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## FOREWORD

Brother James Yamoah has done a great service to the world of Christianity for all time. People are getting tired of 'Church' with its emphasis on its own doctrine rather than on Jesus. There are people who want spirituality without the Church dogma and doctrines. A visit to most churches at worship may reveal the human element in our worship. I know some people who are very religious but not spiritual. They will not forgive you if you offend them. Some have been in church for over twenty years but the church is not in them.

Ephesians 4:13 gives the goal every Christian should strive for, which is to be like Jesus Christ; "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." Spiritual immaturity seems to be the order of the day for our generation. The question is how does one grow spiritually, to become Christ-like? What is the syllabus for Spiritual maturity or growth? Thanks be to God James Yamoah has given us the answer in his book ***Amazing Grace: A guide to Spiritual formation and Disciplines***.

Spiritual formation is a process. The author emphasizes this fact in the first part of the book. He gives a step by step description of how to grow spiritually, what it means to be transformed into the image of Christ. A cognitive approach is given, in language that is so simple anyone who can read English can comprehend. The analytical tools used are explained in simple terms devoid of theological jargon. The earnestness and seriousness with which the author approached the subject is easily discerned and becomes contagious to the serious learner.

It must be emphasized that Spiritual formation is conditioned on self-discipline, that is why followers of the Way of Jesus are called ‘disciples,’ a word from the same root as discipline. Self discipline or self-control is a fruit of the Spirit of God operating in the life surrendered to Jesus. It takes seriousness of purpose, determination, and dedication to the cause to grow into the full image of Christ. The prophet Jeremiah knew this when he prophesied many years before the coming of the Christ, “you will seek me and find me when you seek me with **all** your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). Brother James Yamoah takes pains to explain the whole process by which one can grow from a baby to a mature Christian. By following the steps outlined in this book one can easily grow to be like Christ.

The second part of the book is a practical application of the theory in the first part. It is a skills development section. That makes the book a practical, pragmatic, and realistic training guide for all who sincerely desire to grow spiritually. The disciplines covered are more than have ever been presented by any author. This also makes the book a rich experience of a closer walk with God for every believer. E.M. Foster did a great job in exposing us to the Spiritual Disciplines in his classic book “Celebration of Discipline” but James covers some basics omitted by Foster.

Throughout the book the prevailing feeling is that the disciplines are attainable. This gives the drive and encouragement to the reader to put into practice what steps the author is putting forward. This book must be in the hands of every Pastor, Elder, Deacon, Church Worker, Sunday School Teacher and Bible Studies leader. Transformational leadership is leadership by example. The people need to see the leadership of the Church practicing the

Spiritual Disciplines to encourage the membership to follow suit. In Luke 11:1, the disciple went to Jesus after observing His prayer life and asked Him, “Lord teach us to pray”. Jesus’ prayer life encouraged the disciple to be like Him. We must do likewise. In fact, the key to spiritual growth is imitation of the life of Jesus. The Spiritual Disciplines were an active part of His earthly life. We must imitate Him and follow His footsteps to be like Him as is rightly pointed out in the book.

It is important to take note of a distinction made by Andrew Murray in his classical book “With Jesus in the School of Prayer” the three forms of worship. A) Ignorant worshippers; “You Samaritans worship what you do not know”. B) Knowledgeable worshippers; “we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews”. And C) Spiritual worshippers; “Yet a time is coming, and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshippers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:22 – 24). Andrew Murray opened my eyes to the fact that until the Church teaches the congregation to worship spiritually, we offend God with our human attempts at worshipping God. The Father seeks to be worshipped spiritually. This must encourage every believer to seek the inward disciplines and please God in our worship in spirit and in truth. True worship comes out of a personal relationship to Christ as the book emphasizes. Paul puts it this way: “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection”. It is a personal journey that every Christian has to take. It begins with the new birth and grows into spiritual abilities to overcome the devil and temptation and to cast out demons and heal the sick and to be qualified to use the name of Jesus to work miracles and signs.

Dallas Willard (2008, page 10) made a true observation when he said “the local congregations, the places where Christians gather on a regular basis, must resume the practice of making the spiritual formation of their members into Christlikeness their primary goal, the aim which everyone of its activities serves.” The church must place its emphasis on living as the light of the world on behalf of Jesus, who is the true light of the world. As Ambassadors of Christ on earth we reveal the life of heaven on earth, as the living letters of commendation of God. Every church must adopt a maxim that “whatever does not grow us spiritually is not done here.”

It is only through practice that we can become perfect. The world owes James Yamoah tons of gratitude for showing us how to grow in Christ.

**Rev. Dr. Johnson K. Asibuo, (Senior Lecturer)**  
Ghana Christian University College (GhanaCU)  
Accra, Ghana

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Within these general groups are specific people; parent, guardians, and friends, etc., whose names constantly ring bells in my spirit; Madam Mary Nyarko (my mother), Messrs Francis Gyamera Akwaw (of blessed memory) and Peter Yamoah Akwaw (my uncles), Mrs. Rose-Vida Danquah and Ms. Georgina Achiaah (my aunts), all my siblings (Maggie, Big Joe, Emma, Maame Joe, Esther and Martha), and the entire family, especially Nana Osei Bonsu, MD, Bethseda Printing Press, Kumasi, and his family, Mr. & Mrs. Obiri-Yeboah, Mrs. Rita Amakye-Ansah (a very dedicated Christian mother), Mad. Charity Nyarkoah (my mother-in-law) and her family, Mr. Kojo Badu & Mrs. Gertrude De-Bruce Smith (Columbus, USA), Mr. Kenneth Agyeman, (Texas, USA), Pastor Joseph Boakye Danquah and Pastor & Mrs. Biney (all of Cincinnati, USA), and

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Above all, I am forever grateful to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for always being there for me in accordance with the promise, "... Great is His faithfulness," (Lam. 3:22-23). To Him alone is the glory, Amen.

**James Yamoah**

**Dedicated to:**

All persons who have taught me in my educational pursuit, and my  
mentors, inspirers, helpers, friends in the Lord, and particularly  
the Professor and the Spiritual Formation Class of Fall 2006,  
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Two of the most important issues for mankind to settle after the gift of birth are where and how every person will spend eternity. These are important since it is usually known and mostly accepted by most religions, including Christianity, that mankind has to meet God's standard for righteousness in order to enter the next life in peace. Biblically, man was created a perfect being; in body, soul, and spirit, but after the fall of the first couple, the spiritual state of man became corrupted. The process of transformation to bring man back to the state of perfection can be appropriately termed "Spiritual Formation."

The first twenty-two (22) years after I accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as my Savior and Master were full of spiritual excitements and adventures. But I was never challenged by deep issues relating to spiritual life until I took a course in Fall of 2006, in Spiritual Formation, at Cincinnati Christian University, Ohio, U.S.A. Sitting through various lectures and engaging in discussions on the subject, I began to experience a fresh challenge to reexamine, reorganize, and reshape my life to align with God's plan for mankind's spiritual transformation. Since then, being conscious of the self and being determined to experience spiritual growth on daily basis through the practice of certain disciplines have become necessities.

In pursuit of their spiritual formation, many have taken to different and divergent paths, especially in the area of practicing certain spiritual disciplines. Generally, the practice of these disciplines helps individuals to deepen their relationship with God. Examples of the disciplines are prayer, fasting, study of scripture,

meditation, service, solitude, submission, hospitality, simplicity, etc. Most of these disciplines have to be pursued seriously in order for a believer to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord.

This book; ***Amazing Grace: A Guide to Spiritual Formation & Disciplines***, is expected to bless every reader by spelling out a general pattern of personal spiritual transformation involving; a vision of Christian life, the intention of kingdom-mindedness, and the means to model the character of Jesus Christ. The process of spiritual formation is the subject of discussion of Part One of this book. While Part One builds a strong foundation for a person's spiritual foundation Part Two is where the individual puts the studies into real practice by engaging daily self schedules in order to grow and develop accordingly.

The various disciplines treated in Part Two of this book are contributions of the members of the Spiritual Formation class whose permission I sought for the purpose of this book in order to benefit Christendom. Though there have been some modifications in their original organization the actual text remains largely original. For each of the spiritual disciplines discussed here, I feel touched that a lot is done to appreciate the ultimate satisfaction that the Lord may want for all believers. By pursuing the disciplines discussed in the book, such persons will develop a deeper awareness of God that will culminate in a meaningful worship in faith, joy, peace, and hope at all times.

The book will help persons desiring daily transformation to effectively study God's word, and apply it such that their spirit will dwell intelligently upon God as presented in scriptures.

# **PART ONE**

## **THE PROCESS OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **SPIRITUAL FORMATION IS IMPORTANT**

There is no proper transformation until a person is fully surrendered to God and has accepted the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the only true Transformer. Spiritual formation is in fact the vehicle that takes a person's life through the journey of true transformation. Although spiritual formation has been variously defined, these definitions combine to spell out all the ingredients of what the process is about. One of the definitions summarizes spiritual formation as "an intentional, multifaceted process which promotes the transformation by which Christ is formed in a person to become Christ's continually maturing disciple" (Dettoni, 1994). Obviously, spiritual formation becomes important in the life of every person when it leads to assurance of salvation and settles the issue of eternity. This assurance takes any person from the dangers of the uncertainties of other alternatives.

### **The need for Spiritual Formation**

One of the Apostles of Jesus Christ who really experienced a totally transformed life through solid spiritual formation is Paul. In the book of Romans, this Apostle takes time and space to share a lot of spiritual insights on the whole process. Though he begins a discussion of the subject from an unusual angle, Apostle Paul underlies the process towards spiritual formation with solid foundational blocks. The first set of blocks involves the issues of the spiritual ruin of man, God's condemnation of the world, and His judgment against the unfaithfulness of mankind. Apparently, Apostle Paul's message is to solve the greatest question that faces

mankind; how to stand before the Creator to account for life spent on earth.

In chapter 3:16 of the book of Romans, Paul makes it clear that “all have sinned...” That is, both Jews and the Gentiles have sinned; for the Jews, by breaking the written Law; and for the Gentiles, by breaking the revelatory law written on their hearts. That is, Jews as well as Gentiles admittedly are morally bankrupt. God’s holiness demands that he abhors sin. This means that mankind is guilty before the judgment throne of God, because the justice of God demands that mankind is punished for his unfaithfulness to God because of the sin of disobedience. If there is any hope for either group, it must be found in the mercy of God, and not in man’s claim to any form of righteousness, because everybody stands unacceptable, guilty, and condemned before God. Thus a way to acceptance with God had to open up, a completely different way from a person’s obedience.

### **God’s plan for Spiritual Formation**

From Romans 3:21-31, Apostle Paul shows God’s way of righteousness to meet a universal need, salvation. He points to the next level of blocks in the spiritual formation process, God’s righteous nature. Cottrell posits that the whole point of God’s righteousness is for Him to be true to his nature and his statutes (spring, 2007). His righteousness demands that He goes ahead to punish man. But His love demands that he forgives sin as a demonstration of His love.

At this juncture, God’s solution to remit sin was to offer a fitting sacrifice that could take away man’s sins, while at the same time punishing man’s disobedience all in the name of love. Who

could the fitting lamb for the sacrifice be? Judging by God's legal standards, only Jesus Christ was righteous; anybody else is a sinner. Therefore, God shifts the punishment from mankind and places it on His son, Jesus Christ, so that they would be free. This is the way of life through the gospel of justification by faith apart from the works of righteousness. One source says: "It is the way of faith in Jesus Christ, and it lies open to all who believe in Him, Jew and Gentiles alike...By this new way both Jews and Gentiles can be brought into a right relationship with God, [and] can have the assurance of acceptance by Him, and receive His free pardon (Bruce, 1982, p. 99).

Thus the key text of the Epistle to the Romans, no doubt, is chapter 1:16, 17. These verses imply that everybody is in need of God's gracious salvation that comes through the power of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Cottrell calls this twin verses "the glory of the gospel," and "the heart of the gospel," respectively (2005, p. 60-66). It is the area where the issue of grace is hidden and also revealed. That is, Jesus Christ is the revelatory plan of God to do away with His people's sin once and for all. His death is God's perfect plan and the key to the door of man's spiritual formation.

# **CHAPTER 2**

## **SPIRITUAL FORMATION IS GOD'S RIGHTEOUS ACT**

The discussion in the previous chapter ended with a revelation of the one that God had set forth as the one whose sacrificial death atoned for the guilt of all mankind, Jesus Christ. His sacrificial death also removed the imminent retribution which man's rebellion against God has incurred. This complete work of Jesus Christ is a demonstration of God's righteousness. The book of Romans 1:24-25 explain what "God's righteous act," that is, His righteousness in action, to believers is. In these verses, there are several important words which when fully understood will throw more light on God's righteous act. This is the focus of this chapter.

### **God's righteousness is through Jesus Christ**

The "righteousness of God" consists in the believer "being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." This redemption is achieved by the death of Christ on the cross. He took the place of every sinner by carrying the sin of mankind and nailing it to the cross. That is, on the cross, Jesus became a sinner and "I", a sinner, became righteous. What God did is that, "...He held the public Judgment Day of human sin, displaying His absolute righteousness in not sparing His own son...In the atoning death of Christ, God's righteousness was fully exhibited in His wrath against sin" (Newell, 1972, p. 125). This means that God puts the sins of the whole human race upon the shoulders of Jesus Christ when He was crucified at Calvary. Not

only sin was dealt with but also the guilt that existed in the conscious part of man, the mind. The guilt-stricken mind became cleared and free. So Jesus suffered every sinner's penalty. Cottrell calls this two-way action of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross a "double cure," (Cottrell, 2002, p. 318). This was the greatest exchange; the righteous for the unrighteous.

When Christ finally cried, "It is finished," (John 19:30), He meant that it is finished for man's salvation (Matt. 27:45-54), and that it is finished for their success as believers (Rom. 8:31-32). In the Old Testament, the lamb that was slain by and for the Israelites corresponds to that of the Lord Jesus Christ in the New Testament (Exod. 12:7, 12, 13; 1 Cor. 6:20). This is why John the Baptist cried, "Behold the Lamb of God..." when he saw Jesus Christ (John 1:29). And truly, Christ became the Passover Lamb. Through His death, Christ reconciled man back to God after Adam brought separation (Gen. 3: 23, 24; cf. 2 Cor. 5: 18). After the finished work on the cross, grace took over, and presently every believer has taken Christ's identity (Gal. 3:26-27; 2 Cor. 5:21). God now sees all believers as people wearing Jesus' robe of righteousness.

### **God's righteousness is by justification**

The several important words which Romans 1:24-25 raise on God's righteous act include words like justified; freely; grace; and redemption. These words when fully understood will help the believer of Christ appreciate the depth of God's work on man. First, the word "justified", never means to "make righteous", or does it mean "to pardon." Cottrell makes a positive input to the meaning of the term. According to him "Justification" is a legal concept and must be understood in the context of a court of law, "...to justify is the exact opposite of to condemn" (1996, p. 95). The sentence

speaks of God's verdict by which a believer who should have been condemned is "pronounced righteous and cleared of any guilt." This is typified by Isaiah's experience when he encountered God in the great vision in the temple. One of the seraphs declared on behalf of God, "...Your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for" (Isaiah 6:1-7). Hence the believers' present state of righteousness is totally by God's justification and nothing less.

### **God's righteousness is free**

It should be realized that the righteous act of God is given freely. "This means without charge," "free of cost", for no consideration or compensation is given by us; simply "free gratis" or "gratuitous" (Boll, p. 14). Thus, man's justification is a free gift from God. This then, is the way in which God has demonstrated His righteousness; He has vindicated His own character and at the same time bestows a righteous status on sinful men. This is why in God's patient dealing with men, He could pass over the sins which men committed before the coming of Christ, instead of exacting the full penalty. This demonstration shows man how God remains perfectly righteous while He pardons those who believe in Jesus and puts them in the right before His judgment bar.

### **God's righteousness comes through grace**

The concept of salvation starts with a discussion on the issue of grace and how it applies to every person. The understanding and application of the word "grace" might differ from various cultures. It is a common belief among people of many cultures that God's daily dealing with mankind occurs through His gracious acts. The knowledge of God's gracious provision to people is so basic that all the activities of people from the time he rises

from sleep to the time he returns are known to be by grace. In some Ghanaian cultures, for example, God's grace is accepted as the basis for all things such that one hardly speaks without mentioning it. Questions relating to a person's welfare like, "How are you?" or "How is home?" or "How is work?" receive very common replies like, "By the grace of God," or "It's just by grace," or "The grace is sufficient for me," and the like.

Studies into the "Doctrine of Grace" have brought a true understanding of many of the facts about the kind of "grace" through which God has reached mankind. It is the saving grace based on God's own righteousness. Cottrell is positive that the whole content of any course on the "Doctrine of Grace" can be summed up in one sentence, "The key to assurance of salvation is by understanding the concept of justification by faith through the grace of God (spring, 2007). Fact is, the knowledge of, and seeming reliance on God's grace, is so overwhelming that it is hardly lacking in people's daily conversations, discussions, and even in their songs. May be, this is a true application of what is written in scripture: "For by grace you are saved through faith and not by work so that each man can boast" (Eph. 2:10, NIV).

The big question here is that if in all things God deals with every person according to His grace, why then is there the need for salvation and why is God bringing every person before Him in judgment after death? What about the majority of people, particularly Christians, who know they have been saved by grace and yet are not sure of their stand before God in judgment after death? Surely, a deeper knowledge and appreciable understanding of the subject of grace in relation to salvation is quite important for everyone and Christians in particular.

Grace is always set in direct contrast to meritorious works or reward for law-keeping or anything on a person's part by which he or she might have earned a reward. These acts of merit on the part of every person can also be termed as 'the performance trap.' David A. Seamands, one of the best authors on salvation, mentions "real deficiency of grace" as one of the main causes for people being caught up in such a trap (2002, p. 21). The simple fact is that God's righteous act of justification of mankind is only by grace from God's part and not by works on man's part. That is, a person's justification is effected by God completely through the "redemption" that is in Christ Jesus. The term "redemption" always involves a price paid for the retrieving of something which once belonged to a person, and was lost. The redemption price Christ paid for a believer was by shedding His own blood. Ephesians 1:7 says, "We [believers] have our redemption through His blood...according to the riches of His grace."

The Psalmist was excellent in his estimation when he wrote that the Lord does not treat us [mankind] as our sin deserve or repay us according to our iniquities (Psalm 103:10). This is because if the Lord had been dealing with mankind that way no person would have ever survived in His sight in life on earth; He deals with us by grace.

# **CHAPTER 3**

## **HOW GOD'S JUSTIFICATION BECOMES EFFECTIVE**

From the previous discussion, the obvious thing for anybody to say would be that God is just, and, therefore, condemns the sinner as a criminal. "But here we have the great paradox; God is just, and somehow, in that incredible, miraculous grace that Jesus came to bring to men, He (God) accepts the sinner, not as a criminal, but as a son whom He still loves" (Barclay, 1975, p. 59).

### **God's justification is through Christ's crucifixion**

Indeed, God used Christ Jesus to work out the deliverance of the sinful human race. In doing so, He declared all those who believe in the atonement of Jesus on the cross as righteous. If this is the case then the message of the book of Romans is perfect in implying that God did all this because He is just, and accepts as just all who believe in Jesus. What this means is that the sinner is accepted as a just man by God. Doubtlessly, the singular death of Jesus on the cross makes it possible for God not only to be just but also the justifier of anyone that exercises faith in the finished work of Christ on the cross.

Thus in redemption is the merciful dealings of God, and His grace which justifies freely those who believe has been actively manifested in Christ who is a propitiation for mankind. The understanding of justification by faith should therefore sum up the whole concept of assurance of salvation. There is now no need for any person to earn salvation by godly acts. No! Cottrell puts it this way,

“To be godly is to have one’s name on God’s sinners list; to be justified is to have one’s name taken away” (spring, 2007). This is because man’s assurance of salvation does not depend on how spiritually well he or she is; it is rather how justified the person is.

Along the same line, the chance is 0% for anyone who is trying to go to heaven by works and 100% for the Christian who believes he has been saved by the blood of Jesus. Thus the law and grace distinction is not a distinction between the Old and New Testament. Rather; it is the distinction between the fall of man and the salvation of man. This is because “even in the period of the Old Testament, God saved men by grace, because no one could be saved by the works of the law” (spring, 2007).

Every believer should accept that the work of Jesus Christ on the cross brings Him [Christ] into the scene of the person’s in a special way. Christ now occupies a unique position as God’s representative with man and man’s representative with God. He conveys God’s pardoning grace to men. Since man has no major role to play in securing this salvation but is only left (required) to exercise his faith in the “work” of Christ, where is boasting? According to Apostle Paul, boasting is completely excluded. In fact, the way of salvation by faith and not by works leaves man, especially the Jews who could boast of God’s law, no ground to boast on, because salvation is not based on observation of the law. Thus, everybody, Jews included, is a sinner, and is saved by pure mercy and grace on the ground of faith in Jesus. No man has any room for glorying because God justifies all alike by faith, apart from works of the Law. This is a simple truth that everyone must understand.

## **God's justification is through Christ's blood**

God's justification of the believer is made possible because of the power of Jesus' blood that was shed on the cross (Rev. 5:1-14; 12:7-11). The blood of Jesus did a lot for the believer and continues to do. Through the blood, all believers of Christ have received the following privileges;

- They are purchased by the blood, that is, they are redeemed by the blood (Acts 20:28; Rev. 5:9; Col. 1:4);
- There is remission of sins or forgiveness (Col 1:14; Heb. 9:22), that is, it washes or cleanses believers from their sins (1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5);
- Eternal life is given to believers by the blood (John 6:54-56), because the believer is justified as righteous by the blood (Rom. 5:9);
- There is entrance before the throne of God (Heb. 10:19). That is, His blood has given the believer access to God's grace as a result of the curtain which separated men from God being torn apart (Luke 23: 45; Heb. 4:16). And not only grace but the blood also intercedes for the person (Heb. 12:24);
- The blood of Jesus covers and protects believers from the power of Satan. That is, the bloodshed on the cross also meant a finished business over Satan as well (Luke 19:10). Thus there is power to overcome the devil, courtesy the blood of Jesus (Exod. 12; cf. Rev. 5:9; 12:7, 11; Col. 1:4). Hitherto, Satan held the whole humanity in captivity as a result of the disobedience of the first couple; Adam and Eve, and no effort of mankind could bring freedom. But Christ has brought Adam's race from this bondage of Satan to freedom, to be priest of God;

- The blood brings healing and peace to believers (Col. 1:20). Christ blotted away the sins of man that separated man from God (John 1:29) and made the believer right before God (2 Cor. 5:21). The believer also obtained peace not with God only but also with fellow Christians (Col. 1:20).

### **God's justification took away both wrath and curse**

In Romans 1:18, Apostle Paul mentioned that “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and wickedness of men...” Clearly, this means that mankind is under the wrath of God since all have sinned. The question now is how is this “wrath” to be removed? The answer is that the “propitiation” which God has provided in Christ not only removes the sinners unrighteousness but also averts the wrath or retribution; the inevitable sequel to man’s disobedience to God’s law. In a sense, the believer’s sin has been removed from the presence of God.

Not only wrath is dealt with but Christ’s work on the cross also delivered the believer from any curse of God (Gal. 3:13). This is in accordance with the scripture; Curse is anyone that is hanged on the cross. A curse is simply a verbal statement or pronouncement that brings evil on the recipient or cursed. Examples are found in Genesis 3:16 where God pronounced a severe pain and desire for man. That is, thorns and thistle would be produced by the soil because of man’s disobedience while the Serpent would move on the belly (Gen. 9:25).

There are other instances of curses such as Noah cursed Canaan, God cursed anyone who will cursed Abraham, God cursed Israel for disobedience (Deut. 28), God cursed Michal, daughter of King Saul and wife of David, for rebuking King David when the

latter danced before the Lord, Elisha cursed some youth (2 Kings 2:23-25). God in the book of Malachi cursed man's unfaithfulness in giving tithe. To deal with this long list, Jesus went to the cross not only to remove sin but also to remove curse from man (Gal. 3:13; cf. Deut. 21:23; Col. 2:13-16). That is, Christ became a curse in place of man and canceled every curse that had been pronounced on mankind as a result of disobedience to God's command.

### **God's justification changed the Old order to New**

It is only when we understand what Christ did on the cross that we will really appreciate and be able to serve Him well. If Christmas brings happiness, Easter should bring great joy. Easter has its root in the Passover, the period when God delivered Israel from Egypt. How does Christ's death relate to the Passover (the day which later became known as Easter)? Simple! Christ's work is represented in the Old Testament as true foreshadow of events to come in the New Testament. In the fullness of time He was revealed as the Lamb of God whose blood could take away sin and provide the needed cover from any wrath and destruction. Thus Easter is a time Christians reflect on their remission of their sins and their birth and acceptance by God as His children. It is a time believers rededicate their lives to the good purpose; Christ came into the world that through Him the world might be redeemed.

Again, what Christ did at Easter brought a lot of changes in the Old Testament order (Heb. 5:5). Whatever was established in the Old order became more meaning and significant in the New. For example, the Altar of sacrifice became the Atonement (1 Cor. 5:7), the Washing basin stood for baptism, the Temple became the believer's body for God's spirit to dwell (1 Cor. 6:14), the

Lamp-stand is the word of God (Ps. 119:105), the Altar of incense becomes the prayer of saints (Rev. 8:3), the Curtain which separated men from God and prevented men from entering the Holy of Holies was destroyed when the body of Christ was torn apart and His blood was shed on the cross, and the Kingdom of Israel in the Old order has become God's Kingdom in the New. The blood now becomes the means to God's presence in Heaven before the throne of grace (Heb. 9:12; Hab. 9:24). It is applicable for believers to have faith that they are covered by Christ's blood and to rejoice.

### **God's justification is available to everyone by faith**

Another major issue that needs to be understood is the fact that the redemptive work of God through Christ Jesus is received by man "through faith" (Cottrell, 2002, p. 200). What Christ has thus procured for man can be made effective only by man's own faith. The phrase "through faith" in Ephesians 2:8-10 indicates how the saving benefits of the gospel are appropriated. Faith, according to Bruce, is not a kind of work that is especially meritorious in God's sight; it is that simple and open-hearted attitude to God which takes Him at His word and gratefully accepts His grace (p. 107). Of much importance is the fact that the redemption accomplished by Christ has retrospective as well as prospective efficacy.

How can the work of Jesus on the cross be made effective? It is simple. Just as Jesus canceled all our sins and obtained eternal life for all men so also is Christ's work made effective by open confessing any sins and accepting Him. That is, "faith, which is a condition for receiving the salvation provided by the gospel, must be amply demonstrated by the sinner" (Cottrell, 2005, p. 63). Sinners only have to repent of their sins of disobedience and

negligence to God's word, and then openly accept Christ as Lord and Savior. Wherever possible, a born again person should make restitution for every commission. Finally, the person has to remain in the Lord through constant fellowship to ensure his or her redemption. In this way, believers appropriate the victory of Christ in their lives. They walk as victorious saints of the Lord Jesus Christ, never again to be under Satan's yoke of slavery, and Christ's blood continues to give them life to replace death (John 5:24; Exod. 12:13).

By Christ's death and resurrection, He has given back to believers the power that was lost in Eden – the power over all things including Satan (in the name of Jesus). Accordingly, Jesus declared upon His resurrection, "I give you power" (Luke 10:19). Again, Christ has given believers hope in the life to come – by His resurrection. There is also victory, peace, and reconciliation through Jesus Christ's death. Thus believers must be dead to the flesh in order to live in the spirit for the Lord. Believers must make no provision for the flesh; flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom (Rom. 13:14; 1 Cor. 15:50). In fact, the flesh profits nothing; the Spirit gives life (John 6: 3). And if the flesh does not die the spirit cannot live. Jesus defeated the devil by His death. Therefore if the flesh does not die, the devil cannot be defeated. In other words, if the flesh and its desires are not killed, sin will continue to reign in the body. But when one is dead in flesh, the one is quickened in Spirit (Gal. 2:20; 1 Peter 3:18).

### **God's justification is appropriated in baptism**

Now what is the role of baptism in the whole process of salvation? Throughout the New Testament the importance of baptism cannot be overemphasized. Indeed, it is the act which

ensures that the salvation of man is accomplished. It is the open ceremony to show a person has declared faith in Christ; identified with Christ's death and resurrection. Cottrell mentions baptism as the time or place where God initially chooses to bestow the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (2005, p. 66). Baptism is not a meritorious work to receive salvation; it is a show of obedience to complete the process of salvation which comes by faith alone. Baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is believers only way to demonstrate the salvation process and become righteous before God. It is the open signing of the salvation register, and an open demonstration of a person's faith in the risen Lord. Therefore, the only way to a right relationship with God lies, not in any doomed attempt to win acquittal by performance; it lies in penitent acceptance of the love and the grace which God offers mankind in Jesus Christ and sealed in baptism.

### **God's justification is practiced through good works**

To celebrate the process of salvation, it is expedient for the believer to demonstrate his love and appreciation for God's love by doing good works. Every act of faith is demonstrated through works of love. A person is not saved by good works but is saved for good works through the labor of love. It is when man is ready to do good works that the process of sanctification begins. Thus, while one became 100% justified before God when faith in Christ was declared, sanctification begins at 0% and keeps improving as the person develops spiritually and matures to reach Christ's perfection at 100%.

Armed with the above truth from scriptures, believers are rest assured of salvation for as long as they continue to hold on to their faith in the sacrificial work of the resurrected Christ. There

is the need for continued growth and development of a person's spiritual life through all the processes of solid spiritual formation, particularly, by the practice of some disciplines some of which would be discussed in the subsequent sections of the book. Needless to say, every believer also has a commitment to serve the Lord, not out of compulsion but out of love in response and appreciation for the salvation received. This service includes a systematic way to teach some people who can also teach others (2 Tim. 2:2) in order to confirm their faith in Christ Jesus.

# **CHAPTER 4**

## **PRESSING ON IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

“Spiritual Formation” has been defined as “the process of transformation to bring man back to the state of perfection,” (refer Introduction), or “an intentional, multifaceted process which promotes the transformation by which Christ is formed in a person to become Christ’s continually maturing disciple” (chapter 1). But another definition of “Spiritual Formation” considers it as “the progressive patterning of a person’s inner and outer life according to the image of Christ through intentional means of spiritual growth” (Lawrenz, 2000). This usually begins when a person has surrendered completely to God and has accepted the Lordship of Christ. Considering this definition, one can realize that there is a pressing demand in life to know God the more; the more a person draws closer to Him the more the one realizes that he or she does not know Him. Thus every believer needs a further dive into a deeper and a more fruitful relationship with God.

A renowned author of books on spiritual formation mentioned concerning Westerners of several decades ago that many of them saw discipleship as no more required for one to be a Christian (Dallas, 2006, p. 258). This is rather unfortunate because believers everywhere and of all generations should realize that God wants them to reach the maximum level in order to offer maximum service to society. Jesus Christ our Lord himself practiced all the disciplines and was therefore able to fulfill God’s mission for Him in this world. In the same way, most believers who were able to follow His example and master the “Disciplines” became

successful. There are lots of benefits in the practice of these disciplines.

First, the journey of spiritual formation is a demonstration of a person's practical life. It is the way of life of the members of God's kingdom. God transforms His children through the practice of some excellent disciplines. Besides many other things, spiritual formation creates in the believer a burning desire, willingness, attitude and commitment to a deeper Christian life. The process of spiritual formation creates a greater awareness of God, a greater intimacy with Him, where one is brought into a greater conformity with the word of God to experience a peaceful, joyful and a much more fruitful life. The process also creates a greater awareness of who the person is and how the person can better be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in accordance with God's purpose for mankind.

Moreover, as the believer continues to live through the constant practice of the spiritual disciplines and becomes more transformed, the person watches his or her life both publicly and privately (1 Tim. 4:15-16). Apart from nature's responsibility placed on everyone to settle the issue of eternity, people should also be able to let others know their reasons of hope in life. After a certain period of undergoing the process of transformation, the person is now ready to set himself as an example to other believers (1 Tim. 4:12), and the world in general. God leads the person out through the wilderness of life to face the realities of the world so that the one shows forth God's praise through what he or she has become.

Finally, as the believer continues to live the spiritual life that God wants, He allows the person to be empowered moment by moment by the Holy Spirit. This enables the person to live for God

and also overcome sin and the devil. The person reflects the glory of God in an unfading way, not like that of Moses when he descended from mountain Sinai. Such a glory under the new covenant (not the old) grows with every passing moment. Therefore it is hoped that all believers will make every effort to practice the disciplines in order to reflect the glory of God daily. The following texts are very helpful in the discussion of issues in spiritual formation; Luke 6:43-4; 9:23-24; 1 Cor. 9:24; 10:13; 1 Tim. 4:6-8; Heb. 12:1; Prov. 4:20-23, 27; Philip. 1:1-6; Eph. 4:11ff.

### **Approaches of people to Spiritual Formation**

There are different approaches of Christians to the issue of spiritual formation. Four main types of such approaches are discussed here. The major differences are generally seen in the way each person approaches God and also relates to life issues.

**Activist approach:** People who demonstrate this kind of approach have a strong concept of the Holiness of God; “God is Holy.” Any person who belongs here likes engaging in a lot of action in life. Such a person is task oriented. But the danger here is legalism, i.e., the person becoming too pious, and having a “holier than thou” attitude.

**Intellectual approach:** Any person in this group sees God as truthful; “God is truth,” and their approach to life is to experience realities. Such a person is information oriented, and prefers to think, discuss, inform, and reason a lot about issues. Those who belong here are said to have bigger heads than hearts. The danger for people in this category is pride, arrogance, and extreme self confidence.

**Contemplative approach:** To many contemplative persons, “God is Love.” They relate this virtue of God to every life issue. Such persons are therefore interested more in relationships; they are very experiential and emotional. Those who belong here demonstrate too much dependence on other people, and are also too easygoing. Such people are very appreciative and usually expect same. There are many dangers here but the greatest would be betrayal and associated issues like disappointment.

**Mystical approach:** To the people who belong here, the statement that “God is a Spirit,” is of extreme importance. Most persons who demonstrate this approach believe that spiritual things are so real that they, more often than not, interpret a lot of life issues supernaturally. For such people, there is a strong desire to be like God. They show much faith, engage in a lot of prayer, always waiting on God to do things. Thus there is a tendency for such people to be passive to this present life. The danger here is loss of contact with realities of life and lack of connectivity, sometimes. Bill Weber believes that though a person may belong to one of these groups at any time, there is the possibility of moving from one area to another at different time periods” (Sept., 2006).

### **The different sexes and Spiritual Formation**

Men and women approach spiritual formation differently. Many reasons, including the different characteristics and responses between the male and female sexes to certain life stimuli account for these. It is common knowledge that for many past years, a lot of cultures of the world were not interested in feminine issues, particularly, education and active Christian services. Now there is growing concern by people to address some

of the differences so that women are able to play and fulfill their God-given role in society.

**The table below shows the differences between the sexes in relation to Spiritual formation presented by Verna Weber**

| Men                                                 | Women                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| They pursue spiritual formation to develop strength | They pursue spiritual formation in order to deepen relationship |
| They are more emotionally intelligent and logical   | They are less emotionally intelligent and logical               |
| They are concerned with text and tools in language  | They are concerned with passion, and emotions                   |
| They present reasons or thoughts of the situations  | They usually talk about what they feel                          |
| They are both poor listeners and talkers            | They are good listeners as well as talkers                      |
| They are not very sensitive to their environment    | They are more sensitive to their environment                    |

Dr. (Mrs.) Verna Weber, Associate Professor of Educational Ministries and Family Studies, Cincinnati Christian University, Ohio, is an expert in this area. She made a great contribution on this subject by spelling out the differences between the sexes in relation to spiritual formation during one of the class discussions (Spiritual Formation, Sept. 2006). The details of Verna Weber's contribution are shown in the table above. The information in the table might help in all spheres of human resources development and also enables one to know how to relate with the different sexes and treat them accordingly. Some of the points that are raised in the discussion are very interesting. But it must be noted that the table is not exhaustive. The area of spiritual formation in women will be looked at more deeply in the next chapter.

# CHAPTER 5

## SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Issues of personality, emotion, responsibility, and so on, and differences which exist between men and women which were mentioned in the previous chapter, as well as issues of children, which help them to relate to God are the focus of discussion of the chapter. Particularly in the Old Testament culture and even in some cultures today, feminine issues, and to some extent, those of children have been relegated to the floor. Against this backdrop, much interest and importance is attached to these issues in this chapter.

### **Women's approach to Spiritual Formation**

Do women walk on a different path or journey from men? Are there differences in men and women apart from the biological physical differences? Well, according to Verna Weber, the answer is yes, i.e., personality-wise, emotion-wise, and responsibility-wise (Sept, 2006). Fact is women were created differently from men (Gen. 1-2). Thus, the societal consideration of women on spiritual levels is something worth considering. There are various influences of spiritual formation in women which include the following:

**Capacity for Interdependence:** This depends on what they are related to; closeness of family or partner. For example, women are inclined to see relationships as an end in itself unlike men; they have more close friends; they share more in their relationships; and do not see relationship as very strong for spiritual development.

**Intuition:** Women have more natural intuition and tend to integrate more pieces of information, both verbal and non-verbal. They can also integrate information from all their senses: what they feel, hear, see, and so on. An incorporation of a woman's own history and experience is trusted in a voice of feeling and an evaluation of other people's experience.

**Language and Communication:** Generally, when women speak, they tend to use more languages of feelings and emotions, and are more inclined to share emotions than men. In fact, they are more passionate.

The question that might arise from the discussions on the traits above is whether there are any implications of the different characteristics of women in their spiritual formation. This is very important in light of the seeming practices in some of the changing cultures where there are debates as to whether women should be sidelined in any sphere of life or should be actively involved. The strong features of women as shown in the table inform and advice society to rather expedite steps aimed at encouraging and exploring the use of feminine unique characteristics.

It is important to recognize what women do as part of the disciplines to their spiritual development. They often engage in their activities with complete devotion, i.e., their whole body is involved; senses, mind and heart. Women really get involve in life issues than men. Thus, all their experiences, including even those of pregnancy and child caring, home care, etc., might be considered as part of their processes in their spiritual formation which can be tapped for the benefit of society. In pursuance of this, women should be allowed to have some retreat in order to help their spiritual formation; they should be given a good Bible study

time to make up for periods spent on other commitments. Women might not be very successful with mentoring but they are observed to be good at spending more time with children in order to help the children's spiritual formation.

### **Spiritual Formation in Children**

Spiritual formation in children is a process, step by step wherein we empower, nurture, encourage and discipline them to find Christ as their Savior, and disciple them to grow in His likeness through the power and work of the Holy Spirit. In children, spiritual formation begins at birth and continues throughout life. Since no child is an isolated individual, the parents' spiritual formation forms the basis of the child's spiritual life. That is, the spiritual development of the parents is transferred to the child even while in the womb (Verna Weber, Sept. 2006). Scripture reveals that God knows man even while he is in the womb (Jer. 1:1ff; 2 Tim. 3:14; Deut. 6:4-9; Luke 2:52).

Verna Weber notes that children naturally are religious and this has to be nurtured (Sept, 2006). Spiritual development is affected by a child's overall growth and development because of such reasons as:

- The psychological situation of children may determine their growth.
- The kind of care and concern shown to children can influence their spiritual formation.
- The kind of environment; family, friends, school, etc., that children are exposed to can be a great influence to them.

While spiritual formation of children is the responsibility of their parents, the church or school also has some responsibilities to them. Children are generally very sensitive to their environment, and while they are helped to develop their spiritual formation, their parents or trainers should not impose a lot of things on them. For a healthy spiritual formation in children, there is the need for every parent, minister, or guardian to recognize their limitations. Anyone who is involved in children's spiritual formation must also be able to recognize the children's needs.

Different churches have different approaches to dealing with children. But whatever it is, an appropriate and specific means should be found and developed to facilitate children's spiritual formation. For example, church leaders should be able to encourage and empower a lot of parents to develop appropriate education in the children's early life. Also, the need to restore the Children's connection with the community of faith is important. That is, integrate them into the body of Christians around and let them feel a part of it. Thus to ensure that the processes of spiritual formation and the necessary transformation of children are carried through it is important to develop a specially planned program of spiritual growth discipline for them.

# **CHAPTER 6**

## **HOW SPIRITUAL FORMATION SHAPES LIFE**

There are various factors that bring people to the Lord and subsequently influence their spiritual formation. The common ones include a person just developing interest in religion, through conviction by the Holy Spirit, listening to scripture, being present at a church service, attending a camp meeting, and so on. The common non-spiritual experiences relate to families and friends; death of loved ones, unusual changes in life situation. Others include education or insights from books, experiences from professional responsibilities, economic situations of people, influences from society, and so on. All these factors, in one way or the other, help in shaping the life of every individual. This is because these factors determine needs and life choices. Underlying these influences also are the issues of the person's will, attitude and commitment.

### **Spiritual Formation and Life choices**

Dr. William Weber, a Professor of Practical Ministries at Cincinnati Christian University, throws much light on how spiritual formation helps in shaping the life of a person (Sept., 2006). He agrees with Maslow, a renowned Psychologist, who says that human beings, including Christians, make choices based on a "hierarchy of needs." This is because everybody is subject to certain basic needs; biological, physiological, safety, belongingness and love, etc. Although the Christian may have different ways that he or she may value the different things at the different levels, the bottom line is that he or she needs all of them. It is important to

note that people value each level differently. Many Christians value their faith first; others their lives.

### **Spiritual Formation and the “will” of a person**

Every step of a person's life requires two very important things: i) the will; ii) commitment. Both are necessary in shaping the life of everyone. During childhood, the kind of “will” that operates is Intrinsic, not as a result of much reflection. As a person grows however, the “will” becomes influenced by a lot of factors including the culture of the person, tradition, education, socio-economic, and religion (Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and so on). All these influence the person's will and take it to a decisive level, i.e., the Vital will. This is where a person makes a choice after much consideration of the circumstances around. It is usually the adjusted will of the person, and it is very self-centered. The “will” has a major role to play in every person's life; it is the driving force behind all decisions in life. That is why God places a lot of value on the role of the “will” in every decision taking. It is the God-given part of every person that makes the one an independent individual.

At the point of decision for Christ, the “will” can best be described as “Reflective” in accordance with what it does. But after one becomes a Christian, his or her “reflective will” changes and a person makes a conscious effort to adapt to the “will” and decision of Christ. That is, the “reflective will” now accepts a different standard as a result of Christ and adjusts to divine changes. This is where self-actualization applies to a believer's Christian life. It is the stage every Christian has to realize where God wants him or her to be in order to operate at the highest level.

At this juncture, spiritual formation helps the person to know where the issue of “call by God” for special services fits. Apparently, the Christian’s attitude towards the Lord’s expectations of him or her can be seen in the person’s willingness to obey the scriptures. Doubtless, many people believe they have special call of God for specific services; Pastors of churches or ministries, Leaders of specific areas of life or organizations, Missionaries to other parts of the world; North or Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, and so on. The issue of “special call” might be debatable. Nevertheless, it is still within the context of every call to service that the issue of the “will of God” for a person lies.

### **Spiritual Formation brings enlightenment to a person**

Apart from the role of a person’s will and commitment, “education has the greatest influence in shaping a person’s life,” (Weber, Sept. 2006). Thus education is very important for mankind. Definitely, all proper education leads people to enlightenment. Little wonder education is taken seriously by many people such that many are prepared to spend many years to acquire it. Quite unfortunately, a good number of people in underdeveloped and developing countries are somehow deprived of access. This might be a major cause for the low levels of living standards in these areas. In fact, the situation fits God’s message through the prophet Hosea, “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge...Because you have rejected knowledge I also reject you...” (Hosea 4:6). Education does help in the development of a person’s skills and enhances the person’s fulfillment of life goals. The general purpose of education is shown in the illustration by Weber (Sept., 2006: see Appendix). The sketch shows the various levels of education as follows:

- Basic or Elementary education: This is the foundation level.
- College education: This has general components in most of the Bachelor degrees; Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) or Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.), and so on. Here also, there is general knowledge in education, and might involve both Major and Minor areas that lead to acquisition of skills.
- Seminary education. This is a vocational or professional level and might involve general Theological studies like Bible, Theology, Church History, Practical Ministry, and so on.
- Post-graduate education: This is any level beyond the College degree. It may also include seminary education as mentioned above which develops the vocational or professional expertise in a person.

Weber's sketch reveals a breakdown of the role of education in developing a person for life and ministry (i.e., service to society). The sketch also helps a person to realize his or her role in leadership development. It is from the development of leaders, indeed, the transformed ones that societies really benefit.

### **Spiritual Formation and development of societies**

All personal lives need spiritual renewal. And along the same line, all cultures of the world also need some sort of spiritual renewal. Spiritual formation based on Christ is the very basis of renewal and revival of societies. So to spark any genuine renewal, some unhealthy relationships have to be broken while the fruitful ones require maintenance or healing. It is likely that a good number of people can relate well when they are at the same depth of understanding, level of focus, purpose and vision, and so on. But it

is unadvisable to have a deeper relationship outside of Christ. Relationships in Christ are no doubt the deepest and best.

In any relationships also, there is the need for some form of spiritual renewal. The more Christ gets a hold on anyone involved in a relationship, the better the relationship tends to be stronger. This is because there will be more trust, honesty, and sacrifices for the sake of Christ. For example, in family relationships, some factors are required in order to function healthily; good communication, appreciation, strong commitment, togetherness, a person's ability to cope with crisis, spiritual healthiness, and so on. These are the important ingredients that the presence of and influence of Christ in the family provides so that the family unit is maintained. Even in small-groups relationships, the presence of Christ helps because there is sharing, caring, and helping.

Therefore, there needs to be considerable care when a Christian is involved in any form of relationship with a non-Christian. The expected care, trust, sacrifices, and so on which Christ can bring to a person's life through spiritual formation are usually missing, and Christ's name is not glorified. All believers should to practice obedience to God's word.

# **CHAPTER 7**

## **THE ROLE OF DISCIPLINES IN SPIRITUAL FORMATION**

Spiritual formation involves the daily practice of certain disciplines. Any practice in one's life which helps him or her to relate to God can be considered a spiritual discipline. Examples of the disciplines include prayer, fasting, Bible studies, meditation, service, solitude, submission, hospitality, simplicity, etc. All these disciplines have to be pursued much more deeply now than before. Every believer has to realize that God wants him or her to reach the maximum level in order to operate at God's expectation. The Lord Jesus Christ practiced all the disciplines and was therefore able to fulfill God's mission for Him in this world. In the same way, believers who were able to follow His example and master the disciplines became successful.

### **Christ and Spiritual Disciplines**

Being God's perfect example for humanity, the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled all the disciplines. His expectation is that every believer will also practice the spiritual disciplines. A thirst for God is the first step. The desire to be more like Jesus and obey Him is the motivating factor. Believers who are able to master the disciplines become very mature in spiritual matters. It is therefore important to see the disciplines as necessary spiritual growth factors needed for proper growth and functioning of every believer. Studying the disciplines through regular devotion periods and making efforts to

practice what is prescribed by the study is one of the best ways that the blessings of the book could be enjoyed.

### **Appreciate the Disciplines for your spiritual growth**

There are a lot of benefits in studying the spiritual disciplines including better understanding of Scripture, centering the mind on God, bringing relief from spiritual burdens, planning for the day and periods ahead, helping to organize the person for counseling, refining one's spiritual life (sanctification and rededication), bringing spiritual growth, receiving guidance for life, and so on. What these mean is that the persons' inner man is renewed and strengthened in addition to the increased sensitivity to God. Every practitioner of the disciplines receives direction from God which brings joy and fulfillment. These help the person to set godly priorities, leading to better perspective and a sense of deeper meaning to life. Other basic benefits of studying the disciplines include the fact that it brings greater dependency on God, and strengthens one's faith, bringing into reality the grace needed for the desired transformation.

Any believer who practices spiritual disciplines becomes much more aware of the need to develop the habit of opening up to God. The person then makes a conscious effort to listen for God's voice and direction. Bill Hybels writes in *Too Busy Not to Pray: Slowing Down to be with God* that a believer's eternal destiny, assurance as a Christian, overall spiritual growth, life plans, etc, all depend upon how one responds to the leading of God by waiting and listening for His voice (1998, p. 133-143). Concrete spiritual formation discussions such as ongoing also help to create a better understanding of the fact that a more focused and acceptable attitude to prayer yield better outcome. One will appreciate that

some problems of life that appear so impossible to overcome and are often regarded as "Life Mountains" can be overcome if the person focuses on God and sees Him as bigger than every mountain. The person is then challenged to develop courage as an essential element in overcoming every "mountain of life."

All the spiritual disciplines discussed in this book are very educative and interesting. In fact, their admonishing can spark a great desire in any believer to reexamine and rededicate himself or herself to God. While the disciplines challenge one to be content and approachable they also caution the believer to be careful of detestable life-styles so that the person can always appear before God's throne of grace in confidence. Additional impact from the studies is that the believer learns to chart a path of righteousness which will place him or her in God's will. There is always the need to submit to God in order to overcome the enemy, the devil. Obviously, godly submission is not something one must try to perform; it is the natural fruit of a close walk with Christ. It occurs through fruitful studies of God's word and the practice of the disciplines. Hybels writes that when we submit to the will of God, the purpose of God is achieved in our lives (p. 133-143).

Finally, one should be prepared to take a step forward in tackling life problems, while trusting the Lord to honor his or her requests. Our Lord God can do all things due to His absolute power over nature, circumstances of life, and hearts of men. God is the impossibility possibility performer. He can change all things, and yet, nothing can change Him. God's preparedness to answer a believer's prayer is like the promptness with which a loving earthly father wishes to satisfy his children's requests. It is heart-warming to discover that an uninterrupted flow of God's power can always

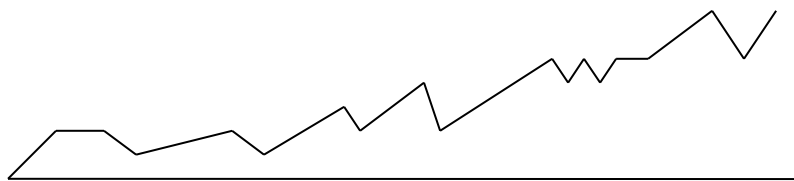
be available to the believer if the person develops the habit of maintaining a continuous relationship with Him through prayer. By so doing there will be a chain of spiritual victories in the believer's life, and a testimony of God's presence and power.

### **Types of Spiritual Disciplines**

Spiritual disciplines can be grouped into different areas, though the relation among all the disciplines is that they are dependent on one another. The types are:

- The Classic type: These are not bound by time and place. For example, fasting, prayer, meditation, and so on, can be done at any time, place, and situation.
- The Personal type: The ones which are bound to time and space. For example, evangelism, Bible study, and follow-up.
- There are some of the disciplines which also depend on cultures and traditions of an area. For example, the disciplines of body exercise, diet, and so on.

The graph of a lot of believers who are not serious in the area of spiritual disciplines might be as shown here:



In such a life as revealed by the graph what is missing might be the needed balance. The bottom line is that every believer

needs to be polished through the disciplines in order for God to use him/her. But it is important to know that one should not be very legalistic about the disciplines, or else it will lose its meaning.

# CHAPTER 8

## HOW TO FOLLOW A SPIRITUAL FORMATION PLAN

In his book, *A Hunger for God: Desiring God through Fasting and Prayer*, John Piper writes, “The state of the times extremely requires a fullness of the divine spirit in ministers, and we ought to give ourselves no rest till we have obtained it” (1997). The above quote best describes why some people decide to draw devotional plans calculated to refine their Christian lives and develop in them the needed discipline for spiritual maturity. This plan, if well followed, helps them to better appreciate the love of God, and make them more sensitive to His will. It also helps them to become strengthened in commitment, keep them from detractions, make them better equipped, and more focused for life and service of humanity. It might be helpful therefore to follow a workable spiritual growth plan as provided here.

### **A devotional plan**

Devotional plans for specified periods of time; day, week, month, quarterly, yearly, etc, are very important guides to effective spiritual formation. The details of a conscious spiritual formation plan for say one year might include the following:

- To have a Quiet time of at least 45 minutes every day for a year. It should involve thanksgiving, confession, praise and worship, prayer, and studying of scriptures. Weekend sessions might be extended to about an hour.

- To complete reading of the whole Bible, the Old and New Testament, within a year. To achieve this, there must be an effort to read at least four (4) chapters every day beginning with Genesis. Others try with quarterly schedules. For example, the quarterly breakdown for the study of the whole NT is; first, the Gospels; second, Acts – Corinthians; third, Galatians – Hebrews; and last, James – Revelations.
- To have at least a three days and at most one week of waiting in fasting and prayers within each quarter of the year. These may be either total fast devoid of food and choice drinks or a partial one with restricted diet, especially for the week fasts. Such fasts are best done when people retreat to solitary places where they can experience greater concentration and enhance deeper relationship with the Lord.
- To prepare one Bible study material (for a seminar, conference presentation, preaching, or teaching sessions) every week, especially from the weekend quiet-time sessions. Here, attention might be giving to the use of other biblical resources like commentaries, dictionaries, concordance, atlas, etc. These materials are specifically for deeper Bible study and research commitments.
- To read at least one Christian resource every forth-night.
- To devote a week to the reading, revision, and application of one spiritual discipline, especially the ones discussed in this book, so that the lessons become practical and beneficial.

In order to sustain this plan through the year, it is important to have regular evaluation at the end of every week, month, and quarter, and also do well to consult the plan constantly. Also, to ensure proper balance in the above development plan, the practitioner

should decide to make provision for uncertainties by not setting rigid time periods. Thus there should be free periods to take care of most unplanned events.

## **PART TWO**

# **DISCUSSION OF DISCIPLINES**

## INTRODUCTION TO SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES

To imitate the Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate desire of every Christian. In order to achieve this feat believers should become very sensitive to their spiritual needs through self assessment and should make conscious efforts to submit to the will of God. Therefore, the believers need to get away from the things that will distract their attention in order to be alone with God.

### Effective study of the Spiritual Disciplines

Do you know that there are more to benefit from the Bible and particularly the spiritual disciplines than we ever think? It's very amazing, when one really takes time to find out the answer. To help every reader derive maximum benefit from the disciplines discussed in Part Two of this book here are some important principles, which were taken from a devotional booklet, *The Word for you Today: June, July, August, 2007*:

1. **Learn to ask questions:** The more questions you ask, the more you'll get out of it. Bombard the text with "Who? Why? When? Where? As you do, you'll discover things you've overlooked or never seen. It will seem as though you have been given a new pair of eyes. Fresh insights will help leap out. Each time you pick up your Bible pray like this, "Open my eyes, O Lord, that I may see wonderful things in your word" (Ps. 119:18).
2. **Write down what you have discovered:** You haven't really thought through a Biblical text until you've put the thoughts gained into writing. Your notebook and your Bible should always be together. If you really value the pieces of "golden

truth” God gives you, you’ll take notes. Otherwise you’ll lose them.

**3. Make your application your ultimate goal:** James writes: “Do not merely listen to the word...Do what it says” (Jas. 1:22). D. L. Moody once said, “The Bible was not given to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives.” As you read, ask yourself questions like,

- What attitudes do I need to change?
- What discipline do I need to start or stop doing?
- What do I need to believe or stop believing?
- What relationship do I need to work on?
- And what ministry should I be rendering to others?
- How should I practice what the Spirit says?
- What prayers should I say in response to the study?

When these tips are applied to the studies of the disciplines in Part Two, deeper examination of the study would be stimulated, and understanding would also be better leading to enhanced application of the study to life.

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **SUBMISSION [I]**

(By James Yamoah)

### **Introduction**

The book of Hebrews 5:7 says, “During the days of His life on earth, He offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and He was heard because of his reverent submission.” Apostle Paul in Romans 13:1 also writes, “Everyone must submit to the governing authority, for there is no authority except that which the Lord has established.” These verses of scripture serve as backgrounds to the discussion on Submission.

### **Definition**

Submission is defined ordinarily as, “A voluntary attitude of giving in, of cooperating, of sharing a burden.” In other words, when the word “submit” is used in the Bible, it refers not only to the yielding and obeying attitude of the heart, but equally and importantly, to an attitude of cooperation and support. Submission is “Seeking not one’s own, but ever laboring for the other(s).” Submission is putting others ahead of you in order that Christ is glorified. It is one of the greatest attitudes of the Lord that made Him to fulfill the ultimate plan of God for humanity. It is a virtue that is not appealed for; it is a requirement by God.

## **Purpose**

The main objectives of studying this discipline are:

- I. To achieve in believers spiritual freedom.
- II. For believers to distinguish between genuine and stubborn self-will.
- III. To have the will of believers broken so that only God's will comes to pass in our lives.
- IV. To make believers free in order to value other people.
- V. To show obedience to both God and man

## **Biblical Principles**

- I. "And whosoever shall desire to become first shall be servant of all" (Mark 10:45).
- II. Therefore it is necessary to submit to the authorities not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience" (Rom. 13:5).
- III. Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the King as the supreme, or to governors who are sent by to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right (1 Pet. 2:13-14).

## **Personal points to consider**

- What does Paul's statement that "slaves should submit to their masters" teach concerning your relationship with those above you?
- What does Jesus' example of "submission to the will of the father" help you to understand the way we should make choices before God?

## **General questions**

- I. Should Christians submit to non-Christians' authority in every- thing? In which areas should they and in which should they not?
- II. What areas of life do you think the Lord still want you to submit to Him and why?
- III. How do you understand the biblical admonishing of "wives to submit to their own husbands" (Eph. 5:22; Col. 13:18).
- IV. Why is submission to authority a primary issue in the scriptures?

## **Application**

- When we submit to the will of God, the purpose of God is achieved in our lives (Hybels, 2006).
- Believers need to understand "submission" in the context of how slaves submit to their masters, because we are God's slaves (Romans 2:22).
- We need to submit to God in order to overcome the devil (1 Peter 5:5).

## **Conclusion**

Godly submission is not something the believer should try to perform; it is the natural fruit of a close walk with Christ. That is, once a person has truly surrendered to God, submission will be a natural outworking of the Holy Spirit in his/her life. Submitting to righteousness puts believers on the path of God's will. It also helps to keep the enemy, Satan, away from the believer in accordance with the word of God in 1 Peter 5:6. Let us learn to submit to both God and all persons, especially those in authority.

[illegible]

# CHAPTER 2

## SUBMISSION [II]

(By Nick Miller)

### Introduction

“The one and only compelling reason for submission is the example of Jesus.” (Foster, 117) “As far as we do not practice it, we are not his disciples. It is absolutely, indispensably necessary, either to our becoming or continuing as his disciples” (Wesley, 426). “Discipleship and Lordship are always interrelated. When we preach a crucified Christ, the only authentic response is for one to give up all other pursuits that might compromise one’s commitment and devote oneself completely to the *kingdom tasks* for which Christ gave his own life” (Keck, 203, italics added).

### Definition

Submission is willfully yielding to Christ and his commands in light of his power, holiness, and love. “Submission is nothing more than a decision about the relative worth of another person, a manner of dying and rising with Christ, and a way to respect and love other people” (Snodgrass, 293). Submission is self-denial without self-hatred” (Foster, 113).

### Purpose

[The objective of studying this discipline includes:]

- I. To be a disciple of and to imitate Christ.

- II. To help us to seek first the kingdom of God.
- III. To allow us to find our real identity in self-denial.
- IV. To enable us to deliver and empower others by humbly serving them.
- V. To establish a Christian community.
- VI. To lead with power and authority.
- VII. To share in the blessings of God's coming kingdom.

### **Biblical Principle[s]**

- "If anyone desire to come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Luke 9:23
- "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Eph. 5:21
- "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." Philip. 2:3-5
- "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all." Mark 9:35

### **Personal Points to Consider**

- In what areas are you struggling with submission? Is it because you have to have your own way?
- In what ways are you practicing submission in your own life?

### **Questions**

- I. If through submission to God we ultimately find self-fulfillment, why is it so hard?

- II. For Christians, are authority and submission the same thing? Is servant-hood the best leadership?
- III. Does the leadership of the church at large practice biblical submission?
- IV. Are there limits to biblical submission? (At what point does it become destructive?)
- V. Can we practice biblical submission in the way in which we handle our money?

### **Application**

- If we want to do the Lord's will, we have to practice true submission to Him.
- The first test of whether or not we are truly submissive for the interest of others is in our marriages.
- If we want be effective ministers or have an effective ministry we must practice biblical submission.

### **Conclusion**

“Under this principle you must do all your duty to your fellowmen, whether to their bodies or to their souls, denying all those worldly desires and propensities which would conflict with this duty, making Jesus Christ himself your model and his expressed will your perpetual rule” (Finney, 105).

### **[Space for notes, comment(s), and lessons learned so far]**

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# CHAPTER 3

## FASTING

(By Profaute Medeus)

### Introduction

“Virtually every religion in the world practices fasting. And every non-religious people fast for political or health reasons. So why should a Christian join this pagan parade of ascetics?” (Piper, 26) “Jesus said to them...But the time will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast” (Matt. 9:15, 16 NASB). “God’s gateway to supernatural power can become ours when we come to our heavenly father with contrite hearts and obedient spirit in fasting and prayer” (Floyd, xv).

### Definition

[It is] “The experience of being without sufficient food, going hungry. The act of going without sufficient food for a devotional or cultic purpose” (Danker, 671). [The types of fasting are as follows:]

**Normal fast:** It is going with food for a definite period during which you ingest only liquid (water and/or juice).

**Absolute fast** allows no food or water at all.

**Partial fast** omits certain food or is on schedule that includes limited eating.

**Rational fast** consist of eating or omitting certain families of foods for designated period” (Towns, 23, 24).

## **Purpose**

[The objective of studying this discipline includes:]

1. To serve God (Luke 2:37; Acts 13:2).
2. To have one's entire life transformed to Christ-likeness (Isaiah 58:3- 8; Ezra 8:28).
3. To be released from sin and to repent (Jonah 3:5-10; Deut. 9:17,18; 1 Kings 21:17- 29)
4. To seek the guidance of God for the ministry (Acts 9:9; 13: 2; 14: 21; Exod. 34:28)
5. To seek God's protection and to overcome enemies (Esther 4:16; Judges 20:24-28).
6. To lose weight and to cleanse the system of toxins to improve one's health (Smith, 11).
7. To seek blessing and to be released from suffering (1 Sam. 1:7; 1 Kings 20:31)

## **Biblical Principles**

- “Yet even now, declares the Lord, Return to me with all your heart, and with fasting, weeping, and mourning” (Joel 2:12, ANSB).
- When you fast anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but your father who sees what is done in secret will reward you” (Matt. 6:17, 18, ANSB).

## **Personal points to consider**

- Do you sometimes not feel like you have gorged enough worldliness till you have fasted in order to get rid of these spiritual “scraps”?

- What do you expect as a result of fasting? (Floyd, 211)

## **Questions**

- I. How can fasting as spiritual discipline transform your utter life?
- II. Does God always answer positively to our request when we fast (Isa. 58:3-8; Col. 2:21-23; Matt. 6:14-17; Jer. 14:12)? Give specific reasons.
- III. What are some of the biggest challenges you have faced during your fast?" (Floyd, 205).
- IV. What is the best way to fast: Normal fast? Absolute fast? Partial fast? Rational fast?
- V. Besides refraining from food, what other ritual can we consider when we fast?

## **Applications**

- In order to keep a well balanced life in all its dimensions, we have to fast periodically.
- "If we fast to subject our will to God's, he will reveal his will to us" (Towns).
- "If we fast, we can break the besetting sins that limit freedom in Christ" (Towns, 6)
- "Fasting enhances your prayer life by strengthening your desire to commune with the father in prayer through each day" (Salmonson, 21)

## **Conclusion**

"Let us be given some vegetables to eat and water to drink. At the end of ten days their appearance seemed better and they

were fatter than all the youths who had been taking the King's choice food" (Daniel 1:12b, 15 NASB). **Better shape!** Fasting is a spiritual discipline that can help us to have a better spiritual growth and tap into the power of God.

**[Space for notes, comment(s), and lessons learned so far]**

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# **CHAPTER 4**

## **ANGER MANAGEMENT**

(By Christina Womacks)

### **Introduction**

“Anger is powerful, a potentially immensely creative passion. We can compare it to love whose opposite...is not hate but apathy. If the opposite of anger is non-feeling...[and] death then anger might be considered a virtue. Thus we could define anger as a habit of passionate devotion to all humanity’s participation in the banquet of life, and staunch opposition to all that is death-dealing.” – Miriam Ukeritis (qtd. in Saussy, 9).

“Anger as a result of personal offense finds no justification in scripture. Such offences are to be accepted as part of Christian’s lot of suffering. Although we might express our displeasures at such actions, anger is inappropriate” - Charles E. Cerling, Jr. (qtd. in Saussy, 9).

### **Definition**

“Anger is the emotions, thought, and physical tenseness we experience when we believe that something or someone is treating us or someone else unfairly” (Chapman, 19). \*NT GK *Thumos* – a state of emotional agitation; fit of rage, outburst of anger (Anderson & Miller, 38). \**Orge*--a mental state of anger

typically accompanied by a desire for revenge (Anderson & Miller, 38).

## **Purpose**

[The objective of studying this discipline includes:]

- To restore the godly purpose of anger in our lives: “to motivate us to take constructive action in the face of wrongdoing or when facing injustice” (Chapman, 25).
- Aid in our becoming “slow to anger and abounding in love” (Psalm 103:8).
- Empower us with the ability to control our anger.

## **Biblical Principles**

- God is described as being “slow to anger and abounding in love. (e.g. Psalm 103: 8). We are exhorted to do likewise (e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13: 5ff).
- “...Everyone is to be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry...”( James 1: 19, 20).
- ““In your anger do not sin’: and do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” (Ephesians 4: 26).

## **Personal points to consider**

Personal inventory and reflection: any need to take ownership of or accept feeling of anger? Any need to comfort a particular person in a certain situation in a godly manner? Maybe it is time to forgive (self, others, etc.).

## Questions

- I. Our belief and attitude about anger affects the way we deal with anger in our own lives. What kind of beliefs or attitudes have you encountered in your experience (culturally, religiously, familial, etc.)? And do you think that they have positive or negative effect on your ability to manage anger?
- II. In what ways does anger serve as a *destructive* force in our lives? How might we cause this?
- III. In what ways might anger serve as a *restorative* force in our lives? How can we make this happen?
- IV. Compare and contrast God's anger with human anger.

## Application

- Two helpful questions (in most situations): Is the action I'm considering positive; ...does it have the potential for dealing with the wrong and healing the relationship? Is the action I'm considering, loving; ...is it designed for the benefit of the person at whom I am angry? (Chapman, 35).
- Chapman's Model: (1) consciously acknowledge [your anger]; (2) Restrain your immediate response; (3) Locate the focus of your anger; (4) Analyze your action; and (5) Take constructive action (35-46).

## Conclusion

Anger is a physical and emotional state that has its origin in the God spark within us; the potential for anger is an attribute that we share with God. As humans it acts as compass that points us in holy or evil directions. Ideally, it is the physiological barometer that

alerts us to evil and harm, similar to the physical experience of pain. Anger unmanaged lashes out and destroys; anger managed leads to restoration (both personal and relational), reformation, and ultimately justice. The challenge is to learn to control anger, rather than allow it to control us.

**[Space for notes, comment(s), and lessons learned so far]**

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# **CHAPTER 5**

## **SPIRITUAL RETREAT**

(By Mike Putt)

### **Introduction**

Spiritual retreat as we know it does not seem to be a discipline by anyone's standards. However, when we read what the author's have to say, spiritual retreat is necessary. The longer you provide life-giving water to others, the quicker your own "well" can run dry (Stone and Rusaw). Spiritual retreat is more than just going to a convention.

### **Definition**

Spiritual retreat is taking time away from a busy schedule of life to focus one's attention on their relationship with Christ. "In order to keep moving forward, we all need to pull over and get refreshed at a spiritual rest area" (Stone and Rusaw).

### **Purpose**

[The purpose of studying this discipline includes:]

- To refresh your soul so that you can "feed" others effectively.
- Broaden your understanding of your relationship with Christ.
- To actually have a relationship with Christ.

- To have a chance to slow down your pace of life.

### **Biblical Principle[s]**

- “Immediately after this, Jesus made his disciples to get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake while He sent the people home. After, he went up to the hills by himself to pray.” (Matt. 14:22-23 NLT)
- There are many instances in the bible where characters retreated to be alone with God. Jesus did it often in his three years ministry.

### **Personal points to consider**

1. Am I in the position to say that I am in a PERSONAL relationship with Christ?
2. When was the last time you took time to focus on Christ?
3. Do I attend conferences because other people are going or because I fully intend to get something out of the event?

### **Questions**

- I. When you think of spiritual retreat, what do you picture in your mind?
- II. What does Stone and Rusaw’s quote mean in the introduction?
- III. Is spiritual retreat something you should do alone or with a group of people?
- IV. Is there or should there be a set pattern to a retreat?
- V. Can we say that spiritual retreat is really biblical? If so, then how can we make such a claim?

## Application

- Take time at least once a year to get away from life and focus on your relationship with Christ.
- Don't go on retreats, just go on a retreat. Go on then prepared to get closer to Christ.
- Start this practice by devoting just a half day per month.

## Conclusion

"The most important eighteen inches is the distance from the head to the heart." (as quoted by Beckett) Without caring for ourselves we cannot be effective minister[s] of the Gospel. Spiritual retreat can be something as little as going to a room in your house or taking a week trip to the mountains. Either way, it is a great tool to focus your mind and your heart on the Lord.

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# **CHAPTER 6**

## **GUIDANCE**

(By Jason Bohl)

### **Introduction**

“Dwell in the life, love, power, and the wisdom of God, in unity with another and with God; and the peace and the wisdom of God will fill your hearts that nothing will rule in you but the life which stands in the Lord your God.” (George Fox)

### **Definition**

[Guidance is defined as] “The Direct, active, immediate leading of the Spirit together. Corporate Guidance is when God leads through his people,” (Foster)

### **Purpose**

[The objective of studying this discipline includes:]

- To allow Holy Spirit to guide his people in unity.
- To provide counsel to individuals who desire to hear the word of the Lord.
- To live under the Lordship of Christ as a body of believers.
- To be obedient to the will of God.
- To provide understanding and unity for the community of believers.

- To deepen our relationship with God.

### **Biblical Principles**

1. “There is one body and one spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.” (Ephesians 4: 4-6)
2. “For it seemed good to the *Holy Spirit and to us* to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials.” (Acts 15: 28)
3. “Again I say to you, that if two agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where two or three have gathered in My name, I am there in their midst.” (Matthew 18: 19-20)

### **Personal points to consider**

- Have you ever heard the voice of God?
- Have you ever experienced divine counsel through a brother or sister in Christ?

### **Questions**

- I. Has anyone here experienced corporate guidance?
- II. What are some positive and negative aspects to corporate guidance?
- III. Can this concept of corporate guidance be valid, if every member in your church is not a devoted Christian?
- IV. How can you tell if the persons giving the counsel are speaking from God or for their selves?
- V. Can this concept of corporate guidance be applicable in other setting outside the church?

## Application

- Guidance can come from individuals as well as the Bible.
- “God does guide the individual richly and profoundly, but he also guides group of people and can instruct the individual through the group experience.” (Willard)
- In John 17:17-21, Jesus prays for Unity and Truth for his followers. If we are going to be united through the truth we must learn to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

## Conclusion

“Man is meant to live in an intermittent but ongoing conversation with God...he truly lives only by the constant speaking of God in his soul, *or by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God.*”

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# **CHAPTER 7**

## **THE PRIVILEGE OF PRAYER**

(By Marla Parrish)

### **Introduction**

“When it comes to prayer, you either believe in a powerful God or you believe in nothing at all” NCC, 2005, Lexington, KY. “Prayer is the fuel that will allow us to be successful as we follow God’s leading in this ministry. Without prayer nothing will happen” - Mark Ward, graduate of CBS [Cincinnati Bible Seminary] and Director of Mike’s Mission to Thailand.

### **Definition**

“Prayer is a conversation, communication with God. When we pray we talk to God, aloud or within our thoughts” (Willard, 184). “Prayer is a dialogue between two persons who love each other” (Rinker, 22).

### **Purpose**

- I. To grow in relationship with God, thus growing our spiritual life.
- II. To seek answers, receive guidance, release emotions, [and] receive blessings, for healing.
- III. To find peace, to change our hearts, for healing, to change our perspective and irrational beliefs and values.
- IV. For assurance that our relationship with God is not one sided.
- V. To praise our creator; thanksgiving for his love and blessings.

### **Biblical principle**

- 1 Thessalonians 5: 17: “Pray without ceasing.”
- Psalm 68:16-20: “He has given heed to the voice of my prayer.”

### **Personal points to consider**

1. “I am so grateful I did not wait until I was perfect or have everything straight before I started praying for other, otherwise I would have begun” (Foster, 38).
2. “Getting honest with God means learning to give every problem and need to him before we have exhausted all other possibilities” (Littleton, 23).
3. “We have leaders who do not worry about the future, who forgives the past and who guides us in the present” (24).

### **Questions**

- I. How often do you pray?
- II. When and where have you found yourself most comfortable praying?
- III. What are some of the steps that we, as leaders of the church, can take to develop praying congregation?
- IV. In Dallas Willard’s book, he stated the nature of case, prayer almost always involve other disciplines and spiritual activities if it is to go well, especially study, meditation, and worship, and often solitude and fasting as well as (184). Do you agree to disagree with this and why?
- V. Have you been blocked from praying, meaning, due to being angry with God, feeling apathetic, etc? What do you do to resort your relationship with him?

## Application

- How do we apply prayer to our lives?
- The more comfortable we become in our prayer lives, the more willing we are to surrender our lives to him, thus allow him to mold and change our heart for his purpose. So begin by practicing it, speaking from your heart.
- “Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am humble in heart, and YOU WILL FIND REST FOR YOUR SOUL. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matt. 11:28-30)

## Conclusion

Prayer is an awesome outlet and release for our own spiritual growth and maturity in Christ. Jesus was always praying. One characteristic about him that I believe is that God wanted us to see of Him that He was always praying. People must see it as daily chore or hassle, but in its proper context prayer can be the single most powerful tool that a Christian can possess. It is our lifeline to our Creator. Joshua Stone, CCU (Cincinnati Christian University) undergrad.

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# CHAPTER 8

## WORSHIP [I]

(By Rafael Soares)

### Introduction

“Everyone who is called by my name, and who I have created for my glory, which I have formed, even I have” (Isaiah 43:7-NASB). “Worship is the most momentous, the most urgent, the most glorious action that can take place in human life” (Barth, [quoted in J.J. Von Allmen, 1965]).

### Definition

“The word worship itself is fascinating. It is the shortened version of the old Anglo-Saxon word *weorthscipe*, which is transliterated ‘worthship.’ It simply means ‘worthiness.’ Thus to worship someone means to recognize and declare that person’s worth. But to worship God pushes worth-ship to its ultimate limits, for true Christian worship calls us to declare the absolute worthiness of God and relative worthiness of everyone and everything else” (Basden).

“Worship, no less than believing, manifests the delicate relationship between grace and freedom, as those ‘gifted’ give thanks for God’s grace. Whatever language, gesture, [and] pattern of worship we choose, they have been granted to us in our time and place by culture formed with God’s care...God. Such convictions are

the matrix of worship; without them, worship is meaningless. Therefore, as response, acts of worship are believers' celebrations of what God is about in the world," (Burkhart).

### **Purpose**

1. To fulfill the reason we were created (Matt. 4:10; Deut. 6:5; 10, 20).
2. To speak to God (Hosea 14:1, 2, "sacrifices of our lips").
3. To speak to God (Rev. 5:12, "worthy is the Lamb," Isaiah 6:3 - "Holy is the Lord of hosts").
4. To win over our enemies (2 Chron. 20:22 - victory of Jehoshaphat against the men of Ammon and Moab).

### **Biblical Principle[s]**

- I. "To the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to praise of His glory" (Ephesians 1:12-NASB).
- II. "For then I will give to the people purified lips, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord, to serve him shoulder to shoulder (Zephaniah 3:9-NASB).

### **Personal points to consider**

- Do you spend a daily specific personal time to worship the Lord?
- Do you limit your worship expressions in public to the same attitudes that the people around you have or do you have enough courage to be authentic?

### **Questions**

- I. Do you agree with the sentence: "God doesn't receive music; God receives worship?"

- II. Is the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church's worship an expression of devotion/ love to God or an entertainment?
- III. Do you think that specific rhythms (Rock, Reggae, Blues, Samba, etc.,) are inappropriate for music at the church?
- IV. In what way do you worship God sincerely and with freedom?

### **Application**

- We must live a daily life of worship; not only moments of worship on Sunday mornings.
- Like King David, to be extravagant-free, worshipping the Lord (1 Samuel 6:14).
- We must be sincere and honest with God in worship (Acts 16:25 - Paul and Silas in the prison).
- We must worship Him in all times - not only when we are comfortable and happy.
- Worship[ping] God is a priority in our lives; everything else is secondary (Luke 10:38 - Martha and Mary).

### **Conclusion**

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymn and spiritual songs with gratitude in your heart to God” (Colossians 3:16 - NASB). A worship lifestyle is the application of the spiritual disciplines in your daily life: prayer, fasting meditation and study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, time management, and family time, exercise and weight control, speech, patience, evangelism, honesty and LOVE! An extravagant love to the Lord!!!

# **CHAPTER 9**

## **WORSHIP [II]**

(By Chris Owens)

### **Introduction**

“Worship has always been central component of corporate spirituality and the early church quickly assimilated and adapted elements of synagogue liturgy” (Boa). “Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That’s the kind of people the father is out looking for: those who are simple and honest [in] themselves before him in their worship. Those who worship Him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration” (John 4, message).

### **Definition**

Worship is a way of gladly reflecting back to God the radiance of his worth (Piper). Our English word “worship” is a shortened form of worthship, which means to “attribute worth” (Kimball, the emerging church). “[Worship] is the bowing of our innermost spirit before Him in deepest humility and reverence” (Sanders).

### **Purpose**

- I. The need or desire to worship is in every person
- II. We were created to have fellowship with God
- III. To thank God for his love and sacrifice
- IV. Corporate worship strengthens the whole church

- V. An extension of our daily walk with God

### **Biblical Principles**

- I. "You shall have no other gods before me." Exodus 20:3.
- II. "Come, let us sing for Joy to the Lord: let us shout aloud to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our maker..." (Ps. 95:1-2, 6)
- III. "Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. (Ps. 24:3-4)
- IV. "When you gather for worship, each one of you should be prepared with something that will be useful for all: sing a hymn, teach a lesson, tell a story, lead a prayer, [and] provide an insight. When we worship the right way, God doesn't stir us up into confusion; he brings us into harmony. This goes for all the church, no exceptions." (1 Cor. 14)
- V. "Therefore, I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, Holy and pleasing to God- this is your spiritual act of worship." (Romans 12:1)
- VI. "...The worship of God is carried on by spiritual rather than physical rites, in which the 'sacrifices' are the selves ("bodies") of God is carried rather than animal substitutes." (Kee, referring to Romans 12:1)

### **Personal Points to Consider**

- Can you ascend the hill of God daily or weekly? Are your hands clean and is your heart pure?

- How are you contributing to worship in your congregation?

### **Question**

1. Is there a right way or a wrong way to worship?
2. What are some ways that we [have] to worship outside the typical Sunday worship gathering?
3. How can you “offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God”?
4. What are acceptable ways to worship? (Psalm 24:3-4; Deut. 26:10)

### **Application**

- Having the right attitude is crucial in acceptable worship (Mark 7:6-9).
- Do not judge others by the way they worship (Colossians 2:16-17)

### **Conclusion**

Jesus, priceless treasure, source of purest pleasure, truest friend to me: long my heart hath panted, ‘til it well-nigh fainted, thirsting after thee. Thine I am, O spotless lamb, I will suffer nought to hide thee, ask for nought beside thee,” Johann Franck.

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# CHAPTER 10

## WORSHIP [III]

(By David Kohn)

### Introduction

How do you see God? In light of who He is, how do you see self? ...Divine cleansing leads to a dedicated life.

### Definition

[The] Greek word [for worship] is *Proskuneo*...submissive, lowliness, and deep respect. Literally: “to kiss toward,” (Matt. 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; Acts 8:27; 1 Cor. 14:25; Rev. 19:10; 22:9). [Another] Greek word is *Latreia* or *Latreuo*...to serve, service (Heb. 9:12; Rom. 12:1). “At its heart, worship is the reply of the creature to the Creator. It is the response of the beloved to the Lover. It is the reaction of the ransomed to the Redeemer” – Randall Harris & Rubel Shelly (The Second Incarnation, 118).

### Purpose

1. Serve God daily out of reverence/deep respect for who He is.
2. Honor Him with your entire being.
3. Glorify the Lord for who He is by striving to imitate Jesus.
4. Express heartfelt gratitude for Him rescuing you out of the dominion of darkness and transferring you into the Kingdom of light.

### **Biblical Principle[s]**

- *Proskuneo*: Matt. 8:2 = “And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, ‘Lord, if you are willing, You can make me clean.’” Rev. 5:14 = “And the four living creatures kept saying, ‘Amen.’ And the elders fell down and worshiped.”
- *Latreuo*: Rom. 12:1= “Therefore, I urge you...by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God...your spiritual service of worship.”

### **Personal Points to Consider**

- In your daily life how do you show adoration for God?
- Should daily worship of God make a difference in your life? If so, how?

### **Questions**

1. How do you allow God to be a part of your daily life?
2. How can daily worship lead to continual transformation?
3. What does it mean to you to be a living sacrifice?

### **Application**

- I. In order to worship God we must consciously come to terms with His identity: Holy, Merciful, Powerful, the Life, the Truth, the Way, the Light, [and] the Rescuer.
- II. In order to worship God we must come to terms with who we are... totally dependent beings for our very existence.
- III. In order to worship God we must accept divine love and forgiveness.

- IV. In order to worship God we must [know] His call for each of our lives.

## Conclusion

“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” – Deut. 6:5. “... Since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire” - Heb. 12:28-29. “To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God, to devote the will to the purpose of God” - William Temple (Foster, 158).

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# **CHAPTER 11**

## **PATIENCE [I]**

(By Melania Selaru)

### **Introduction**

“But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” (Gal. 5:22- 23)

### **Definition**

[It is the] Capacity to wait calmly or without complaint, the ability to not be impetuous and to remain steadfast, despite opposition, difficulty or adversity.

### **Purpose**

- To be a disciple of and imitate Jesus.
- To control anger and rashness.
- To build the capacity of forgiveness and love for others.
- To bring peace in our and others lives
- To help us seek God

### **Biblical principles**

- I. “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on your heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience; bearing with one

another, whoever has a complaint against anyone.”  
(Col. 3:12)

- II. “With all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love.” (Eph. 4:2)
- III. “Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.” (2 Tim. 4:2 )
- IV. “Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and the late rains. You too, be patient, strengthen your hearts, and wait for the coming of the Lord is near.” (James 5:7-9)
- V. “Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate his perfect patience as an example for those who believe in Him for eternal life.” (1 Tim. 1:16)

### **Personal points to consider**

- Why am I struggling with the lack of patience?
- Is it possible to learn patience?

### **Questions**

1. What are some practical things gained from being patient?
2. Is patience one of the most challenging virtues of centuries?
3. In your day to day life, what do you do to show patience?
4. What are some factors that stop us from being patient?
5. What are the negative results of impatience?

## Application

- If we want to follow Christ, we have to practice real patience within us and among others.
- It helps us to feel God's presence in our lives, it improves our spiritual lives.
- It facilitates us to forgive people and understand them and to behave in a Christian manner.

## Conclusion

“Without patience and tolerance in our relationship with people, our lives would become unbearable” (The Romanian Spirituality – The Superiors from the Monastery Optina). “God wants from us one thing: to be humans...for some people, the sky is empty” (Father Sofian - The Monastery Antim, Bucharest).

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# CHAPTER 12

## PATIENCE [II]

(By Alisha Bates)

### Introduction

“In your patience possess ye your soul” (Luke 21:19, KJV). Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete not lacking anything” (James 1:14, NIV). “The only way God can teach us patience is to test us and try us, and the only way we can learn patience is to surrender and let God have his way” (Wiersbe).

### Definition

Webster says, [Patience is] “Sustaining trouble unflinchingly; persevering.” Patience comes from the Greek word, *Makrothumia*, which is defined as endurance, constancy, steadfastness, perseverance, especially as shown in bearing troubles and ills. [It is] The endurance of wrong without anger or retaliation (LeFan). Synonyms: Composed, Uncomplaining.

### Purpose

1. It is a mark of maturity and wisdom.
2. Patience helps us to show others God’s love.
3. Patience helps us control our anger and selfishness.
4. Patience helps us understand the heart of God.

## **Biblical Principles**

- “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).
- A man’s wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory that he will overlook an offense (Proverbs 19:11).
- “But the fruit of the spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self Control. Against such thing there is no Law” (Galatians 5: 22-23).

## **Personal points to consider**

- Who or what do you have the most difficult being patient with? What does this reveal about your heart?
- Who is the most patient person you know? How do you suppose he or she grew to be so patient?

## **Questions**

- I. What area of your life are you the most impatient with? How?
- II. What area of your life are you the most patient with? How?
- III. What do you think is the biggest manifestation of our impatience as a society?
- IV. In what ways has God shown patience to mankind?

## Application

- Be patient in trials! This is the only way you will learn patience! (LeFan).
- Become aware of your current patience level.
- Ascribe to a higher standard that you are currently attaining.

## Conclusion

“We can’t redirect the wind, but we [can] adjust our sails.”

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# **CHAPTER 13**

## **[CHRISTIAN] MEDITATION**

(By Kristy King)

### **Introduction**

“It involves no hidden mysteries, no secret mantras, no mental gymnastics, and no esoteric flight into the cosmic consciousness. The truth of the matter is that the great God of the universe, the Creator of all things desires our fellowship” (Foster, 17).

### **Definition**

“Christian meditation, very simply, is the ability to hear God’s voice and obey His word” (Foster, 17). Christian meditation is a form of quiet contemplation often associated with prayer or study of biblical scripture.

### **Purpose**

- To grow in relationship with God.
- To become more like Jesus.
- To let God take control of your thought and to let him reveal things to you during your meditation.

### **Biblical principle**

1. “But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night,” Psalm 1:2.

2. "When I remember you in my bed, I meditate on you in the night watches," Psalm 63:6.
3. "My eyes anticipate the night watches, that I may meditate on Your word," Psalm 119:148.
4. "On the glorious splendour of your majesty and on your wonderful work I meditate," Psalm 148:5.
5. "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it, for then you will make your way prosperous and you will have success," Joshua 1:8.

### **Personal points to consider**

What we think about is very important; our thought determine our behaviour.

### **Questions**

- I. How many of you are able to find time in your day to meditate on regular basis?
- II. What kind of thing do you find yourself meditating upon?
- III. Has there been time in your life when meditation has helped you during either a difficult time or time when you felt far away from God? Explain.
- IV. How can you make meditation a habit in your daily life?
- V. For those that have a harder time meditating on His word what tends to be the distraction?
- VI. Since there are often time of misconceptions about meditations and its place in the church, how can we introduce Christian meditation in our churches?

## Application

- “No other habit can do more than transform your life and make you more like Jesus than daily reflection on scripture... if you look up all the times God speaks about meditation in the Bible, you will be amazed at the benefits He has promised to those who take time to reflect on His word throughout the day” (Warren, 190).
- It is the way to obtain understanding and truth in the word of God.

## Conclusion

“Meditation is focused thinking. It takes serious effort. You select verse and reflect on it over and over in your mind...if you know how to worry, you already know how to meditate” (Warren, 190). Some simple steps to meditation on God’s word:

1. Go to a quiet place and find a comfortable position.
2. Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide you.
3. Read through the Bible at your own pace.
4. Stop and think about a word when it jumps out to you and think about how that scripture applies to your Life.

What should we focus on while meditating? Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brethren whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is right, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good report, if there is any excellence and if anything is worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”

## [Space for notes, comment(s), and lessons learned]

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# CHAPTER 14

## MEDITATING ON SCRIPTURE

(By Shawnee Fleenor)

### Introduction

Christian meditation most frequently refers to meditation on a passage of Scripture, though many other types exist and are practiced by Christians. Meditation is also practiced by non-Christians in various forms and levels of intensity. In Christian meditation on scripture, “[t]he truth being meditated upon passes from the mouth into the mind and down into the heart, where through quiet rumination - regurgitation, if you will - it produces in the person praying a loving faith-filled response” (Foster, *Prayer*, 143). (Note Foster’s connection between meditation and prayer.)

### Definition

Scriptural meditation is the mental practice of focusing one’s thinking (or pondering, reflecting, ruminating) on a particular, brief passage of scriptural meditation as “mental prayer.”

### Purpose

- I. Differently than in Bible study, which provides *information*, Bible meditation provides *formation*.
- II. “Christian mediation aims at deepening a relationship that has been formed” (Moffatt 13).

- III. “[...] to provide a framework or setting for a personal heart-to-heart conversation with Christ” (Rohrbach 3).
- IV. “[To] create the emotional and spiritual space which allows Christ to construct an inner sanctuary in the heart” (Foster, *Celebration*, 20).
- V. “[...] to see, to hear, to touch the biblical narrative. In the simple way we begin to enter the story and make it our own” (Foster, *Prayer*, 147).
- VI. “[In meditation] God implants in us a desire for a far-off country, which is God’s own self” (Johnson 21).

### **Biblical Principles**

- Joshua 1:8: “Do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you may be prosperous and successful” (NIV).
- Psalm 119:97: “Oh, how I love your law! I meditation on it all day long” (NIV).
- Psalm 119:99: “I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes” (NIV).
- Psalm 143:5: “I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done” (NIV).

### **Application**

1. “The vision of God comes only to those [whose] minds have been prepared and enriched by brooding long on spiritual things” (Radcliffe 126).
2. “We cannot burn the eternal flame of the inner sanctuary and remain the same for the Divine Fire will consume everything that is impure” (Foster, *Celebration*, 20).

3. “With Christ at the center of our being, we view events in their proper perspective” (Moffatt 13).

### **Personal Points to consider**

In meditative prayer, “[w]e must first have our minds filled with and disciplined by scripture before we can, with genuine profit, enter into the holy in unmediated communion” (Foster, *Prayer*, 145-146)

### **Questions**

- I. In view of the comments we’ve read and discussed here, how does that meditation lead into prayer?
- II. Knowing the fallibility of our imagination, what would be some appropriate safeguards to employ when preparing to use our “sacred imagination” in meditating on scripture (beyond Foster’s obvious point about filling and disciplining our minds in scripture)?
- III. How could we introduce meditation to our congregations in a practical, accessible way that demonstrates the viability and benefits of this often neglected discipline?
- IV. What are other methods of “Christian” meditation that do not involve preparatory Bible study?
- V. Foster’s comment listed under “Personal Points to Consider” sounds true and ideal on first reading, but is it too exclusive? We can probably each come up with an example in which a relatively untutored individual experienced tremendous fellowship with God. Is a disciplined approach to scripture the only approach to “unmediated communion” with God?

- VI. If meditation is also practiced by non-Christians and, as some Christians claim regarding non-Christian methods, can lead into dangers such as demonic possession, why should Christians practice this discipline? Wouldn't we, through examples, be leading "weaker brothers" into danger, or be misleading non-Christian observers?

## **Conclusion**

"Above all [devotional thinkers] need to learn to remember that meditation or contemplation is not normally a lifetime way of praying, even for active apostles" (Green 11). For all its wonders and benefits, meditation is still simply a tool. We pursue not tools but God Himself.

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# **CHAPTER 15**

## **STUDY [OF SCRIPTURE]**

(By Dawn Owens)

### **Introduction**

How pleasing is your word to my palate, sweeter than honey, (Psalm 119:103, JSB). “Knowledge must come through action; you can have no test which is not fanciful, save by trial” (Sophocles, Trachiniae Greek tragic dramatist (496 - 406 BC).

### **Definition**

[Study of Scriptures is] - An experience in which through careful attention the mind is enabled to move in a certain direction (Foster). The discipline of study is central to the purpose of renewing the mind in such a way that we can respond appropriately to the truths of God’s word (Boa). The act or process of applying the mind so as to acquire knowledge or understanding by investigating, reading, etc. (Webster’s Dictionary).

### **Purpose**

1. Having an intimate relationship with God.
2. Being capable of teaching, preaching, and sharing God’s truth with others: Christian and non-Christian.
3. Standing firm to the beliefs of the Christian faith.
4. To be the word to the world.
5. To gain understanding and direction for your life.

### **Biblical Principle**

- You will know the truth and the truth will set you free (John 8:32, NIV).
- Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15, NIV).

### **Personal points to consider**

1. If you had a loved one who left a journal behind of their thoughts would you take the time to read it, if only to be able to hear their voice again? So it can be with God's word.
2. It's been said that God's word is love letters to his people. Do you read the word like he's writing about his love for you?
3. What types of resources do you need to obtain in order to conduct an in depth study of God's word?
4. Do you pray before you study God's word?

### **Questions**

- I. How do you experience God while studying his word? Does praying beforehand have an impact on your study?
- II. What technique(s) do you use in studying God's word?
- III. Does your knowledge of the word affect your theology and your worldview?
- IV. Do you study better alone or with a group? Why?
- V. What type of environment(s) do you enjoy studying in?

## Application

- There are many resources you can use to study: Various Bible translations, commentaries, lexicons, yearly study plans, etc.
- Techniques for study can vary in different ways of studying the word.
- Consistent study of God's word cultivates eternal values and priorities; guidance for decision making, assists us in overcoming temptation, and enhances our knowledge of God and ourselves (Boa).

## Conclusion

The next time you take time to study the word of God, consider these things: honest on your lips, love letters left for you, a journal written by your loved one. What is God speaking to you now?

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# CHAPTER 16

## SIMPLICITY [I]

(By Cindy Cooper)

### Introduction

As listeners followed his logic with mouths open in awe, they realized they were not sitting at the feet of another arrogant scribe but rather before the God-man, the Messiah Himself (Swindol). Part of what makes Christian Spirituality “simple” is that it has a single focus: Christ. All else radiates from there or is to be set aside, (Spirit Home). And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 18:2-3; Bible Topics).

### Definition

Simplicity 1: “The state of being simple, uncomplicated, or uncompounded[;] 2a: lack or subtlety or penetration: **Innocence, Naivete**[;] b: folly, silliness[;] 3: freedom from pretence or guile: **Condor**[;] 4a: directness of expression: **Clarity**[;] b: restraint in ornamentation: **Austerity**. (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary Tenth Edition. Springfield, MA.). Simplicity is freedom. (Foster C. of D.)

## **Purpose**

1. The detachment from the confusion all around us in order to have a richer attachment to God. Christian meditation leads us to the inner wholeness necessary to give ourselves to God freely.” (Foster, C. of D.)
2. Resolve: that all men should live for the glory of God. Resolved second: that, “whether others do or not I will.”
3. Love is not patronizing and charity isn’t about pity, it is about love. Charity and Love are the same – with charity you give love, so don’t just give money but reach out your hand instead. (Vardey)

## **Biblical principle**

- Start and end the day with prayer. Come to God as a child. If you find it hard to pray you can say, “Come Holy Spirit, guide me, protect me, and clear out my mind so that I can pray.” (Vardey)
- For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversations in the world, and more abundantly to you - ward (2 Cor. 1:12; Bible - Topics).

## **Personal points to consider**

What do you rely on to give you comfort in the aftermath of a disaster, such as Hurricane Katrina, 911, or tragedy?

## **Questions**

- I. What are some ways that you could simplify your life?

- II. Do you pray and listen for God's answer?
- III. Do you feel that everything from your faith and soul to outward material possessions are gift from God?
- IV. Do you try to hang onto material possessions even after they have lost their usefulness to you?
- V. Can you think of two simple acts of kindness that you could do in the next three days?

### **Application**

- 1. Buy things for usefulness.
- 2. Say no to addictions, needs only.
- 3. Give things away.
- 4. Say no to modern day gadgets.
- 5. Learn to enjoy things without owning them.
- 6. Develop a deep appreciation for creation.
- 7. Be a healthy skeptic on buy now pays later schemes.
- 8. "Let what you say be simply 'yes or no'; anything more than that comes for evil, Matthew 5: 37.
- 9. Reject oppression.
- 10. Shun anything that distracts you from seeking first the kingdom of God.

### **Conclusion:**

The simple path;  
The fruit of silence prayer  
The fruit of prayer is faith  
The fruit of faith is Love  
The fruit of Love is service  
The fruit of service is peace

# CHAPTER 17

## SIMPLICITY [II]

(By Steve Poston)

### Introduction

“Simplicity is freedom. Duplicity is bondage. Simplicity brings joy and balance. Duplicity brings anxiety and fear” (Foster - *Celebration*). “Because we lack a divine center, our need for security has led us into an insane attachment to things” (Foster - *Celebration*). “Simple living is not about living in poverty or self-inflicted deprivation. Rather, it is about living an examined life – one in which you have determined what is important, or ‘enough’ for you, discarding the rest” (*The Simple Living Network*).

### Definition

“The Christian discipline of simplicity is an inward reality that results in an outward lifestyle” (Foster-Celebration). “Simple Living is an individual matter: a person choosing before God how best a steward of his gifts in today’s world of such gross inequalities” (Carol Westphal quoted in Sider). “Living in a way that is outwardly simple and inwardly rich” (Duane Elgin quoted on *The Simple Living Network*).

### Purpose

1. To put material wealth and possessions in proper perspective.

2. To develop trust in God as provider & protector.
3. To free the spirit of worries related to the accumulation and maintenance of material possessions.
4. To seek first the kingdom of God.
5. To find true pleasures in the gifts God has provided.
6. To make resources available for meeting needs of others.

### **Biblical Principle[s]**

- I. **Damage of Worry** – “Still others, are like seed among thorns. Here the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful,” Mark 4:18-19.
- II. **Admonition against Hoarding** – “Then he said to them, ‘watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possession,” Luke 12:15.
- III. **True Treasure** - “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field,” Matthew 13:44.
- IV. **Surrender** – “Jesus looked at him and loved him. ‘One thing you lack, ‘he said. ‘Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, Follow me,” Mark 10:21.
- V. **Balance** – the Old Testament framed property ownership in equilibrium of being highly desirable but not needlessly accumulating possessions at the expense of others. Old Testament Law sought to make it achievable for all God’s people but also put safeguards in place (Blomberg).

- VI. **Generosity and Concern for the Poor** - “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?” James 2:15-16

### **Personal points to consider**

- Can you decide on a particular economic livability level and rest and be contented with that even if your income exceeded it?
- What is your biggest obstacle to a simple life?
- What is one aspect of your life in which you could begin to implement the discipline of simplicity?

### **Question**

1. What personal benefits do you see to a life of simplicity?
2. What is the balance between being a Christian and being rich?
3. What is our responsibility to the poor? As individuals? As the church? As a nation?
4. Do Christians have a different responsibility to poor Christians than to others in poverty?
5. In what way do you see simplicity as a greater challenge to younger generations than older generations?
6. What impact will this have on Christian ministry in the future?
7. How does the outward expression of simplicity effect evangel-ism?

## Application

- “Simplicity is keenly relevant to the massive problems of our world”(Foster-Freedom).
- “It’s estimated that if every American Christian would simply tithe that the additional funds that would be generated would be enough to wipe out world poverty in our lifetime (Blomberg).

## Conclusion

“Holy obedience-the center of inward simplicity...the central desire to know and follow Jesus as Lord-the willingness to give up all for Christ... The quality is essential to true simplicity of life...” (Foster - *Freedom*). Living out of the Divine center-God at the center of all of life’s experience...it’s the heart of simplicity... The many facets of our lives come under the unifying control of God and find a refreshing balance and equilibrium of life...” (Foster - *Freedom*).

“Christian simplicity frees us from this modern mania” (the rat race – the complexity of rushing to achieve and accumulate more and more)...” it brings sanity to our compulsive extravagance, and peace to our frantic spirit... It allows us to see material things for what they are- goods to enhance life, not to oppress life...” (Foster – *Freedom*).

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# **CHAPTER 18**

## **STEWARDSHIP**

(By Rob Clendening)

### **Introduction**

“From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked” (Luke 12:48b, TNIV).

### **Definition**

According to the Webster Dictionary: [It is] “The careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one’s care.” It is about more than money. We are “trustees” of everything in our life (Dietze).

### **Purpose**

1. “God entrusts possessions to Christians and holds them accountable for their use, as a tool to grow God’s eternal kingdom, as a test of [every] believer’s faithfulness to God, and as a trademark that their lives reflect Christ’s values” (CSA).
2. Practice for what really matter
3. [Have] A heavenly investment plan.
4. [Know] How God grabs our heart
5. [There should be] Active surrender of our life to God (Foster)

6. Change: Stephen and Philip were selected to be stewards and it changed their lives (McManus 2).

### **Biblical principle[s]**

- I. “Whoever can be trusted with very little, can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you are not trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” (Luke 16: 10-11, TNIV).
- II. God requires us to actively manage that which He has entrusted to us (Matt. 25:14-30).
- III. “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Matthew 6:19-21, NTIV).
- IV. God owns everything and does not need our money (Rom. 11:35-36).

### **Personal points to consider**

- We are lazy if we do not plan enough, and if we plan too much we are not living by faith (Burkett 1).
- Do you take better care of something that is borrowed?

### **Discussion questions**

1. How do we measure good stewardship?
2. How do we know when we cross the line in terms of too much planning and control?

3. How do we carefully manage yet avoid the temptation to take back ownership?
4. If a congregation holds a pastor accountable for stewardship, should the congregation also be accountable for personal stewardship?
5. If we only have a little money and we are considered good stewards, does that also hold for giving of ourselves in ways that are not necessary aligned with our spiritual gifts?

### **Applications**

- Extra Responsibility: Church leaders also have special responsibilities as church stewards (Stetzer).
- Risky: “We must be willing to trust God and risk everything” (McManus 1).
- Surrendered: Admit that everything belongs to God (Burkett 2).
- Be organized and intentional; and keep notes about your stewardship decisions (Bailey).

### **Conclusion**

“To Jesus, our attitude towards money is of utmost importance, because it is a reflection of our attitude towards God” (Moodie and Hoos).

### **[Space for notes, comment(s), and lessons learned]**

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# CHAPTER 19

## HONESTY [I]

(By Kendahl Lund)

### Introduction

“The best thing that could ever happen to you is for your sins to be broadcast on the 5:00 news,” Derek Webb. “How often we fashion cloaks of evasion-beam-proof shelters – in order to elude our Eternal Lover” Richard J. Foster. “And even if I confess not to You, what could be hidden in me, O Lord, from You whose eyes the deepest depth of man’s conscience lies bare?” Augustine “[S]o many people join the Church without the protective clothing that takes us months to put on. There they are, odd and vulnerable, showing off their scars and wounds to a watching church, not looking an awful lot like the rest of us. And if we’re honest, we get a little embarrassed at the sight of it all” Craig Borlase.

### Definition

[It is] “Upright disposition, rectitude in dealing with the other, probity, purity.” [It is] “Fairness and straightforwardness of conduct.”

### Purpose

- **To begin to restore our relationship with God** - “[I]t is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his own

wretchedness as to know his wretchedness without knowing God” Blaise Pascal.

- **To pull us off of our pedestals, level the playing field and build relationships with others** – “Our churches are filled with people who outwardly look contented and at peace but inwardly are crying out for someone to love them... just as they are – confused, frustrated, often frightened, guilty, and often unable to communicate even within their own families. But the other people in the church look so happy and contented that one seldom has the courage to admit his own deep need before such a self-sufficient group as the average church meeting appears to be,” Keith Miller, as quoted by Michael Yaconelli.

### **Biblical Principles**

1. “Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden,” Genesis 3:8.
2. “If I say, ‘Surely the darkness will hide me and this light become night around me,’ even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you,” Psalm 139:11-12.
3. “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light,” Matthew 6:22.

### **Personal points to consider**

- Am I comfortable with the fact that God knows everything about me?
- How many people in my life really know me?

- How often do I look other people in the eyes and truly allow them to look into mine?

## Questions

- I. On a day-to-day basis, when is it the most difficult to be honest?
- II. What are the most common things that stop us from being honest?
- III. Is it possible to be too honest?
- IV. If we are always honest with everyone, what is the worst that could happen? The best?
- V. How does being in ministry affect how honest we should or have to be?

## Application

- **God/Self** - "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith," Hebrew 12:2.
- **Kingdom/Self** - "[i]f we know that the people of God are first a fellowship of sinners, we are freed to hear the unconditional call of God's love and to confess our needs openly before our brothers and sisters," Foster.
- **World/Self** - "We have problem with what we perceive as failure. Too often we can feel guilty if we allow the merest stain of failure to darken our pure white robes of faith. Letting a non-Christian in on the fact that our life might not be a bed of roses, admitting to the realities of the struggle, owning up to doubt, fear, and confusion they all can leave us with a hangover that tells us we have done wrong," Borlase.

## Conclusion

“Can I be honest with people, telling them about my struggles as well as about the things that are going well? [I]s there a way that it can be a little more me and less mask?” Borlase. “Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need,” Hebrews 4:16.

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# **CHAPTER 20**

## **HONESTY [II]**

(By Kenny Talbott)

### **Introduction**

“The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in men who are truthful,” Proverbs 12:22. Honesty should be an art, a way of life, a discipline that is practiced” (Furse).

### **Definition**

[It is] The quality or fact of being honest; uprightness and fairness. [Or] Truthfulness, sincerity, or frankness. Freedom from deceit or fraud.

### **Purpose**

1. To Glorify God.
2. Honesty helps relationships improve.
3. Honesty brings better physical and mental health, (Kahn).
4. Honesty brings less stress to one’s life.
5. Honesty allows people to trust each other.

### **Biblical principles**

- “I have chosen the way of truth; I have set my heart on your laws,” Psalm 119:30.
- “Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place,” Psalm 51:6.

- “Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from him heart,” Psalm 15:1-2.

### **Personal Points to Consider**

- “To be persuasive we must be believable; to be believable we must be credible; to be credible we must be truthful” (Edward R Murrow).
- “The trite saying that honesty is not policy. The real honest man is honest from criticism that honesty is not policy. The real honest man is honest from conviction of what is right, not from policy,” Robert E. Lee.

### **Question**

- I. Do we practice honesty with our children [on issues like the following]: Santa, Tooth Fairy, and Easter Bunny?
- II. Do we practice honesty in our church: copyright, personal use of resources, etc.?
- III. Do we practice honesty with our spouse: Relationship, time, priorities?
- IV. Do we use words like: fibbed, withheld, white lie, exaggerated, instead of lie?

### **Application**

- [We should] Hide God’s word in our heart.
- [We should accept that] Christ is the truth.
- “When we cheat, we choose to give up one thing in hopes of gaining something else of greater value” (Stanley).

## Conclusion

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am our way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the father but through me,’” John 14:6. “You will know the truth, and the truth will make you free,” John 8:32.

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# **CHAPTER 21**

## **SOLITUDE**

(Stephen R. Turek)

### **Introduction**

“And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up on the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone... Matt 14:23 (NEV).” “Solitude is the most fundamental of the disciplines in that it moves us away, for time from the lures and aspirations of the world into the presence of the Father” (Boa).

### **Definition**

“Solitude is the state of being solitary or alone; seclusion, isolation or remoteness” (Webster). “Solitude is more a state of mind and heart than it is a place. There is solitude of the heart that can be maintained at all times. In the midst of noise and confusion we are settled into a deep inner silence. “Solitude is the furnace of transformation. Without solitude we remain victims of our society and continue to be entangled in the illusions of the false self” (Merton).

### **Purpose**

1. To seek the face of God.
2. To hear the voice of God.
3. To become transformed into Christ’s image.
4. To be convicted of our sins by God.
5. To be cleansed of our sins by God.

6. To get away from worldly cares.
7. To let God love us.
8. To seek a deeper relationship with God.
9. To be filled with God's love so we may serve other.
10. To deepen our desire to witness and win people to Christ

### **Biblical Principle[s]**

- I. "And in the morning rising up a great while before day, he went out and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed, Mark 1:35, KJV.
- II. "He (Elisha) went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord," 2 Kings 4:33, KJV.
- III. "But, thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" KJV.

### **Personal Points to Consider**

- Is growing closer to God worth the sacrifice of time it takes?
- What can we learn about ourselves and God by spending time alone with him?

### **Question**

1. What is your purpose in spending time alone with God?
2. What is your motivation in spending time alone with God?
3. How often should we spend time alone with God?
4. Can we be alone with God even when in a crowd? How so?
5. Describe how you get alone with God. Where? When? Why?

## Application

- In order to seek God, We must see ourselves as we really are.  
In order to become more Christ-like, we must get alone with God (Nouwen).
- In order to minister effectively, we must become intimate and full of the Holy Spirit.
- In order to fully love God, we must get closer to him (Merton).

## Conclusion

“...Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ...” Eph. 4:13, NEV. We must spend time alone with God. I.e., Solitude is good and necessary for us to become more intimate with God, our ultimate lover.

## [Space for notes, comment(s), and lessons learned]

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# **CHAPTER 22**

## **SERVICE**

(By Bill Baumgardner)

### **Introduction**

“Everybody can be great because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and your verbs agree to serve...You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love” (Martin Luther King, Jr.). “Jesus took a towel and a basin and redefined greatness” (Richard Foster). “Service is the overflow which pours from a life filled with love and devotion” (Oswald Chambers).

### **Definition**

[It is a] “Radical self-denial...experience the many little deaths of going beyond ourselves” (Foster). “The art of unselfish living” (Charles Swindoll).

### **Purpose**

[Some of the purposes of rendering service include:]

1. To reflect God’s love (Healing/The cross)
2. To meet needs (Feedings).
3. To get some out of an embarrassing situation (Water to wine).
4. To teach (Feet washing).
5. To redefine what a Christian truly is.

6. To do the message before we preach the message.

### **Biblical Principles**

- I. “Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,” Matthew 20:26-28.
- II. “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you,” John 13:15.
- III. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus,” Philippians 2:3-5.

### **Personal Point to Consider**

- What gifts has God blessed you with in order to serve others for his sake?
- Why do you serve? What are your true motives?

### **Questions**

1. Who are some of your examples of a servant? Why?
2. Humanly, what is the greatest act of service one can do? (No, death acts, please!)
3. How can you make service a “habit” of your daily life?
4. How is service defined in Philippians 2? What applications can we make?
5. Does service which cost us nothing really count as service?

## **Application**

- Serve out of obedience; Deuteronomy 13:4
- Serve out of gratitude; 1 Samuel 12:24.
- Serve out of gladness; Psalm 100:2.
- Serve out of forgiveness; Isaiah 6:6-8.
- Serve out of example; John 13:12-16.
- Serve out of love; Galatians 5:13

## **Conclusion**

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self centered; forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives; be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends, and some true enemies; be successful anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you; be honest anyway. What if you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight; build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous: be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will often forget tomorrow; do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough; give the world the best you have anyway. You see, in the final analysis, it is between you and God. It was never between you and them anyway. (Found handwritten on the wall of Mother Teresa's room)

# **CHAPTER 23**

## **EVANGELISM**

(By Griff Ray)

### **Introduction**

“...To evangelize is to tell a good message... Let us never forget we are telling the Good news - Jesus has conquered sin, death, and the grave!” (Reid). “Evangelism is critical because people apart from Christ are lost” (Reid).

### **Definition**

The verb is e-van-gel-ize: 1. “To preach the gospel to [people].” 2. “To convert to Christianity.” You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, telling the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, Act 10:36.

### **Purpose**

- “...You’ll find yourself moving a step closer to the people Jesus misses most-those that are distant from him but are more open than think to being shown the back to God” (Henderson).
- Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks the water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal,” John 4:13-14.

### **Biblical principle**

- And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!” Romans 10:15.
- And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with self, so that you may know how to answer everyone, Colossians 4:3-6.

### **Personal points to consider**

“Consider for a moment if it [is] not evangelism, but rather late twentieth-century styles of evangelism that deserve our disdain and avoidance. What if evangelism is one of the things that our world needs most?” (McLaren)

### **Question**

- I. Do you think the average Christian is effective at the discipline of evangelism?
- II. What do you think is the greatest struggle individuals have in practicing effective evangelism?
- III. The interviewer on the DVD implied, “we, as Christians have to be converted in our thinking before we can convert non-Christians.” What do you think he meant by that?
- IV. McLaren describes effective evangelism as more of a dancing with a non-Christian. He also believes that tragically, we try to wrestle with them instead of win them.

- V. Many of the books I reviewed laid a heavy burden on the believer in the area of positive, effective and non-forced interaction with non-believers. Why do you agree or disagree with that burden?
- VI. What do you find most effective and most surprising about Jesus' approach to sharing the good news?

### **Application**

"You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it lost its flavor? Can you make it useful again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world-like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see. Don't hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father, Matt. 5:13-16.

### **Conclusion**

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry but others out of goodwill. But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached, Philippians 1:15, 18.

### **[Space for notes, comment(s), and lessons learned]**

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# **CHAPTER 24**

## **CONTROLLING SPEECH**

### **(THE TONGUE)**

(By Lianne Vance)

#### **Introduction**

“The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire and is itself set on fire by hell” (James 3:6). “The point, then, is that the tongue’s fiery destructive power affects all of human existence, from beginning to end, and in all its circumstances” (Moo).

#### **Definition**

“If anyone is never at fault in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to keep his whole body in check” (James 3:2). “The inability to control the tongue is indicative of the effects of sin” (Hines).

#### **Purpose**

- What a person says can do a great deal of damage.
- What a person says displays who he or she is on the inside.
- What a person says should be believable without any proof.

## **Biblical Principles**

- I. “But I tell you, Do not swear at all: Either by heaven, for it is God’s throne...Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘yes’ and your ‘no’ be ‘no’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one” (Matthew 5:33-37).
- II. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth” (Eph. 4:29)
- III. “But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell” (Matthew 5:22).
- IV. “If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless” (James 1:26).
- V. “...But no man can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:8)

## **Personal Points to Consider**

- What are you showing about yourself by what you say?
- How often do you consciously control what you say, especially in anger?

## **Question**

1. How important do you think it is to control what you say? Where do you draw the lines?
2. Why is it so difficult for people to control what they say?
3. What strategies do you use to control your speech?
4. How does what the Bible say about controlling speech apply to the “swearing “that is common in our culture?

## **Application**

- In order to be pure, we need to work on the difficult task of controlling our tongue.
- In order to be an example to others, we need to be truthful in what we say.
- We have the ability to bless or harm by what we say.

## **Conclusion**

“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brother, this should not be” (James 3:9-10). “If you and I are going to have tongues that delight, then we must meet with the Lord each day and learn from him. We must get our “spiritual roots” deep into His word. We must pray and meditate and permit the spirit of God to fill our hearts with God’s love and truth” (Wiersbe).

## **[Space for notes, comment(s), and lessons learned]**

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# **CHAPTER 25**

## **CONFESSION [OF SIN] [I]**

(By Jeff Hogan)

### **Introduction**

“He who is alone with his sin is utterly alone” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer). “Confession is a difficult discipline for us because we all too often view the believing community as a fellowship of saints before we see it as a fellowship of sinners” (Richard Foster).

### **Definition**

[It is] “The appropriate disclosure of my brokenness, temptations, sin, and victories for the purpose of healing, forgiveness, and spiritual growth” (John Ortberg). “To own up to the fact that our behavior wasn’t just the result of bad parenting, poor genes, jealous siblings, or a chemical imbalance from too many Twinkies” (Ortberg).

### **Purpose**

1. To bring us back into fellowship (community) with God and each other.
2. To promote honesty in evaluating ourselves and limit opportunity for false pride or self-exaltation (Douglas Steere).

3. "Give us the opportunity for penance, or examination which helps us move into that deeper sense of the sinfulness of sin" (Foster).
4. To be free from the weight of sin and the guilt that accompanies it.

### **Biblical Principle**

- "Therefore confess your sins to each and pray for each..." James 5:16a.
- "...Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling" Philip. 2:12b.
- "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" 1 John 1:9

### **Personal Points to Consider**

- Is it easier to confess your sins to God privately, or to another believer? Considering God's holy, sinless nature in comparison to that of another sinner, why is this?
- "As the first disciples left all and followed when Jesus called, so in confession the Christian gives up all and follows. Confess in discipleship" (Bonhoeffer).

### **Questions**

- I. Do you agree or disagree with the above statement? Why? How does Bonhoeffer's view compare with the emphasis the church today places on confession?
- II. What are some of the positive implications of being involved in a community of believers that values and encourages

confession of sins within the framework of its deep relationships? Do you think it's possible for a church to establish confession as a widely practiced "core value"?

- III. Describe some of the characteristics that need to be present in order for a relationship to be safe for confession.

### **Application**

1. Confession to another believer causes us to consider the past, present, and future of our sin.
2. Confession should be specific and honest. "We must lay before him what is in us, not what ought to be in us" (C. S. Lewis).
3. Confession reminds us there is no sin that cannot be covered by God's grace.
4. "Confession must be freely offered, never manipulated (Ortberg)," coming from a contrite heart.
5. Confession facilitates transformational growth in Christ.
6. "Take your confession as far as it needs to go, but no further. Broadcasting your sin to the world doesn't help the world, and it certainly doesn't help you" (Kroll).

### **Conclusion**

"I will never invest my life in a community that doesn't value truth and confession, and neither should you. Without confession we cannot accomplish our God-given calling to transform people" (Ortberg).

# **CHAPTER 26**

## **CONFESSION OF SIN [II]**

(By Justin Dunn)

### **Introduction**

There are two dangers in dealing with our sin: the view that God holds things against us, there we must confess, and the view that our sin is just part of mans essence (Rahner). Proverbs 12:4-6:

The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me. The cords of the grave coiled around me; the snares of death confronted me. In my distress I called the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.

Galatians 5:1: It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not subject again to a yoke of slavery.

### **Definition**

Confession of sin is when the Christ[ian;] man or woman or child has acknowledged that [he/she has] committed wrong against God and ask for forgiveness of that wrong. It is a constantly chosen choice of action that brings us under the shadow of the Almighty (Foster).

### **Purpose**

1. To adequately acknowledge the sin in our life.

2. To achieve a greater level of intimacy and communication with God.
3. To achieve a greater level of intimacy and communication with brothers and sisters (Longenecker).
4. To receive a sense of freedom in a life weight weighed down by guilt and troubles.
5. To openly admit our faults so that we can learn from our past and strive for betterment.
6. To open ourselves to others and God to make sure we can be above reproach and do not harbor any secret sin that eats away our life.

### **Biblical Principles**

- 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sin, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sin and purify us from all unrighteousness."
- James 5:16: "Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."
- 1 Timothy 2:5: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus."

### **Personal points to consider**

- What do you think that your life would be like if you kept every sin, every evil inside and to yourself? Do you know someone who is like this? What does [his/her] life look like?
- How do you feel when you know there is something not right in your life, and you harbor it and keep it in? How free does it feel to confess that and start healing?

## **Question**

- I. ...How many of us practice this regularly with God? With one other trusted person? With a group of brothers and sisters?
- II. How do you think confessing of sin can bring intimacy within Christian brothers and sisters (i.e. A small Group)? What could be the problems with this?
- III. Why do you think that we don't hear about this discipline or see it in action as often as we hear and see others?
- IV. How can you teach this discipline within your church or Christian setting?

## **Application**

- Confession of sin needs to be specific.
- Confession of sin needs to be not only to God, but to other mature followers of Christ.
- Confession of sin needs to be a discipline that we practice much more to really maintain our maturity.

## **Conclusion**

“Did you ever hear the philosophy that once a man admits he's wrong, he's immediately forgiven for all wrong- doings?” This may not be true, but it is the start to becoming a mature follower of Christ.

# **CHAPTER 27**

## **WEIGHT CONTROL**

(By Ben Dillon)

### **Introduction**

“Reaching an ideal, healthy weight is an achievement most are proud of. We like to refer to this process as Weight reduction or Weight management. The term “loss” implies that what you had is something that you wanted, and you are likely to look for until you get it back” (Christian Life Skills). “Recent studies indicate that obesity in... [United States] is now at epidemic proportions. The latest studies indicate that more than 71% of American adults are overweight - an all time record. This compares to 56% in 1984. The problem, however, is not just limited to adults since approximately 12 to 14 % of children and adolescents are likewise above their ideal body weight” (Christian Life Skills).

### **Definition**

Weight management means keeping your body weight at a healthy level. Healthy Mass index should be between 18.5 and .9 BMI [Body Mass Index]. Determine your BMI by taking your weight in kg or height in meters squared. Or go to the centers for Disease control BMI calculator at [www.cdc.gov/needpdp/dnpa/bmi](http://www.cdc.gov/needpdp/dnpa/bmi)

## **Purpose**

- The process of weight reduction or weight management is to reach and maintain a healthy weight that is achievable and inspiring.
- To care for the body that God has given us and not destroy the temple of the Holy Spirit.

## **Biblical Principles**

1. “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body,” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.
2. “I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize,” 1 Corinthians 9:27.
3. “When you sit to dine with a ruler, note well what is before you, put a knife to your throat if you are given to gluttony. Do not crave his delicacies, for that food is deceptive,” Proverbs 23:1-3

## **Personal Points to Consider**

- “Obesity increases your risk of many diseases including hypertension, heart diseases, and even cancer” (Christian-like skills).
- Maintaining a healthy weight will make you feel more energized and help you be more productive and active with your family.

## Questions

- I. How many times a week do you do intentional exercise?
- II. Do you have a selective diet and if so how has it helped to maintain a healthy weight?
- III. Why is it important for a Christian leader to have good weight management skills?
- IV. How can weight control become a vanity issue?
- V. What can you change in lifestyle to help you and your family live healthier?
- VI. Is it more important to have a healthy body weight or to be happy or content with your body? Why?

## Application

- A daily lifestyle of diet and exercise can help maintain a healthy weight.
- Weight management can be a matter of life and death due to increased risk of diseases that increases with being overweight...
- In order to preserve our body, the temple, and be a credible witness to others of good spiritual discipline we must also uphold a healthy lifestyle.

## Conclusion

“Each of us has a hunger deep within where no one can see. And although it may not be obvious, this hunger is the most universal of all. It is the hunger of a starving soul...It is a God-given hunger for genuine intimacy wherein our deepest needs for security and significance can be substantially met. Unfortunately, when these needs are not met, we turn to counterfeits such as food,

drugs, alcohol, work, or other compulsions in an attempt to fill the void” (Halliday and Halliday).

**[Space for notes, comment(s), and lessons learned so far]**

This image shows a full page of a handwriting practice worksheet. It consists of multiple rows of horizontal dashed lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a guide for letter height and placement. The background is plain white, and there are no margins or additional markings.

# CHAPTER 28

## QUITE TIME

(By Denis Odhiambo)

### Introduction

Retire from the world each day to some private spot, if it's only the bedroom (for a while I retreated to the furnace room for want of a better place). Stay in the secret place till the surrounding noises begin to fade out of your heart and a sense of God's presence envelopes you...Listen for the inward voice till you learn to recognize it. Stop trying to compete with others. Give yourself to God and then be what and who you are without regard to what others think...learn to pray inwardly every moment. After a while you can do this even while you work...Read less, but more of what is important to your inner life. Never let your mind remain scattered for very long. Call home your roving thoughts. Gaze on Christ with the eyes of your soul. Practice spiritual concentration.

All the above is contingent upon a right relation to God through Christ and daily meditation on the scriptures. Lacking these, nothing will help us; granted these, the discipline recommended will go far to neutralize the evil effects of externalism and to make us acquainted with God and our own souls (A. W. Tozer).

### Definition

[It is] "The way in which any person can slow down and enter someone else's world or to reach a place where thoughts are not flying back and forth" (Luci Shaw).

## **Purpose**

1. To follow the example of Jesus
2. To regain a spiritual perspective
3. To hear the voice of God better
4. To seek the will of God
5. To express worship to God
6. To learn control of the tongue
7. To express faith in God
8. To be able to see and hear from God
9. To be physically and spiritually rested

## **Biblical Principles**

- I. And early in the morning, while it was still dark, He arose and went out and departed to a lonely place, and was praying there (Mark 1:35).
- II. And immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and went ahead of him to the other side to Bethsaida, while he himself was sending the multitude away, And after bidding them farewell, he departed to the mountain to pray (Mark 6:45 - 46).
- III. And they came to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, sit here until I have prayed." And took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be very distressed and troubled. And he said to them, "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death; remain here and keep watch." And he went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground, and began praying (Jesus, quoted by Mark 14:32-34).

- IV. And when day came, he departed to a lonely place; and the multitudes were searching for him, and came to him and tried to keep him from going away from them (Luke 4:42).
- V. But he himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray (Luke 5:16).
- VI. And it was at this time that he went off to the mountain to pray, and he spent the whole night in prayer to God (Luke 6:12).

### **Personal Points to Consider**

Jesus found it necessary to go apart to be with God that he might receive strength and guidance and help as he faced both the opportunities and the duties that befell him. If Jesus needed a prayer retreat in the face of his responsibilities, it follows that we also need to go apart for communion with God.

### **Question**

1. As a person, how much do I need God?
2. What are some of our distractions?
3. How can we make time with God a priority over family, job and other responsibilities?
4. How can we make quite time become habitual practice in our lives?
5. What are some of the ideological controversies?
6. What was or is so peculiar with the people who have excelled in the discipline of having daily quite time?

## **Application**

- God has given us his best in Jesus; we must reciprocate by giving of our everything; the best of our time, the best of our labor.
- Don't expect each time of quietness to be a landmark occasion which will make you Billy Graham overnight.
- Sometimes there is not always dramatic result or intense emotion involved.
- However, as with all, not all spiritual disciplines like quite time is profitable even though sometimes you conclude them feeling normal or even dry.

## **Conclusion**

Jesus decided to make his time with God a priority. It was important to him and it was important for the gospel writers to mention these times. You may call it quite time, alone time, or devotional time. Whatever you call it, spend time with God. Make that time personal, without distractions and try to avoid making it just another religious exercise. Remember, this is your Father and he enjoys His time with you.

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# **CHAPTER 29**

## **TIME MANAGEMENT**

(Anonymous)

### **Introduction**

“My days are swifter than a weaver’s shuttle” (Job 7:6). “For God did not give you a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:6). “The successful person has the habit of doing the things failures don’t like to do...They don’t like doing them either necessarily. But their disliking is subordinated to the strength of their purpose” (E.M. Gray).

### **Definition**

“The first principle of time management is recognizing the value of time and redeeming it, buying it up and using it carefully as the priceless resource which it represents” (Boa). We rake the time which we are allotted by God and carefully steward it for his maximum glory. We consecrate what we are given for his use (Patterson). We must form our goals around the Person of Christ and our service towards Him (Covey, Yohn).

### **Purpose**

- To bring maximum glory to God within whatever time we have (Piper).
- To place our entire day under God’s rule.

- To not waste the time he has given us, but instead to fulfill his purpose in ministry (MacDonald).

### **Biblical principles**

- I. “Be very careful, then, how you live-not as unwise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16).
- II. Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).
- III. “The sluggard craves and gets nothing, but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied” (Prov. 13:4).

### **Personal points to consider**

- What in your life is keeping you from using your time in the best possible way?
- How can you rearrange your schedule to better serve God?

### **Question**

1. What are some of the “symptoms of disorganization” in your own life? In the lives of others?
2. What is the difference between that which is urgent and that which is important?
3. What are unsatisfactory substitutes for Christ that people hold as central purposes for living? What is the result? (Covey)
4. What are some constructive changes we can make to place our time under Christ’s Lordship?
5. What principles of time management do we see Jesus use in the Gospels?

6. What has worked for you in the past or present for managing your time in this way?

### **Application**

- I. Keep the most important thing at the center; set goals from here (Covey).
- II. Set specific written goals achievable over a certain time period (Pavlina).
- III. Learn to differentiate the urgent from the important (Covey).
- IV. Complete tasks at the optimal part of each day (MacDonald)
- V. “DO IT NOW. DO IT NOW. DO IT NOW” (Pavlina).

### **Conclusion**

“As we make decisions about how we will make the most of our time on earth, we reflect the character of God. That is our ultimate responsibility. What matters most in the long run is not how long we live, but how we live. A day of reckoning is coming, and purposeful achievement is a mark of the reign and rule of God coming to fruition in our lives” (Boa).

### **[Space for notes, comment(s), and lessons learned]**

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# **CHAPTER 30**

## **EXERCISE**

(By Timothy Peace)

### **Introduction**

“... Christian ethics rightly ought to originate in and flow from the worshipping activity of Christian” (Guroian).

### **Definition**

...Exercise or physical fitness, while it may not be considered by some to be a “Spiritual Discipline,” should be a practice that does flow of the discipline of worship in ones day to day life.

### **Purpose**

- I. To take care of ourselves in a way that honors God.
- II. To be prepared for any physical requirements that life brings.
- III. As an outward reminder of our inward reality.
- IV. To be a positive influence on other.
- V. To use our bodies in healthy, rather than disastrous way.

### **Biblical Principles**

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own. For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body” (1 Corinthians 6.19-20).

### Personal Points to consider

- Do I view exercise and/or physical fitness in the same light as I would other “body politics,” being an upright citizen and other things that generally concern those who call themselves “Christians?”
- Is my exercise or physical fitness regimen for the purpose of glorifying God or is it simply done in order to achieve good ol’ fashioned world status among other people?

### Question

1. Do you exercise regularly? In what ways and why?
2. Have you ever had an irresponsible view of physical well-being, either from lack of it or from obsession with it? Why?
3. How can the church teach a healthy view of exercise in a culture that is either drowned in obesity or obsession with physical appearance? (This would be a rather *harsh* critique of [Ghanaian or any African or] American culture).

### Application

- If we are saved individuals we should attempt to live like [Christ], therefore, we should have a *healthy* and *responsible attitude* toward diet and exercise. (This would mean that we should not destroy our bodies with gluttony and laziness; however, we ought not to become obsessive with appearance and other things often associated with exercise).
- When called up to provide service to others that require any physical labor, we ought to be physically prepared to do it for the sake of the individual(s) we are trying to help.

- If we take seriously the idea that we should take care of our bodies when it comes to issues like sex, drugs, etc, then we should also care about staying physically fit as well.

## **Conclusion**

“For bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come” (2 Timothy 4:8). We must remember that without the internal change brought into our life, the outward is not only irrelevant, but is many times impossible.

### **[Space for notes, comment(s), and lessons learned]**

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## **GENERAL CONCLUSION**

What conclusion might be suitable after such insightful studies? Discussions in Spiritual Formation should help everyone to appreciate how to relate to Jesus Christ not only as a Savior but more: as Lord, Master, and as the faithful Friend. The reason is not far-fetched. The studies deepen a person's relationship with Him to the extent that not only does the one communicate with Him in special prayer moments but also becomes very mindful of His presence every moment. The insights here help one to pray, praise, or worship not only at special time periods or places but every time, every place, and in any circumstance, since these are forms of communication with Him.

The challenges offered by the discussion of the disciplines also place on any believer the need to press on to know the Lord more and more. No one can be fed up with the messages offered by the contents of this book, especially the information contained on the disciplines. Let me reiterate that the overall benefits of faithfully practicing spiritual disciplines is the inner strength, joy, and the spiritual fulfillment it brings, and the deeper meaning it gives to life.

Christianity grows through sharing of all the eternal goodies of Christ. Thus, it is of utmost importance for any reader to extend genuine fellowship or fellow-feeling to relations, friends, etc., about the benefits of knowing and practicing the spiritual disciplines discussed in this book or elsewhere. Helping one another to grow to become well establish in our faith is a delight of our God. So let us make efforts to share the blessings in this book.

Finally, if you acknowledge that this compilation has been a blessing to you in your pursuit of Spiritual Formation, you can express your interest, comment and experience in the space that follow here for future reference or pass it on to the author.

**[Space for notes, comment(s), and lessons learned]**

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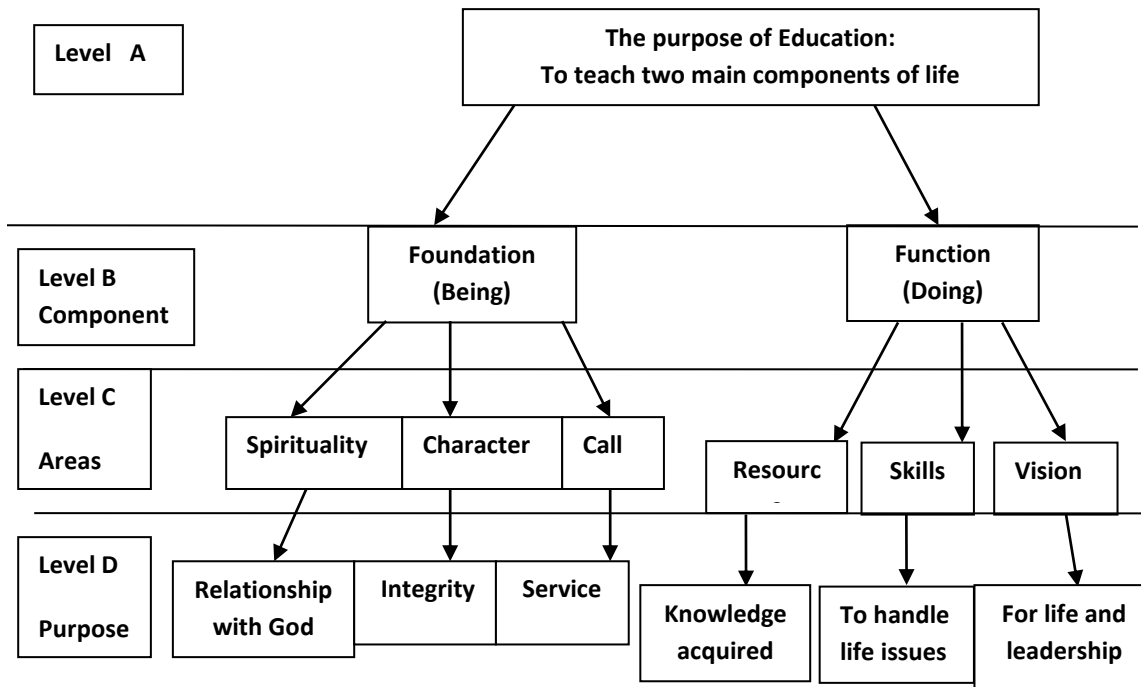
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## Appendix

### Bill Weber's illustration of General purpose of Education





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Yamoah is a Lecturer of Old Testament Studies and Biblical Hebrew at Ghana Christian University College (GhanaCU). He is the Dean of Students and also the Minister-in-Charge of the Campus Fellowship of the University College. He has travelled the length and breadth of Ghana as a preacher and speaker at Seminars and many Youth Conferences. He has also preached at some churches in Ohio and Maryland, in USA.

Besides Pastoral ministry, James who is affectionately called JY by his students and colleagues is a prolific writer. In ***Amazing Grace: A Guide to Spiritual Formation & Disciplines***, he engages the basics of scriptures to lay a solid foundation for the spiritual formation of all individuals desiring growth, and compiles presentations from his colleagues as they are led by the Spirit to unearth divine truth in various disciples. James is the author of:

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- ***Pacesetters of Divine Ministry: Let us learn from them!***
- ***Always Ready: Over 150 Messages To Help You Study, Teach, Preach, & Live the Bible Systematically***
- ***Suffer to Gain: How the Righteous should overcome Difficult Times***
- ***A Model for Hebrew - English Translation and Application: The Biblical Hebrew Student's Companion***

James combines a theological mind with Pastoral heart. Therefore, all the books from the gracious teaching ministry of James are not only thought provoking, informative, educative, and inspiring they are also practicable and very appropriate.