The goal of soul-winning is to lead sinners to a definite decision for Christ; therefore, you should consciously and prayerfully strive towards this in your presentation of the gospel. However, we are not to impose any decision on the sinner; it should be voluntary. Be simple and clear on what the sinner need to do to be saved and what it means when someone decides for Christ. You should also be patient with the sinner until the desired result is realised: genuine conversion.

STUDY 32: POWER FOR SERVICE

Acts 1:8; 2:1-4

God's work is large and great: we cannot do it effectively with human strength. It involves turning the Satan-dominated world unto Christ; it requires God's power. Weak and strong believers alike need it. No wonder Jesus gave His disciples power and authority over Satan and evil spirits in their evangelistic outreaches. After His ascension, they received the Holy Ghost power for the Great Commission. The same power is available to us through the Spirit's baptism.

THE GREAT TASK

Matthew 10:1,5-7; 9:36-37; Nehemiah 4:19; 2 Corinthians 2:16; 1 Thes. 2:18.

God's service deals with never dying souls; this implies we must do it diligently. It is a spiritual work, which often attracts opposition. It is a great task because it deals with the total man (body, soul and spirit). It entails preaching the gospel (2 Tim 4:2), contending for the faith (Jude 3), doing good to them in the household of faith and those without (Gal 6:9,10; 1 Peter 3:11), wrestling against powers and principalities and spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph 6:12,13), and edification of the body of Christ (Eph 4:11-13). Considering these various tasks, we are bound to cry like Paul the Apostle that **"Who is sufficient unto these things?"**

THE NEED FOR HOLY GHOST POWER

Matthew 10:1,16; 1 Corinthians 2:4-5,9; Acts 1:8; 6:8-10; 13:8-12; Luke 10:19.

Human strength, wisdom, intellect and resources are inadequate to succeed in God's work. Besides, the demands of the service and the opposition it attracts, necessitate spiritual power. How can we deliver people from the bondage of sin and Satan without the supernatural power? We need Holy Ghost power: (i) To create favourable spiritual climate for preaching the gospel (Acts 13:8-12). (ii) To minister total deliverance to total man (Mat 10:1; Luke 4:18). (iii) To do great exploit for God and succeed in Christian ministry. (iv) To be bold and effective in

evangelism. (v) To have power with God and prevail over the forces of darkness. (vi) For a vibrant and fruitful spiritual life (vii) To prove the unfailing and unchanging power of Jesus Christ in our unbelieving world (Rom 8:19).

THE PATHWAY TO POWER

Matthew 10:1; Acts 1:8; Gene 32:24-28; Mark 11:23,24; 16:15-18; Joel 2:28-30.

The search for power is normal, but people look for it in several ways. Some join the occult while others spend all their savings to acquire power. Jesus is the true power source. Believers do not have to look elsewhere. The conditions for Holy Ghost baptism include: (i) Relationship with Christ (Mat 10:1; John 3:3). (ii) Purity (2 Timothy 2:19-21; 1 Peter 1:15,16). (iii) Persevering and prevailing prayer (Luke 18:1; Mat 17:21). (iv) Consecration (Rom 12:1,2; Luke 2:8,9). (v) Faith (Mark 9:23; James 1:6-8). (vi) Humility (Phil 2:5-8) and (vii) unity (Eph 4:2,3; Acts 1:14; 2:1). Holy Ghost power is the promise of the Father and He is faithful to pour His power upon you if you meet the necessary conditions mentioned above. What then is hindering you from being baptised with the Holy Ghost?

STUDY 33: EARNESTLY CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Jude 1-3

Here is a command which every follower of Christ must obey. 'The faith' here is wide, great, broad, and extensive: it is the sum total of all we believe. It is the same as the whole counsel of God, the entire gospel, the full revelation of God. We have been called into the faith. While others compromise and depart from the faith, we must earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints.

CALL BY CHRIST INTO THE FAITH

Jude 1,2; 1 Cor 1:9; 1 Timothy 6:12; 1 Thes 4:7; Romans 1:7; 1 Peter 1:14-16.

Through God's gracious salvation, we are brought into His kingdom, fellowship and the faith. Not all who hear the message of salvation respond and repent. **"Many be called, but few are chosen"** (Mat 20:16; 22:14). Those who accept the invitation are referred to as **"the called"** (Rom 8:28). God's call demands a personal response. The Bible terms it as a high calling (Phil 3:14), a holy calling (2 Tim 1:9) and a heavenly calling (Heb 3:1). Believers are called to holiness (1 Thes 4:7), to a worthy walk (Eph. 4:1) and to eternal life (1 Timothy 6:12).

COMPROMISE AND CONTEMPT FOR THE FAITH

2 Cor 2:17; Acts 13:8; 2 Pet 2:1-3; Jer 5:30,31; 1 Tim 4:1,2; 1:19,20; 2 Tim 2:17,18.

These are perilous times when some once saved souls are turning away from the Lord and the faith; they now corrupt God's word. They once tasted the goodness

of God; now they embrace Satan's error. They once drank of the pure water of life; now they are drinking the poison of false doctrine. They confuse others to draw them away from the Lord, making them **"twofold more the children of hell than themselves"** (Mat 23:15). They lie and deceive the innocent, trying to **"take away the righteousness of the righteous from him"** (Isa 5:23). They **"call evil good and good evil: put darkness for light, and light for darkness; put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter"** (Isaiah 5:20). They have withdrawn their service from the Lord, now they evangelise for the devil (Pro 4:16). Beware of them!

CHRISTIANS CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Ju 3; Ne 13:23-25; Jer 9:2-5; Ac 4:18-20; Ph 1:27; 2 Th 2:2; 2 Ti 1:13,14; Rev 2:10.

All Christians without exception are commanded to **"earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."** The words **"earnestly contend"** mean to fight for or stand for a thing which is assaulted and which the adversary desires to take away. We must continue to fight for the purity and preservation of the faith till the end of our life. We are to earnestly contend, defend and fight to retain everything God has revealed in His Word whatever price we have to pay or whatever sacrifice we have to make. We earnestly contend for the faith by:

1. Separating from all who compromise the faith even if that brings persecution or suffering in our lives (Romans 16:17; Nehemiah 13:28; Proverbs 14:7).
2. Refusing the invitation of agents who want to overthrow our faith (Proverbs 4:13-16; 2 Timothy 2:17,18).
3. Having no fellowship with false prophets and anyone who have departed from the faith (Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 6:3-5).
4. Not reading books or listening to cassettes that speak contrary to sound doctrine (2 John 9-11; Proverbs 19:27).
5. Preaching the truth forcefully and with conviction more than the aggressive perpetrators of error and evil (2 Timothy 4:2-5).
6. Living an uncompromising life that will challenge and convict the unstable (Phil 1:27).
7. Supporting faithful pastors and teachers who teach God's Word without compromise (3 John 5-8)

STUDY 34: ONLY ONE LIFE

Psalm 90:9-10,12; Hebrews 9:27

We have only one life, but with various possibilities for fruitfulness or worthlessness. We cannot die and come back to re-live life on earth. We have only one life; yet, we can make it a stretch of sweet melody of eternal remembrance. There is only one chance at life. We have a borrowed one and we shall soon be

summoned to give an account of our stewardship. How we live on earth determines our eternal destiny. No wise person will ever trifle with life. And it is only what we do for Christ that will last.

THE BREVITY OF LIFE

Psalm 90:9-10,12; 89:47; Gene 47:9; 1 Peter 1:24; 1 Corinthians 7:29.

Life on earth is short but the memory of a well-spent life is eternal. There are many figurative allusions to the brevity of life in the Bible. It is likened to (i) A tale that is told (Psalm 90:9). While the tale is still going on, some people will fall asleep and at the end the rest of the group are dispersed one by one. (ii) A shadow (1 Chron 29:15; Job 8:9; 14:2; Psalm 102:11; Ecclesiastes 6:12). A shadow is cast only for a while and it cannot be kept or captured. (iii) Grass (Psalm 90:5,6; 103:15,16; 1 Peter 1:24). The beauty and glory of man lasts only for a short time just as the greenness of the grass. (iv) A flying shuttle (Job 7:6; 9:25). Like a bird that flies swiftly in the sky and we cannot see its trace, so does life run speedily to an end and it is soon forgotten. (v) A watch in the night (Psalm 90:4). (vi) A weaver's web (Isaiah 38:12). Life is fragile. (vii) A vanishing vapour (James 4:14). Life on earth will soon pass away. Life is uncertain: no one can predict its weather. Life is a milestone to eternity. Life on earth is only a handbreadth in length (Psalm 39:5). Life is short. We must apply our heart to wisdom to spend our life in the best way. Life is precious. It can be spent to cast our footprints on the sand of time and leave godly legacy for posterity.

THE BEST USE OF LIFE

Psa 90:12; Phi 1:21; 3:7,8; John 6:27; 9:4; Luke 5:27,28; Mark 10:28; 2 Cor 12:15.

Our brief lifespan is long enough to live well and honourably. Since it is a milestone to eternity, its best use is to prepare for eternity. It is to spend it for that which outlives time: Christ. We should leave all, follow Him and live prodigiously for His cause. It is better to burn out for Christ than to rust in pursuit of earthly things. We should turn hell-bound sinners to the highway of holiness and do good to them that are of the household of faith. The paradox of life is that we must lose before we can gain. Our lives must be lost for Christ's cause before we can win the heavenly prize. The worst investment of life is to live for the mundane things: money, fame, knowledge, fashion etc. Disciples of Christ must live for the realisation of the heavenly vision. There is no sacrifice too great for Christ.

BENEFITS OF LIVING FOR CHRIST

Mark 10:29,30; 8:35; Matthew 19:21,29; John 12:24; Phil 3:8; 2 Timothy 4:8.

Living for Christ is an investment in eternity. There are gains if we lose our life for Christ. Loss of earthly treasures secures spiritual riches. We are bound to win

Christ if we spend our life for Him. There are blessings in time and in eternity that await anyone that give his or her all to Christ: joy, peace, divine favour, boldness before God, spiritual exploits, answers to prayers and eternal life. Heavenly citizenship assures us eternal bliss, permanent residence in heaven (John 14:2), an undying hope (Phil 3:20), glorious inheritance (1 Peter 1:4) and unbroken fellowship with God. Living for self will inevitably end in self-ruin. Living for silver and gold is the short cut to premature death. Living for pleasures and beggarly things of the world leads to sorrow and regret in time and in eternity. Your life will soon end. It is a borrowed life and you will soon account for it. What will be your account if you are called today?

STUDY 35: THE BEST THAT YOU CAN BE

Within every man is an ocean of undiscovered possibilities. You can be the best you ought to be for God. You can achieve more than your present exploit. Whatever you want to be, you can be by the grace of God if you have burning desire and you are willing to pay the price to realise your dreams. Never let your past to embitter your present. Divine resources are available to be the best for God. The only limit to your usefulness in Christ's kingdom is yourself.

REASONS TO BE YOUR BEST

Philippians 3:12-14; 1 Corinthians 12:31; 2 Samuel 24:24; Genesis 1:26,27.

Man is specially endowed with mental and spiritual capacity far above every other creature. As Christians, we are expected to live far above the people outside Christ. Our best is the only thing that can recommend us to God who has given us His best (His only begotten Son). You should be your best for the following reasons: (i) To enjoy the best of God. This is the best preparation for heaven's blessings. (ii) To live a fulfilled life (Phi 1:21; 3:8). (iii) God expects the best from you. (iv) To offer an acceptable service unto the Lord (Gen 4:4). (v) To develop and exercise the talents in you (2 Tim 1:6). (vi) To be a blessing to others and to the church of Christ. (vii) To do great exploits for God. (viii) It is the best witness to our Christian profession (Daniel 6:1-4). Excellence is a good witness of Christian and the Christian a good witness of Christ. You cannot afford to be anything short of your best if you are to be a blessing to your generation and the posterity.

REALISATION OF YOUR POTENTIAL

Genesis 1:26,27; 2:15; Psalm 139:13,14; Ephesians 1:3-6; 2 Peter 1:3,4; 1 Kings 3:12-14; Psalm 68:19; Matthew 6:33; James 1:5.

Every person born into the world a miracle machine (fearfully and wonderfully made). God put man in the world to succeed and not to fail. We are born to win.

As Christians, God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. He has given us richly all things to enjoy. He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. Therefore, you have no excuse to live below your best. You need to stretch your brain and brawn, and you will be surprised that your environment is not a limit to your progress. We are capable of more than we are presently achieving. Only the path of commitment can help to bring the best out of our lives. Awake the sleeping giant within. All things are possible to him that believes. Whatever our mind can conceive, we can achieve if we believe.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR PROGRESS

Gen 26:12-22; 31:38-42; 35:1-7; 39:1-6,20-23; 41:51-52, 46-49; Eccl. 9:10; Mat 7:24-27; Luke 15:18; 5:5; 4:42-44; John 9:4; 6:28; 12:20-22; Mark 10:46-52.

In this world, we succeed only in direct proportion to the effort we make. It is then essential that we take total responsibility for our progress. It is futile to blame the government, the church, your boss, your partner in marriage, your parents or background for your failure. The major element responsible for your progress is YOU. To progress, there is need for consuming desire to accomplish something in life. This underscores the need for specific, clearly defined, written, challenging and realistic goals. Want of purpose makes life bleak and barren. Purpose is what keeps us from giving up. Progress also requires commitment. Knowledge of principles of success without a definite action cannot bring the desired change to your life. It is your responsibility to put them to work in your life. You can be the best by accepting responsibility for your progress. Never avoid responsibility. Do not avoid the hard and necessary decision that can give you success. The very things we want to avoid in life are the things that nurture and shape us into the persons we should be. Success will always cost you something!

STUDY 36: NO CONTINUING CITY

Hebrews 13:14

We are strangers and pilgrims in this world; we have no continuing city here or a permanent habitation. Though we live in the world, we are not of the world. We should expect little or nothing from this world. We should hold lightly the things of the world and maintain a fresh vision of our heavenly country.

THE TRANSIENT WORLD

Heb. 13:14; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Peter 3:10-14; Rev. 21:1; 1 Corinthians 7:31; 1 Peter 2:11; Ecclesiastes 2:11; 5:10; Proverbs 23:5.

The world is not a permanent dwelling place for man. Its beauty, social systems, fashions and values will pass away; its riches are fleeting and its glory is temporal.

Life on earth is also brief and uncertain. We cannot be here permanently because of death. Sins, sinners and tribulations will not also allow saints to continue long on earth. Besides, God, the Builder and Maker of that better country will not allow His saints to continue long in this world of wickedness. No true saint will ever be at home in this passing world. Rather, **“we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven”** (2 Cor 5:2). The Christian is a stranger here; his home is in heaven. His Father is there, his Saviour is there, his home is there, his life is there, his treasure is there, his affections are there, his inheritance is there, and his citizenship is there. The heavenly country is better than any country upon the earth; it is better situated, better stored with everything that is good and better secured from everything that is evil.

THE ETERNAL HOME

Heb 13:14; 11:8-10,13-16; 12:22; Rev 3:12; 21:9-27; John 14:1-4; 2 Cor 5:1.

Heaven is the everlasting home of the saints. It is a country, through which flows the river of the water of life (Rev 22:1-5). It is an everlasting home and it has room for a great multitude. It is the eternal dwelling place for saints of all ages (Isaiah 64:4; John 14:1-3; 1 Cor 2:9). Heaven is a holy city (Rev 21:2; 22:19): there shall never enter it anything that defiles, works abomination, or makes a lie (Rev 21:27). The life in heaven is a life of fellowship with God (1 Cor 13:12; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 22:4), rest (Rev 14:13), full knowledge (1 Cor 13:12), holiness (Rev 21:27), joy (Rev 21:4), service (Rev 22:3), abundance (Rev 21:6), glory (2 Cor 4:17; Col 3:4; John 17:24) and worship (Rev 19:1; 7:9-12; 5:12). There in our heavenly country, God shall wipe away all tears (Rev 21:4). There will be no more death, no more sorrow, no more pains, and no more curse (Rev 21:4; 22:3). All things are made new (Rev 21:5) and we shall inherit all things. In contrast to the perfect and endless bliss of the saints in heaven, all sinners will spend their eternity in hell; a place of torment, sorrow, eternal punishment and damnation (Mat 25:41,46; Luke 16:22-28; Rev 20:13-15; 21:8).

PREPARATION FOR THE HEAVENLY COUNTRY

Hebrews 11:9-10,13-16; 12:14; Revelation 21:3; 20:15; Amos 4:12; 1 Peter 2:11-17; Luke 19:13; 1 John 3:1-3.

Heaven is prepared for all whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life (Rev 21:27). No sinner will enter it. Holiness is required to enter the heavenly city (Heb 12:14). As strangers and pilgrims in this world, we must abstain from fleshly lusts, live honestly before men, honour all men, love the brotherhood and fear God (1 Peter 2:11-17). We must lay aside every weight and besetting sin and run the race before us with patience (Heb 12:1-2). We must strive to get to heaven. Like a runner, we must strain every nerve and muscle, and exert every ounce of

strength, to meet the goal. We must be prepared to meet Jesus Christ either by death or in rapture. Prepare your heart, prepare without fault, prepare your work, prepare the way of the Lord (Isaiah 40:3; Mat 3:3). Be not mindful of this earthly country; seek the better country (Phil 3:20). Do not look back to Egypt. Esteem the heavenly kingdom far better than earthly things and seek for the heavenly city. Remember: we have no continuing city here. The blessedness of the heavenly state is inconceivable (1 Cor 2:9). Just be sure you get there, whatever it may cost you and you will discover it worth all the sacrifice.