

James Yamoah



**Over 150 Messages To Help You
Study, Preach, Teach, & Live
The Bible Systematically**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



The author, James Yamoah, is an ordained minister of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. He holds degrees in B.Sc. (Hons., Biological Sciences) from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana, B.A. (Hons, Biblical Studies), from Ghana Christian University College (GhanaCU), Ghana, and Masters in Religion (Old Testament Biblical Studies) from Cincinnati Christian University (CCU), Ohio, USA, where he received one of the prestigious international awards; the Stone-Campbell Journal Award for

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James is a prolific writer. In ***Always Ready: Over 150 Messages to Help You Study, Preach, Teach & Live the Bible Systematically***, he engages the basics of scriptures to lay a solid foundation for the transformation of individuals, and churches at any stage, into growing and healthy ones. James is the author of: ***Can You Be God's Transformational Leader? Yes You Can!*** ; ***Amazing Grace: A Guide to Spiritual Formation and Discipline*** ; ***Suffer to Gain: How the Righteous should overcome Difficult Times*** ; ***It will be well with you!*** ; ***Pacesetters of Divine Ministry: Let us learn from them!*** ; and ***A Model for Hebrew - English Translation and Application: The Biblical Hebrew Student's Companion***. Church leaders, workers, and Christians in general will find a lot of fulfillment in the Living streams that flow from the gracious Teaching Ministry of James. Amen.

FOREWORD

God's kingdom is ruled by principles. These principles are found in his word. Many have tried several principles, ideas, and keys. These have brought nothing but misery. It is only when we return to the ideals of God's ways that we will find true protection, prosperity, and happiness.

When king Asa and his subjects returned from a sweet conquest of the Cushite led armies, prophet Azariah met them on the way and reiterated God's principle for sustained victorious living: stay connected to God's ideals for your life (2 Chron. 15:1-6). If you seek him, he will be found by you.

Just as happened in the days of king Asa, the Lord is troubling the nations with every kind of distress (2 Chron. 15:6). These distresses are manifested in such scourges as economic, social and political upheavals; AIDS and other health epidemics, poverty, family disintegration, community violence, and the culture of fear. These troubling times are in response to our rejection of his principles.

James Yamoah has written this volume to inculcate in its readers a vision of Christian life, the intention of God's kingdom principles. James provides critical pathways to help us navigate life in the will of God that we may find life and have its fullness with God.

There are 150 chapters of materials covering topics for the beginning Christian as well as materials for leaders and pastors. The lessons are laid in an easy to read manner and allow for a flowing engagement with the text.

James has produced a master piece, drawing on his experience as a youth leader, pastor, and outstanding lecturer. I invite you all to engage with this great scholarship.

Dr. Manual Budu Adjei (President)

Ghana Christian University College (GhanaCU),
Accra, Ghana

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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," (Lamentation 3:22-23). To Him alone is the glory, Amen.

James Yamoah

DEDICATION

To all my children, students, and disciples in the Lord Jesus Christ

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ⁱ All messages with asterisks (*) were largely developed from cell group discussion materials prepared by (Inter-Hall Christian Fellowship – UST between 1985 and 89.

INTRODUCTION

Do you know that one of the main reasons for the compromises and corruptions in the life of some Christians is their lack of solid foundation in the word of God? Are you aware that there are more to benefit in life from the Bible particularly when you devote enough time for quality research under the guidance of the Spirit of God and apply its teaching? It's very amazing, when one takes time to find out the answers. There is the need to align with God's perfect plan for the complete spiritual transformation of the believer. Now more than ever, the pressing consciousness and determination to experience spiritual growth on daily basis through the systematic study of Bible truths has become a necessity. These truths include basic messages and systematic teachings of the Bible that can help a believer to grow from Christian foundation to maturity.

It is against the above backdrop that I also feel much challenged to put the resources that are essential for spiritual growth into a compilation for effective use and blessing of others. This volume; ***Always Ready: Over 150 Topics to help you Study, Teach, Preach, & Live the Bible Systematically***, is expected to bless every reader by not only laying a solid foundation of spirituality in Christ but also helping the believer to experience the blessedness of such spiritual transformation. This volume inculcates in its readers a vision of Christian life, the intention of God's Kingdom-mindedness, and the means to model the character of Jesus Christ inspired by the Holy Spirit and revealed in the believer. The book comprises eight parts broken down as follows:

- Part I: Growing as a Christian;**
- Part II: Growing as a Responsible Youth;**
- Part III: Maturing as a Christian**
- Part IV: Growing and Living as a Church;**
- Part V: Serving as a Leader;**
- Part VI: Issues of Spiritual Warfare;**
- Part V: Be inspired for victory all year round;**
- Part VIII: Marriage should be honored as Sacred.**

Each part is tailored to meet a specific age group or level of growth in the Lord. For both individual and group studies purposes, the topics are

arranged according to laid down spiritual principles for growth and maturity in Christ. Ministers, church leaders, and Christians in general can use this book as a guide for studying, teaching, preaching, etc., in order to live the Bible and help others do likewise. In the case of church Bible study sessions, it is the duty of the Pastor, Christian education supervisor, or Sunday school leader, etc., to determine which group of the congregation studies what topic.

How to do the study of the messages effectively

To help every reader or Bible class teacher (or Pastor) derive maximum benefit from the study or discussions of the messages in this book, here are some summarized important principles, which were taken from a devotional booklet.

Learn to ask questions: The more questions you ask, the more you'll get out of it. As you do it will seem as though you have been given a new pair of eyes. Each time you begin the study pray like this, "Open my eyes, O Lord, that I may see wonderful things in your word" (Ps. 119:18).

Write down what you have discovered: 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.

Make your application your ultimate goal: As you study, note the ff:

- What attitudes do I need to change?
- What do I need to believe or stop believing?
- 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?¹

The book will help individuals and groups desiring daily Bible study guide in order to effectively study God's word, and apply it to their lives. When the tips given in this section are applied to all the studies then deeper examination of the study would be stimulated, understanding would also be better leading to enhanced application of the study to life. Above all, Christian leaders who use this book will be blessed with spiritual insights to also share through teaching or preaching to others.

PART I

GROWING AS A CHRISTIAN

MESSAGE 1

WHAT IS THE MESSAGE OF SALVATION?

INTRODUCTION: When some people are asked, “If Christ should come today where would you stand, or if you should die today, are you saved, and will God welcome you to heaven?” they do not have clear answers. So how can one be sure that he/she received the true message of salvation to also pass on? This study will take us to the basis of the salvation message.

MAIN TEXT: John 3:16; 1 John 5:11, 12; Isaiah 64:6.

MEMORY VERSE: We have been saved by grace through faith. It is not because of our good works hence there is no room for boasting (Eph. 2:8-9).

Definition of who a Christian is: A Christian is one who has invited Jesus Christ into his or her life and believes that Christ has come as promised. Such a person is ready to live a Bible-patterned Spirit-filled life by the grace of God.

The basic steps to salvation involve the following:

- A. Acknowledge that you are a sinner:** Accept that you are a sinner who cannot save him /herself and needs to be saved.
 - (i) If we say we have no sin we are deceiving ourselves and making God a liar (Rom. 3:11-18, 23; John 1:8, 9-10).
 - (ii) We are slaves to sin and need to be set free (Rom. 7:15-25).

- B. Repent and Confess your sins:**

This means, turn away from your sins. God loves the sinners, but hates sin. He is able and willing to save us from our sins (Rom. 5:8-10; 1 John 4:10). God’s love compels the sinner to surrender to Him.

- C. Believe and accept that the Lord Jesus Christ died for you:**

On the cross of Calvary, the Lord died to save you from your sins. The scripture says, “For God so loved...” (John 3:16, 18; Rom. 10:9, 11, 13; Acts 16:31). Accept Jesus now, if you have not done it already.

APPLICATION: Is your faith build upon the true message of salvation? Are you prepared to share this message with other people? When?

CONCLUSION: If you are very sure of your salvation now, stick to God’s word and remain in the family of believers. We should accept our Christianity only on the basis of Christ’s atoning sacrifice and be ready to share with others.

MESSAGE 2

REVISIT YOUR CHRISTIAN FOUNDATION

INTRODUCTION: Many people who had once believed they had accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are now living defeated Christian lives partly because they had no basis of their salvation. Many factors can cause one to doubt his/her salvation. Sometimes, Satan suggests to one who accepts Christ that what was done is not real and that nothing actually happened. In the light of this one has to be sure of the stand with God.

MAIN TEXT: John 1:12; 1 John 5:12.

(**Note:** The Gospel of John is one of the Gospels that really present the deity of Jesus Christ and what He did while on the earth).

SOME HELPFUL DEFINITIONS

Salvation: This is the act of lifting a person from spiritual consequence of sin and eternal damnation through the atonement work of Christ Jesus.

Faith: Faith is, “accepting what God says He will do/acting on God’s word.”

Sin: Sin is basically acting on one’s will, and it is characterized by an attitude of active rebellion, or passive indifference to God.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS:

- A. Why did Christ come into the world? (John 3:17)
- B. Why does humanity need to be saved? (John 8:34-36)
- C. How does God see you after accepting Christ? (John 1:12)
- D. What kind of lifestyle does God expect from you? (2 Cor. 5:17)
- E. What will Jesus do for those who come to Him? (John 10:27-29)
- F. What changes have occurred since accepting Christ? (John 5:24)
- G. After you receive Christ unto your life what happens to your past, present and future sins? (1 John 1:8-9; Rom. 8:1; Ps. 103:3, 12)

APPLICATION: The Bible promises eternal life to all who receive Jesus Christ by faith. How is your faith different from your feelings?

CONCLUSION: The Christian lives by believing that God is revealed in the Bible. The promise of God’s word is our final authority. The truth of the Word has the power to lead us. We are joined to the power of God’s truth by faith.

MESSAGE 3

BE WHOLLY COMMITTED TO CHRIST

INTRODUCTION: While there are millions of people who are only good and satisfied with attending church, there are many others that are wholly dependent on Christ. To the latter, their very existence now and hope for the future depends on Him. Whichever way we see it, living as a Christian involves total commitment. We can find the truth from this study.

MAIN TEXT: John 8:12; 10:10, 30; 14:6.

MEMORY VERSE: "...He who has the Son has life; he who has not the Son of God does not have life" (1 John 5:12).

Steps to ensure commitment: Whether through wrong understanding or ignorance, many people do not know the most important fact to become a Christian. Becoming a Christian involves commitment of your whole self as indicated in the OT by Deuteronomy 6:4:

- A. It involves your body:** One becomes a Christian through faith. If you know someone sincerely loves you, there will be no hesitation trusting the one and being committed to the one. For a person to receive Christ he/she must know, believe Him, and experience Him.
- B. It involves your mind (soul).** Before one becomes a Christian, the person must know certain facts about Jesus (Heb. 1:1-3; Col. 2: 9-10). This knowledge involves the mind that is made truly free (John 8:31-32). The mind is also the seat of the will. Until one willfully enthrones Jesus Christ as Lord and Master of his life, his conversion is incomplete (John 7:17).
- C. It involves your heart (spirit):** When you get to know something about a lover, it gives you great joy and a growing desire to love the person and be with him or her. Becoming a Christian involves such a desire on your part—to know and feel more of the love and forgiveness of Christ deep within the heart, and the desire to be with the Lord.

APPLICATION: How does this study apply to you in your walk with the Lord? If you are not committed to the Lord, are you prepared to surrender to Him?

CONCLUSION: We can truly know we are Christians by being wholly committed to Christ and living by His promises (Rev. 3:20; Heb. 13:3).

MESSAGE 4

WHY SHOULD YOU BE BAPTIZED?

INTRODUCTION: Scripture tells us that those who received Jesus Christ as Lord were baptized and in this way separated themselves from the unbelieving people. The Lord Jesus himself was baptized in order to become one with His believers. This study discusses the importance of baptism.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Corinthians 10:2

MEMORY VERSES: “Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34-35).

A. What is Baptism? Baptism is a public act that shows conversion and initiation into a certain faith. Baptism was something generally known to the Jews. With “Proselyte baptism,” a gentile separated himself from his people and took his place with Israel. 1 Corinthians 10:2 explains that baptism is part of the processes that makes God to recognize/accept a person into Christ.

B. Why the need for Baptism?

- I. All true believers need to confess publicly and demonstrate that they are associated with Christ. And this occurs through baptism.
- II. Baptism identifies believers with Christ and purifies their hearts.
- III. Baptism makes us God’s agents for reconciling the world to Him. God is looking for men and women who are easily identified as ambassadors of Christ.
- IV. At baptism, believers die and rise with Him in baptism.
- V. At baptism, believers become sealed and filled with the Holy Spirit.

C. Who needs Baptism?

All true believers need to confess publicly and demonstrate that they are associated with Christ. And this occurs through baptism.

APPLICATION: People that God is preparing for His work are born again, baptized in the Name of the Lord, and matured in consistent prayer. Are you one of them? What convinces you of your position as a Child of God?

CONCLUSION: The selection of Cornelius did not depend on outward appearance alone. He was ready to be baptized, Acts 10:1-12. Everyone needs to confess and repent from sin and become subjected to the Lord. God is looking for baptized believers to serve Him.

MESSAGE 5

BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT

INTRODUCTION: How to be controlled by the Holy Spirit is one of the most important messages all Christians need today. The first century Christians, because they were controlled by the Holy Spirit and with His love were changed from fearful men to bold and fruitful witnesses for Christ. Being controlled by the Holy Spirit is the greatest experience for any believer.

MAIN TEXT: Ephesians 5:18; Acts 2:38-42

Some of the important questions on the **Holy Spirit** include the following:

- A. Who is the Holy Spirit?** The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Triune God. Some of the attribute of the Holy Spirit are found in 1 Thess. 5:16-22.
- B. Where does the Holy Spirit come from?** The Holy Spirit comes from God into a person's life when the person accepts Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit is the Spirit's entry into one who has surrendered to the Lord. Baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs after conversion (Joel. 2:28ff; cf. Acts 2).
- C. Why did the Holy Spirit come?** The work of the Holy Spirit at conversion seals up the person as God's child and produces the fruits of the spirit. By the same Holy Spirit the Christian is given the gifts to operate as a Christian (John 15:26-27; 16:13; Acts 1:8).
- D. How might a Christian experience the Holy Spirit always?** It is by surrendering to Christ and being controlled by Him (Matt. 5:6; Rom. 12:1-2). It involves:
 - I. Confessing all known sin, and asking God to fill you with the Holy Spirit.
 - II. Believing that you have been filled with the Holy Spirit as God commanded it (Eph. 5:18), and God promised it (Luke 11:13)
- E. How is a believer controlled by the Holy Spirit?** To be controlled by the Holy Spirit is an inhaling process or spiritual breathing. This we do by faith when we constantly ask God for the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13).

APPLICATION: What are the benefits for having the Holy Spirit? (1 Tim. 1:7)
What are the marks of a spirit-filled Christian? (Gal. 5:22-23)

CONCLUSION: Since the Holy Spirit empowers and controls believers, He makes us become equipped for any spiritual warfare. Be led by the Holy Spirit.

MESSAGE 6

YOU NEED TO PRAY ALWAYS

INTRODUCTION: When a child is born, every member of the family rejoices. A relationship begins to develop with parents and other members of the family. So is everyone who is born again into Christendom. The best way to develop this relationship is talking to God and Him also talking back. And it is God's desire that this communication continues unabated.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Thessalonians 5:17

A. Definition of Prayer: It is

- I. Conversation with God. The basis is the father- child relationship.
- II. A loving relationship which brings satisfaction to both father and child.
- III. A relationship of performance maintained through communication.
- IV. Not a strictly give and take process. It's a healthy talk with God.
- V. Not same as consulting spirits which the Bible forbids (Deut. 18:9ff).

B. What is the role of prayer

- I. How does one ensure a relationship with God? (1 Thess. 5:17)
- II. What role can prayer play in bringing answers to the believer? (Mark 11:25; Ps. 66; James 1:6-7; 4:3)

C. How does one grow in prayer?

- I. Growth in prayer involves a desire and constant practice of it.
- II. The Holy Spirit helps believers in the art of praying (Rom. 8:26).

D. What are the results of prayer:

- I. Growth in prayer may be observed in the results that prayer brings.
- II. Prayer brings increase, improvement, and maturity in life.

APPLICATION: Do we have time to talk to God? Having known how God talks to us by His Spirit and the Word and how we also talk back to Him (prayer), the Christian needs to pray and to grow in it since he has to fight and overcome some enemies, the, flesh, devil, and sin.

CONCLUSION: It is effective prayer life that makes it possible for one to obtain the needed holiness, without which no one will see the Lord (Heb. 12:14).

MESSAGE 7

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

INTRODUCTION: In our previous study, we saw how a relationship begins to develop with parents and other members of the family. For everyone who is born again into Christendom, there should be a strong relationship through constant communication with God, i.e., prayer. We have to understand that prayer is important for the growth of the Christian.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Thessalonians 5:17 (Matt. 26:41; 1 Peter 5:8; Luke 22:40).

Background: Some facts on why prayer is important include the ff:

- A. After the first couple was created they were given a responsibility to keep God's creation (Gen. 2:7). This was a duty originally performed by Lucifer or Satan, who rebelled against God and was cast down and demoted (Ezek. 28:11-19; Isa.14:12-15; Rev. 12:7-12). Satan has since opposed mankind and frustrated all our efforts.
- B. Satan or the devil has become man's arch enemy, and a personal enemy to every Christian. This enemy works hard with his demons (i.e., fallen angels) to keep people from obeying God's word and living lustful lives.
- C. Satan is continually deceiving Christians with his major weapon; lies. In order to fight and conquer this enemy, the Christian needs to put on the whole armor of God. In Ephesians 6:10-20, we see that the complete armor is made of seven (7) parts:
 - I. Five defensive weapons: truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, shield of faith, helmet of salvation.
 - II. Two offensive weapons: The sword of the Spirit and prayer.
- D. All believers of God have a duty to fight and resist Satan in order to enter the kingdom of God. The weapons to fight this battle operate in prayer.

APPLICATION: How often do you pray, how can you improve your prayer life?

CONCLUSION: The best way to develop a relationship with God is by talking to Him, and He also talking back to us. Knowing that Satan has become mankind's arch enemy the Christian needs to pray and to grow in prayer since he has to fight and overcome him. The best way to keep Satan away is to keep on praying. Let us pray unceasingly.

MESSAGE 8

FOLLOW THE STEPS OF CHRIST IN PRAYER

INTRODUCTION: The examples that Christ left us are enormous and to attain them would only mean to be Christ Himself. But the Holy Spirit grants believers the ability to live just like Christ did. Some salient aspects of Christ's steps still needs consideration in order that we would gradually be transformed to the image of God (John 21:25). One of these is Prayer.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Peter 2:20-22

Background to Christ's prayer steps: The victorious life of Jesus that He demonstrated publicly was the result of closet prayer (Mark 1:35).

Reasons to follow Christ's prayer steps:

- A. We have the hope of becoming the very substance of which Christ is made when He appears. In order to achieve this, it calls for emulating the prayer life of Christ (1 John 3:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:19).
- B. We notice that if one takes prayer out of Bible study/reading, the person will become powerless and can never come to experience all the truth and knowledge of God (John 5:39).
- C. Except we follow Christ's steps and live under the spirit, we are never going to be victorious. The Holy Spirit comes when one is in touch with God in prayer (John 16:14).
- D. Persistent prayer is the answer of Christ to the devil. Although Jesus had fasted for 40 days and nights before He began His ministry, He never stopped praying for power from on high to do good works (Matt. 4:1ff; Luke 4:1ff).

APPLICATION: How often do you pray? It was the power of prayer only that energized Christ to overcome Satan. Pray and faint not; pray without ceasing.

CONCLUSION: The example this study leaves us is that if we pray continuously we would not fail to shine. We do not have to say that because Jesus had the nature of God (or was God), that is why He was able to pray with results. The Christian shakes the devils foundations when he/she prays (Heb. 4:15-16).

MESSAGE 9

DEVELOP YOUR CHRISTIAN LIFE THROUGH QUIET TIME

INTRODUCTION: One of the best ways to develop a relationship with God is communication regularly with Him. That is, talking to God and allowing Him also to talk back through His Spirit and Word. How do we talk to God? Why do we need to pray? When do we pray? This study answers these questions.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Background: Every believer learns to grow gradually and then matures in the Lord. Quiet Time is important for this growth.

A. Introductory questions:

- I. What is Quiet time, and why should one have it? Ps. 40:29-31
- II. When and where should one have Quiet time? Mark 1:35
- III. What are the challenges one encounters during Quiet time?

B. Effective Quiet time:

What are the indices of quality Quiet time?

- I. Time and duration, (e.g. the Lord Jesus Christ had regular early morning devotion (Luke 6:12); and all night prayers (Mark 1:35).
- II. Intensity and desire to pray- (e.g. The Lord prayed three times in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt. 26:36-46).
- III. Inclusion of fasting (Mark 9:14-29).
- IV. Proper planning, choice of the best place and time.
- V. The study of the Bible and quality spiritually helpful materials.

C. Bible study

- I. Why do we read the word of God? Ps. 1:1-2
- II. What is the main source of God's word? 2 Tim. 3:1
- III. What do you do with God's word? Ps. 119:97; 2 Tim. 2:15

APPLICATION: How does this study apply to you in your walk with the Lord? How regular is your Quiet Time? How will you improve upon it?

CONCLUSION: Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths." This can be achieved when we continue to talk with God during the period of Quiet Time.

MESSAGE 10

WALK WITH GOD BY FAITH

INTRODUCTION: It is the will of God for believers to have faith in Him. That is why He will honor himself when we ask for anything in faith because the honor of the Lord is at stake. We who believed are convinced that He is able to keep us through what He has said because all the promises are in Him.

MAIN TEXT: Mark 11:23; James 1:6-7; Heb. 11:1ff; 2 Cor. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:12.

MEMORY VERSE: “But unto them that fear my name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings ...” (Mal. 4:2)

Definition of Faith: It is taking God by His word and acting upon it.

A. Why faith? Faith is essential in asking everything according to God’s will and receiving it (1 John 5: 4-5, 14). It helps us in our spiritual welfare (Eph. 6:13-16). We live by faith by relying on God’s promises.

B. How strong is your faith?

It is very easy for one to demonstrate a lack of faith in challenging situations. But there are a lot of scriptures to help. Isaiah 41:10 says, “...Fear not, be not dismayed, for I am thy God, I’ll strengthen you and uphold you...” Philippians 4:6, “The Lord is at hand, have no anxiety...” Also, Psalm 48:14 says, “For this God is our God forever...”

C. Do you have faith that you will not fail in life?

It is the will of God for believers to prosper in all things and be in health just as the soul does (3 John 2). We should not be-little ourselves but realize that the Lord is with us to fight for us. The ff. texts can help:

- I. “...I am with you always, even to the very end of the age” (Matt. 28:18-20).
- II. “...When you are passing through fire, water, etc. (Isa. 43:1-2).
- III. The Lord wishes you to prosper in wealth and health ...(3 Jn. 2)

APPLICATION: Why should believers have faith in God? Give three ways this study has helped you to strengthen your faith.

CONCLUSION: God rewards those who seek Him diligently (Heb.11:6). Not counting on our weakness but building up faith in Him is essential for our Christian growth (Rom. 4:19-21).

MESSAGE 11

BE RESPONSIVE TO THE MESSAGE OF GOD

INTRODUCTION: In the book of Nehemiah, we see the attitude of the people to the word of God. The book reveals how God's people became sensitive to the message of God when building the walls of Jerusalem and its gates, and how we can apply this to our lives. We also see the various oppositions they faced and how they overcame them through God's word. This study will help us.

MAIN TEXT: Nehemiah 7, 8, and 9; Psalm 119:101.

MEMORY VERSE: "This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth but thou shall meditate upon it and...do whatever is written in it..." (Jos. 1:8)

Discuss the following questions from the passage:

- A. Do you take time to study, understand, and meditate on the word of God in order to be able to teach others to their understanding?
- B. What was the reaction of the people after hearing the words of the Book of Law? (chap. 8:9; 9:1-3)
- C. Outline some expectations of those who teach people to understand God's word.
- D. Deduce from chapter 8:7-8 the strategies Christians need to adopt in order to cause people to appreciate the word of God as we teach them.
- E. How can we use the word of God effectively to win our family, friends and acquaintances for Christ?
- F. What does the content of Ezra's prayer reveal about himself?

APPLICATION: How have the lessons helped you? In what ways can you make the positive things discussed in the passage part of your life?

CONCLUSION: The word of God comes as a guide to some of the strategies the enemy adopts to discourage God's people. Let us be sensitive and obedient to God's word.

MESSAGE 12

LET THE WORD OF GOD BE YOUR GUIDE

INTRODUCTION: From Bible days till now, God has always spoken to people and had wanted His word to be obeyed and used. Whenever man uses it, blessings; whenever man denounces it, trouble. Examples of those who had trouble are Achan, King Saul, Judas, etc. This study will help us to know more.

MAIN TEXT: John 1: 8; Psalm 119:105

Major areas of the study are the following:

- A. What is the importance of knowing the word of God?** The word of God does the ff:
 - I. Keeps us from sin and purifies us (John 17:17; 15: 3; Psalm 119:11).
 - II. Gives us continues life (John 6:63).
 - III. Directs us on our path and brings blessings (Psalm 1:1-3; 119:105)
 - IV. Helps us to relate more with God and brings answers to prayers.
- B. How does the Word of God help us in spiritual warfare:** It helps us:
 - I. To overcome temptation (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10).
 - II. To destroy the devil devices (2 Cor. 10:4-5).
 - III. To attack the devil and keep Him from us (Eph. 6:17).
 - IV. To breakthrough any challenging situation (Jer. 23:28-29).
- C. What steps help us to develop/grow in the knowledge of God's word?**
 - I. **Search** (or **Read**) the scriptures for the truth (Acts 17: 11).
 - II. **Meditate** on God's word by asking how it applies to you (Jos. 1:8).
 - III. Meet at Church or home to **Study** it (Acts 2:42-47; Heb. 10:2).
 - IV. **Speak** to God in prayer about His promises (Neh. 1:8; Dan. 9:11-12).
 - V. **Confess** the Word to overcome the Devil (Rev. 12:11)

APPLICATION: In what ways do you use God's word as reliable guide in life?

CONCLUSION: There are no better steps for us to be like the Lord Jesus Christ than to follow His reliance on God's word. Develop a strong believe in the Word of God that it is true (John 17:17), and put your faith in it (Psalm 119:49). Let us press on to become like Jesus in everything.

MESSAGE 13

LET THE WILL OF GOD BE YOUR DESIRE

INTRODUCTION: Whatever God himself plans to do cannot be thwarted or resisted by anyone or anything. But God gives every person the choice to be part of His perfect will or not. This choice will bring to the person either glory or shame. Today's study will help us to decide to do God's will.

MAIN TEXT: 1 John 5:14; Luke 22: 42; Mark 14:36.

Definition of the "will" It is the seat of decision in man. Its center is the mind.

A. What are the main types of "wills" at work?

- I. **God's will** (the Perfect will): God's ways are perfect and so is His will (Matt. 26:42; Luke 22:42; Mark 14:32-36; Jer. 29:10, 11; Heb.10:5-10).
- II. **Man's will** (the Permissive will): This is what controls the natural person (i.e., the unbeliever). This might be inferred from Matthew 26:42; Luke 22:42; Mark 14:32-36.
- III. **Satan's will:** This does not usually operate in man except the person is possessed or influenced by Satan or demons (Matt. 16:23; Mark 8:31ff; Luke 9:21-27). This is what happened when Satan entered into Judas Iscariot (Luke 22:3; John 13:27).

B. How will we know the will of God?

- I. Through God's word/ godly counseling from believers of God/ Prayer
- II. Through revelation by true visions, dreams, God's spirit living in us, etc.

C. How do we allow the will of God to prevail in our lives?

- I. Discerning the will of God through His word and walking in it.
- II. By submitting to the leading of the Spirit of God.

APPLICATION: What do you depend on as your main guide in life? How do you know **it is God** that is leading you **or not** at any point of time?

CONCLUSION: One would know God well, understand Him and walk with Him only by the quality of the person's relationship with Him through His word.

MESSAGE 14

FOLLOW THE STEPS OF CHRIST IN HUMILITY

INTRODUCTION: The example that Christ left us is enormous and to attain them would only mean to be Christ Himself. However, the spirit grants us the ability to live just like Christ did. Christ's steps are what we want to consider here in order that we would gradually be transformed to the image of God.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Peter 2:20-22; Hebrews 5:7-9; John 21:25.

Why do we have to follow after Christ's steps? We have the hope of becoming the very substance of which Christ is made when He appears. But to achieve this, it calls for emulating the very example of Christ (1 John 3:2-3, 1 Cor. 15:19). Some of the examples could be studied here.

Christ's life of humility is revealed in the following:

- A. The birth of Christ in the manger is the first testimony to the nature of life the Savior was ready to lead and leave as example for believers to emulate.
- B. The deity of Christ as regards His earthly stay shows the extent of His humility and that result is marvelous (Philip. 2:5).
- C. One of the most important examples that Christ left us is to be humble even as He did on the cross (Philip. 2:1-11).
- D. In His life on earth Christ continually exhibited humility as part of His very nature (Heb. 5:7).
- E. For the sake of Christ, Christians can make a lot of difference between behavior and misbehavior by agreeing to take lowly positions. Christ washed the feet of the disciples (John 13:1-5).

APPLICATION: It is not because Jesus had the nature of God or was God that is why He was able to forgive, pray always or become utterly humble. How was He able to do these?

CONCLUSION: Fact is that God's kingdom is in you and the kingdom of the devil is rooted out. Notice that the weakest Christian stands tall when he humbles himself. Such a person is highly exalted by God.

MESSAGE 15

LEARN TO OVERCOME SIN

INTRODUCTION: Every Christian must strive to maintain his or her relationship with God in order to enjoy life. Whilst there are lots of things that can rob a person from the joy of the Lord, there are only few ways by which the one can have the joy restored. Examples include being forgiven and washed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Let us learn more here.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3; 1 John 2:15-17

Background to mankind's spirituality: There are three kinds of people with respect to spirituality. Each of these has its own characteristics.

A. What are the kinds of people that sin differentiates?

- I. They are natural, carnal and spiritual (Rom. 14:23; James 4:17).
- II. What are the characteristics or fruits of each of these natures?
- III. What are the relationships between these kinds of natures?
- IV. Which of the groups do you belong to and why?

B. How does the Christian overcome with sin?

What provision has God made for our sins? Luke 24:47

- I. First accept that you are a sinner.
- II. Repent from any sin, and pray for forgiveness.
- III. Finally, accept that you have been forgiven by faith.

C. What is your guarantee for forgiveness of sin?

There is a strong basis for forgiveness of sins (1 John 1:9).

- I. God forgives sin because He wants to relate with His people.
- II. We are forgiven when we accept its basis in faith (Heb. 10:18).
- III. We need to be empowered by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:1-2).

APPLICATION: As a Christian, why do you have to refrain from sin? If you find that you are now in a kind of sin what should you do immediately? Why don't you examine yourself now and act upon this study (1 John 1:7-9).

CONCLUSION: Christians are called to a life of holiness which suggests dealing with sin so that we can enjoy fellowship with God. God has forgiven us of our sins but it requires faith to complete it (1 John 1:9). This is the only way we can restore our relationship with Him.

MESSAGE 16

FOLLOW THE STEPS OF CHRIST IN FORGIVENESS

INTRODUCTION: We have already learned that the example that Christ left us are so enormous that to attain them would only mean to be Christ Himself. Nevertheless, the spirit grants us the ability to live just like Christ did. In this study too we will concentrate on one of the salient aspects of Christ's life in order that we would gradually be transformed into His very image.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Peter 2:20-22; John 21:25; 1 John 3:2-3; 1 Cor. 15:19.

- A. Why do we have to follow after Christ's steps?** We have the hope of becoming the very substance of which Christ is made when He appears. But to achieve this, it calls for emulating the very example of Christ. Examples could be studied in this series.
- B. Christ's life of forgiveness is revealed in the following:**
- I. When the first couple chose their own way to live, they became rebellious to the saving grace and fellowship of God. Mankind could not even forgive himself/herself.
 - II. The result of sin was the wrath of God upon all mankind until Christ came to die on the cross. He paved the way for forgiveness by His death (1 Peter 2:20-24).
 - III. As Jesus thought the disciples to pray He said, "...Forgive us as we forgive those who trespass against us" (see also, Mark 11:25).
 - IV. Even on the cross, Christ proclaimed forgiveness to His killers.
- C. Do we have examples of Christ-like forgiveness?** Stephen followed the example of Christ to the point of death where he said "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" (Acts 7:59-60).

APPLICATION: What kind of heart do you have; forgiving or unforgiving? Do you have bitterness against somebody? Why? How will this study help you?

CONCLUSION: The love of God's kingdom is in every believer to forgive the sins that others commit against us. The greatest sinner can still be forgiven no matter the magnitude of sin. Such a step thwarts the schemes of the devil.

MESSAGE 17

THE PURPOSE OF TRIALS IN A BELIEVER'S LIFE

INTRODUCTION: In our Bible studies for the moment, we shall be considering the Practical Christian Living as outlined in the book of James. This will help us answer the question, "How then shall we live?" This study looks at the purpose of trials or tests in a believer's life.

MAIN TEXT: James 1:2-18; Job 1-2

MEMORY VERSE: "...But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing" (James 1:4).

Definition: Trials and tests are situations which God allows believers to go through as means of proving our faith. It is any means used to get knowledge of a person's stand or to find out the quality of something.

A. Main sources of trials or tests

- I. Why do trials occur at home, Church, workplaces, etc?
- II. Is trial (or test) same as temptation? Give reason for your answer

B. The Purpose of trials or tests

- I. What must be our attitude during trials? Have trials worked out any fruits of the Spirit in you? (James 1:3, 4)
- II. How does "letting patience have her perfect work" make us perfect and complete, wanting nothing in our Christian lives? (Rom. 5:2-5)
- III. What must we pray for during times of trials? (verses 5-8)
- IV. What benefit do we derive from trials? (James 1:2-4)

APPLICATION: Is your life dominated by temptations and chronic sins? What have you learned about overcoming them?

CONCLUSION: Temptations are results of our own evil desires but trials come to purge and sharpen us for effective Christian work.

MESSAGE 18

HOW TO UNDERSTAND TEST OR TEMPTATIONS

INTRODUCTION: In God's providence, people are tested by Him. In this testing, He may use Satan as the tool. So Satan comes in with temptation. Temptation is not sin, but yielding to it is sin.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 22:1-12; Exodus 16:4-5; 1 Corinthians 3:13

Difference between test and temptation: A trial/test is any circumstance that God uses to prove the faith and commitment of a believer. But temptation is any circumstance that Satan uses to cause a believer to disobey God's word.

A. Sources of test or trial of the believer:

- I. They are used by God as tools to purify the believer
- II. They are never associated with evil
- III. They are intended to lead to a testimony

B. Sources of temptation of the believer:

- I. Tests are executed by God, e.g. Abraham (Gen. 22:1-12; 1 Cor. 3:13).
- II. Temptations are brought by Satan as a challenge to God and to make mankind fall,, e.g. Jesus (Matt. 4:1-11).
- III. How is a man tempted? Give the stages to sin and spiritual death.

C. Importance of test/ temptation to the believer:

- I. Both prove our faith/commitment to God (Gen. 22:1-12).
- II. Both purify/refine and give us experience (Job 23:10; James 1:2-4).
- III. Both make us mature and complete (James 1:2-4), and make us win praise, honor and glory for God (1 Peter 1:7; 5:10).
- IV. Both bring the final reward which is the crown of life (James 1:12).

APPLICATION: Are you faced with any trials/temptations? How are you dealing with them?

CONCLUSION: Trials are meant to strengthen believers; temptations are not. As Christians, we should therefore pray that God keeps us from temptations.

MESSAGE 19

HOW TO OVERCOME TESTS OR TEMPTATIONS

INTRODUCTION: In the previous lesson, we learned that a test is any situation that God uses to prove the faith and commitment of a believer, but temptation is any circumstance that Satan uses to cause a believer to disobey God in order to do wrong. But how can the believer overcome both? Let us see how the discussions in this message can help us.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 22:1-12; Exodus 16:4-5; 1 Corinthians 3:13

A. Means for the tests and temptations: In order for the believer to overcome both tests and temptations, one has to understand the means that trials come to a person. These include:

- i. Attacks on very precious property (Gen. 22:2).
- ii. Attacks through family, neighbors, other people.
- iii. From natural occurrence/ disaster like fire, accidents, etc.
- iv. Breakdown of health (diseases), economic hardships, conflicts, etc.

B. Weapons required to overcome any test or temptations:

- i. Accept the situation as part of God's plan to test and purify us (Job 1:21-22; Isa. 45:7), and look to God for help (Ps. 121:1).
- ii. Confession of sin and waiting for God in humility (1 Thess. 5:17).
- iii. Show absolute faith and obedience to God (Job 13:15, 16; 27:6).
- iv. Be totally determined to overcome (Acts 20:24).
- v. Base all your utterances upon the word of God (Job 1:22; 27:3,4).
- vi. Develop total patience (James 1:2-4).
- vii. Practice constant prayers (1 Thess. 5:17). Examples: Elijah (1 Kings 18:41-44); Hannah (1 Sam. 1:6-7); The Lord (Luke 5:15; 6:12).

APPLICATION: In what ways are you faced with trials/temptations?

CONCLUSION: During times of trials and temptations we should not hasten to do anything as King Saul did (1 Sam. 13:7-14), or as Israel did (14:40-45). Trials are good but always pray that God keeps you from hasty decisions and temptations.

MESSAGE 20

HOW TO EXPERIENCE CHRIST DEEPLY

INTRODUCTION: Accepting the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior in an excellent decision any person can take in life. But the true relationship does not end there; it goes further into a lifelong commitment to know God more deeply to the extent of knowing His plans for individuals and for the whole world. This study will help us direct our focus unto God.

MAIN TEXT: Philippians 3:10; Luke 5:1-6; Ruth 1:16-18.

A. What must the believer do in order to know the Lord deeply?

To know Christ deeply there are some steps we need to take including:

- I. We must be prepared to forsake the world (1 John 2:15-17).
- II. We must be prepared to follow Him. We need to be at any place that the Spirit of the Lord leads, and imitate His life as revealed by scriptures.
- III. We must be prepared to live for Him. Living for the Lord means that we no longer live to please ourselves. It means forsaking the desires of this world in order to be identified with Christ at any time. People around us should see Christ in our appearance, speech, conduct among them, etc., in everything (1 Tim. 4:12-14).

B. A typical example of steps to know God deeply:

Ruth is a woman who decided to know the God of Israel (Ruth 1:16-17).

- I. She decided to forsake the world; her country, people, family and all.
- II. She turned to the true God by following Naomi to Israel.
- III. She came to live for God in Israel by declaring citizenship.

Note: As a result of Ruth's desire to know God personally, she was rewarded for her heart desires; a concerned mother-in-law, an excellent husband, a son, and a people that made her to feel better than her former country.

APPLICATION: Do you have worldly intimate friends, interactions, dealings, etc? How are you associated with or separated from their life and conduct?

CONCLUSION: Nobody surrenders to God and loses his/her blessings. If we press on to know the Lord deeply, He will bless us like the way He blessed Ruth. We must be prayerful, i.e., that God will empower us to forsake the world, follow the Lord, and live for Him.

MESSAGE 21

LEARN TO LIVE A SANCTIFIED LIFE

INTRODUCTION: A disciple must be set apart every day. Once the old sin nature has been rooted out the person must be in a challenging fellowship, instantly obeying the voice of the Holy Spirit through the word and prayers. Maintaining a sanctified life is necessary for spiritual growth and maturity.

MAIN TEXT: Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 5:8.

MEMORY VERSE: "...This is the will of God...your sanctification." (1 Thess. 4:3).

A. Definition of Sanctification:

- I. It is defined as being set apart and consecrated for sacred use; i.e., for/the Lord and in the Lord's house (Lev. 19:2; 21:8; 2 Tim. 2:21).
- II. It is the situation where something is devoted to religious use; made sacred, consecrated, separated from all defilement (1 Chron. 22:19; Titus 1:7-8; Eph. 1:4).

B. Why is sanctification important?

- I. It is important so that Christ might have a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle but holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:27).
- II. Our old man is crucified with Christ; we walk in new life (Rom. 6:1ff).
- III. Our calling is unto holiness (1 Thess. 4:7) in order to see the Lord.

C. Common sins to be sanctified from include:

- I. **Fleshly desires:** This is the passion for bodily satisfaction. "We are not to love the world..." (1 John 2:17). Let's mortify the deeds of the flesh (Col. 3:5).
- II. **Lust of the eyes:** It is an ambition to acquire things that appeals to the eye (1 Peter 3:1-6).
- III. **Pride of life:** It is ambition for recognition; excessive desire for power.

APPLICATION: How does this study apply to your walk with the Lord? Mention two ways by which you can maintain your sanctity in the Lord.

CONCLUSION: Our old nature is crucified with Christ but sometimes it raises its head. We need to always return to the cross for cleansing and renewal.

MESSAGE 22

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF SANCTIFICATION?

INTRODUCTION: In the previous study we learned that a disciple must be set apart and must not harbor the view that the old sin nature has been rooted out. Indeed, the need to maintain a sanctified life is a necessary factor for spiritual growth and maturity. Today's lesson focuses on sanctification.

MAIN TEXT: Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 5:8.

MEMORY VERSE: "...This is the will of God...your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3).

A. Why does the believer need to be sanctified?

- I. Continuing living in sin. One born of God does not sin. But foul talk, impure thoughts and heart desires, and dirty conversations all defile the Christian (Eph. 4:29, 5:3-4).
- II. Some Christians are not able to bridle their tongue (James 1:26). We shall give account of every idle word spoken (Matt. 12:35-36).

B. Who sanctifies the believer?

- I. God the Father is involved in sanctification (John 10:10).
- II. The word of God is truth and sanctifies (Eph. 5:26).
- III. The Lord Jesus also, sanctifies with his own blood (Heb. 13:12).
- IV. The Holy Spirit sanctifies believers by faith (Acts 26:18).

C. How do we become sanctified?

- I. Our hearts should be circumcised so that we can love God with all our heart and soul and with all our might (Deut. 30:6).
- II. We should be sanctified through the truth (John 17:17).
- III. The Lord Jesus died to redeem us from our sins and to purify unto himself people who are prepared to live for God (Eph. 2:9-10).

APPLICATION: In what ways does this study apply to you in your walk with the Lord? Discuss two methods you will employ to stay sanctified for the Lord.

CONCLUSION: Our old nature is in continuous struggle with our new creation. We need to return to the cross for cleansing and renewal to stay sanctified.

MESSAGE 23

PRACTICAL HOLINESS IS NECESSARY

INTRODUCTION: Holiness is a very important virtue that has to be pursued by every believer; without it no one can see God. Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians 1:30 says, if we will have the right conscience to worship God, then it's from Christ; live like Christ lived. This study looks at holiness.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Chron. 22:19; (Titus 1:7-8; Exod. 20:8; Lev.19:2; 21:8)

General definition of holiness: Holiness is simply defined as putting sin away and living far from it, or having sin on the one side and you on the other side.

A. Old Testament method of holiness

Holiness has been defined in many ways in the scriptures. Its application in the Old and New Testaments are quite different. In the former, it is:

- I. Knowing the power of God in order to Love Him in our heart (Joshua 3:5).
- II. To present one's self clean before he or she can offer any sacrifice-worship (1 Samuel 16:5; Joel 2:12-16).
- III. To remove anything unclean from the body or clothes, or tent as in the some texts (Joel 2:13; Joshua 7:13; Exodus 19:10, 11, 15).
- IV. By obeying the commandments (Numbers 11:8).

B. New Testament method of holiness

- I. It is to be cleansed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:57 admonishes us to see holiness as victory in Christ over Satan.
- II. The emphasis is not on outward cleanliness. Romans 7:20-25 says we should serve God in our conscience and heart.

APPLICATION: If to be holy means to stay away from everything sinful then how do you hope to achieve this purpose daily?

CONCLUSION: If you ask God anything and believe that you have asked in faith then the only hindrance to the answer of your prayer could be sin on your part since you cannot tap the things of God when you are not living a holy life. Holiness is required in order to see God.

MESSAGE 24

BE LIKE JESUS IN HIS HOLINESS

INTRODUCTION: Every believer has to be serious with Christian practices especially when it comes to the issue of Holiness. The reason is simple; Bible says that without the practice of holiness no one can see God. It is important to settle the issue once for all; to live a holy life as Christ did.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Peter 1:15-16, 19; Hebrews 2:14-18

Definition: Holiness has been defined as not doing anything contrary to God's word or will. It is abstinence from all forms of sins (Heb. 12:1; 1 John 3:3).

A. Why do we have to be holy?

- I. Because God is Holy and we have to be like Him (1 Pet. 1:15-16).
- II. Without Holiness no one can see God (Heb. 12:14).
- III. Without Holiness no one can go to Heaven (1 John 3:3).

B. In which areas of our life do we have to be holy?

- I. Spiritual area, i.e., the spirit (this refers to the things in the heart).
- II. Spiritual area, i.e., the soul (refers to the mind/conscience).
- III. Physical area – body (i.e., what we use our physical body to do).

C. How do we become holy like Jesus?

- I. This can be referred from 2 Corinthians 6:14.
- II. We should not take part in ungodly spiritual practices: do not touch or handle their fetishes (materials contaminated with spirits).
- III. We should not engage in practices such as illicit sex, drunkenness, lies, stealing, corruption, etc. Believers should always run away from these (2 Tim. 2:23ff).

APPLICATION: Mention three new things about holiness that you have studied. How do you apply these to your life in order to remain holy for the Lord?

CONCLUSION: Living a holy life before God is not negotiable for the Christian. The Bible says without holiness no one can see God. You need to stay holy!

MESSAGE 25

THE BLESSINGS OF LIVING IN HOLINESS

INTRODUCTION: Our studies today will look at more discussions and implications of a holy living. It is a very important virtue that has to be pursued by every believer for without it no one can see God. Let's learn more now.

MAIN TEXT: 2 Sam. 22:27; Ps. 19:9; 51:10; 119:9; Matt. 5:8; 1 Tim. 5:22

Definition of Holiness: Another definition of holiness is keeping the body, soul, spirit free from defilement and making the person acceptable before God.

A. Why do believers have to pursue purity?

- I. Purity is a commandment or a requirement from God for his people.
- II. Purity makes us acceptable to God, and brings us closer to see Him.
- III. Purity keeps the devil/ Satan or the enemy away from touching us.

B. How can believers pursue purity in the areas below?

- I. **Body** – in our appearance, by abstinence, etc. (Discuss this in details)
- II. **Mind (soul)** – by keeping our mind from unholy thoughts, fantasies, etc.
- III. **Heart (spirit)** – by not harboring bitterness, hatred, etc.

C. What tools can help the believer pursue purity?

- I. By studying the word of God always and obeying it or being led by it.
- II. By continued prayer; keeping our spirit in communion with God.
- III. By allowing the Spirit of God to lead and guide us.

D. What practical example of the practice of purity do we have? Discuss ways by which the following youthful believers pursued or practiced purity:

- I. Joseph (Gen. 39:7-12).
- II. Daniel and his colleagues (Dan. 1:8; 3:8-26).
- III. Timothy (1 Timothy 4:12).

APPLICATION: How does the study challenge you about the need for holiness?

CONCLUSION: Only knowing how to handle sin and how to be controlled by the Holy Spirit is not sufficient. We need to live a holy life so that we can conquer Satan (Eph. 6:11f), more so, in order to reflect the glory of God.

MESSAGE 26

ENSURE SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD

INTRODUCTION: The need for the call to separate from the world to be sounded more. The reason is that the world has become so churchy and the church so worldly that it is hard to distinguish one from the other. Some believers are mere shadows of themselves; God's glory has departed.

MAIN TEXT: 2 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Samuel 4:1-21-22

Background: In God's plan at conversion, He does not intend us to wonder but to yield fully and live in the spirit without backsliding. But very few are able to do. There comes a great spiritual crisis due to failure to surrender and live wholly for God. We need spiritual separation to experience God deeply.

A. What separation from the world is not:

- I. It is not separation from human beings or the physical things around us.
- II. It is not freedom from all forms of temptations.
- III. It is not a gradual deliverance from sin.

B. What is separation from the world?

- I. It is a deliberate measure to experience God better,
- II. It is a life of victory over the things that can lure a believer to sin,
- III. It is a life-long transformation into Christ-likeness (2 Cor. 3:18).

C. Step to ensure separation from the world:

- I. It calls for separation from worldly pleasures (2 Cor. 6:14).
- II. There should be regular confession of sins that the believer commits (1 John 1:9).
- III. Ensures dedication of oneself to Christ in prayer and Bible study.
- IV. There should be continuous infilling of the Holy Spirit; i.e., keeping our mind on God and asking the Holy Spirit to lead us.

APPLICATION: What should Christians do to avoid the departure of God's glory from us (i.e., "Ichabod")?

CONCLUSION: If we walk in the light of God's word we will not fall. One of the ways to win others for Christ is to be different ourselves, and thus challenge them by our lives. The world should not win us; we should win the world.

MESSAGE 27

YOU WERE ONCE DEAD BUT NOW ALIVE IN CHRIST

INTRODUCTION: How does a person experience the blessings of New-Life in Christ? Apostle Paul paints some vivid and contrasting picture to help believers explain how we moved from our old life to our new one. Let us revisit what it means to become a Christian.

MAIN TEXT: Ephesians 2:1-10; 2 Corinthians 5:17

Use the above text to discuss the following questions:

- A. Ephesians 2:1 begins with, “But as for you...” What contrast do you see between your life and unbelievers?
- B. Why is it necessary to see a contrast in a person’s life when he/she first becomes a Christian and when the one continues in the Christian walk?
- C. A second “but” comes in verse 4. What striking contrast do you see between our own nature (verses 1-3) and God’s (verses 4-7)?
- D. How would remembering God’s love and mercy and grace help us to live lives of holiness and service?
- E. Twice in this passage (verse 5, 8) Paul repeats the phrase “By grace are you saved.” Why do many people feel that their works can save them?
- F. How should knowing that we are saved by grace affect the way we see each other in Christian fellowship? Why has God saved us?
- G. How have you come to see more clearly the Lord’s kindness since becoming a Christian?

APPLICATION: In what way(s) does the study apply to you? What should you do about them? How would you use this passage to tell someone else how to become a Christian?

CONCLUSION: As a believer you should always try to remember a time when you were overwhelmed with God’s love, and also try to let such a love affect your words, thoughts and actions, so that you remain steadfast in Him.

MESSAGE 28

YOU ARE NOT AN ENEMY BUT A PART OF CHRIST'S FAMILY

INTRODUCTION: To what extent does becoming a Christian have on your family, colleagues, and society or it is simply an individual matter? With various contrasts and pictures, Paul makes it very clear that salvation in Christ has made us part of a new society. Let's see how to be a part of it.

MAIN TEXT: Ephesians 2:11-22

Memory verse: "You are my friends if you do what I command..." (John 15:14)

Discuss the following questions from the main passage:

- A. Twice in Ephesians 2:11-12, Paul asks believers to "remember" what our status was before we knew Christ. Why is it so important to remember what we were before we were saved?
- B. How does Paul describe the family Christ has built through the cross?
- C. Through the blood of Jesus, deep and divisive walls of hostilities, separations, and exclusion have been broken down. What walls of hostilities were dividing us before we came to Christ?
- D. By what means does the blood of Jesus break down barriers and bring the kind of peace that any person cannot achieve from the world?
- E. To what extent are we allowing the same walls of barrier to exist within the church today? How would that destroy the testimony to Christ's work on the cross?
- F. How should becoming a Christian affect the believer's relationship with: a) other Christians? b) unbelievers
- G. What evidence of our fellowship with God should be demonstrated to: a) our extended family; b) where we live; c) colleagues at work place?

APPLICATION: Describe the contrast between your past and present life in Christ. Do you see any difference, and what does it mean to you?

CONCLUSION: Christ has accomplished what humanity has failed to do through the ages. People should see a great contrast between what we were before knowing Christ and what we are after knowing him. Let's live for Christ.

MESSAGE 29

CHRIST HAS TRANSFERRED YOU FROM RAGS TO RICHES

INTRODUCTION: Having all this blessing in Christ, being made alive and being made friends are not enough. Christ has transferred you from rags to riches. What responsibility is there now other than to tell that good news to others? That is what made Apostle Paul the effective ambassador that he was. You can also be the same if you study this message well.

MAIN TEXT: Ephesians 2:11-22; 3:1-21

Discuss the following questions from the texts:

- A. Four times (verse 3, 4, 6, and 9) Apostle Paul repeats that he has been assigned to reveal to us a mystery that God has kept hidden since the foundation of the world. What mystery is Paul revealing?
- B. How does Paul see his privilege and responsibility revealed? (verse 1-5, 7-9). Why should this mystery not be hidden any longer from people?
- C. How eager are you to reveal this “open secret” in the gospel to others?
- D. Why might Paul be prompted to pray for us each time he thinks about what God has done for us in Christ? What could we learn from this pattern of praying?
- E. Do you pray for others? If yes, what example does Paul’s prayer in verses 16-19 have on us when we pray for each other? If no, why?
- F. What emphasis did Paul make just before he urges us in chapter 4:1 to lead a life worthy of our calling? How much are we overwhelmed with the love of Christ?

APPLICATION: How important are our suffering and trial compared to our riches in Christ? What lessons can we learn during times of sufferings/trials?

CONCLUSION: Apostle Paul saw very keenly his privilege and responsibility to really experience the unsearchable riches of Christ. Therefore, he prays that we too would come to know fully the deep love of Christ Jesus. Make sure you share this love with other people.

MESSAGE 30

YOU NEED TO PRACTICE YOUR CHRISTIANITY

INTRODUCTION: Christianity is a call with a message for all generations. If this call is not practiced, it becomes dangerous for the world. The pivot of this call is an understanding and experience of the true ingredient of the Christian life. Today's study will help us understand our call as Christians.

MAIN TEXT: Acts 2:37-47; 2 Timothy 2:20-21

Background: True salvation involves Jesus being the Savior and most importantly Lord of the person's life. But there are many characteristics of a person's life that make him/her a Christian. Some of the major characteristics of a Christian will be discussed in this study.

How do you understand the following Christian characteristics?

- A. Total repentance – change of mind from worldliness to spirituality
- B. A demonstration of the desire to abide in the Lord forever
- C. Having living faith in God – (walks and talks with God always)
- D. Becoming a student of God's word for it to become part of you.
- E. Using prayer as a means of clear communication.
- F. Living in fellowship with other Christians everywhere.
- G. Being a witness for the Lord and sharing the gospel with others.
- H. Accepting trials and persecution for serving the Lord.
- I. Tithing/giving a contribution of your income to the work of God.
- J. Practicing good works: This becomes a product of salvation which is based on appreciation for the saving grace of the Lord Jesus, i.e., His death and resurrection only.

APPLICATION: Has this study challenged your life as a Christian? Explain your answer. How do you hope to improve your knowledge of Christian values?

CONCLUSION: Some Christians benefit from the Lord because they do well to take a stand for Him and make the world around them know their faith by practicing it openly. If we are not shy of the Lord, He will honor us openly.

PART II

GROWING AS A RESPONSIBLE YOUTH

MESSAGE 31

TRAIN THE YOUTH!

INTRODUCTION: After the death of Joshua and the elders who knew the Lord the next generation of leaders failed in their duty to train the youth that followed them. When the youth grew up they turned their backs to God and engaged in all forms of vices. Such a situation is likely to occur today if the Church fails to train the youth.

MAIN TEXT: Judges 2:8-15; Eccl. 11:9-12:1; 1 Tim. 4:12; Acts 16:1ff.

MEMORY VERSE: "...Remember your Creator in the days of your youth..." (Eccl. 11:9-12:1).

Definition of the Youth:

- If the traditional saying that, "life begins at forty" is anything to go by, then the period of Youth is the period of life below 40 where life is yet to begin.
- By Philosophy, the youth is a growing person above a child where one begins to learn from dependent to complete independence.
- But by age, the youth are people of the age 13-19 (Num. 14:29). This youthful stage which begins with the teenage is a period of transition from child to adult in sexual development and maturity.

What are some of the characteristics of the youth period?

- A. Being exuberant or active, full of strength.
- B. Very adventurous; daring and experimenting.
- C. Quite joyful and hopeful, full of interest in the self.
- D. The youthful period is the most changeable and moldable one, it might be where a person is most prone to change due to exposure.
- E. The growing up of a teenager into adulthood also involves the development and maturation of the body's sexual features.

APPLICATION: What steps have your church put in place to forestall what happened in the book of Judges? What is your evaluation of these steps?

CONCLUSION: Ecclesiastes advises that every person ought to remember his creator in youthful days. By old age, the experience has moved a person's heart from God to idols, it is worthy to build strong foundation in the period of youth so that when the evil days come, man can still stand.

MESSAGE 32

THERE IS NEED TO BRIDGE THE GENERATION GAP

INTRODUCTION: One of the reasons that account for the cycle of sin which begun in Israel after the death of Joshua is that the next generation of leaders failed in their duty to train the younger generation that followed them. This led to a generation that grew up without much information of the workings of God among the people of Israel. There is the need to seriously train our youth.

MAIN TEXT: Judges 2:8-15; Eccl. 11:9-12:1; 1 Tim. 4:12; 2; Ps. 119:9.

MEMORY VERSE: "...After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD" (Jud. 2:10).

Importance of Youth in Church ministry: Express your opinion on the following by showing where you agree and where you do not, and why.

- A. The youth constitute the future or hope of any church because they serve as the bridge between aged and children, and therefore fill up the generation gap, etc.
- B. Developing a vibrant Youth Ministry is a prerequisite for transforming a weak or stunted church into a growing and healthy one (Acts 16:1-5).
- C. It is also a positive step to ensuring a better future for any progressive Church. The youth constitute a very peculiar group of every society.
- D. In the Church, having a vibrant youth is a big asset. The youth can be trained for various services of the church and can make a church lively when they are actively involved in certain activities. For example, a well organized and trained youth are useful in supporting or leading such important areas as praises, worship, for manual duties, etc.
- E. When utilized appropriately, the youth can be good wheels for church growth since they can be utilized well in evangelism and follow-up.

APPLICATION: Does your church have a plan for the youth ministry? Are you satisfied with the way your church is developing the youth? Explain?

CONCLUSION: During that period of the Judges, scriptures say that the generation who came after that of Joshua had died knew neither the Lord nor the great works He did with their fathers. The result is that this new generation turned from the Lord to other gods leading to very negative consequences.

MESSAGE 33

WHY THERE IS NEED TO BRIDGE THE GENERATION GAP

INTRODUCTION: One of the results for failing to train the youth is to have youth without much information of the excellent workings of God over the years. When this new generation grows up they will turn their backs to God and follow other gods (or beliefs) and engage in all manner of vices. To prevent such a situation, the church needs to devote great attention to youth development.

MAIN TEXT: Eccl. 11:9-12:1; 1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:22; Ps. 119:9; Acts 16:1ff.

MEMORY VERSE: "...After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the LORD" (Jud. 2:10).

The following are some of the issues that the Youth need to understand now in order to step into the shoes of the adults:

- A. One has to remember his Creator and serve Him while he/she is young so that by old age a person might have achieved God's purpose in life.
- B. A youth has to be well placed to give accounts to his/her Creator. In the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon takes his readers on a mental journey through life in general, using himself as a test case to explain how everything he tried, tested, or tasted was "meaningless"
- C. The youthful age, with all the vigor and blessings of very active mind and purposefulness is the period when better services for God can be nurtured with strong roots.
- D. Old age is a period where the desires of life are mostly lost and most of man's strength has slacked to the limit that active service to humanity is much reduced, let alone to God.
- E. Worst of all, old age hasten life's uselessness. No youth should keep postponing some of the services he/she can do now till adulthood.

APPLICATION: What are some of the steps that the church is taking to create awareness of the challenges of a generation gap in your church? Explain.

CONCLUSION: Clearly, any leader who plays down the importance of a youth ministry in the church is not considering a bright future of his/her ministry, that is, its growth and healthy development; he/she is creating a generation gap.

MESSAGE 34

FAILURE TO TRAIN THE YOUTH

INTRODUCTION: One of the reasons for failing to train the youth is to have youth without much information of the excellent workings of God over the years. When this new generation grows up they will turn their backs to God and follow other gods and engage in all manner of vices. Such a situation is likely to occur in today's church, hence the need to attend to the youth.

MAIN TEXT: Judges 2:8-15; 1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:22; Ps. 119:9; Acts 16:1-2.

MEMORY VERSE: "...Remember your Creator in the days of your youth..." (Eccl. 11:9-12:1).

A. What are some of the result of failure to train the youth? There are various problems or challenges of failing to handle youth in the Church. How true are the following examples?

- I. Inactive youth at home, church, school, other places.
- II. Moral breakdown or high immorality among the youth.
- III. Static or unfulfilled vision.
- IV. A youth who might not know what is right and therefore mess up.
- V. Loss of an important link between the informed adult.
- VI. Leaders who might know what is right and might pursue.
- VII. Ignorant youth that grow into irresponsible adults.
- VIII. The creation of generation gap in the Church (as happened to Israel).

B. What other problems does the lack of proper training of the youth likely to bring to the home/church/school/etc?

C. By what means will the issues in A and B above be prevented?

APPLICATION: Is your church taking the development of the youth seriously? What areas of the youth development need to be addressed by your church?

CONCLUSION: When Joshua and his generation who knew the Lord and the great works He did with their fathers died, the new generation who grew turned from the Lord to engage in vices. Present leaders in our society, especially the Church, must avoid this unfortunate situation.

MESSAGE 35

THE YOUTH MUST OVERCOME YOUTHFUL SEXUAL DESIRES (I)

INTRODUCTION: The youthful period of a person can also be the most changeable and moldable period, and it might equally be the period of life where a person is most susceptible to change due to exposure. The growing up of a teenager into manhood and womanhood also involves the development and maturation of the sexual features of the body.

MAIN TEXT: Eccl. 11:9-12:1; 1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:22; Ps. 119:9; Acts 16:1ff.

MEMORY VERSE: "...Run away from sexual sin, every other sin...is outside their bodies, but those who sin sexually sin against their own bodies" (1 Cor. 6:18).

Physiological and behavioral developments in Youth: Part of the sexual development of teenagers involves a lot of changes in their behavior which may reach a certain peak level. In most cases the behavioral changes in the teenager may create within them certain characteristics. Explain why the following happen.

- A. Interest in the company of someone of the opposite sex.
- B. Paying special attention to the body in terms of appearances.
- C. Attraction to or feeling for the opposite sex.
- D. Becoming curious and desirous of sexual issues.
- E. Becoming secretive, shy, and seeks for more freedom.

Note: It is interesting to know that the reproductive organs also relate with other important organs of the body to bring about the transformation of an immature person into a fully matured one. This normally happens during the teenage or adolescent period.

APPLICATION: What physiological and behavioral changes have you experienced in your life lately? What awareness has this study created in you?

CONCLUSION: King Solomon came to the conclusion in the book of Ecclesiastes that man ought to remember his creator in his youthful days because of all the above areas considered and the experience he acquired in them. By old age, his experience has moved his heart from God to other things; it is worthy to build strong foundation in the period of youth.

MESSAGE 36

THE YOUTH MUST OVERCOME YOUTHFUL SEXUAL DESIRES (II)

INTRODUCTION: Both physiological and behavioral changes in the teenager may create some desires, especially, sensual feelings such as sex and pornography.

MAIN TEXT: 2 Tim. 2:22; Ps. 119:9; Eccl. 11:9-12:1; 1 Tim. 4:12.

MEMORY VERSE: “...Run away from sexual sin, every other sin...is outside the body, but those who sin sexually sin against their own bodies” (1 Cor. 6:18).

A. Positive side of Sex: Of all the means by which the teenager can satisfy his or her sensual desires, sex is the commonest. Generally, the Bible speaks about sex in many passages including the following,

- i. God made SEX for a purpose (Gen. 1:27-28).
- ii. God made SEX for a marriage life (Gen. 2:24; Heb. 13:4).

B. Negative side of Sex: There should never be sex outside marriage because this is sin. Sex outside marriage includes, teenage sex or premarital sex; i.e., fornication (1 Cor. 6:18), extramarital sex, i.e., adultery (Heb. 13:4).

C. Which age group are the most susceptible to sexual desires and why?

The answer is obvious; the teenage. The reasons are as follows:

- i. The teenage period is the stage where secondary sexual characteristics begin to develop.
- ii. The teenage period is associated with drives and adventures
- iii. It is also the stage where the means to exercise control over sexual behavior and desires are yet to be fully experienced.

D. What are the implications of sex outside of marriage? No sexually immoral person will go to heaven (Rev. 2:27; 22:14-15). Scripture says, “... Run away from sexual sin, every other sin people do is outside their bodies...those who sin sexually sin against their own bodies, (1 Cor. 6:18).

APPLICATION: In what ways have this study helped you to live a better life?

CONCLUSION: The body of the man, including the youth or teenager should never be used for sexual immorality because the body is the temple of God. If any person destroys the temple of God with sex God will destroy that person.

MESSAGE 37

ENTICEMENTS/BAITS FOR PRE-MARITAL SEX

INTRODUCTION: When one considers the nature and development of human beings, God made the body to fully enjoy life on earth. Therefore, He provided us with wonderful body parts that can meet all our needs in life; the brain, the heart, the stomach, the hands; mankind is wonderfully made (Ps. 139:14). Quite in line with the above are sex and pornography.

MAIN TEXT: 2 Tim. 2:22; Ps. 119:9; Acts 16:1-2; 1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Cor. 6:18

MEMORY VERSE: "...Remember your Creator in the days of your youth..." (Eccl. 11:9-12:1).

What are the enticements/baits of pre-marital sex?

- A. A good number of teenagers are drawn in sex because of lack of self-control over their feelings.
- B. Many are drawn into it because they fall for some bait. If we understand what "bait" does in a "trap," it will help us to understand what "baits" of sex traps means. Sex "baits" among others include:
 - I. Promise of money or material gifts.
 - II. Promise of a lasting relationship (i.e., marriage).
 - III. Promise of help to meet certain needs.
 - IV. Peer pressure, the "all friends are doing it" deception.
 - V. Deception that "sex is an expression of one's love for another." This is the greatest of the "bait" of sex for which most teenagers fall.

Note: It is important that each youth knows which of these "baits" is likely to attract him or her into sex and how he or she hopes to overcome it.

- C. What other "bait" or trap usually catch the youth into promiscuous lives?

APPLICATION: Which of the baits/traps has caught you/have you avoided before? What lessons can you share with your peers?

CONCLUSION: The author of Ecclesiastes concludes that a person has to enjoy life but this enjoyment should be accomplished by fearing and obeying God. Obedience to God's word is every person's hope; God has acted in Christ to bring hope to mankind in order to stand in the judgment.

MESSAGE 38

THE YOUTH MUST OVERCOME PORNOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION: Both physiological and behavioral changes in the teenager may create some desires, especially, sensual feelings, which most of the times he or she may want to satisfy. If such desires are not controlled they may drive the person into unproductive attitudes and behaviors. One of the negative practices which have gained lot of strength presently is pornography.

MAIN TEXT: 2 Tim. 2:22; Ps. 119:9; Eccl. 11:9-12:1; 1 Tim. 4:12.

MEMORY VERSE: "...Run away from sexual sin, every other sin...is outside the body, but those who sin sexually sin against their own bodies" (1 Cor. 6:18).

Definition of Pornography: It is a form of graphical or picture communication which arouses sexual desire or draws a person into sex. Some might argue that Pornography is in the scriptures. Yes, the word "Pornography" does not appear in scriptures explicitly; it is implied in some of the sins in it.

A. Types (or forms) of Pornography

The most common forms appear as pictures showing the following:

- i. A naked person.
- ii. Part of a naked body, mostly, the sexual parts.
- iii. Naked sexual acts or interactions.

B. What are the common sources of Pornography?

- i. The common sources of Pornography are the books or magazines, where they appear as pictures,
- ii. the internet (at certain websites),
- iii. television movies
- iv. video cassette movies,

Note: In most cases, some of these sources are intended for adults but they end up in the hands of innocent teenagers.

APPLICATION: Are you already caught up in pornography? If yes, how will you come out? If no, what has helped you to stay away from it? Share with others.

CONCLUSION: Staying away from/coming out of pornography is one of the positive steps that any person should take in order to overcome sexual impurity. As Christians, we have to do everything possible to stay pure.

MESSAGE 39

REASONS THE YOUTH ARE INTERESTED IN PORNOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION: God made man as a sexual creature and included in the body, reproductive organs for special functions. To satisfy sexual behavior, to continue the process of creation (reproduction), and other functions like; to pass out urine, growth, etc, both physiological and behavioral changes in the teenager may create some desires. This includes pornography.

MAIN TEXT: 2 Tim. 2:22; Ps. 119:9; Eccl. 11:9-12:1; 1 Tim. 4:12.

MEMORY VERSE: "...Run away from sexual sin, every other sin...is outside the body, but those who sin sexually sin against their own bodies" (1 Cor. 6:18).

A. For what reasons will a youth be interested in pornography? People may take to pornography for a lot of reasons but the common ones include:

- I. To stimulate a person (or whet his/her appetite) for sex.
- II. To satisfy their sexual desires in the absence of real sex.
- III. To store in their minds sexual fantasies (sexual ideas that give them fun).

B. What are the consequences of pursuing Pornography?

- I. Pornography is part of the sin of sexual immorality.
- II. It can make a person's mind become filled with sexual thoughts (or visions) which arouse sexual feelings and fantasies. This is sin before God (Matt. 5:27-30).
- III. It creates lust and sexual desires that can lead to sin (James 1:14).
- IV. It can lead to spiritual depravity and moral weakness (2 Sam. 11:2-4).
- V. It can arouse sexual feelings leading to masturbation, homosexuality, fornication/adultery (whether consensually or by rape), etc.

APPLICATION: In what way(s) has this study helped you to overcome or keep resisting the temptation of pornography? What lessons can you share with others in order to help them become aware of the dangers of pornography?

CONCLUSION: Since a time will come when the current adult will age up and there will not be responsible youth ready to take over, any leader who plays down the importance of a youth ministry in the church is toying with the growth and healthy development of the church; he is creating a generation gap.

MESSAGE 40

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF YOUTHFUL (OR TEENAGE) DESIRES

INTRODUCTION: Both physiological and behavioral changes in the teenager may create some desires, especially, sensual feelings, which most of the times he or she may want to satisfy. If such desires are not controlled they may drive the person to engage in unproductive attitudes and behaviors.

MAIN TEXT: Eccl. 11:9-12:1; 2 Tim. 2:22; Ps. 119:9; 1 Tim. 4:12.

MEMORY VERSE: “...Run away from sexual sin, every other sin...is outside the body, but those who sin sexually sin against their own bodies,” (1 Cor. 6:18).

A. What are some of the negative effects of uncontrolled youthful sexual desires? If the natural sexual drives of the youth are allowed to get of control over them, it can lead us into terrible consequences. Some of the results of uncontrolled sexual desires are:

- I. Teenage pregnancy as a direct consequence of youthful sexual acts.
- II. Contractions of diseases like Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD), Acquired Immune-Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), gonorrhea, and so on.
- III. Abortion, which can cause destruction of the womb/death.
- IV. Psychological effects on life – shame, trauma, and so on.
- V. Interruption or destruction of life’s ambitions because of early births.
- VI. A person’s mind becomes filled with sexual thoughts (or visions) which arouse sexual feelings and fantasies. This is sin (Matt. 5:27-30).
- VII. It creates lust and sexual desires that can lead to sin (James 1:14).
- VIII. It can lead to spiritual depravity and moral weakness (2 Sam. 11:2-4).
- IX. It can arouse sexual feelings leading to masturbation, homosexuality, fornication/adultery (whether consensually or by rape), etc.

B. What other harmful effects of uncontrolled sexual desires can you think of?

C. How can all the issues in A and B above be prevented?

APPLICATION: What awareness has this study brought to you? Explain how the lessons of the study can be shared with other person(s).

CONCLUSION: Any leader who plays down the importance of a youth ministry in the church is toying with the growth and healthy development of the church.

MESSAGE 41

HOW TO HELP THE YOUTH OVERCOME FLESHLY DESIRES

INTRODUCTION: Even though God made us as sexual creatures, teenage sex is sin. When we understand God's purpose for sex we will not sin against our own bodies and God's. In fact, any leader who plays down the importance of youth training in the church is toying with the growth and healthy development of the church; he is either creating a generation gap or raising corrupt leaders.

MAIN TEXT: Eccles. 11:9-12:1; 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Tim. 4:12; Ps. 119:9

MEMORY VERSE: Flee the evil desires of youth (teenage), and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace...out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22).

What are some of the ways to help the Youth overcome fleshly desires? One of the major areas that the Church in particular has trouble with is how to help the youth to control or flee youthful evil desires.

- A. The youth must avoid all attempts to trap them:** Apostle Paul warns Timothy concerning lust in 2 Timothy 2:22, "Flee youthful lust..."
- B. The youth must fear God:** Ecclesiastes 13 and 14 give us two major ways.
 - I. By fearing God (vs. 13); i.e., the one has to abstain from evil deeds.
 - II. By keeping God's commandments (vs. 13), which means one has to know the precepts of God and walking in them.
 - III. By pursuing good life and abstaining from evil.
- C. The youth must be involved in serving God:** Indeed, man ought to remember to serve God when there is life and strength for the day because the future is unknown. This is in accordance with Jesus' message in John 9:4: "As long as it is day, we must do the works of the one who sent us, that is, the Creator..."

APPLICATION: As a youth, what are you involved in to help take your attention from unhealthy practices like youthful sex and keep you focus on God?

CONCLUSION: The author of Ecclesiastes concludes that man has to enjoy what he can in life but this enjoyment can be accomplished only by fearing God. For, God is in control of life and He can be expected to reward obedience by the creature to Him. Obedience to God's commandments brings hope which God has acted in Christ to bring to mankind in order to stand in the judgment.

MESSAGE 42

THE YOUTH MUST REMEMBER THE CREATOR

INTRODUCTION: It is pathetic to note that some youth, by their behaviors and attitudes, still think that they have to be pampered in order to be seriously committed to God. The Youth must remember the Creator (Eccl. 12:1-7, 13-14). “Thy Creator” here implies that man did not create himself but was created by somebody.

MAIN TEXT: Eccl. 11:9-12:1; 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Tim. 4:12; Ps. 119:9; Acts 16:1-2

MEMORY VERSE: Flee the evil desires of youth (teenage), and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace...out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22).

- A. The Author of life, God, has to be remembered because of the ff:
 - i. The creator has absolute claim over the creature.
 - ii. The creature owns the Creator duty, honor, or a sense of appreciation.
 - iii. The human heart is prone to forget the Creator and instead, align and praise the creatures around him, or some evil days will compel him to forget major issues of life (vs. 2-7).
 - iv. It is remembering the Creator that one may come to terms with the reason he/she was even created.
 - v. The creature will definitely give accounts of his/her life (vs. 14).
- B. Everyone is advised by the Preacher to remember his Creator in the days of his youth because of the reason such as the following: (1-5).
 - i. Youthful time is when self surrender has not become difficult as a result of fewer evil days in life.
 - ii. It is the time when ones’ heart is less calloused to holiness; one has little to worry about, and has much zeal to work.
 - iii. It is also the period when desires of mankind are high.
 - iv. A person faces less troubled by sorrows, affliction, bodily weaknesses, constant anticipation/fear of death, etc, which characterizes old age. Before old age comes, one has to remember his creator.

APPLICATION: In what way(s) is the advice to stay away from youthful sexual desires important to you and the youthful members of the church/home?

CONCLUSION: The author of Ecclesiastes advices that every person has to enjoy life in a fearing God manner. His experience has moved his heart from following God to other things (idols), it is worthy to build strong foundation in the period of youth so that when the evil days come, you can still stand.

MESSAGE 43

THE YOUTH SHOULD BE DETERMINED TO STAY AWAY FROM SIN

INTRODUCTION: If sensual desires are not controlled they may drive the youth to engage in some negative sexual behaviors such as sex (by consent), rape (sex without consent), homosexuality, sexual fantasies, masturbation, etc.

MAIN TEXT: Ps. 119:9; Eccl. 11:9-12:1; 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Tim. 4:12; Acts 16:1-2

MEMORY VERSE: Flee the evil desires of youth (teenage), and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace...out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22).

The youth should make conscious/determined effort to do the following:

- A. To lead determined lives. In fact, determination is a great key to success. There is a saying that “where determination rules supreme no amount of failure can dismantle the flag of success.” Thus the youth need to be determined to keep themselves pure from sin.
- B. To keep themselves from any contact with pornographic materials and should not befriend people whose sexual behaviors cannot be trusted.
- C. To love their peers and even adults with true (“agape”) love without any ungodly attractions for them.
- D. Not to listen/look/think/read about things that arouses sexual desires.
- E. Not to go to places that can set them up for sexual acts, or unnecessarily open up to the opposite sex/draw close to them ignorantly.
- F. To always pray against falling into baits/traps of teenage sexual desires.
- G. To do well by filling their minds with the word of God, hymns, spiritual songs, etc. (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4). When idle, do private studies.

APPLICATION: By what means are you determined to succeed in life? Explain.

CONCLUSION: It is now advisable to follow a good line of reasoning after the thorough observation of life and to arrive at the conclusion that every person, especially the youth has to remember his Creator in the days of his youth before the evil days come, in order for him to stand in the judgment.

MESSAGE 44

THE YOUTH MUST BE DETERMINED TO SUCCEED IN LIFE

INTRODUCTION: It is to enable man reconcile and relate well with the Creator that Christ came, that He may lift mankind up from the clutches of sin and give the enablement by the Holy Spirit to live a righteous and holy life for God. If a person is able to live for God, he/she will not fear the judgment to come. Above all, the person is guaranteed success in life.

MAIN TEXT: Ps. 119:9; Eccl. 11:9-12:1; 1 Cor. 6:18; 1 Tim. 4:12; Acts 16:1-2

MEMORY VERSE: Flee the evil desires of youth (teenage), and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace...out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22).

- A. **The youth need to be sensible:** Without proper application of knowledge, a simple understanding of the differences between love and sex might elude any youth. For example, to many shallow minded people, the simple statement “I love you,” means “I want to have sex with you.” Thus, many teenagers have unfortunately been deceived by such expressions and have become victims of sex. Love is different from just having sex. Wise up!
- B. **The youth should seek knowledge:** An important appeal to every youth concerns education and quality profession. One of the greatest enemies of life is ignorance, i.e., “ignorance is the worse disease to afflict man.” There should be conscious efforts to overcome ignorance in this fast developing world order to live a purposeful life because “knowledge is power.”
- C. **The youth need vision in life:** A good vision for life is essential to every youth because it helps him/her to make healthy choices and avoid mistakes. A youth with a vision is a youth with a future; a youth without a vision is likely to “perish.” Having good visions during youthful days is also helpful because this is the period that such visions can be nurtured till maturity. The Bible has examples of youth who had good visions for their life; Joseph, David, Jeremiah, Daniel, Esther, Timothy, etc.

APPLICATION: Besides the areas above, what other important issue do you need as a youth to guarantee your success in life? Elucidate your point.

CONCLUSION: The fear of God will keep one from evil and bring to the person success. It is worthy to build strong foundation as youth so that when the evil days come, we can stand. Let every youth enjoy life wisely and not foolishly.

MESSAGE 45

THE YOUTH MUST FOLLOW THE STEPS OF TRUSTWORTHY LEADER(S)

INTRODUCTION: To deal with the menace of youth immorality there is need for a youth Pastor/Leader/Mentor who has an in-depth understanding of scriptures as well as youth issues. Such a person will create in the youth the awareness that the sooner they realize that their spiritual development and service to God is a path towards a successful future, the better.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Tim. 4:12; Eccl. 11:9-12:1; Acts 16:1-2; Ps. 119:9

MEMORY VERSE: Flee the evil desires of youth (teenage), and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace...out of a pure heart (2 Tim. 2:22).

Role of Youth Pastor/Leader/Mentor: There are various roles that the Minister or Pastor of a church can play to develop the Youth ministry. Generally, the role of the Youth Minister shall be to team up with other leaders to have a general oversight of the youth in the following areas:

- A. To prepare syllabus (lessons) and direct the youth development activities.
- B. To gain and maintain interest of youth in the church
- C. To help youth identify their areas of service in the church
- D. To counsel and teach the youth Christian living or ethics of society.
- E. To prepare the youth for evangelism, visitation, prayers, etc.
- F. To inspire and instill leadership qualities in the youth.
- G. To identify youth challenges and helping them to overcome them.
- H. To help the youth in counseling/teaching others the word of God.

Note: The Pastor/Leader/Mentor should be able to find out something about the persons' age, gender, class and educational backgrounds, what their life experiences are, what gaps need filling; family background, vulnerability, painful experiences, what should be their core competencies, etc. These would help put in greater effort in the development of their spiritual formation.

APPLICATION: As Youth/leaders, how can we improve our youth development plans for the benefit of the family, church, and larger society?

CONCLUSION: No important advice can be given to a youth than the one that draws their attention to important life decision during the prime age of life.

PART III

MATURING AS A CHRISTIAN

MESSAGE 46

THE LORD JESUS COMMANDS ALL BELIEVERS TO GO AND TELL

INTRODUCTION: The Lord Jesus Christ established a missionary Church by his Great Commission; not just a prophetic or healing church. The Lord is always interested in preparing His people for this task. Christians should accept that the Great Commission is a command that we have to respond to it.

MAIN TEXT: Acts 13:1-10; Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-18; Prov. 11:30

Memory verse: “And while they waited on the Lord...the Holy Spirit said, set apart Paul and Barnabbas for the work prepared for them...” (Acts 13:1ff).

Background: Although God specifically calls certain people to fulfill the task of evangelism Jesus gave all believers the commission to be his witness to lost souls and every Christian will be accountable to God for this command.

A. The Evangelism imperative and responsibility

- I. The Lord indicates that all believers are sent (Matt. 28:18-20).
- II. The church must respond to the Great Commission (Acts 9:32; 13:1ff).
- III. Those sent by the Holy Spirit should be supported by the Church.

B. Hindrances to evangelism and how to overcome them:

- I. Lack of money: support those who are ready to go (Luke 10:4ff).
- II. Not making time: Be ready in season and/or out of season (2 Tim. 4:2).
- III. Lack of confidence: It is not we who speak (Matt. 10:17-20).
- IV. Inadequate preparation: The Holy Spirit will help us (Acts 1:8).
- V. Fear of opposition: “...Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (Matt. 28:18-20).

C. How can the Church practice all the issues in ‘B’ above?

APPLICATION: In what way(s) are you involved in the Great Commission?

CONCLUSION: The Great Commission can be obeyed by every believer. The church should come out with plans to move the members into fulfilling it. The whole congregation must be able to understand our general call to witness and the specific call of some as evangelist.

MESSAGE 47

WE NEED TO INTRODUCE CHRIST TO OTHERS

INTRODUCTION: Every Christian has been commissioned by the Lord Jesus Christ to be a “Fisher of men,” and this life-long occupation can be an exciting adventure. We can be effective in fishing for men (that is witnessing) and also disciple the converts as we follow the scriptures. The message of this study will throw more light on this important call.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Corinthians 15:1-6; Matthew 28:18-20

MEMORY VERSE: For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...” (Rom. 1:16)

Background: Consider the following probing questions: What are the world and your community’s greatest need? Are you part of the problem or part of the solution? Why hasn’t this need been met? The Lord Jesus Christ can bring the expected change if they know Him.

A. Witness in the power of the Holy Spirit: The Preparation

- I. Be sure you are a Christian.
- II. Be sure there is no sin(s) in your life (i.e., confess every sin).
- III. Be sure you are led by the Holy Spirit (soak yourself in prayers).
- IV. Be prepared to share your faith with others (study the scriptures).

B. The secret of successful witnessing: The Action

- I. Be at the right place at the right time (God will lead where to go).
- II. Simply talk about Christ to them, that He came to die for our sins.
- III. Let the Holy Spirit do the convicting, do not apply any force.
- IV. Expect results at the same time or later. Just trust God for answers.
- V. Be prepared to follow-up in order to nurture the convert to maturity.

APPLICATION: How prepared are you to share your testimony of salvation and faith in Christ with the unsaved? The motivation here is that Christ’s death has given us salvation and His resurrection has brought us hope.

CONCLUSION: We need to live continuously in God’s words as His witnesses so that we will make Him better known. We also have to increase our testimony of what Jesus would do in each situation, as we appreciate His love and share with others.

MESSAGE 48

HOW TO INTRODUCE CHRIST TO OTHERS

INTRODUCTION: At the close of His earthly ministry, the Lord Jesus Christ commanded his disciples to go and make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey all that He had taught them. The word of the Lord applies equally to us who believe in Jesus. In this lesson we want to know our message, the need to present it, and ways to present this message.

MAIN TEXT: Matthew 28:18-20; John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10

Now let us discuss the following areas of the topic:

A. Issues about the witness

- I. Who is a witness? 1 John 1:1-3; Luke 1:1-3
- II. Why is there the need to be a witness for the Lord Jesus Christ?
- III. What are some of the qualities of an effective witness?
- IV. What are some of the hindrances to effective witnessing?

B. What are the steps in witnessing?

- I. The gospel must be heard. You need to know what the gospel is (Rom. 1:18-32; 3:23; 5:2, 11; Isa. 53:5, 6; John 14:6, 10).
- II. Our hearer(s) must make a decision to receive Christ, and the decisions are incomplete without acting on them. It therefore calls for faith or trust in the Lord (Acts 4:12, 12; 16:30-31; John 1:12; Rom. 12:20; Col. 1:19-20; Luke 14:27-33; Matt. 16:24).
- III. Find out what motivated the person to act on his/ her decision? (Rom. 3:21-22, 25-26a)
- IV. Make arrangements for a follow-up: date/day, time, place, reason.

APPLICATION:

- How does this study apply to you as an individual witness for the Lord?
- If a person wants to receive Christ, how would you lead the one?
- If your witness converts someone to Christ, what is the next step?

CONCLUSION: It is imperative that we obey the Great Commission and fulfilling it means that we become effective witnesses. It is important that we learn how to witness by actually witnessing. It is not by attending a Bible school or special classes though these are very helpful. You can begin with your own testimony.

MESSAGE 49

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOW-UP

INTRODUCTION: The greatest miracle that can occur in a man's life is the deliverance of his soul from death into life through the gospel. But after a person is born in the Lord how do we ensure that the convert is fed with the right spiritual food at the right time? This study will answer these issues.

MAIN TEXT: Colossians 1:28; John 15:16

Definition Follow-up: It is the process of grooming a convert (young believer) in the faith to spiritual maturity and fruitfulness (Col. 1:28). It is an occasion to discuss what character reflects in a person's life now that he/she is a Christian (1 John 2:3-6; 3:4; 2 Cor. 5:17). It is important to encourage converts, know their problems, help them to grow, etc.

Use the main texts to discuss the following questions:

A. Why is it necessary to undertake follow-up of converts?

Note: This should be discussed from the individuals' experiences as a convert who is growing into maturity)

B. What is involved in follow-up?

- I. What should be taught first in follow-up?
- II. Do I need special follow-up materials? If yes, which ones, if not, why?
- III. What do I need to challenge my converts to remain in the Lord?

C. What links exist between follow-up and discipleship?

- I. It is necessary to follow-up others since it ensures a trainer-trainee process. This is where discipleship begins.
- II. Follow-up enables a believer to grow into a mature Christian who is able to stand as mature believer able to convert others.

APPLICATION: What is the usefulness and purpose of follow-up to you? What qualities do one need for this important process? Do you have these already?

CONCLUSION: It is important to ensure that our converts are also able to give birth and bring up others into God's kingdom. Successful evangelism is not the making of converts but the making of disciples through follow-up.

MESSAGE 50

WHO IS A DISCIPLE OF CHRIST?

INTRODUCTION: Matthew 28:19 indicates how the Lord Jesus Christ expects those who come to Him to be disciples and also make disciples. Thus, those who walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry were called disciples. The question is who is a disciple? The aim of this study is for believers to understand and to accept the responsibility of making disciples for Christ.

TEXT: 1 Peter 2:21; John 8:31-32; 2 Timothy 2:2

DEFINITION: The Greek word for disciple is *Mathetes* which means “one who learns instruction from another.” A Christian disciple is one who is learning from another in order to be like Christ.

Five basic principles of Disciples:

- A. **A disciple lives continually by the word of Jesus:** He is not an occasional follower of the words of Jesus but rather committed to follow the teaching of the master in a disciplined and committed way.
- B. **A disciple commits his or her life completely to the Master (Jesus):** This commitment should be total. Jesus is totally committed to us, so He wants the same commitment in return (Matt. 6: 24; John 10:1ff).
- C. **A disciple lives in fruit-bearing relationship with Jesus:** When a tree is full of sap, it uses the sap for production. This is the process of fruit formation. When a Christian is full of Christ, the result is fruit-bearing that gives birth to other Christians (John 15:4-5).
- D. **A disciple is committed to obedience and love for the Master and others.** The Lord Jesus said that if anyone loves Him, the person will obey Him. The obedience is total and the love is a selfless and “Agape” (John 13:34-35; 14:23).
- E. **A disciple is dedicated to the fulfillment of Christ’s commission.** The goal of every disciple should be that the converts he/she wins also become disciples. It is the command of the Master (Matt. 28:18-20).

APPLICATION: How can we fulfill our obligations as disciples and also live our daily lives showing “agape” love towards other Christians? (Rom. 5:5)

CONCLUSION: We need to be totally committed to Jesus, making Him our Lord. We should not say “no” when He asks us to do something for Him.

MESSAGE 51

WHY THE NEED FOR DISCIPLES OF CHRIST?

INTRODUCTION: The Disciple occupies an important position in fulfilling the purposes of Christ. Devoting attention to the studies on discipleship is therefore very important. This message will lead the way.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Peter 2:21; John 8:31-32; 2 Timothy 2:2

Background: Just being well convinced in one's position as a child of God and having peace with Him is not enough, the believer should mature such that nothing is able to separate him/her from the love of God (Rom. 8:38-39). To achieve this, discipleship is very necessary.

Use the above text to discuss the following questions:

A. Reasons for Discipleship

- I. Should believers grow as they want, or as God wants? (2 Cor. 5:15)
- II. Should a convert have a guide in the things of Christ? (Jn. 16:13-14)
- III. What sorts of things are expected of a convert in Christ? (Jn. 14:12-14)
- IV. How can a disciple learn about Christ (1 John 4:10-11; Jn. 22:37-39).
- V. Are there special instructions concerning discipleship? (Matt. 22:37ff)

B. The privileges of a Disciple: A disciple is a privileged person:

- I. Jesus died for the person in order for him/her to live for Him (Rom. 5:8).
- II. God is the disciple's Father; His Spirit dwells in him/her (Gal. 4:6-7).
- III. He is a special person called by God to be trained for Christ (Eph.1:4-5).
- IV. Without the disciple, there cannot be continuity of the faith.

APPLICATION: Are you a disciple or involved in discipleship? At any point in time a disciple should ask, "What does the Lord want me to do?"

CONCLUSION: Being a disciple is a firm decision to follow the Lord without turning back. We need to see God as our loving Master who only wants our good. We need to love and serve God first, others second and ourselves last.

MESSAGE 52

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN DISCIPLESHIP?

INTRODUCTION: The Lord Jesus Christ gave the Great Commission to all His followers. The Apostles obeyed by spreading the gospel in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria. Paul and his team carried it across to then “Roman world.” In carrying it to the utmost part of the world, some missionary did well by bringing it to our country. To what extent have we carried out this command?

MAIN TEXT: Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 9:20; John 1:41-42, 45; 4:7, 28, 39

Definition: Discipleship is to raise a convert to live like you.

Major areas of the discussion:

- A. When does Discipleship begin?** It begins when a convert sees the need to respond to the call, and accepts (John 1:40-44). It requires a deliberate effort for one. It is like a parent - child relationship.
- B. Where does Discipleship begin?** It can begin in a believer’s immediate environment, home or among relatives, friends and acquaintance and all others both near and far.
- C. Who should be a disciple?** Anyone who responds to our message and turns to the Lord, who is prepared to learn in order to grow.
- D. How does discipleship begin?** It begins with a matured Christian showing interest in a convert to Christ, and is prepared to help the convert to also grow into maturity.
- E. What is involved in discipleship?** It is a matured Christian - convert relationship, and it requires commitment from both parties.
 - The matured Christian should be prepared to teach
 - The convert (or disciple) obeys, opens-up, and is ready to learn.

APPLICATION: Do you have a disciple? How is the relationship helping you?

CONCLUSION: Christian discipleship is a must. It goes with discipline; a commitment to obedience and a desire for righteous living. It is a decision to live and serve God. It is raising children in Christ.

MESSAGE 53

UNDERSTAND THE CHALLENGES IN DISCIPLESHIP

INTRODUCTION: Most often, many converts are not attended to, as a result of neglect on the part of those who witnessed to them. In the Great Commission, Lord Jesus Christ did not only command us to win souls for Him, but to disciple those who believe Him through teaching and training of these converts to grow. In return, these will bring others up in the Lord.

MAIN TEXT: John 3:1-2; 4:7-9; 13:13-16; (Supp. texts: 1 Cor. 9:19-23; Luke. 6:12-13; 2 Tim. 2:2; 1 Cor. 9:19-23; Matt. 14:14-16; Philip. 1:16-18)

The following discussion will help us understand and appreciate our message:

A. When does discipleship end?

- I. Discipleship is the art of bringing up dedicated converts who hold onto the beliefs of a leader (usually a religious leader).
- II. It is expected that the disciple will and also propagate the beliefs by practicing them and telling others about their contents.
- III. Discipleship usually begins after conversion but does not have a specific time that it should end.
- IV. It might continue even when the disciple is also disciples another.

B. How will you deal with the following challenges in discipleship?

- I. How to devise a strategy to train the disciple (1 Cor. 9:36).
- II. The cost of time, material resources, money, etc. (Luke 14:28-30).
- III. How to sustain the faith of the disciple (1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Peter 1:5-8).
- IV. How to imitate Christ for the disciple to follow (1 Cor. 11:1).

APPLICATION: Are you a disciple or a convert? If you are a convert, are you prepared for discipleship? If you are a disciple, are you prepared to disciple a fresh convert in Christ? How will this study help you to achieve your aim?

CONCLUSION: What do you think of a woman who brings forth a child and abandons it? The obvious answer is that she is wicked; such is any Christian who does not disciple the converts. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them (John 13:17).

MESSAGE 54

IT IS TIME TO SOW

INTRODUCTION: The next series of studies will focus on the principles that govern sowing and reaping. The objective is to understand why the issue of sowing in the spiritual sense is important to the Christian. In this study we shall lay a foundation by considering few of the issues relating to sowing.

MAIN TEXT: Jer. 4:3; Gal. 6:7-9; Ps. 126:5-6; Matt. 13:3-9, 18-22; 24-26

MEMORY VERSE: “Cast your bread upon the waters...” (Gal. 6:7-9).

Background: “Sowing” is a practice that is known to farmers. An entrepreneur prefers the word “investment.” But we shall use the meaning as understood by the farmer in our explanations because in the passages of the main texts, scriptures employ many farming terms. Sowing relates to life in many ways.

A. What does it mean “to sow?”

It is the act of putting a seed or any part of a plant that can germinate into a soil in the hope of reaping abundance of what was sown.

B. Who has to sow?

- I. The main sower is God himself; He has the word of life.
- II. In the OT, the message came to God’s people, Judah (Jer. 4:3).
- III. In the NT, the message came to the disciples of Jesus (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-22; 24-26). So the message is for all believers.

C. What is the seed that should be sown in life?

- I. It is mainly the word of God, and it bears fruit of love, peace, purity, joy, humility, etc. in life (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-22; 24-26; Ps 119:11).
- II. It can be word that one says to himself/herself or to somebody else.
- III. It can be the time, energy, money, expertise, etc. one gives to God.
- IV. It can be any kind of lifestyle; good/bad that one leads (Gal. 6:7-9).
- V. It can be investing in the life of a person who will bear fruit in future.
- VI. It can be a profitable/wasteful venture one takes (Matt. 13:24-26).

APPLICATION: In what way does sowing apply to the Christian? Are you in any form of sowing? How has this study helped you? Is your seed God’s word?

CONCLUSION: The Jews and disciples were expected to do what would please God. Christians should be prepared to sow only that which can profit the Kingdom of God and lead to eternal life. It is sowing time.

MESSAGE 55

BREAK UP YOUR FALLOW GROUND!

INTRODUCTION: Success by worldly standards is never success before God. In fact, God wants His people to experience real blessings. God cares about your spiritual life as well as your physical: health, economic, social, etc, situation. In the following passage, He is concerned about the issues that prevent proper growth of their lives, so that His people can prosper. He illustrated with farming.

MAIN TEXT: Jer. 4:3; Joel 2:12-18; Matt. 13:3-9; Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8

MEMORY VERSE: This is what the Lord says...“Break up your fallow ground and do not sow among thorns...” (Jer. 4:3).

Answer the following questions:

- A. How important is the ground to the farmer?
- B. How does the ground relate to a human being? (Matt. 13:3-9)
- C. What does ‘fallow ground’ mean to the farmer? (Jer. 4:3)
- D. How were the farmers supposed to prepare the ground for best result from God? By “breaking up the ground.”
- E. How does ‘fallow ground’ relate to spiritual life? (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-22)
It applies to the ff:
 - I. Hardened to God’s word (stony heart).
 - II. Hatred to God’s word.
- F. What does God want us to do? (Joel 2:12-18; Hoses 3:1-3; Jer. 4:3)
We need to do the following:
 - I. We should identify what hardens our heart (all the thorns).
 - II. We should break ourselves down/ uproot all evils in our lives.
 - III. We should cry to God for restoration or positive change.

APPLICATION: How does “breaking the fallow ground” relate to the Christian? Does this apply to you now? Why? How do we prepare the heart for God?

CONCLUSION: When a believer’s heart is well prepared to receive the Word of God, the spiritual blessings or profit from the heart will be manifested in the flesh for people to see. Let us not harden our hearts to the word of God.

MESSAGE 56

SOW INTO THE KINGDOM OF GOD

INTRODUCTION: In the previous study it was clear that God has a plan for the success of His people. In this study too, God is relating to His people in farming terms: the type of seed to sow and how not to sow among thorns.

MAIN TEXT: Jer. 4:3; Gal. 6:7-9; Ps. 126:5-6; Matt. 13:3-9, 18-22; 24-26

MEMORY VERSE: “He that sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life but...” (Gal. 6:7-9).

Background: There are different types of seeds that every farmer can sow but not all are good or profitable. The kind of sowing practices are as follows:

A. How do you sow what you have to sow?

- I. It should be done bountifully not sparingly (2 Cor. 9:6).
- II. It should be done willingly not coercively (2 Cor. 9:7).

B. When do we have to sow?

- I. Sowing time can be determined by the type of seeds. Scripture says there is time to sow (Eccles. 3:1-2).
- II. It can also be open, since scriptures give various options: at any time (Eccles. 11:4-6).
- III. We have to be prepared in season and out of season (2 Tim. 4:2).

C. What should be the objective of Christians when we sow?

- I. It should be for eternal life not fleshly/personal desires (Gal. 6:8).
- II. It should be for future profit not present interest (1 Cor. 15:58).
- III. It should be as a source of security not for pleasure (Matt. 6:19ff).
- IV. It should be seen as fulfilling God’s command (Eccles. 11:1ff).
- V. It should be for long-lasting fulfillment and not brief satisfaction.

APPLICATION: Are you practicing the right spiritual farming in your life? (Matt. 13:24-26). Is your seed God’s word or works of the flesh? (Ps. 1:1-3)

CONCLUSION: To the Jews whatever seed they were to sow should be one that God would be pleased with and that could profit them. In the same way Christians can sow many different kinds of seeds. Since we reap what we sow, we have to be careful of what seed we sow in life.

MESSAGE 57

YOU NEED TO WATER GOD'S SEED IN YOUR LIFE

INTRODUCTION: Definitely, the issue of how any seed will grow is very important. This is where the need for rain or water comes in. In this passage, a believer is supposed to fulfill instruction. The rest is for God to determine. One of the key ingredients in life is dependence on God for water or rain.

MAIN TEXT: Jer. 4:3; Job 14:7-19; 2 Chron. 7:14; 1 Kings 18:41-45.

Memory verse: "Let us return to the Lord...He will return like the former and the latter rain" (Hosea 3:1-3).

Background: After every farmer has sown seeds the next important thing is for it to be watered to make it grow. This is where man depends on God for the rain and good weather.

Discuss the following questions:

- A.** There is the need to take care of the good seeds God sows through us.
 - I.** Why do all seeds and plants require special conditions to grow?
 - II.** Under which seasons/conditions do seeds grow better?
 - III.** How does the above relate to the proper growth of every Christian?
- B.** If we want to have good results, we need to understand the following:
 - I.** We need to return to God and seek His grace (2 Chron. 7:14).
 - II.** We need to surrender to God and obey His word (1 Kings 18:41-45).
 - III.** We need to exercise faith in God that He will definitely bring the increase. For, "Faithful is He who has promised, who also will do."

APPLICATION: The need for water and good climate by every seed is like what every believer needs in life. How do you evaluate your spiritual growth?

CONCLUSION: It is God who sends rain to bring the increase to whatever is sown in life. If we (believers) continue to demonstrate obedience to God's Word, we will enjoy the best of the land according to His word in Isaiah 1:18ff.

MESSAGE 58

SECURE THE SEED FROM YOUR ENEMY

INTRODUCTION: We have studied that God has a plan for the success of His people. In this study also, God relates to His people in farming terms. Once again “where to sow and where how to protect it,” will be treated here.

MAIN TEXT: Jer. 4:3; Gal. 6:7-9; Psalm 128; Matt. 13:3-9, 18-22, 24-26

MEMORY VERSE: “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against spiritual powers...” (Eph. 6:12).

Background: There are different types of problems that every farmer can encounter. This is because all growing seeds have enemies. While some relate to the soil others relate to the other plants that grow on the soil; thorns. So there is the need to secure any seed you sow from your enemy. To secure the seed from the enemy from it, we need to consider the following:

A. Where are you sowing the seed of your life?

- I. It can fall among thorns/hard/ground (Jer. 4:3; Matt. 9:16-17).
- II. It can fall on a ploughed/good soil? (Jer. 4:3; Matt. 13:3-9)

B. How does the thorns relate to the Christian? (Matt. 13:24-26)

- I. They are hindrances/worldliness that prevent God’s word
- II. They are stumbling block/opposition to progress of life
- III. They stand for the enemy/Satan/evil forces of life.

C. What lessons do the seeds among thorns teach the Christian?

- I. The Christian has enemies who fight to prevent God’s blessings.
- II. The Christian has to constantly fight the enemy to keep him away.
- III. The Christian has to uproot thorns from his/her life (i.e., the heart)

APPLICATION: How do you know that the true seed in your life is not being hindered by works of the flesh? How do prevent the true seed of God from being attacked by the enemy?

CONCLUSION: Not all soils (hearts) can receive the true seeds (word of God) and support its growth. Decide for yourself what types of spiritual ground is profitable and how to protect your seed from the enemy.

MESSAGE 59

YOU REAP WHAT YOU SOW

INTRODUCTION: Sowing becomes important only when it gives opportunity for reaping. Like sowing, there are some principles that govern reaping. In this study, we shall consider the issue of reaping in this life and the life to come.

MAIN TEXT: Hosea 8:7; Gal. 6:7-8; 1 Cor. 15:42-43; Ps. 126:5-6

MEMORY VERSE: “...They sow the wind and reap the whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7).

BACKGROUND: In both the natural and spiritual world, the principles of sowing and reaping operate in life. Only God can alter the principles because He is not bound to it. So, some spiritual principles defy the rules. Let us discuss some of them.

- A. Before you expect to reap you should sow; you cannot reap something when you have not sown anything (Gal. 6:7).
- B. You reap the kind that you sow: All materials reproduce their kind: seed produces seed; money produces money; good produces good; evil produces evil; etc. (Gal. 6:7-8).
- C. You reap the quality/state in which you sow: Physical seeds give physical products; spiritual seeds produce spiritual fruits (Gal. 6:7-8).
- D. You may reap a different quantity from what you sow: This means that you will reap an increase of what you sow (Hosea 8:7), and/or same as you sow (Luke 6:38; 2 Cor. 9:6).
- E. You reap after sometime of sowing: This means that a period of time elapses before what is sown produces any results. Because, sowing is an investment that needs time to mature (Eccles. 11:1, 6).
- F. Sowing is painful or tearful but reaping is joyful (Ps. 126:5-6).
- G. In terms of resurrection, the body is sown a corruptible nature but it will rise up in an incorruptible form (1 Cor. 15:42-43).

APPLICATION: What are you sowing in life – good, evil, to the flesh, to the spirit? What do you expect to reap? What does He expect you to sow in life?

CONCLUSION: God has good plans for your future. So He wants you to lay a good foundation now. This depends upon what you sow in life.

MESSAGE 60

WAITING ON GOD IS AN IMPORTANT NEED

INTRODUCTION: A true Christian's life begins and ends with a full dependence on God. This dependence requires intimate relationship with the Lord. Waiting is a period set aside to have intimacy with God, or to draw closer to God in order to know Him better and for Him to also come closer to you (James 4:8).

MAIN TEXT: Isaiah 40:28-31; Psalm 27:14

Definition: What is waiting on God? It is a period of time that a believer decides to have ultimate encounter with the Lord by pouring out our heart before the Lord in prayer, and desiring for answers, direction, fulfillment, and or anointing successful living and service. It is done by effectual fervent prayer with or without fasting (Job 14:14; Hab. 2:1-2). It is usually done in solitude.

A. The reasons for waiting on God

- I. "Waiting" is usually initiated by a desire to know, hear, or be directed by God.
- II. It is a practice that helps one to be spiritually in tune with God, to be abreast with God or to make one's way pleasing to God (Ps. 63:1-8; Hosea 10:12).
- III. It is a deep sense of spiritual thirst for God (Ps. 42:1), because of emptiness (Jer. 29:13). Waiting is by individual/corporate practice.

B. Importance of waiting: Its importance includes the following:

- I. By waiting, God exalts us and establishes us firmly (Ps. 37:4; 40:1-4).
- II. It renews our spiritual strength (Isa. 40:31; 59:9).
- III. It brings answers to prayers, and direction in life, (Ps. 25:4; Acts 1:4).
- IV. It brings rest and hope for our weary souls (Ps. 130:5; Heb. 4:9, 10).

APPLICATION: To have personal encounter with God, one needs to have the desire to draw closer to Him in solitude. Are you prepared to do it? What needs to be taken care of in order to wait on God effectively?

CONCLUSION: Waiting on God is not, optional, time wasting, unproductive period in a believer's life. Waiting on God is spending quality time before the Lord prayer for deeper relationship, renewed strength, and breakthroughs.

MESSAGE 61

WAITING ON GOD: WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE?

INTRODUCTION: Waiting has been defined as setting aside some day(s) to have quality time with God (sometimes with fasting). It might be a long period set aside purely with fasting, (Daniel 9:3), or that quiet period after a prayer session. Whichever way, moving closer to God requires waiting on him.

MAIN TEXT: Isaiah 40:28-31; Psalm 27:14

The waiting procedure and mood: During waiting one has to make sure he or she lays aside all that will obstruct attention because God knows that you have purposed that period to consciously wait for Him. There are definite preparations to ensure effective waiting. Discuss each of the following that will move you into the spiritual atmosphere for total spiritual blessings.

- A. Set aside a period of time and go to a solitary place to pray (or fast).
- B. Engage a spiritual exercise; praise, worship, etc., (Ps. 63:1).
- C. Deliberately engage in self examination; consider the things that make you sinful before God and confess all sins that you are convicted of.
- D. Study and meditate on the word of God (Ps. 57:1-4).
- E. Offer appropriate prayers, e.g., ask for spiritual direction; be quiet in prayer, read, praise, worship, etc.
- F. Wait quietly and patiently before the Lord after prayer. This allows for answers (Hab. 2:3). “Be still before the Lord” (Ps. 46:10).

APPLICATION: What have you learned and how will apply it to your life? In which area of life should God prepare to make you a new person (Ps. 57:10)? How can waiting on God facilitate the preparation of your life? How can you make your waiting very effective?

CONCLUSION: There are many things which waiting on God will achieve in the life of every believer. Many Christians are weak spiritually because they do not give priority to waiting on God (Luke 10:38-41). Let us desire to be strong spiritually through regular waiting on God.

MESSAGE 62

DEVELOP GODLY VISION FOR YOUR LIFE

INTRODUCTION: To have a vision is to have a spiritual eye to see beyond others. Vision is very important for life without which the believer stands the danger of failure. God says, without vision His people perish. We need to understand issues of vision now.

MAIN TEXT: Proverbs 29:18a; Matthew 2:1-2, 9; Acts 13:11

- A. What is “vision” to the believers?** It is to see into the spiritual realm (Matthew 17:9). It is to have foresight or revealed plan in the mind or good sense of spiritual perception. It might be received through the ff:
- I. Open vision during the day/night when the recipient is still active.
 - II. Night vision also called dream when the recipient is asleep
 - III. Trance, i.e., a sudden loss of consciousness during which insight into past, present or future events, are perceived.
- B. Purpose of vision:** Vision is a spiritual light of the believer:
- I. It comes to give spiritual plan/instruction/ direction to fulfill God's will, e.g., Apostles Peter (Acts 10:10); and Paul (26:14-19).
 - II. It comes to reveal hidden truths of future; either disasters or blessings, e.g., Apostle John in the book of Revelation.
 - III. It is a means by which God specially talks to people (Isaiah, Paul).
- C. How do you cross-check your vision?** These questions may help:
- I. Do you see your work as God sees it?
 - II. Where did you receive the vision and where are you presently?
 - III. What are your future plans for vision or you have reached your limit?
 - IV. What are you doing as far as the vision/works is concern?

APPLICATION: To what extent have you caught God's vision for your life? How far have you developed the vision you have?

CONCLUSION: Always pray that God renews His vision for you so that it always becomes fresh to you. You need to fulfill God's vision for your life.

MESSAGE 63

THE DANGERS OF LOSING YOUR VISION

INTRODUCTION: In our previous study it was clear that Vision is very important for life. Without vision, the believer stands the danger of failure in life or ministry. God says without vision His people perish. To have a vision is to have a spiritual eye to see beyond others. Because vision is important, it is expedient that we understand issues of loss of vision now.

MAIN TEXT: Prov. 29:18a; Hosea 4:6; Matt. 2:1-2, 9; Acts 13:11; 26:15-19

Background: To have vision is to: have an idea of God's plan for you (Acts 26:15-19); see into the spiritual realm (Matt. 17:9); have foresight (or insight), to have a good sense of perception/knowledge. Vision is like a spiritual light.

A. How vision might be lost: Since vision is a spiritual light of the believer, it might be cut off, or become dim as a result of the following:

- I. Disobedience (King Saul lost God's plan for him).
- II. Deviation from the true path (King Jeroboam; 1 Kings 14)
- III. Vision not being attended to (when the returnees from exile lost God's vision, they left the Temple to build their houses, Hag. 1:1ff).

B. Dangers of loss of vision: Imagine how the Christian life will be like if there is no sense of direction from the Spirit of God. Generally when a person loses his/her vision the one can no more see spiritually and the following consequences can occur:

- I. The believer's direction/plan comes to an abrupt end. The believer loses his way or deviates from the path (King Saul lost his throne).
- II. The believer commits mistakes, gropes in darkness, and perishes, i.e., "For lack of knowledge, my people perish (Hosea 4:6).

APPLICATION: Do you have a divine vision for your life? **A.** If yes, to what extent are you fulfilling this vision? How far have you developed this vision you have? In what ways will this study help you to act? **B.** If no, how can you have it?

CONCLUSION: Always pray that God helps and refreshes His vision for you all the time. You need to fulfill God's vision for your life. Act now!

MESSAGE 64

UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF THE TONGUE ON LIFE

INTRODUCTION: The tongue is the part of the body which helps to declare orally whatever the mind of a person wants to communicate outwardly. It is a very important part of the human body without which speech becomes quite unclear. In Proverbs, King Solomon passes on practical advice on the proper use of the tongue for a sound and successful life.

MAIN TEXT: Num. 14:28; Prov. 18:20-21; Jam. 3:1-12; Rom. 10:10; Jer. 1:9ff; Matt. 12:34-37.

Discussion: Let us consider some general areas where the power of the tongue is effective.

- A. **The tongue possesses the power to life, (bless or make):** The life-giving power of the tongue is found in texts such as Proverbs 13:3a, 21:23. The man who speaks with wisdom will reap it (Prov. 12:14).
- B. **The Tongue has the power of death (curse or destroy):** The tongue is deadly when used unscrupulously (Prov. 18:21; 21:23). It puts the user in a great danger. It has power to destroy the one who uses it wrongly and those against whom it is used. In 2 Kings 2:23-25, Elisha cursed the children who teased him. The Lord cursed a fruitless tree (Matt. 11:12ff).
- C. **The tongue is the weapon to invoke:** It is from where words are uttered by a person to establish blessing or curse; good or evil (Jos. 6:26-27).
- D. **The tongue is the weapon to revoke:** It is from where words which are uttered by a person, whether good or evil are reversed/nullified by other words (2 Kings 2:19-22).
- E. **The use of the tongue depends on the person:** Every person has the right to use the tongue whether for life/good or for death/evil.

APPLICATION: In which way have you used the tongue; as an instruments of blessing and appreciation, or for cursing our neighbor? Explain your answer.

CONCLUSION: Let us exercise maximum self control in what we say. We are to bless and never to curse. We should not use the same mouth to bless and curse people (James 3:3-12). To ensure this, we should never rush to speak!

MESSAGE 65

LEARN TO CONTROL THE TONGUE

INTRODUCTION: The utterances of a person can bring blessings or judgment upon him or her. We should be careful at the harm an uncontrolled tongue can cause to the whole body. Therefore, we shall consider how to tame the tongue for useful services to God.

MAIN TEXT: James 3:1-12

Memory verse: “From the same mouth comes blessing and cursing. My brethren this ought not to be so” (James 3:10).

Definition of the tongue: The tongue is a small part of the whole body. It forms about 3% of the body and is used for feeding. Generally, it is an organ in the body for tasting sweet or bitter. Matthew 12:34 says it is the part of the body that reveals what is hidden/whatever the body wants to declare.

Discuss these questions from the text:

- A. What are some of the importance of the tongue? James 3:5-12
- B. What are some characteristics assigned to an uncontrolled tongue?
- C. Why do people use abusive languages?
- D. What does scripture mean by “no man can tame the tongue”?
- E. Why is the tongue described as an evil part of the body?
- F. What similarities exist between the use of the tongue and fruit bearing?
- G. Why is it extremely important to control the tongue?
- H. How can Christians control the tongue?

APPLICATION: Has your uncontrolled tongue set fire in the Church, the house, or in your workplace before? If yes, how did you manage it? What does the passage mean by “perfect man”?

CONCLUSION: There is tremendous power in the tongue and a careful use of it brings life to both the speaker and hearers. A careless use of the tongue brings destruction (Prov. 18:20, 21; cf. 13:3; 21:23; Jas. 1:26; 3:6). But the choice of either “life or death” through one’s own confession is a decision that is within each person’s will that goes a long way to determine his/her destiny.

MESSAGE 66

USE THE POWER OF YOUR TONGUE WISELY

INTRODUCTION: It is important for people to be aware of the tremendous power in the tongue. This will make them careful in using the tongue so that it never brings trouble but blessing to us. Scripture says that life and death are in the power of the tongue, and whoever loves it will eat of its fruit.

MAIN TEXT: Ps. 109:17-20; Prov. 18:20-21; Num. 14:28; Matt. 12:34-37.

MEMORY VERSE: “Whoever would love life and see good days should keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful words” (1 Peter 3:10).

For believers to use our tongues well, we should take note of the following:

- A. The one who uses the tongue unwisely and speaks rashly will come to ruin (Prov. 13:3b; 21:23; James 1:26; 3:6).
 - I. Endeavor not to say negative words about yourself (Num. 14:28), God’s ministers (Num. 12:8), or other people (Ps. 109:17-20).
 - II. Do not curse your enemies/those people who oppose you (Matt. 5:44).
 - III. Endeavor not to utter filthy statements or lies (Ps. 34:13)
- B. The use of the tongue wisely brings life to the user/hearers (1 Pet. 3:10).
 - I. Use the tongue to speak words that will bring life, health, peace, and virtuous things to you, i.e., positive confession (Prov. 15:4; 18:20-21).
 - II. Speak by faith of things that bring God’s favor or build up (Eph. 4:29).
 - III. We can use the tongue for discipline. There is power/virtue in the tongue to teach, instruct, rebuke, and correct (Prov. 1:8; 22:6; 31:26).

APPLICATION: In which ways have you used the tongue well and not well?

CONCLUSION: Any idle utterances from a person’s tongue can bring judgment upon him/her (Ps. 109:17-20; Matt. 12:36-37). By the use of the tongue, many are languishing in prison while others are living very meaningful lives. Therefore let us endeavor to use our tongue for excellent purposes.

PART IV

GROWING & LIVING AS A CHURCH

MESSAGE 67

BE A FUNCTIONAL PART OF CHRIST'S BODY

INTRODUCTION: The importance of being part of God's body is enormous. The objective of today's study is to let members know they form part of the body (without them the body is incomplete) and to challenge them to determine their areas of service and function therein.

MAIN TEXT: Romans 12:1-10; 1 Corinthians 12:14-27

MEMORY VERSE: If you have ... any fellowship with the spirit ... make my joy complete by being likeminded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose (Philip. 2:1-2).

A. What is the body of Christ?

- I. The body of Christ is compared with the body of man which is one but has many different parts.
- II. Each part of the body is recognized. It is only when each part is functioning perfectly well that the body is said to be complete.
- III. Why do we need to fellowship with other believers? John 1:3
- IV. What does the Bible say about Christians meeting together for fellowship? Heb. 10:25

Note: The body of Christ grows through regular fellowship. Christians grow and learn better through fellowship with other believers.

B. Discuss these questions from the passage:

- I. What are the various organs that are present in our local church and how many of these organs are functioning?
- II. What will happen when our part is not functioning well?

APPLICATION: What kind of groups can you associate with? (2 Cor. 6:14) How will you ensure that true love works in your life for others to be challenged?

CONCLUSION: The reason God commanded us to be part of the body is for us to fellowship with one another. Let us function as one so that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sins.

MESSAGE 68

GROW IN CHRIST THROUGH FELLOWSHIP

INTRODUCTION: In this study, we will consider how through constant fellowship with one another, we can grow in Christ as a body. Our main objective is to instill the drive to constant fellowship in members and enlighten them to the importance and the role of fellowship.

MAIN TEXT: Psalm 133:1-3; Acts 2:42; Heb. 10: 25; 1 John 1:7

MEMORY VERSE: “If you have ... any fellowship with the spirit ... make my joy complete by being likeminded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose (Philip. 2:1-2).

What is fellowship? It is an association of people of similar rank, belief, etc, who share something in common; goals or purpose. The word is literally taken as a two-lettered word, “fellow” and “ship.” Put together, it is “fellowship.” Christian fellowship is “becoming joined together to be one in everything.”

A. What kinds of fellowship exist?

- I. With God, Jesus (word), and Holy Spirit (Philip 2:1; 1 Cor. 1:9).
- II. With believers (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:25).
- III. With the devil (1 Cor. 10:20).
- IV. With works of darkness or people of the world (Eph. 5:11).

B. How does the Bible describe each of the above fellowships?

C. What kind of fellowship have believers been called into?

- I. Only the first two of the fellowships in “A” above are acceptable for believers. Why?
- II. With the remaining two, God hates them and has warned believers against them (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10: 25; 1 John 1:7).

APPLICATION: Are you prepared to practice the right kind of fellowship? Are you prepared to abstain from unhealthy fellowship?

CONCLUSION: It is not a secret that God delights in our coming together as one belonging to Him, and He knows why He forbids us not to cease fellowship. Jesus prayed that we should be one in everything. This can come about as we have regular fellowship. Let us endeavor to have fellowship.

MESSAGE 69

LIVE PEACEFULLY IN FELLOWSHIP

INTRODUCTION: In the previous study, we saw how we can grow a body through fellowship with one another. In this study, we will continue to consider how through constant fellowship with one another, we can also promote peaceful living as a body of Christ.

MAIN TEXT: Psalm 133:1-3; Acts 2:42; Heb. 10: 25; 1 John 1:7

Discuss these questions from the passage:

A. The importance of fellowship:

With the definition of Fellowship still in mind (from the last study), what is the importance of fellowship with one another?

(**Note:** The following answer might help: If we have fellowship with one another, we are filling the commandment of God stated in Hebrews 10:25)

B. What are some benefits of Fellowship?

- I. It makes it easier for God to build us up as one and prepare us for His Kingdom together (Acts 2:42).
- II. God delights in fellowship, so it brings blessings on believers (Ps. 133:3).
- III. It also makes us know ourselves and settle issues that may arise among us easily (Acts 6:1-4).

C. How can we promote fellowship with one another? Fellowship with one another can be observed in two ways:

- I. As a group; such a meeting constitutes a church (body of Christ).
- II. As individuals; we can meet with others for prayer, as follow-up, etc.

APPLICATION: Fellowship is usually initiated by extending a hand of friendliness to a fellow believer or promoted by need, sickness, sharing of joy, etc. Are you prepared to do these?

CONCLUSION: The more we attend church programs, the more we are promoting Christian fellowship. Let us not cease to fellowship, but rather endeavor to live peacefully as a body through constant fellowship.

MESSAGE 70

PROMOTE RECONCILIATION AMONG BELIEVERS

INTRODUCTION: As we study how to live and work together as a body we can deal with issues that arise within the group (body), and forge ahead to success. The objective of today's study is to instill in members the need to see reconciliation as a tool to bring peaceful living as a body.

MAIN TEXT: Colossians 3:13-14; Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15-17; Romans 12:18

MEMORY VERSE: "... And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespassed against us" (Luke 11:4).

Definition: What is reconciliation? It is (a) Joining together as one or, (b) Coming together to settle difference.

A. The steps to reconciliation involve the following:

- I. God's Word says, the offended may use an arbitrator (Matt. 18:16).
- II. The offender may also initiate steps to settle the issue (Matt. 5:23ff).
- III. A third part may upon hearing the conflict initiate settlement.
- IV. The offended party should develop deep love for the offender.
- V. The offended party is to forgive without any further references.
- VI. As led by God, everything should be done genuinely and willingly.

B. Importance of Reconciliation: It is important because God commands us to do it. It is the key to forgiveness from God and the means to bring people together. It is the first step by which God can achieve His plans.

C. It requires love: This virtue operates despite the magnitude of sin; Love covers multitude of sin (Prov. 10:12; Rom. 5:8; Col. 3:13-14). God loved us even when we were sinners. God was the first to practice reconciliation; He first forgave us and commanded us to follow His example. The virtue that catalyses reconciliation = LOVE.

APPLICATION: Is there no grudge between anybody and you? Do you have any bitterness against anybody? If yes, are you prepared to forgive?

CONCLUSION: Christian fellowship thrives on love and forgiveness. God commands believers to forgive if we want to be forgiven. We should just obey it in order to be blessed.

MESSAGE 71

PROMOTE SHARING AMONG CHRISTIANS (I)

INTRODUCTION: From the past study, we have seen how through fellowship, we can live peacefully as a body of Christ. That is, we should each strive to have fellowship with one another and as a body because this is good in the sight of God. This study discusses how we can grow as a body by “sharing.”

MAIN TEXT: Acts 4:32-35; Luke 4:10-11

Memory verse: “Share with God’s people...Practice hospitality” (Rom. 12:13).

Background: Our main text tells us of the role sharing played in building of the early Church. Through sharing the church grew as one and the Lord did a great work through it.

Discuss these questions from the passage:

A. What is meant by “to share”?

- I. Sharing generally means, “breaking something into portion(s) for other person(s) to receive parts.”
- II. To the Christian, it is a practice which should be encouraged in the Church because the word of God teaches a lot about the importance of sharing.

B. What can we share with others?

Things which can be shared can be brought under one of the following:

- I. Spiritual things: God’s word by exhortation, prayer, etc. (Gal. 6:6).
- II. Physical/materials things, money, food, etc. (Luke 4:10-14; Acts 2:46ff).
- III. Emotional things: problems, affection, etc. (Dan. 2:17-18; James 5:16).

APPLICATION: In each of the above item, one can explain briefly how it can be shared. Sharing is as relevant to the church today as it was in the early church. Are you doing it?

CONCLUSION: In present times, there are still a lot of people who are in divers needs and there are still a lot of people who help. Each individual can be satisfied when we begin to practice sharing. Practice it now or never.

MESSAGE 72

PROMOTE SHARING AMONG CHRISTIANS (II)

INTRODUCTION: In our previous study we saw how we can live as a body of Christ through sharing. It is as relevant to the church of God today as it was in the early church. In this week's study we shall continue to touch on "sharing." We shall once again see how sharing can promote God's work.

MAIN TEXT: Acts: 32-35; Luke 4:10-11

MEMORY VERSE: "Share with God's people..." (Rom. 12:13).

Background: Apostle Paul encouraged believers to practice sharing. The main text tells the role sharing played in the establishment of the early Church.

Discuss these questions from the passage:

A. What are some of the benefits of sharing?

- I. It supports the weak and needy (Acts 4:34).
- II. It reduces the burden of the needy members.
- III. It makes members feel they are loved and it shows care for them.
- IV. It opens doors of blessings to the giver (Luke 6:38).
- V. Many people in the church will remain if someone shows care.
- VI. It prevents Satan from using need/hardship to bring back-sliding.

B. Can sharing be practiced in our church today, give reason(s)?

Sharing is relevant to the church of God now as in the Early Church.

- I. We should be able to identify particular needs of members.
- II. Programs can be organized to raise funds/material for the needy.

APPLICATION: Are you sharing with the needy? Is it acceptable to God?

CONCLUSION: There are a lot of people who are in divers needs and who can be satisfied when we begin to practice sharing. We can give it a try and see, if the Lord through it will not wrought many miracles as it happened in the early church. Let's practice it now or never.

MESSAGE 73

WORLDLINESS IS A CHALLENGE TO CHRISTIANS

INTRODUCTION: There is no difference between the worldliness in the body of Christ today and what pertained to the Israelites during the Old Testament and some of the New Testament City-Churches before their destruction. Worldliness has become a huge challenge to every concerned Christian, and if not dealt with can lead to regrettable consequences.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17

Definition of Terms:

Worldliness: To the Christian, “worldliness” is “the pattern and standard of life found in the world.” In other words, it is the totality of all the things that go on in the world; the lifestyle, thought-pattern, interest, etc. It is the kind of life in the world as opposed to the kind of life in the Kingdom of God.

Challenge: It is a contest, a difficult task that opposes a person’s ability to succeed. While we can overcome challenges they can prevent victory.

A. What are the basic factors of worldliness?

- I. Many of the causes of the world’s problems can be grouped under three main areas. The three areas are **lust for money, sex, and power**.
- II. They are the issues that Satan, the devil, used to cause the first couple on earth to fall (Gen.3:6; 1 John 2:15-17). The situation is not different from what is happening in the Church of God on earth.

B. Discuss these phrases which are deduced from the two passages:

- I. “delight to the eyes” or “lust of the eyes,” which is equated to desire for money;
- II. “good for food or lust of the flesh;” is equated to desire for sex;
- III. “desirable to make one wise” or “the pride of life,” is equated to desire for power.

APPLICATION: Are you caught in the web of worldliness? Explain your answer.

CONCLUSION: All three main areas of worldliness must be considered seriously in addressing worldliness in the Church. These vices damage God’s Church and bring God’s name into disrepute. Let us overcome this web.

MESSAGE 74

WHY CHRISTIANS SHOULD OVERCOME WORLDLINESS

INTRODUCTION: Living by worldly standards has always been a great enemy of believers of God. Already, a number of Christians, not excluding the ministers, have fallen to the bait of worldliness. There is punishment for every sin.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17

Background: Worldliness appears to be ubiquitous and eating up the Church very fast. Though the effects of worldliness are very devastating with abundant troubles from the examples mentioned, yet a lot of believers, ministers and leaders have still not learned any lessons.

- A. **Worldliness is sin:** A number of leaders are watching as the Church is being swallowed up by worldliness. Not being prepared to confront the challenges is a negative practice that should be avoided by all Christians, especially those who want to see quality church growth.
- B. **Worldliness brings judgment:** In the book of Judges, some Priests/Levites were hired by individuals, some engaged in idol worship; took concubines (Judge 17; 19:1); stole offerings and sacrifices; engaged in prostitution with women in the tabernacle (Eli's sons, 1 Sam. 1:12ff; 2:27-36). God punished them with death.
- C. **Silence means consent:** Like the High Priest Eli who did little to restrain his sons even after God had warned him (1 Sam. 3:13-14), a lot of people in responsible position are doing very little about worldliness making them guilty before God.
- D. **Worldliness brings God's wrath:** All believers face the punishment God meted to some believers in Bible times who failed to overcome the cancer of worldliness if;
 - I. We also fall into sin or fail to confront these challenges,
 - II. We fail to brace ourselves up for the challenge.

APPLICATION: In applying this study, are you guilty or innocent of worldliness?

CONCLUSION: Worldly practices have gripped a lot of Christians and not even sparing the top hierarchy of very big Churches. The sooner the Church purges herself of the present unprecedented worldly practices the better for all of us.

MESSAGE 75

HOW CHRISTIANS CAN OVERCOME WORLDLINESS

INTRODUCTION: The occurrence of worldliness appears to be ubiquitous in the Church and has become a huge challenge to every concerned Christian. Though the effects of worldliness are very devastating yet a lot of believers including Ministers and Church leaders have still not learned many lessons.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17

Background: Worldliness has taken deep roots in the Church today. How can worldliness be dealt with in the Church? This can be done through:

- A. **Intense Prayer is needed:** There should be special times of long and intensive prayer against Satan and the forces behind these Acts of worldliness. The Lord has given believers power over Satan (Luke 10:19).
- B. **Christians everywhere should be involved in the crusade:** All Christians should be able to overcome any “holier than thou” attitude and free themselves from the grip of any apathetic spirit, and get involved in addressing the issues of worldliness.
- C. **We should place value on Christian ethics:** Christians must live above reproach (1 Sam. 12:3-4; Acts 20:34-35).
- D. **Christians should be prepared to be their brothers’ keepers:** God’s word says, “Iron sharpens iron...” (Prov. 27:17). Galatians 6:2 says we should bear each others’ burden.
- E. **Boldness is needed to confront all negativities:** All Christians should be able to confront the corruptions and worldliness which is engulfing the church boldly. We need to be provoked in order to confront sin head-on.

APPLICATION: Let us answer the following questions

- Should we sit down for the situation to completely deteriorate?
- At what level should believers rise and arrest the situation?

CONCLUSION: We should find ways to overcome worldliness in our Church. God is looking up to us for action. Great reward awaits anybody who will rise and uproot traits of worldliness from the Church. We cannot fail God.

MESSAGE 76

THERE IS NEED FOR MODESTY IN DRESSING

INTRODUCTION: It is clear from the Bible that God is the first to provide man with a dress (garment). But dressing has become a big problem in our Church and society today probably because the devil is using it to lead a lot of people into sin. It is very important that we discuss the issue of modesty in dressing.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Timothy 2:9-10; Genesis 3:21; Colossians 3:17

Discuss the following questions:

- A) Explain the following reasons why God provided man with a dress:
 - I. To cover man's nakedness
 - II. To make man appear different from other animals.
 - III. So that man will not be ashamed.

- B) To what extent are the reasons why some people dress up given below affect you?
 - I. To attract attention to themselves.
 - II. To show that they are better than other people.
 - III. To deceive people or to entice the opposite sex (dressing to kill)

- C) Evaluate the nature of the dressing of the worldly people:
 - I. Some dress half naked by exposing sensitive parts of their bodies and sometimes their underwear.
 - II. Some dress too tightly to show their body shape.
 - III. Some put on a lot of body/ cosmetic decoration.

- D) Below are some of the good reasons why God gave special instructions concerning dressing in **1 Timothy 2:9**. Explain them.
 - I. To make people appear very humble
 - II. To create a difference between Christians and non-Christians.
 - III. To set Christians as examples for others to follow.
 - IV. To keep Christians from temptations by the world.

APPLICATION: What should be the nature of the dressing of Christians especially the youth in the midst of current societal challenges?

CONCLUSION: God provided bodily dressing for a good purpose. But people now dress up with evil motives. Christians should be careful to honor God.

MESSAGE 77

RESPECT THE PRINCIPLES OF GOD'S KINGDOM

INTRODUCTION: In God's Kingdom, Christ is the king and His subjects are the Christians, who are His servants or subjects. The Kingdom of God is set on a covenant. Both the subjects and the king must fulfill their part. The church is the Kingdom with Christians as sons of it who must live by its principles.

MAINTEXT: Matthew 6:33; Colossians 1:13

Definition: A kingdom is the realm over which a king reigns. The kingdom of God is where God's reign is established, that is, where God reigns and has subjects. God's kingdom is not autocratic but theocratic; God is the King.

A. Being kingdom minded include the following:

- I. Accept that you belong to a kingdom ruled by a King. We receive what we have because we are obedient to Him (1 John 3:22ff).
- II. Accept that you are a servant who is subject of the King. Christians are servants of Christ. Paul confessed that he is a slave of Christ.
- III. Accepting that there are regulations in the kingdom which are the perfect will of God revealed in the Bible. God only blesses us and continues to do so if we do His will, i.e., "Not our will but His will," (1 John 5:14). The will of God is for our good.

B. The principles of the kingdom:

- I. There is a way of life that every Christian has to lead; everyone must be Holy and show transformation and renewal of our minds.
- II. In God's Kingdom, anyone who wants to live must die; who wants to get must give; who wants to be the greatest should be the servant.
- III. Everything of God's kingdom must be done to fulfill the Will of God.
- IV. The world's standard of success is not the same as God's standards.
- V. If we seek the kingdom of God first, God will add all that we need.

APPLICATION: Discuss three ways in which this study applies to you. Explain.

CONCLUSION: We have been delivered from the powers of darkness into God's marvelous Kingdom of light. But we must understand that there are lots of principles that govern God's Kingdom and we should be prepared to obey and fulfill them.

MESSAGE 78

BE KINGDOM MINDED: LEARN HOW TO LIVE WITH OTHERS

INTRODUCTION: Every Christian needs to know that God has set out a special pattern of life for those in His Kingdom. This life is opposite to that of the world. If anyone belongs to the kingdom of God, the person has obtained heavenly citizenship. This study will teach us the life expected of Christians.

MAIN TEXT: Romans 14:17-18; 8:28-30; Eph. 4:13; 1 Peter 1:9; 2 Cor. 5:17

Background: Christ lived like a man but His character, desire and commitment were fully focused on the kingdom. We need to always look to Christ in order to be like him in everything.

- A. How to be kingdom minded:** We ought to change our character to conform to that of Christ; else we change our name from being called Christians.
- B. How should we live?** We should accept that we are Disciples of Christ, which means that we should allow ourselves to be changed to the standard of the leader (Christ). The following have to be noted:
 - I. As Christians, we have to learn how to live as Christ did (Eph. 5:1).
 - II. It is expected of believers to walk just as Jesus walked (1 John 2:6).
 - III. We should learn from Christ in His commitment to Gods work (John 4:34; Matt. 11:30).
 - IV. We should learn to sacrifice and to love just as Christ loved.
- C. How to grow in the Kingdom:** The following spiritual disciplines (or practices) are most likely to help the believer to grow and become kingdom minded; prayer, word study, witnessing to other people (unbelievers), regular fellowship with other Christians, etc.

APPLICATION: Jesus said that he that believes on Him should live as He lived. As Christians, what should be the pattern of our thoughts, speech, life, etc.?

CONCLUSION: People of the world live according to the dictates of this world (Eph. 2:1-5). Thus they do not live and govern their life according to God's Kingdom. But not so with Christians who belong to the Kingdom of God. We need to live by the rules of the Kingdom.

MESSAGE 79

ENJOY THE BLESSINGS OF GOD'S KINGDOM

INTRODUCTION: God has unlimited blessings in store for His children. The scripture says that "Eye hath not seen, neither had ear heard nor has it entered the heart of man what God has in store for us." Are you prepared to enjoy the blessings of the Kingdom? Let's see from the study.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Peter 3:9; Psalm 35:2; Job 22:21-30

MEMORY VERSE: "Seek first the Kingdom of God...and all others shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

A. What are the blessings God has for His children?

- I. Every riches of God in Christ shall overflow to the fullness in the believer's life.
- II. God's fullest protection (security) and peace (Psalm 37:23).
- III. God's power to overcome sin and the enemy.
- IV. Abraham's three- fold blessing which are
 - a. spiritual fellowship with God and protection
 - b. uncountable offspring and material possession
 - c. long life and peace with neighbors (Gen. 25:8)

B. How can we ensure that we inherit these blessings?

- I. We need to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.
- II. We need to engage in honest labor so that God will bless our work.
- III. We need to exercise faith/hope in order to inherit God's blessings. It calls for affirmative action, not a passive attitude (Rom. 4:18-22).

APPLICATION: What three new things have you learned from this study?

CONCLUSION: In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray for God's Kingdom to come, and then to ask for the daily bread. Thus one has to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness then he or she shall inherit blessings. God has called us to inherit His kingdom.

MESSAGE 80

DISCIPLINE IS A NECESSITY FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH (I)

INTRODUCTION: God reveals the sins of those He loves and corrects through the act of discipline. But how many Christians are prepared to accept and endure God's discipline, and how does one even know that what he/she is facing is part of God's discipline? This study is likely to help us find out more.

MAIN TEXT: Titus 1:1-13; Jeremiah 30:10-11.

Definition of Discipline: It is defined as a measure that seeks to reform a person. It includes training, correction, and being self controlled, etc. It produces obedience and uprightness and restrictions.

A. Discipline is important for reasons like:

- I. To build faith/ensure righteousness (Titus 1:1-13; Heb.12:5-11).
- II. It brings understanding, and shows fatherly love (Prov. 3:11-12).
- III. It controls exuberance and provides care (Rev. 3:19-20).
- IV. It helps to avoid condemnation/ save offenders (1 Cor. 11:32).
- V. It brings correction and restoration (Jer. 30:10-11).
- VI. It brings self control and serves as a deterrent.
- VII. To correct disorder and remove wickedness (1 Cor. 5:3-6).

B. Some of the ways to ensure discipline:

- I. Discipline must be done in or with love (2 Cor. 2:6-12).
- II. Discipline must be done with gentleness (Gal. 6:1).
- III. Discipline must be done with justice or impartially (1 Tim. 5:20-21).

APPLICATION: In what way(s) are you experiencing God's discipline? What lessons have you learned through such a period?

CONCLUSION: Discipline is very important for the church of God, but the people of God always find it difficult to accept. Discipline is from the Lord to all his children Amen!!

MESSAGE 81

DISCIPLINE IS A NECESSITY FOR CHRISTIAN GROWTH (II)

INTRODUCTION: In our last study, we learned that discipline is very important for the church of God, but the people of God always find it difficult to accept. This study will help us to know the importance of discipline to the child of God.

MAIN TEXT: Titus 1:1-13; Jeremiah 30:10-11

Definition of discipline: “A measure that seeks to reform a person.” It includes training, correction, and being self controlled, etc. It produces obedience and uprightness and restriction.

QUESTIONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

- A. Who are authorized to discipline?** Any person in a position of authority is God’s agent for discipline (Matt. 18:15-18; Heb. 13:17; John 20:23).
- B. Discuss the following biblical types of disciplinary measures:**
 - I. Correction, i.e., letting the person know his/her fault (2 Tim. 4:1ff).
 - II. Rebuke/reproving by appealing to conscience (Gal. 2:11).
 - III. Suspension for a specific period of time for restoration (1 Cor. 5:1-5).
 - IV. Being excommunicated from the church (1 Tim. 1:18-20).
- C. What misbehaviors call for Church discipline?**
 - I. Falling into open sin such as; fornication, adultery, quarreling, insults, misuse of church funds, etc.
 - II. Failure to conform to church rules, continuous violation of these, or conforming to, and being used to places of worldly amusements
 - III. Embracing and/or practicing false Church doctrines.

APPLICATION: In what ways have you been disciplined before? (Heb. 12:5-6; Prov. 3:1-12) What lessons did you learn from the discipline against you?

CONCLUSION: All disciplinary measures depend upon the maturity of the persons involved. Discipline is from the Lord for the good of all his children.

MESSAGE 82

HOW TO PRAY WITH THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

INTRODUCTION: We are able to address God through the right attitude, just as the Lord Jesus taught us when He offered up prayer in Hebrews 5:7-8. He himself established a method of praying for all believers. We have to learn the right attitudes in this study.

MAIN TEXT: Luke 18:10-14; Judges 16:1-4, 20.

Background: Attitude is a person's behavior/misbehavior towards other people, circumstances, and challenges of life at a particular time. Certain attitudes define Christians' relationship with God. When it comes to prayer the following attitudes are most acceptable.

- A. The attitude of holiness:** Holiness is being set apart for God. Without holiness, answers to prayers are prevented (Jos. 7:1ff). Because every person is a product of the choice that he/she makes, wrong choice hinders good results (Judges 16:1-6; 1 Cor. 15:33).
- B. The attitude of forgiveness:** Though forgiveness does not come to man easily, it is still required to receive hearing from God (1 Tim. 2:8).
 - I. Forgiveness is a choice – Gen. 33:1-4
 - II. Forgiveness opens doors of mercy – Matt. 18:21; Psalm 103:10
 - III. Forgiveness is God's character – Psalm 103:3
- C. The attitude of God-fearing:** To fear God is holding Him in absolute reverence. Since life is a journey, our attitude to life is also our attitude to God. If we fear God our life/conduct will reflect it (2 Chron. 20:1-9).
- D. Importance of praying with these attitudes**
 - I. All these attitudes generate commitment, trust, etc. (2 Chron. 20:12)
 - II. All these attitude open doors for quick intervention by God

APPLICATION: What is your attitude to God when praying or studying His word?

CONCLUSION: A bitter heart never fulfills the purposes of God. Our actions and reactions are important. We must come to God with acceptable attitudes.

MESSAGE 83

ANSWERS TO PRAYER: WHEN DOES GOD SAY 'NO'?

INTRODUCTION: God wants His children to call upon Him, but we should know that the answer comes from God. He always does everything according to His will. In most cases, calls which receive a 'No' answer may never be understood. But a 'No' answer can also be a response from God to our call. If we continue to wait on God, He will make everything clear to us.

MAIN TEXT: Deuteronomy 3:23-26; 1 John 5:14; 1 Corinthians 12:7-9

Background: It is not clear how God answers prayers. Sometimes, unbeliever's prayer can be answered than the believer's; that of a late-comer earlier than the earlier-comer; one who has not fasted has answers while the one who has fasted continues to wait. Why?

Reasons: When God answers 'No' to a prayer, some of the reasons may be:

- A. The request might be completely contrary to God's will. It may bring problems, and may even lead to the fall of a Christian (1 John 5:14).
- B. There may be an unrecognized and unconfessed sin which will prevent a positive answer from God (Joshua 7:1; Isa. 59:1, 2).
- C. God wants us to seek Him more than we do.
 - I. This is because our hearts become so filled with our problems that God may bring a No answer to make us draw more to Him.
 - II. We have become indifferent to God's word, as in Proverbs 28:9. But we remember God's promise to Joshua (Jos. 1:8).
- D. A 'No' answer may be because of selfish, evil motives as James 4:3 said. If we refuse to meet other people's needs when we can help God will also refuse ours also.

APPLICATION: Have you received yes, no, or wait, to your prayers? How did you understand these answers?

CONCLUSION: There may be some reasons for answers to prayers we do not know. There is the need for understanding when it comes to prayers. Patience and faith are key factors.

MESSAGE 84

ANSWERS TO PRAYER: WHEN DOES GOD SAY 'WAIT'?

INTRODUCTION: When an ordinary person says wait, it may mean so many reasons including evil. But when God says wait, He means good to the person. There are lots of blessing in waiting for God. Believers should learn how to Pray Until Something Happens, i.e., '**PUSH.**' Let us study more on this topic.

MAIN TEXT: Ps. 27:13-14; Eccl. 3:10-11; Lam. 3:25-26; John 2:1-5; Isa. 40:41

Background: There are times when a believer may demonstrate:

- I. A right relation with God (Psalm 68).
- II. Right choices (1 John 5:4).
- III. Faith and with right attitude (James 1:6).

Yet, God answers 'wait' to the person's prayer.

When this happens some of the reasons may be as follows:

- A. It enables the person develop more trust in Him (Heb.11:6; James 1:2-3). This is not only to keep the one in suspense but for Him to raise his/her level of faith. If believers were to receive everything we ask for, we will begin to fall in our level of faith in God. Your request may be in the will of God, but the timing (Jer. 29:11; Eph.1:3).
- B. God is preparing the person to receive the answers so that he/she is able to properly handle and use it.
- C. God may have something better than what we might even think of. Therefore, there is the need to wait for it (Eccl. 3:10-11).

APPLICATION: Have you received needed answers for all the things you are praying about? Whether yes, no, or wait, what have you learned from this study?

CONCLUSION: Every believer needs to wait for God's time. If you rush into anything by faith, we will suffer for it. God knows every person's limit of endurance in hardship, or to wait. Let us wait with patience, faith, and in hope. In His own time He makes everything beautiful.

MESSAGE 85

ANSWERS TO PRAYER: WHEN DOES GOD SAY 'YES,' CONDITIONALLY?

INTRODUCTION: When we pray we enter into a covenant with God, that is, we are exercising a dialogue between us and the one who has called us into fellowship. When we pray, we engage God and draw His attention unto us. Prayer as a business can bring God's will to pass but with some conditions. This message will give us further insights.

MAIN TEXT: 2 Chronicles 7:14; 1 John 5:14; Deuteronomy 30:1-10

Background: It is not clear how God answers prayers; the answer might be 'yes,' 'no,' 'wait,' etc. One striking answer is where God says 'yes' with a condition. How? His answer might be based upon our accepting some responsibilities and being prepared to do them.

A. God's conditional 'Yes' answer: God's answers to prayers are usually in accordance to His will and it satisfies the following:

- I. Affirms the nature and character of God as Supreme. In fact it is God's nature of love, faithfulness, mercies, and compassion that makes Him the One we can trust.
- II. Affirming out faith in His covenant with us to be our God, and father.
- III. Utilizing the privilege that God has given us, to fellowship with Him.
- IV. It is to ensure that we ask Him for His will to be done.
- V. His desire to reveal to us what we should do.

B. Why God's conditional 'Yes' answer? God's conditional 'yes' involves asking the Lord what needs to be done in the following attitude:

- I. In a spirit of humility, repentance, holiness, and all the good virtues
- II. When one is ready to do His will and is responsible for them.

APPLICATION: Have you received needed answers to your prayers? Whether 'yes,' 'no,' or 'wait,' what have you learned as to why you have received such answers? In what way(s) have this study helped you about prayer?

CONCLUSION: It is only when our broken relationship with God is restored that He hears our prayers and then He comes in to meet our needs (2 Chron. 7:14; Deut. 30:1-10). We need to do what he desires, and then he will do our will.

MESSAGE 86

ANSWERS TO PRAYER: WHEN DOES GOD SAY 'YES,' UNCONDITIONALLY?

INTRODUCTION: When we pray, we engage God and draw His attention unto us. Prayer is a business which brings God's will to pass. Our answers to prayer from God are tied up to His will. This is better understood when we consider God's nature or His attributes.

MAIN TEXT: Matthew 12:1; 1 John 5:14

Background: It is not understandable how God answers prayers. God answers to the person's prayer may be 'yes,' 'no,' or may delay, etc. How? The way they occur in the life of people can only be understood in His attributes. Some of His answers might be based upon the believer's inability to meet some responsibilities and not being prepared to do them.

A 'yes' answer without any condition might be understood as follows:

- A.** The love and favor of God (Exod. 33:12-19; Matt. 5:7). God gives unconditionally because of His favor on the one who is asking, not because of position, long prayer and fasting. Sometimes when we show favor, God returns it to us (1 Sam. 2:30).
- B.** The mercies of God, compassion, and His faithfulness to His promises (Matt. 5:7; Lam. 3:22-23).
- C.** Because of His Glory (1 Kings 18:37). When God answers 'yes' to the person's prayer unconditionally, there might be some very good reasons. In John 11:41-42, the Lord Jesus prayed that God should answer Him so that people may know that He was His Son. God may answer our prayers because He wants to glorify Himself (John 9:1-3).

APPLICATION: If you have received the needed answers, whether 'yes,' 'no,' or 'wait,' what lessons does this teach you? What does today's study teach you about the way God treats the prayers of His children?

CONCLUSION: God does answer us just to glorify His name, not because of our righteousness or anything. He does so because He is God; He is merciful, faithful, and He answers prayers according to His will. Let us wait with patience, courage and in hope.

PART V

SERVING AS A LEADER

MESSAGE 87

GOD IS STILL LOOKING FOR WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD

INTRODUCTION: The Lord Jesus Christ asked the disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more people for the harvest because the harvest was plenty but the laborers were few. Indeed, there is the need for very effective men and women to make a dramatic change in the Church to meet the current day in the world. The Lord commanded us to continue in His work.

MAIN TEXT: Luke 10:2; Ephesians. 4:7-10; Habakkuk 3:2; 2.

MEMORY VERSE: "...The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers..." (Luke 10:2).

Background: God used apostles, evangelists, teachers, etc, for the perfecting of saints, work of the ministry, and edification of the body of Christ. Why does God want to use you?

A. There is the need for equipping of saints for God's work:

- I. Upon conversion, the Holy Spirit wants believers to become equipped for good work in the Kingdom. This is perfecting of the saints.
- II. Paul told Timothy to teach or train or commit unto others what he has learned from him so that the work of the ministry will continue.

B. There are many prospects for revival of God's work:

- I. There is the need for repentance by erring ministers in the Church.
- II. Believers need leaders to help them to stand firm (Acts 17:5-9).
- III. People are crying and still looking unto Jesus for breakthrough.

C. There is the need for ministers/leaders to spearhead the work:

- I. We have many believers but not many workers. Give reasons?
- II. Leaders are purposed by God and called into His service (Eph. 3:7)
- III. Believers need to wait and listen for God's voice (Hab. 3:2; 2)

APPLICATION: Is God speaking to you about any ministry area? If yes, where?

CONCLUSION: In these times, effective workers are needed in the Church, and God is waiting for your response. The task requires bold initiative, good counsel and instruction, insight, etc. We should be prepared for ministry.

MESSAGE 88

BE PPREPARED TO FOLLOW YOUR LEADERS

INTRODUCTION: It is God's will that one day, you also become a leader. But this plan can be realized after you have begun as a follower. Some people want to be leaders but are not prepared to follow and serve others. We need to study to become good followers in order to be successful leaders.

MAIN TEXT: Exod. 17:1ff; Deut.31:7-8; 34:9; Num. 12:1-6; 16:1ff.

Background: God calls some people and allows them to follow some leaders in order that they can learn to perform better when they become leaders.

A. Why should there be followers?

- I. A Leader directs/guides/inspires other people to achieve a goal/fulfill a task. But not all can be leaders at the same time.
- II. Today you might be a follower; tomorrow you will be a Leader.
- III. If you fail to follow, others will do same when you become a leader.

B. What we should know as followers and servants:

- I. Be obedient to your leader's instructions (Exod. 17:1ff).
- II. Support your leader throughout [Joshua was with Moses always]
- III. Seek your leaders' success; when he succeeds you will succeed.
- IV. Be careful not to challenge your leader(s) like the following did;
1) Aaron & Miriam (Num. 12); 2) Sons of Korah (Num. 16).
- V. Wait for your time like the following: David waited until Saul has left; Elisha waited until Elijah has left; the disciples waited until the Lord Jesus Christ has left.

C. What lessons can we learn from Joshua?

Joshua was a **follower** and **servant** at the time Israel left Egypt. He followed and served Moses during the wilderness travel (Exod. 17:1ff). Later, Joshua became the **leader** and led Israel to Canaan (Deut. 31:7ff).

APPLICATION: Does this message relate to you? Will you follow your leader(s)?

CONCLUSION: God will raise you up tomorrow; for today, you must follow and serve. If we serve our leaders faithfully others will reciprocate our service when we also become leaders.

MESSAGE 89

BE PREPARED TO SERVE THE LORD

INTRODUCTION: Sometimes some Christians fail to understand the fact that Christ is the only one who can bring the expected change in society. Fact is the only true revolutionary is Christ, and our commitment to serve Him without reservation is part of our call to serve humanity. Rendering service to the Church and society is also part of our integration into the family of Christ.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Peter 2:20-22; Exodus 20:2-6; Luke 2:52

A. What is Christian service?

Christian service is yielding oneself to the Lord and being loyal to His cause. This means that you see the Lord as Master and you as servant. Christian service is part of a believer's call.

B. Why should believers serve the Lord? We should realize that;

- I. When we look at the redemptive work of Christ on the cross, believers have no alternative but to surrender our all and to serve Him (Matt. 25:23; John 15:1-8).
- II. We are not compelled to serve any religious sects, church, group, etc. Rather, we are called to serve the Lord as led by His Spirit.
- III. Christian service stems out of the victory which Christ has won for us. Without Christ, the world is ruled by the evil ones and all the unpleasant things are planned and executed by the Satan.

C. What is involved in Christian service?

- I. Our service involves our whole life on earth with no passiveness. Believers are not saved to stay on the fence but to affect or make impact on the world around.
- II. A believer's level of appreciation will be shown by his/her commitment to serve the Lord at Church, home, place of work, etc.

APPLICATION: Do you agree that Christian service brings honor to your Master? If yes, in what way(s) are you committed to the Lord? If no, explain.

CONCLUSION: Our commitment to the cause of God works out and improves the quality of our service. We must grow in service to both God and men.

MESSAGE 90

LEADERSHIP IS A CALL BY GOD

INTRODUCTION: It might be God's will that one day you become a leader. But this plan can only be a reality after you have understood what leadership entails. In this message, The Lord wants us to understand that to become a successful leader depends upon Him alone.

TEXT: Joshua 1:8ff; John 13:1-5, 12-17; Deuteronomy 34:9.

Background: Some people have wrong ideas about leadership. They think leadership is a privilege and a means to exercise authority or lord over people.

A. Who is a Leader? A Leader is someone who directs/guides/inspires other people to achieve a goal or fulfill a task. There are different kinds of leaders;

- I. Born leaders (e.g. Solomon was born a heir to King David),
- II. People's leaders (e.g. Jephthah and Jeroboam),
- III. Trained leaders (Joshua, Elisha, Timothy),
- IV. Self-made or ambitious leaders: (Absalom, Adonijah, Korah).
- V. Positional leaders (Joseph was appointed leader in Egypt)
- VI. Situational leaders (Israel's cry in Egypt necessitated Moses' call)

B. How does God make Leaders?

- I. God selects leaders by His own will, and He supports them. Only God makes and unmakes leaders (David made king and Saul rejected).
- II. Those called into leadership must wait for the right time; David waited for his time; Elisha waited until Elijah has left; the disciples waited until the Lord has left.
- III. Irrespective of one's background, only God makes a leader succeed.

C. How should one behave as a leader? Since there are different levels of leadership, any aspirant to a higher position should note the ff:

- I. Leadership is a call to higher service, and stewardship.
- II. Be sensitive to the followers and let their plight be our priority.
- III. We should serve our superiors well. If we are working with other leaders we should work and be part of the team's success.

APPLICATION: How does this message relate to you as a leader or servant?

CONCLUSION: Let us all, whether as leaders or as members be prepared to serve one another as the Lord Jesus Christ set us example in the passage.

MESSAGE 91

GOD DOES NOT ENTERTAIN EXCUSES (I)

INTRODUCTION: Almost invariably, a lot of believers shun responsibilities of leadership. They try to give excuses to beat God's system of redemption for lost souls. Scripture advises believers on this issue as we study the excuses Moses gave when God asked him to go and deliver Israel from Egypt.

MAIN TEXT: Exodus 3:14ff; Jeremiah 1:1ff

Background: When we have to act for God, believers must never say "I do not know what to say and what to do." What usually occurs as a testimony steers out from what God wants to do. God has solutions to all our excuses:

A. Excuse of Insignificance (Exod. 3:11-15):

- I. When God called Moses, he thought he was feeble to go before Pharaoh. He thought of an excuse and said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?"
- II. But God calmed his fears and said "...Certainly I will be with you ..."

B. Excuse of Fear (Exod. 3:11-15):

- I. Sometimes the service of today is blocked by the sins of yesterday. By asking, "Who am I," it is possible Moses remembered the murder he had committed in Egypt and dare not return.
- II. But God can close the door behind and lead us through another one. We must not belittle for God is on our side.

C. Excuse of Ignorance (Exod. 3:13):

- I. Moses pretended ignorance of who God is. He said to God, "Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' What shall I say to them?"
- II. God is ready to help man fulfill His call. God said to him, "I AM WHO I AM," and that people should know me by this Name.

APPLICATION: Have you given excuse to God when you should not have? Do you agree that giving excuses to stay from divine assignments is wrong? Why?

CONCLUSION: You only have to talk off in the scriptures and not say or do what you think is the right thing. The gospel or a believer's testimony of transformation in Christ should be "Good News" to the world and not just expression of one's' views to people. Let us accept our responsibilities now.

MESSAGE 92

GOD DOES NOT ENTERTAIN EXCUSES (II)

INTRODUCTION: In our previous study we saw how many of us shun the responsibility of lifting the banner of the Lord Jesus Christ. We learned not to give excuses to beat God's plan to use us as specially prepared vessels for His redemptive purposes. This study is a continuation of our studies on excuses.

MAIN TEXT: Exodus 3:14ff; Jeremiah 1:1ff

Background: Scripture advises believers in Exod. 3 & 4 on excuses based on the account of Moses when God asked him to go and bring Israel from Egypt.

A. Excuse of Inadequacy (Exod. 4:1ff):

- I. Adequacy is not automatically attained but must be earned. Moses realized how empty and weak he was against his own people and maybe the gods of Egypt. He said, "What if they do not believe me...."
- II. But, Praise God! For, He is ever ready to stand by His faithful servants and show Himself strong.

B. Excuse of Rejection (Exod. 4:1ff):

- I. Notice the wondrous signs God shows Moses. They were not only for the Israelites to accept Moses as one truly sent by God it was much more for the Egyptians. God said, "...They may believe the sign."
- II. Believers have to be faithful to God and do as instructed, because "the battle is not ours, but the Lords."

C. Excuse of Inability (Exod. 4:10-12):

- I. Moses turned his attention to his bodily weakness and wanted to use an inherent disability as inability. He said to the LORD, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent ..." In fact, Moses might have forgotten that God is the Creator and Provider of all things. He is able to make a way where there seems to be no way.
- II. God promised to give Moses utterance (Luke 21:13-15). He provided a speaker; Aaron, so that Moses will not be alone as well.

APPLICATION: Do you excuse yourself from God's service? How do you plan to overcome it?

CONCLUSION: The gospel or a believer's testimony of transformation in Christ should be "Good News" to the world and not just expression of one's views to people. God does not accept excuses whatsoever. He knows you can do it.

MESSAGE 93

YOU NEED TO UNDERSTAND CHRISTIAN SERVICE

INTRODUCTION: Christians must be steady in our lives when our commitment to serve the Lord is at stake. This is because Christ is the only one who can make the difference for the best. In order to be seriously committed to Christ and His Church, we need to have understanding of what is meant by service. This is the focus of today's message.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Peter 2:20-22; Exodus 20:2-6.

Background: The example of Christ should guide believers (Luke 2:21-22; John 4:34), even as they decide on the good cause of service.

A. What does Christian service involve? It involves the following:

- I. The love of God compelling a person to serve others.
- II. Passion for perishing souls, and a desire to reach them.
- III. Passion, sacrifice and diligence for the work in the Church.
- IV. Risk-taking for God's glory to be revealed everywhere all the time.
- V. Godliness: walking in the spirit and submitting to His convictions.
- VI. Persevering in challenges and allowing God's will to prevail.

B. How is one's level of service improved?

- I. Maturity in the level of a person's commitment occurs in areas like prayer, Bible study, and follow-up of others. It may cost him/her a lot of things; energy, time, money, expertise, etc.
- II. The devil is always on the move so believer must even do more.

C. What are the results of effective Christian service?

- I. Effective service results in flow of God's grace to transform a person and others into the image of God (Luke 21:36; Mark. 14:38; 1 Cor. 11:26; Acts 1:8).
- II. It also leads to both qualitative and quantitative growth of the Church (Acts 2).

APPLICATION: In what area are you serving the Lord? What results are you receiving from your services?

CONCLUSION: Christian service commits the believer to the Lord and makes the one loyal to the cause of Christ. When you discover yourself as nothing without Christ it leads to more submission and service. Service will plunder your ambition and bring honor to your Master.

MESSAGE 94

LEADERS SHOULD BE DEDICATED TO GOD'S HOUSE

INTRODUCTION: It is important to note that each believer is part of the body of Christ and that (i) if each performs his/her role, the whole body is built up, and (ii) if anyone fails, the whole body is affected. This study focuses on the need for Christian leaders to consider God's work as a matter as priority.

MAIN TEXT: Ephesians 4:11-16; Haggai 1:1-13; 2:1-9.

MEMORY VERSES: "...And He gave some...for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-16).

A. Content of the passage: The passage in Haggai 1:1-13 reveals that;

- I. The Returnees considered the things pertaining to God's worship as secondary; rather they thought the time for theirs was ripe (vs. 2 & 3).
- II. God through his prophet Haggai called on them to reconsider whether their expectations were met (vs. 5-6, 9-11).
- III. There was need to react quickly to things of God first, (vs. 8).
- IV. The people took God's message seriously and acted quickly (vs. 12).
- V. God took pleasure in their work and blessed them than before (2:6-9).

B. Answer the following questions:

- I. Do you think there is difference between God's call for the people of Israel to put His house in order and our present need to put God's house in order and why? If yes, state some of the differences. If no, state some of the similarities.
- II. The Israelites had reason for neglecting God's house; "It was not yet time... (vs. 2). What are some of the reasons why we fail to put God's house in the best shape?
- III. Do you think our inability to put God's house in the best shape affects us spiritually and physically? If so, what are some of these effects?

APPLICATION: The Israelites responded quickly to God's message. What does God want you to do as far as His place of worship is concerned?

CONCLUSION: By acting quickly on God's word to build His house the people of Israel enjoyed a long period of rest and fruitfulness. God can do the same with us if we will react quickly to His call to put His house in order.

MESSAGE 95

LEADERS SHOULD COMMIT THEIR SKILLS TO GOD'S WORK

INTRODUCTION: God expects some of His children to allow themselves to be used as initiators for His purposes. Such people are expected to demonstrate commitment as servants of God. The objective of this study is to make Christians realize that the role of everybody as part of God's labor force is important and should be encouraged.

MAIN TEXT: Ephesians 4:11-16; Ezra 1:1-4; 5:1ff

MEMORY VERSE: "For the eyes of the Lord ran throughout the earth to strengthen those whose heart are fully committed to him" (2 Chron. 16; 9).

Definition: The experts and labor force in God's house are those who were given the charge of planning, designing, supervising, providing the labor, etc, for the progress of the work.

Answer these questions:

- A.** Discuss the ways in which the following people were used by God as experts and labor force of God's work.
 - I.** Supervising; All the Levites (Ezra 5:9).
 - II.** Advising & inspiring; Prophets Zachariah, Haggai (Ezra: 5:2)
 - III.** Planning and designing; Bezalel and Oholiab (Exod. 36:1)
 - IV.** Voluntary labor; individual families (Neh. 3:1-32).
- B.** Discuss some area(s) of service that Christians can serve as resource persons in God's house now?
- C.** Is every Christian presently playing that special role in God's house? If yes, explain. If not, why?

APPLICATION: To what extent are you committed to your Church in the area(s) discussed in the study? Are you prepared to be a resource person?

CONCLUSION: Building a place of worship for God is the responsibility all of us. But we cannot all do the same thing at the same time. By availing yourself in one of these areas, God will strengthen and use you to achieve His purposes. Do not just be among the group; be committed responsibly.

MESSAGE 96

LEADERS NEED TO BE STRATEGIC IN THEIR DUTIES

INTRODUCTION: The book of Nehemiah reveals a genuine reaction to the news about the state of God's house and the people. It further reveals the strategies he adopted to overcome the challenge, i.e., the rebuilding/repair of the city wall. In this lesson, we shall learn how working together enabled the people to successfully build the wall.

MAIN TEXT: Nehemiah 1-3; Ephesians 6:12ff.

MEMORY VERSE: "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart as working for the Lord..." (Col. 3:23).

Discuss these questions from the passage:

- A. What strategy can we adapt as leaders in building the church of God?
- B. Outline some of the predicaments that could have happened if some portions of the wall were left undone, or if there was division between the leaders and the rest of the people.
- C. What strategies of Satan can we learn from Sanballat and Tobiah's actions against Nehemiah?
- D. What was the first thing Nehemiah did when the oppositions started coming? How do we apply this in our daily Christian living?
- E. From chapter 4:6, what is the surest way to win people for Christ?
- F. From chapter 4:16-23, what are some of the principles we need to apply as leaders/workers to overcome enemies of the Church?
- G. What state of our life can be described as 'watching whilst working'?
- H. Do we see this attitude emanating from us as we engage God's work?

APPLICATION: Is it difficult living and working with others? How? How can we apply Nehemiah's strategy to win our family, friends, etc, for Christ?

CONCLUSION: Leaders should understand that strategy is important to overcome the enemy. Through working together, the church grew and the Lord did a great work through it.

MESSAGE 97

LEADERS SHOULD BE PROGRESSIVE INITIATORS

INTRODUCTION: In the book of Nehemiah, scripture tells of how some people allowed themselves to be used for God's purpose. In this study, we will learn of the requirements for God's work to progress. Our objective for this study is to inspire divine initiation.

MAIN TEXT: Ephesians 4:11-16; Ezra 1:1-4

MEMORY VERSE: "For the eyes of the Lord ran throughout the earth to strengthen those whose heart are fully committed to him" (2 Chron. 16:9a).

Definition of initiators: God usually makes sure His plans are revealed to people who are committed to Him, (2 Chron. 16:9). The task of such people is not to complete the God's work alone, but to ensure that God's purpose is carried out. Such people are used by God as initiators.

Answer these questions:

- A. Who are the people used by God for the following purposes?
 - I. Building of the Ark of Covenant? (Exod. 25:8)
 - II. Building of the first Temple in Jerusalem? (1 Chron. 17:11-12)
 - III. Building or repairing of the broken wall of Jerusalem? (Neh. 2:3-5)
 - IV. Repair and purification of the temple? (2 Chron. 29:1ff)
- B. Are you inspired by the Spirit of God for His special purpose? Explain.
- C. There are many works to be initiated in the church of God presently. Areas like the women ministry, youth, singing, the prayer, Bible study group, etc, were all initiated by people. In what areas of the Church do you see God using you to initiate something?
- D. How do we deal with challenges to our initiations as Christians?

APPLICATION: What project can you initiate in God's house? How do you hope to bring it to fruition?

CONCLUSION: God can use you to initiate something, so consider it seriously and avail yourself accordingly. If we are willing, God is ever willing!

MESSAGE 98

LEADERS SHOULD SUPPORT THE FINANCES OF THE CHURCH

INTRODUCTION: In God's house, everybody has a role to play. Some people are experts in both spiritual and physical programs; others form the labor force in many areas. The objective of this study is to make Christians, especially leaders, realize that the role of financiers and material contributors is important for God's work to progress and should be encouraged.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Chronicles 22:2-5; Ephesians 4:11-16; Ezra 1:1-4

MEMORY VERSE: "Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas...sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet" (Acts 4:28).

Answer the following questions:

- A. Consider the following contributors to the funds and materials needed for God's work and how they made available their contributions:
 - I. The people of Israel who donated personal effects (Exod. 35:20)
 - II. The free-will offering by the people who chose to remain in Babylon (Ezra 1:4-6)
 - III. The example of King David (1 Chron. 22:2-5)
- B. Are you contributing financially to the building of God's house presently?
It is not too late to decide because no contribution is too small.
- C. Are you contributing materially to the building of God's house presently?
It is not too late to decide because no contribution is too small.
- D. If you are not doing any of the above, are you prepared to start now?

Note: Everybody can be a supporter/contributor to the needs of God's work.

APPLICATION: Who is responsible for putting up a place of worship for God? Can we all do the same thing at the same time? What role will you assign yourself after this study?

CONCLUSION: When you plan to contribute anything towards the progress of God's work He will strengthen and use you to achieve something. If we are willing God is ever willing.

MESSAGE 99

LEADERS SHOULD RELATE WELL WITH SUBORDINATES

INTRODUCTION: No leader of a ministry should please the self; he/she should rather strive to please others. If a leader respects other leaders it is a demonstration of humility. On the other hand any leader who shows lack of respect for others is arrogant and thinks he can do everything without their support. He/she is likely to lose support and fail. Let's learn more.

MAIN TEXT: Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 15:2-7; Matt. 18:32-35.

MEMORY VERSE: "And He gave some as apostles...and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service..." (Eph. 4:11).

For leaders to work harmoniously, the following ingredients are needed:

- A. Love:** God first practiced reconciliation through love and forgiveness. He loved us when we were even sinners. We have to follow His example.
 - I. Building God's Church involves relating with others. Relationships are cemented by love; love covers multitude of sin (Prov. 10:12).
 - II. Relationship means being connected to another person (Rom. 5:8).
- B. Loyalty:** This is proving to be trustworthy/faithful to God and the Church.
 - I. A loyal leader will always promote God's will for His work. All leaders have the responsibility of loyalty to themselves and the congregation.
 - II. Every trustworthy leader also trusts another person. He/she puts his trust in people because he/she can rely on them all the time.
- C. Transparency:** Relationship among leaders improves when each is bold to let others know their operations in the church; on monetary matters, appointments, etc. Transparency is the cement for all relationships; without it there is suspicion.

APPLICATION: In what way do you fall short as a leader? What does God want you to reorganize in order to live in harmony with all others? What should you do to show more love, loyalty, transparency to your followers?

CONCLUSION: Ministers and other Church leaders are role models. They should demonstrate how to relate to others in order to build God's Church.

MESSAGE 100

LEADERS SHOULD SUPPORT THE PASTOR TO BE EFFICIENT

INTRODUCTION: There are instances where church leaders fail to provide the needed support to their pastor as a result of some reasons. When this happens, the pastor is not able to perform satisfactorily, and the church is deprived of maximum blessings. This study looks at what is required of the leaders in order to make the pastor effective.

MAIN TEXT: Ezra 7:1-26; 10:4-5

Background: Ezra was a priest who was among the Jewish captives in Babylon. He dedicated himself to God's word (7:1-10). God worked through the Medo-Persian king and gave him permission to return to Jerusalem.

A. What was Ezra commissioned to do?

- I. He was granted special mandate by the King to return and put God's house in shape (7:14).
- II. He was to teach God's word (7:6,10)
- III. He was to lead in the daily sacrifices of the Jews (7:17).
- IV. He was to organize the resources in the house to provide for the needs of God's people (7:18-23).

B. How was Ezra to fulfill the commission given to him?

- I. He was to appoint leaders to help in the duties of the church (7:25).
- II. The leaders were to provide his personal/ministry needs (7:20-21).
- III. The leaders were to support what he would embark upon (7:23).
- IV. He was to discipline all who would oppose God's purposes (7:26).

C. How was Ezra to fulfill the commission given to him?

The response of the leaders was positive because

- I. The leaders acknowledged him and reported issues to him (9:1).
- II. They gave Ezra full support (10:4).
- III. The people encouraged him (10:4).

APPLICATION: How does this message apply to you? What does god expect you to do? Are you prepared to help in putting god's church into shape?

CONCLUSION: As a church and particularly as leaders, we should not impede God's work. We should rather support it.

MESSAGE 101

SATAN'S MAIN BAIT FOR CHRISTIANS/ LEADERS

INTRODUCTION: There is no difference between the worldliness in the body of Christ today and what pertained to the covenant community during some of the Bible periods before God punished them. The issue has become a huge challenge since some Christians particularly leaders have fallen to its bait.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17

Background: Satan/the devil is still trapping God's people as he did in the Garden of Eden. We need to understand how he operates so as to overcome.

A. Fundamental factors of mankind's fall:

- I. The main causes of the world's problems fall under these three areas; **lust for money, sex, and power**. They are "Satan's bait" to sin.
- II. They are the issues that Satan/the devil used to cause the fall of the first couple on earth (Gen. 3:6), and for that matter, humanity.
- III. They are evil and believers are warned against them (1 John 2:15-17).

B. The following are the characteristics of "Satan's bait":

- I. "delight to the eyes or lust of the eyes," is desire for money;
- II. "good for food or lust of the flesh;" is desire for sex;
 - I. "desirable to make one wise/boastful pride of life," is desire for power.

C. What are the results of fallen for Satan's bait: Leaders who have fallen are those who resort to dubious means to achieve their personal ambitions:

- I. "...The priests were teaching for a price, and [the] prophets were telling fortunes just for money" (Micah 3:11).
- II. Some used deception and lies (1 Kings 5:21-25), and prophesied through divinations/sorcery to get results (Num. 24:1; Jer. 23:13)
- III. Some corrupted God's word and made it of no effect (Jer. 23:17), and promised false hope, peace, and security, in order to be believed and in the process make some gains (Jer. 23:16; 29:11).

APPLICATION: Mention two lessons from this study and how you'll apply them.

CONCLUSION: All three main areas discussed must be considered seriously in addressing worldliness in the Church because these vices directly affect God's Church greatly.

MESSAGE 102

DESIRE FOR MONEY IS A CHALLENGE TO LEADERS (I)

INTRODUCTION: Worldliness has become a great challenge to every concerned Christian, and even Church leaders are spared its strong influence. It is important that the Church deals with it promptly. Let's consider the issue of money in this study.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17.

Background: It is quite easy to deduce from the two passages that "delight to the eyes or lust of the eyes," is equated to desire for money.

A. Biblical standards concerning money:

- I. In the Old Testament, the Priest, Levites, widows, orphans, the needy, and strangers, depended upon the offerings of those who could work (Num. 28-29; Lev. 1-21).
- II. The ministers also depended upon the gifts and donations, and some of them, especially the prophets oftentimes devised acceptable means to ensure their own survival, e.g., by having jobs to do (1 Sam. 9:7; 1 Kings 9:7; 13:3; 2 Kings 4:42; 14:3).
- III. Prophets Samuel, Elisha, etc, accepted that they were serving God and His people and not working for money (1 Kings 13:8; 1 Sam. 12:3-4).
- IV. Peter, Paul, and other apostles refused a cash offer (Acts 8:18-23; 2 Cor. 6:3-10). They never fell to the lure of money.

B. Fallen standards in Bible days: The solid standards laid by the men of God began to be corrupted. This is where lust for money began

- I. Some ministers compromised and copied false prophets of the nations who charged fees/expected rewards for service (Num. 22:7-22).
- II. Some of the ministers saw God's work as a source of income or as a personal property to profit from them (Amos 7:12-14).
- III. Some serve for monetary motives (Num. 22; 2 Kings 5:15ff).

APPLICATION: What lessons have you learned and how will you apply them?

CONCLUSION: The desire for money is one of the areas which every Christian, especially leaders must consider seriously in addressing worldliness. We can overcome this challenge and win the battle against the three forms of lust.

MESSAGE 103

DESIRE FOR MONEY IS A CHALLENGE TO LEADERS (II)

INTRODUCTION: In the previous study, we learned how worldliness has become a mountain in the path of many Christians. Thus we must agree to win the battle against worldly standards in the Church. Let us learn more lessons on the challenge of money today.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17

Background: Currently, the Church is engulfed in worldliness with regards to money. The two scriptural passages “delight to the eyes or lust of the eyes,” might easily be understood to mean “desire for money.” The causes include:

- A. **Get-rich-quick idea:** The desire for money and the get-rich-quick disease has attacked some Church leaders resulting in greed, materialism, etc.
- B. **Quick solution to problems:** Some Pastors and overnight ‘prophets’ are cashing in on unsuspecting believers in the hope of providing solutions to their problems.
- C. **Operation toil-and-enjoy:** Some ministers argue that they toiled alone to establish their ministries so it was now time for them to reap.
- D. **Fraudulent transactions:** Hardly a day passes without news of “prophets” A, B, or C, being involved in a fraudulent money business, or for embezzling church funds, having duped somebody for money, etc.
- E. **Exploiting all avenues for monetary benefits:** Some ministers just create special programs like anointing services, special all-night prayer sessions, long fasting periods, etc, to raise money so they can benefit from it.
- F. **Direct negotiation for money:** Some ministers even negotiate for what should be paid them before they honor invitations.
- G. **Prosperity and Materialism Gospel:** Sermons preached center around sowing money seed in order to reap abundant riches: houses, cars, etc.

APPLICATION: Upon assessing yourself in the light of the aforementioned challenges, are you guilty or innocent? How do you ensure escape from them?

CONCLUSION: Succumbing to temptations involving money and the desire to get rich at all cost are becoming major cause of worldliness leading to conflicts and Church breaks. All concerned Christians must be bold to confront these negativities in order to save the Church.

MESSAGE 104

SEXUAL DESIRES SHOULD BE CONTROLLED

INTRODUCTION: Sex is one of the issues which must be considered seriously in addressing any factors of worldliness. Any misunderstanding of the issue and wrong application can directly damage God's Church and bring the revered Name of God into disrepute. In this study, we will shift attention to the issue of sex in order to see how we can deal with it.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17

Background: Sex is not evil and God's standards for it are excellent. Though sex has been abused from time immemorial the situation is worst now. The Church is greatly affected. In the two passages "good for food" and "lust of the flesh;" clearly mean "desire for sex."

A. What does God want us to know about sex?

- I. God is very much concerned with our sexual life. He knows that the desire for the opposite sex, no doubt, is one of the most powerful drives in the body of man.
- II. He designed mating between man and woman both for pleasure and for procreation, and made excellent rules as to how we should go about it.
- III. God allowed sex only within the context of marriage after He had created a suitable partner for man and had commissioned them into the holy institution of marriage as husband and wife (Gen. 2:20-25). He hates fornication and adultery; they are sin.

B. Standards by true men of God: The standard that the true men of God set was very high. They were sexually moral.

- I. Elijah, a man of like passion (James 5:17), stayed with a widow for three and a half years, and yet did not defile himself with the widow and Elisha used to stay at a woman's house; no immoral report (1 Kings 4:8-37).
- II. Paul testified of his moral life and advised Timothy to copy (2 Tim. 2:1-2).
- III. Samuel lived in the Tabernacle with Eli's sons yet did not copy their negative life (1 Sam. 2:1ff).

APPLICATION: How does this apply to your life?

CONCLUSION: There is a need to understand issues relating to sex before its wrong application leads to regrettable results. Christians should be able to overcome lust for sex and be able to discern Satan's baits to trap us by it.

MESSAGE 105

SEXUAL DESIRE IS A CHALLENGE TO LEADERS (I)

INTRODUCTION: As discussed earlier, the drive to live by the standards of this world is still a big challenge to believers of God. No doubt, any abuse of sex by a member of the body of Christ directly damages God's Church and brings the revered Name of God into disrepute. Let us continue to learn lessons on sex.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17.

Background: There has been lots of misapplication of sex in our current period. The Church is faced with this challenge of sex. Our running phrase is still "good for food" or "lust of the flesh;" which are clearly understood to mean "desire for sex."

Fallen standards in Bible times: God's standards for sex are excellent. But due to the uncontrolled fleshly desires of humanity as a result of the fall (Gen. 3:1-6-7), the drive for sex has become one of the 'Achilles heels' of mankind.

Let us discuss the following events which are recorded in the Bible:

- A. The uncontrolled appetite for sex which caused the downfall of many, including leaders (Jer. 23:14; 29:20-23).
- B. The sons of Eli who engaged in illicit sex and brought disgrace to their ministry and were punished severely by God, (1 Sam. 2:12).
- C. The story of King David's illicit sex experience with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, and the negative repercussions are told in 1 Kings 11-15.
- D. Some prophets who were among the remnants in Jerusalem (before the second and third deportation to Babylon) who were guilty of sexual immorality (Jer. 23:13-15).
- E. Some prophets who were among the captives in Babylon also demonstrated sexual immorality (Jer. 29:20-23).

APPLICATION: What lessons can you derive from all the examples given above? What kind of sex life are you living before God now? Explain.

CONCLUSION: Worldly characteristics are great challenges that should be dealt with seriously. All Christians must unite to resist temptations to sex which no doubt is one of the major causes of conflicts/breaks in churches.

MESSAGE 106

SEXUAL DESIRE IS A CHALLENGE TO LEADERS (II)

INTRODUCTION: Due to the uncontrolled fleshly desires of humanity as a result of the fall (Gen. 3:1-6-7), the drive for sex has become rampant very grievous consequences. Worldliness has become a huge challenge to every concerned Christian, and if not dealt with can result in regrettable consequences.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17.

Background: Although God's standards for sex are excellent, the standards have fallen and in our current period the situation is worst. The Church is so much engulfed by issues relating to sexual abuses.

What lessons can we learn from the following report that:

- A. Gay priests in some denominations in the Western world are calling for legalization of gay marriages.
- B. In some places some priests have openly admitted to practicing sodomy on children and their denominations are now searching for ways to settle all the children who have suffered such abuses.
- C. Particularly in Ghana reports of sexual misconduct involving hitherto respected Christian ministers and church leaders keep flying every now and then. The air waves and the newspapers are filled with them.
- D. A lot of problems of Churches today are due to such sex factors; leaders who sexually abuse people's wives, various cases of rape and defilement, people who have engaged in adultery, or cases of fornication.
- E. Even in some Bible institutions; colleges/seminaries, there are confirmed and unconfirmed reports of sexual/immoral misconducts.

APPLICATION: How do we help to prevent such reports as above from happening to our local church? Look at your sex life and tell how this study applies to you. Are you setting credible example for others to follow? Explain.

CONCLUSION: Fallen standards and uncontrolled desire for sex has reached its peak now: Such acts lead to negativities like hatred, in-fighting, sometimes breaks, and in extreme cases murder, even in the Church (Jam. 1:1-3).

MESSAGE 107

POWER SHOULD BE USED APPROPRIATELY

INTRODUCTION: To the Christian, “worldliness” means “the pattern and standard of life found in the world.” Though God’s standards for the use of power are excellent, the Church in the past has experienced abuse of power and the situation is worst now. In this study, we will consider the standards that have been set with regards to the use of Power.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17.

Background: Worldliness is the totality of all the things that go on in the world; the lifestyle, thought-pattern, interest, expectation, etc. It is the kind of life in the world as opposed to the kind of life in the Kingdom of God. In the two passages above, “desirable to make one wise or the boastful pride of life,” is understood to mean “desire for power.” Scripture reveals the following:

A. God’s promotional plan:

- I. God has established hierarchy for the proper exercise of power in every human set up, especially in the Church.
- II. God Himself has set standards where He promotes and also demotes so there is nothing wrong when a person aspires for leadership.
- III. People who became God’s servants were prepared and raised by God to leadership positions in order to become more effective.

B. The challenge posed biblical leaders

People like Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Paul, etc., are a few that might be listed as typical examples of people that God raised to positions of transformation.

C. The challenge of leaders today

Because of the galaxy of leaders we have, some people think that they can only serve effectively when they are in leadership capacities.

APPLICATION: What lessons have you learned and how will you apply them?

CONCLUSION: God wants people entrusted with to use it well. Any wrong means to seek and apply power can directly damage God’s Church and lead to negative consequences.

MESSAGE 108

LUST FOR POWER IS A CHALLENGE TO LEADERS (I)

INTRODUCTION: During the Bible times, some people's aspirations for leadership were mischievous, and were usually executed through methods that conflict with God's standards. One of the reasons for pursuing power will be covered here.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 3:6; 2 Sam. 2:2-3:39; 1 John 2:15-17.

Background: God's standards for the use of power are excellent. But the Church is faced with issues regarding the proper use of power. From the two passages, it is understood that "desirable to make one wise or the boastful pride of life," is desire for power. One of the reasons is discussed below:

A. Desire for fame (Power struggle):

- II. One of the main reasons people seek power is uncontrolled desire for fame or recognition. This is why it is common nowadays to see people fighting for power and devising all sorts of inappropriate methods to undermine perceived enemies.
- III. Desire for fame leads to internal struggle, conflict of interest, opposition against the leadership, and sometimes disunity among members of the leadership, etc.

B. Biblical examples: Typical examples to consider include the following:

- I. Aaron and Miriam opposed Moses (Num. 12:1ff).
- II. Korah and group opposed Moses because of power (Num. 16:1ff).
- III. Prophet Micaiah was opposed by Prophet Zedekiah (1 Kings 22:1ff).
- IV. Prophet Jeremiah was opposed by Prophet Hananiah (Jer. 28).
- V. The disciples struggled for leadership (Matt. 18:1).

C. How is the situation today? Desire for power is worse now as a result of many reasons, some of which will be discussed in the next study.

APPLICATION: Are you, guilty or innocent of desire for power?

CONCLUSION: The abuse of power is one of the many reasons for the current conflicts in-fighting and split of God's Church. Temptations of power must be resisted by all Christians.

MESSAGE 109

LUST FOR POWER IS A CHALLENGE TO LEADERS (II)

INTRODUCTION: In the previous study we learned that some people's aspirations for leadership are mischievous, and are usually executed through worldly methods that conflict with God's standards. In this study we shall continue to learn lessons on the issue of lust for power.

MAIN TEXT: 2 Sam. 2:2-3:39; Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17.

Background: It can be deduced from the two passages that "desirable to make one wise or the boastful pride of life," is desire for power. God's standards for sex are excellent, but the situation is worst currently. The Church is engulfed by worldliness with regards to Power.

Reasons for fallen standards in our time include:

- A. Leadership insecurity:** A lot of leaders hold on to their post because of insecurity, i.e., "what will happen if I lose my job?" or "I have put in too much to let go," or for fear of exposure after leaving office, etc. As a result they take the Church as their property.
- B. Nepotism in the Church:** This is the system whereby people, particularly those in leadership positions, grant special favors to family members/ close associates by preferring their services to more qualified persons.
- C. Jealousy and Hatred:** David's rise and King Saul's growing jealousy recorded in the scriptures is a typical example. King Saul spent a lot of years chasing after David to destroy him and after King Saul's death there was tribal war in Israel (2 Sam. 2:2-3:39).
- D. Persecution of perceived enemies:** There are very many persecutions, suppressive, and oppressive treatments that some superiors or leaders mete out to their subordinates. "Every Kingdom divided against itself cannot stand."

APPLICATION: How does this study apply to your life? Are there areas that you feel guilty already? Discuss how you hope to overcome desire for power.

CONCLUSION: The issue of power must be considered seriously by all Christians. Power drunkenness has become the major cause of conflicts and breaks of churches. Lust for power should be dealt with seriously.

MESSAGE 110

LUST FOR POWER IS A CHALLENGE TO LEADERS (III)

INTRODUCTION: In the past time, some people's aspirations for leadership are mischievous, and are usually executed through worldly methods that conflicts with God's standards. In very recent times power struggles are common in the house of God. We will consider the cancer of lust for Power in this study.

MAIN TEXT: 2 Sam. 2:2-3:39; Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17

Background: Though God's standards for power are excellent the application now is different. As a result, the Church is engulfed by worldliness. In the two passages above "desirable to make one wise" and "the boastful pride of life," respectively might clearly be understood as desire for power.

How do the following contribute to the desire for/wrong pursuit of power?

- A. **Church ministry as means to an end:** There are lots of people, (e.g., school dropouts), who have only entered ministry because they see it as an option to make a living.
- B. **Lack of ministerial call:** Some people have God's call but no evidence of the requisite qualification and would never attempt to have it. Such people will obviously mix ministerial practices with worldliness.
- C. **Desire for benefits and privileges:** Some seek leadership because of desire for self-glory/personal ambitions, and interest in the benefits.
- D. **Desire for recognition:** Bloated ego/self confidence without appropriate qualification for service.
- E. **Undue pressure on people:** Unnecessary pressures from within and without, i.e., from groups like spouses, parents, friends (peers), followers (congregation), etc, might cause a lot of Christians to engage in all sorts of vices to the detriment of the Church.

APPLICATION: Mention two lessons from this study and how you'll apply them.

CONCLUSION: Any wrong means and application of Power can contribute to the negative practices around directly damage God's Church and bring the Name of God into disrepute.

MESSAGE 111

THERE IS PUNISHMENT FOR LEADERS/PEOPLE WHO FALL INTO LUST

INTRODUCTION: The drive to live by the standards of this world is still a big challenge to believers of God. Yielding to such temptation is disobedience to God and brings grievous results, yet a lot of Christians especially leaders have still not learned any lessons. Let us learn from how some of them fell.

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 Sam. 11-15.

Background: Satan used **lust for money, sex, and power** to cause the fall of the first couple on earth. Christians should beware (Gen. 3:6; 1 John 2:15-17).

Punishment for falling into worldliness: The scriptures prescribe punishment for people who fall into such sins. Let's look at some common examples:

- A. **For Priest/Prophets/Ministers:** Gehazi, is a typical example of how money could lure a person to destruction. (2 Kings 5:1-27).
- B. **For Kings and other leaders:** As a result of King David's illicit sex experience with Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, he suffered the following repercussions (2 Sam. 11-15):
 - I. David suffered Prophet Nathan's rebuke;
 - II. The son born from his affair with Bathsheba died as a result,
 - III. David's son, Amnon, raped his half sister, Tamar.
 - IV. As a follow up, Absalom murdered Amnon,
 - V. Absalom usurped David's throne and the King ran for his life,
 - VI. Absalom later engaged in sex orgies with David's own wives.
- C. **For a whole congregation of believers:** Twenty-four thousand (24,000) strong men of Israel died of a plague from God because they lusted after Moabite and Midianite women against the Sinaitic covenant stipulations (Num. 25:1-9; cf. Deut. 7:1-3).
- D. **For individuals:** Reuben, Jacob's first son, lost his entitlement to a double-portion of blessings because of uncontrolled sex (Gen. 49:3-4).

APPLICATION: How does this apply to you as an individual or leader? Explain.

CONCLUSION: A lot of troubles came upon David and other Bible characters and caused major problems to them. These vices can also destroy God's Church now and bring contempt to the name of God.

MESSAGE 112

7 PRINCIPLES TO HELP YOU MAKE IMPACT IN LIFE

INTRODUCTION: No matter your situation in life, if you do not give up but strive hard to improve your standard, you will end up climbing to the next level. Be prepared to consider some important areas of your life where you can build appropriate capacities and live them.

MAIN TEXT: 1Timothy 4:12; 2 Timothy 2; 20-21

Endeavor to observe these seven (7) principles in order to be successful:

- A. Accept God as a reality:** God is alive, ever present, and ready to help you in every situation. Always acknowledge Him and prayerfully rely on the leading of His Spirit.
- B. Hold on to your core values and principles.** Pursue, live, and never compromise on the issues that are important in life for your success. These include love, integrity, faithfulness, humility, etc.
- C. Live a disciplined and determined life:** Be consistent in all disciplines of life so that they become part of you. Learn from the biblical Ruth (1:18).
- D. Be Purpose-driven in life:** This means you have to stay focused on your main area of call, interest, or expertise. In order to make a difference, strive to be yourself and refrain from walking in other people's shadows.
- E. Plan and be well organized:** Failing to plan is planning to fail. Therefore, plan and live your life as directed by God, not as any person wants it. Set and follow priorities in order to establish a difference between your special life and somebody's ordinary living.
- F. Strive to build/expand your knowledge base:** Build capacity in major areas like Leadership, Applied/Technical skills, ICT, Economics, Law, etc.
- G. Allow Eternal desires to provide your daily energy:** Ensure that whatever you do is to bring glory to God and lead you onto eternal life.

APPLICATION: What do you want to achieve in life? Are you on your way to fulfilling your goal? What should you do to have the expected success?

CONCLUSION: By applying the principles above you can make impact in life.

PART VI

ISSUES OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE

MESSAGE 113

DEAL WITH OPPOSITION TO PROGRESS

INTRODUCTION: It took the leadership qualities of Nehemiah and his colleagues to unmask and resist the diabolic plans of those who paraded themselves as supporters of God's work but in reality were enemies. This is why true leaders of God's Church have to be knowledgeable of the activities of Satan and his agents who are constantly waging war against the Church.

MAINTEXT: Ephesians 4:11-16; Ezra 4:1-7; Neh. 2:20; 4:1-16; 5:1-5; 6:1-11

Who is an enemy of God? It is anybody who affects God's work negatively.

Let us discuss the following questions:

- A. What are some of the activities of Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, the Arab, which led to their being classified as God's enemies? (Neh. 2:19; 4:1-3, 4, 6)
- B. What are some negative attitudes that are affecting our church today? (Neh. 4:8.11; 6:1-2; 5:1-5; 6:9-10) In what way are these attitudes likely to affect the church?
- C. What did Nehemiah and his colleagues use to counter these enemy attacks? (Neh. 2:20; 4:9; 13-14; 6:11)
- D. By your attitude towards God's church and the projects and activities undertaken by the church, would you be called an enemy or a co-worker of God? How can we avoid being used by the devil as tools to negatively affect God's work?
- E. What divine weapons do we need as a church and as individuals in order to continue working for God in the face of Satan's attack?
- F. How should leaders react to/deal with those who initiate opposition in the Church in order to derail its growth and progress?

APPLICATION: Are you faced with any opposition in life? In what way(s) will this study help you to deal with such situation in the service of the Lord?

CONCLUSION: It is God's desire that we do not become his enemies rather we become His co-workers in order that we get His blessings (Neh. 4:7).

MESSAGE 114

DO NOT LIVE IN FEAR OF THE ENEMY

INTRODUCTION: This is one of the Psalms constructed in remembrance of the period of David's persecution and flight. The author, undoubtedly King David of Israel, realized how he is surrounded by his enemies. He then pleads with God for protection from their attacks.

MAIN TEXT: Psalm 56; 1 Samuel 21:10-15.

MEMORY VERSE: "...In God I trust; I will not be afraid..." (Ps. 56:4)

Background facts:

- Time: This Psalm was probably written between 1040 and 970BC
- Biblical Text: The background of this Psalm is likely 1 Sam. 21:10-15.

Historical facts:

- I. This was a lamentation from David when he found himself in the region of his enemies, the Philistines when he was fleeing from King Saul.
- II. The Philistines seized him and took him to Achish, the Philistine King.
- III. David feigned madness and was thus released.

APPLICATION:

- I. Do you reflect on God's protection provided you and all around you?
- II. Do you praise God for His daily deliverance to you from all the attacks of the enemy?

If you are in doubt of all that God does for you by way of protection, then you need to repent and plead with God for being ungrateful to Him.

This Psalm can be an individual or collective prayer to God for deliverance when in the midst of troubles or when enemies attack. It can also be used as a daily appreciation to God for the protection He continues to provide for us as a family, Church, or as a nation.

CONCLUSION: Christians are reminded by this Psalm that God's protection and deliverance for those who trust in Him is 100%. You only have to rely on it daily as you commit yourself to Him in prayers and meditation on His word.

MESSAGE 115

WHY ARE THE HOLY SPIRIT GIFTS IMPORTANT?

INTRODUCTION: The Holy Spirit gifts (or spiritual gifts) are believers' tools to fulfill the call to service. Without them, Christians cannot do any profitable service. The Lord Jesus Christ himself had to receive the Holy Spirit grace and engage the accompanying gifts for His ministry. This shows their importance.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Cor. 12:7, 21-26; Acts 4:32-37; 5:12-16; 10:38

Let us discuss the following issues to understand the importance of the gifts.

A. Reasons why the Spiritual gifts are important:

- I. God promised it to the Church? (Joel 2:28)
- II. Jesus confirmed the promise? (Acts 1:8)
- III. God fulfilled his promise concerning it? (Acts 2:33; Eph. 4:7, 8)
- IV. God wants us not to neglect them? (1 Tim. 4:14)
- V. God wants us to know their operation? (1 Cor. 12:1)
- VI. God wants us to desire/ask for them (1 Cor. 12:31; Luke 11:13).
- VII. God wants us to kindle them and use them? (2 Tim. 1:6)

B. The purpose of the Spiritual gifts includes the following:

- I. To perfect and equip God's saints/Church (Rom. 1:11; Eph. 4:12).
- II. For witnessing church growth and expansion (Acts 4:38; 5:12-4).
- III. For direction/instruction and knowledge (Prov. 29:18; Hos. 4:6).
- IV. For teaching, exhortation, counseling, edification, etc. (1 Cor. 14:3).
- V. For healing and deliverance (Prov. 11:14; 1 Cor. 12:10).

C. The operation of the spiritual gifts help in Spiritual Warfare:

- I. The gifts can give insight into the activities of angels and demons
- II. Having discernment helps the Christian in spiritual warfare
- III. Elisha (2 Kings 13:20, 21); Daniel (1:17); Paul (Acts 19:11, 12).

APPLICATION: Mention two new things you have learned and how you plan to apply them.

CONCLUSION: The church benefits when the gifts are in full operation. Lack of their operation will cause the Church sickness (as human body). Let us use the spiritual gifts as the Holy Spirit leads us.

MESSAGE 116

YOU NEED TO MATURE IN SPIRITUAL WARFARE

INTRODUCTION: The Christian is constantly in battle against the forces that pit themselves against Him. Some Christians are even ignorant of the existence of such a battle and its sources. We must know who our enemies are, and how to deal with them as we continue to grow as Christians till we mature in spiritual warfare. This is the subject matter of this lesson.

MAIN TEXT: 1 John. 4:4; 2 Cor. 10:4-5; Eph. 6:10-17.

A. The Christian warfare is a life-long process: Christians have enough weapons for engaging in spiritual warfare. Yes, never despair; victory is ours according to the following scriptures; Eph. 1:18, 19; Phil. 4:13; 1 John 4:4; 1 Cor. 10:13; 1 Pet. 5:8; James 4:7.

B. The Master helper: the Holy Spirit: Christians need to be filled with the Holy Spirit because we need strength to fight these areas:

- I. The flesh (Gal. 5:17-21; Rom. 7:19; 13:14; Gal. 5:16).
- II. The world (1 John 2:6; John 16:33; 1 John 2:15, 17).
- III. The devil (Ezek. 28:14; Isa. 14:12; 2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 2:2).

C. Prayer is important in spiritual warfare: Through prayer,

- I. We have our deepest conviction of sin and we repent.
- II. We break with our sinful past and bad habits (Rom. 7:15-25).
- III. We see the miracles of new birth, deliverance and healing.
- IV. We experience the peace of God as a result of His forgiveness.
- V. We receive revelation, guidance, directions, etc, from God.
- VI. We receive power to witness and testify to the truth (Acts 18).
- VII. We are released from captivity (e.g. witchcraft and occultism).
- VIII. We receive power to grow from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

APPLICATION: Where does spiritual warfare end? How does this study apply to you in your spiritual warfare as a Christian? Christians should know that there is no end to spiritual warfare. But the Christian grows through it.

CONCLUSION: Greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world. Despite the fierceness of those enemies and the subtlety of the tricks they enjoy, we know victory has been won for us on the cross. And we can trust the Lord Jesus to keep us going.

MESSAGE 117

WHO ARE THE ANGELS OF GOD?

INTRODUCTION: The role of angels in the life of believers today is as relevant as it was in the days of the Old Testament. It is therefore important that knowledge of their characteristics and the important role they play become known to the present day believer.

MAIN TEXT: Hebrews 1:14; Psalm 91: 11

Background: The word *angel* is from Greek – *angelos*, meaning messenger. Angels are supposed to be God's messengers. They are also called spirits (Heb. 1:7-14), sons of God (Job 1:6; 38:7; Ps. 89:6) stars of Heaven (Judges 5:20; Rev. 1:20; 9:1, 12:4).

Discuss the following characteristics of angels:

- A. They are supernatural heavenly (invisible) beings (Col. 1:16), a little higher in dignity than man (Ps. 88:4-5), and are uncountable to men (Rev. 5:11).
- B. They were created holy, probably before the earth was made (Gen 1:31; Jude 6; Ezek. 28:12-15; Job 38:4, 7; Ps. 148:2-5).
- C. Angels are not omniscient; all knowing (Matt. 24:36; 1 Peter 1:12); nor omnipotent; all powerful (Ps. 103:20, 2 Thess. 1:7; 2 Pet. 2:11); nor omnipresent, i.e., everywhere at the same time (Luke 1:26).
- D. Angels are organized into different services; messengers, guardians, warring, etc. There are also special positions within the angelic order e.g. Cherubim (Gen. 3:24); Seraphim (Isa. 6:2); Archangel (Jude 9); Chief prince (Dan. 10:13; Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16; Matt. 12:24-16).
- E. Angels might have names, e.g. Michael (Jude 9; Dan. 10:13); Gabriel (Dan. 8:16).
- F. Angels may appear as different creatures, and in different forms, sizes, numbers, etc.
- G. Angels also are supposed to keep and obey God's word (Rev. 22:8, 9; Ps. 103:20).

APPLICATION: Mention two ways your knowledge of angels will help your spiritual life.

CONCLUSION: Indeed, knowledge of angels and the role they play in the life of believers today is as relevant as it was in the biblical days.

MESSAGE 118

UNDERSTAND THE MINISTRY OF GOD'S ANGELS

INTRODUCTION: In the previous study we discussed that the role of angels in the life of believers today is as relevant as it was in the days of the Old Testament. Since angels are still ministering today, it is important that knowledge of what they are and the important role they play become known to the present day believer. Let us continue our studies on angels.

MAIN TEXT: Hebrews 1:14; Psalm 91:11

Background: Angels are God's messengers. They are also called spirits (Heb. 1:7-14), sons of God (Job 1:6; 38:7; Ps. 89:6) stars of Heaven (Judges 5:20; Rev. 1:20; 9:1; 12:4).

A. What roles do angels play? Angels feature in God's dealing with creation:

- I. Stand in God's presence (Matt 18:10), and worship God (Rev. 5:11ff).
- II. Bring God's message to people (Jud. 6:12; Gen. 21:17; Luke 1:11ff)
- III. Guide nations and fight for God's people (Dan.10:12-13, 20; 12:1)
- IV. Execute God's will to people/nations (Dan. 7:16, 10:5; Gen. 19:12ff).
- V. Save, lead, protect, and render various services to believers (Exod. 23:20; Dan. 3:28; Ps. 91:11; Matt. 4:11; Acts 5:19, 8:26; Heb. 1:4), and they strengthen God's people and encourage them (Luke 22:43)
- VI. Are the guardians of God's churches (Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18)
- VII. Will accompany Jesus in the Second Coming (Jude 14, 15)

B. What are the difference between the work of the Holy Spirit and Angels?

Are Angels the same as the Holy Spirit?

- I. While the Holy Spirit dwells in a Christian, angels do not (John 14:17)
- II. The Holy Spirit leads man from within; angels lead man from without.
- III. The Holy Spirit knows the mind of God but angels do not (Rom. 8:27)
- IV. The Holy Spirit is unlimited in power/knowledge/ presence.

APPLICATION: Explain two ways your understanding of angels will help you.

CONCLUSION: Angels are still serving God's purposes today. Therefore, knowledge of their role in the life of believers today is as relevant as it was in the days of the Bible days.

MESSAGE 119

WHO ARE FALLEN ANGELS?

INTRODUCTION: The Bible says that believers are not struggling against flesh and blood. Indeed, the main enemies of believers are Satan and the host of devils with whom he has set a kingdom. Knowledge of their characteristics and the role they play is important to the present day believer. We need to study about them in this message.

MAIN TEXT: Eph. 6:10-12; Luke 10:18-20; Jam. 4:1-4; 1 Pet. 4:1-4; Gal. 5:17

Who are Satan and fallen angels? Major characteristics of them and how they fell from their exalted position is as follows:

- A. There was an angel of God called Lucifer who was in the Garden of Eden as the anointed cherub (Ezek. 28:12-15). But pride and lust for power were found in him, and he wanted to set a rival throne and be like God (Isaiah 14:12-5; Ezek. 28:16ff).
- B. War broke up in Heaven where Lucifer and a third of heaven's host were defeated and cast out to the earth (Rev. 12:4, 7-8, 19; Luke 10:18).
- C. It is likely Satan and demons fell after the Garden of Eden was made; all God created on the earth in the beginning was perfect (Gen. 1:31; 2:1-3).
- D. It is also likely Lucifer and his host also fell from heaven before the fall of man for it was Satan who "used the serpent" to deceive man (Gen. 3:1). After Satan fell to the earth, he became the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4), chief prince over principalities and powers (Luke 10:19; Eph. 6:22).
- E. Satan established his kingdom and appointed some of the demons to positions such as rulers/princes (Dan. 10:13, 20-21; Luke 11:15). But some of the fallen angels are kept in chains awaiting eternal destruction.
- F. But all fallen angels will be destroyed finally in the Lake of fire (1 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10).

APPLICATION: How can the believer stop Satan's operation/overcome them?

CONCLUSION: Knowledge of Satan and demons and the role they play against believers is very important. With knowledge believers can overcome them.

MESSAGE 120

HOW DO FALLEN ANGELS OPERATE IN THE WORLD (I)

INTRODUCTION: In the previous message, we studied how Satan was created the anointed cherub, full of beauty, full of wisdom, but fell. We also saw that the life of a believer is that of a constant battle against seen and unseen enemies whose main aim is to prevent believers from fulfilling God's perfect plan. In this message we will learn of them and their activities.

MAIN TEXT: Ephesians 6:10-12; Luke 10:18-20; John 10:10; 1 Chron. 21:1-4.

- A. The present activities of Satan and demons:** Satan and the demons have been on the offensive to make man to also fall from God's eternal plan. Satan's main aim include the following:
- I. To destroy the work of God in humanity and to deceive us into disobeying God (1 Thess. 2:18; Dan. 10:13; Gen. 3:13).
 - II. To win glory and worship for himself (Luke 4:6-7; Isaiah 14:12).
 - III. To finally bring us into his fate and to let us lose our position, i.e., to bring us into destruction (Gen. 3:4, 5; Ps. 8:5; Matt. 25:36).
 - IV. But other angels who fell from that holy position tend to oppose God (Jude 6; Ezek. 28:12-15; Isa. 14:12-15; 2 Pet. 2:4; Rev. 12:14, 7-9).
- B. Satan and his fallen angels are organized to achieve the following:**
- I. To demand worship and prevent service to God (Luke 4:8; Rom. 8:38).
 - II. To be a force to oppose God's angels and humanity (Dan. 10:12-13).
 - III. Tempting and influence people's mind to sin, and block God's blessings through hardness of heart, double-mindedness, doubt, etc. (Luke 22:3; Matt. 4:3; John 13:27).
 - IV. To set up a false religion (twisted/false doctrine) that will compete with Christ for lost souls (1 Tim. 4:1, 2; 2 Cor. 11:14; 2 Thess. 2:2).
 - V. Inflict people with disease, poverty, etc. (Luke 13:16; Matt. 9:32)
 - VI. Cause accidents, war, sickness, earthquakes, etc. (Job 1:12ff, 19; 2:7).

APPLICATION: How has this study helped your understanding of the many negative occurrences: a) in churches b) in families c) in the world? Recommend steps in dealing with these negativities.

CONCLUSION: Believers have to be extra careful of the activities of Satan so that the person does not fall into any of the traps discussed above. Every Christian should be cautious of these three traps of the devil.

MESSAGE 121

HOW DO FALLEN ANGELS OPERATE IN THE WORLD (II)

INTRODUCTION: In our last study we discussed some vital issues about the main enemy of the Christian, Satan. We saw that after his fall he has been on the offensive to make man to also fall from God's eternal plan. In this lesson we will see some of Satan's ways to achieve his purposes of destroying God's eternal plan of using the human body as His temple.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Corinthians 10:19-21; 9:17-21.

Background: Satan and host are on the offensive to destroy the human body which is God's eternal temple. Christians must resist them (1 Sam. 16:14).

Means by which demons torment human bodies:

- A. Through ancestral practices, idolatry, oppression of the mind, through food, drinks, etc, through excessive grief, fear, shock, lust, and through general spiritual weakness and contact with the demon possessed e.g. spirit of fornication/lust (Luke 11:24:26; 22:3).
- B. Through initiations into witchcraft, occultism, etc. (Luke 11:26), and food offered to idols which the evil spirit possess (1 Cor. 10:19-21; 9:17-21).
- C. Through trials/bodily marks which brought temptation, demonic deliverance (the materials we introduce into the body are usually possessed (Deut. 18:9-14).
- D. Through contacts with rings/turbans, bracelets, etc, which are usually from demonic sources/possessed by them (Deut. 7:26; 18:9-14).
- E. Through concoctions, holy waters, incense, etc, which are possessed by spirits and are used by some demon-influenced churches, and practitioners of occultism.
- F. To act through agents to frustrate and tempt believers.
- G. To destroy bodies through our own sins, i.e., pride disowning God's spirit, polluting our body with sin which will make God's spirit leave us (Matt. 9:32ff; 8:28; Luke 22:3; 11:24ff; 1 Sam. 16:14; Ps. 57:10-11).

APPLICATION: In what ways have you benefitted from Satan's activities.

CONCLUSION: We have to be extra careful of the activities of Satan so that the person does not fall into any of the traps discussed above. Through our knowledge of them, their kingdom and operations, we can overcome them.

MESSAGE 122

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SATAN IN TEMPTATIONS?

INTRODUCTION: If Satan, and his host of demons, cannot bring you to doubt your faith in God, they will often concentrate on some area of weakness in order to put some burden on you. It is important to remember that you cannot live victoriously in your own strength, except with God. Believers need to be able to overcome every move of the devils from this study.

MAIN TEXT: James 1:1ff; 1 Corinthians 10:13

MEMORY VERSE: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ lives in me: and of life which I now live: in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who lived in me and gave himself for me” (Gal. 2:20).

Discuss the following questions:

- A. What is the name given to Satan in Matthew 4:3? Why is he called your enemy? (1 Peter 5:8)
- B. What are the three main avenues of temptation? (1 John 2:16). What is the main cause of defeat to temptation (James 1:14, 15)?
- C. What should we do to stay from temptation (Matt. 4:3-4; 26:41)?
- D. Who gives Christians the strength to overcome temptations? How can we make God’s weapons available to fight temptation? (Ps. 119:9, 11)
- E. Realizing the stages to sin and death, how can the child of God keep him or herself from sin? (Prov. 4:23; Col. 3:1-5)
- F. List three aspects of assurance of victory over temptation that you know. What guarantee is there that you could endure any temptation? (1 Cor. 10:13)

APPLICATION: Recall some of the events that lead you to sin. How will the lessons learned help you to raise a fellow Christian who has fallen into sin?

CONCLUSION: If we will put to death our evil desires and pray for holiness, we shall overcome every temptation. Let us learn to take our eyes off our weakness and put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

MESSAGE 123

DEVICE STRATEGIES TO COUNTER SATAN'S ATTACKS

INTRODUCTION: There was a major breakthrough in the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem when the Israelites moved on seriously to build the wall. This breakthrough was how Nehemiah led them to counter Satan's attack of the progress of God's work. Let us study some of the strategies and how we can also apply them to overcome the enemy.

STUDY TEXT: Nehemiah 5 and 6.

MEMORY VERSE: "Be self controlled and alert. Your enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour" (1 Pet. 5:8).

Background: To overcome the devil's attacks, there is a need to evolve strategies.

Discuss the following questions from the passage:

- A. What types of oppositions are outlined in chapters 5:1-5; 6:2, 6-7, 10, and who were the targets of these oppositions?
- B. At what stage of work did Nehemiah the returnees face the various oppositions mentioned and what effects did the enemy have on the wall building front?
- C. Outline some of the ways that Nehemiah adopted to combat the various oppositions; taking note of the ways in which he tackled each type of opposition (chapter 5:6-13; 6:3-11).
- D. Outline some of the strategies that propelled Nehemiah and the Israelites unto victory. What are the bases for Nehemiah's confidence against the enemies?
- E. Comment on the passage in chapter 6:17-19 and find out how such a thing can affect your Church presently. How can this be avoided?

APPLICATION: Is it possible that our local Churches can face spiritual opposition? Mention some of them and the practical ways of combating them.

CONCLUSION: So far as believers remain in the flesh, the devil will keep striking. Let us always remain in the spirit. The more battles we win the less strong Satan becomes. God is ready to fight for us when we do not give up.

MESSAGE 124

UNDERSTAND BIBLICAL DELIVERANCE

INTRODUCTION: The Bible seeks to let every believer enjoy total deliverance, that is, in body, soul, and spirit. Such a person becomes totally delivered (Acts 2:40). God's ministers are first to be fully delivered, i.e., completely saved, so that they can also save and deliver others. Deliverance is an integral part of the Christian ministry and needs to be understood.

MAIN TEXT: Luke 8:2; Acts 16:16-18; 19:11-16

- A. **Definition of Deliverance:** It is the state of being saved from temporal or eternal danger. Since no man possesses the power to deliver and only God does, deliverance is part of salvation. The ministry of true deliverance should destroy the works of Satan and his demons and not man.
- B. **Basis of true deliverance:** The Lord Jesus Christ himself sees the need for deliverance for humanity. Thus, biblical deliverance is based upon the finished work of the Lord on the cross. The cross is the symbol of deliverance from God; no cross no deliverance. But the believer can fall, but this does not mean the one cannot be saved; such a person only needs deliverance.
- C. **Points to know about Jesus' deliverance approach**
 - I. Deliverance by the Lord Jesus Christ was usually done openly. The ministering of deliverance by Jesus brought realities, separating God's from that of Satan.
 - II. The Lord Jesus never accepted any testimony of demons; therefore we also should never entertain their testimony (Mark 3:11; Acts 16).
 - III. Jesus allowed demons to speak or to give testimony (for example, Jesus asked the demon possessed, their number (Mark 5:6-13; 9:20).
 - IV. Jesus always broke the point of contact of the demons. If this is not done, the demons cannot be overpowered and cast away.

APPLICATION: Should deliverance as the Lord Jesus Christ practiced in His earthly ministry be encouraged in the Church today? Explain.

CONCLUSION: It is better to ensure total deliverance of the body, soul and spirit, than to remain in bondage. The Lord Jesus Himself called for the afflicted to be brought to Him for them to be delivered from demons.

MESSAGE 125

ENJOY CONTINUOUS BIBLICAL DELIVERANCE

INTRODUCTION: The demonic kingdom, headed by Satan can be cast from the life of man, but cannot be destroyed by prayer. In fact, God has time appointed for their destruction. It was part of Jesus' ministry. It is important that the believer receives total deliverance from all satanic bondages.

MAIN TEXT: Luke 8:2; Acts 16:16-18; 19:11-16

Background: It is God's will that every man of God, be filled to be able to bring deliverance to man. Biblical deliverance should be enjoyed by all Christians.

A. Sources of the power for deliverance: These include the following:

- I. **The Word of God** (Psalm 107:20): Deliverance becomes very effective where there is the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The use of handkerchiefs, aprons, oils, etc, should be understood as symbols.
- II. **The Name of Jesus** (Mark 16:16): In Jesus' ministry, he did not always lay hands; sometimes he just spoke the word of power. He is full of power and so is His name.
- III. **The blood of Jesus:** Using the blood/power of the cross (Rev. 12:11).

B. The Practice of deliverance:

- I. The minister has to discern to know the truth. It takes the spirit of God to discern the truth (Acts 16:16-18).
- II. The minister should be well equipped and well sanctified, so that Satan and the demons do not have anything against him (Acts 19:11-16).
- III. The minister should always be mindful that Jesus never sends any minister without giving the one the authority to do the work.

APPLICATION: As God's ministers or believers, how must we ensure our total deliverance in order to be in a position to also minister deliverance to others?

CONCLUSION: We should not rush to lay hand or pray for deliverance from demons. We must be fully prepared first. Any believer can be overpowered by the devil except he enjoys continuous deliverance through knowledge of God's word and also by the Holy Spirit.

PART VII

**BE
INSPIRED
FOR
VICTORY
ALL-YEAR ROUND**

MESSAGE 126

YOUR TIME FOR TRANSFORMATION IS NOW

INTRODUCTION: There is time for everything (Eccles. 3:1ff). So also a time to begin afresh comes the way of every person. But this does not happen automatically. Why? The world may have some answers through human philosophy, but only God who has the right answer.

MAIN TEXT: Jeremiah 18: 1-16; Rev. 21: 5; Jer. 29:8-11; Matt. 11:28-29

Historical background: Jeremiah became a prophet in 627-587 BC (40yrs). He preached from King Josiah-Zedekiah. In one of his messages, God asked the prophet to tell Israel to trust Him for positive change.

Body of the message: God says, “You are in His hands like clay in the hands of the potter.” If you want to experience transformation in life, trust God for it.

A. How does God transform clay: Clay has fine particles and can hold water, but it has less humus, air, and soil organisms. Thus, it is not a good soil for plant life. However, clay has another purpose; it is used in making ceramic pots. This can be achieved through transformation (Rom. 12:2). God’s message to Jeremiah in the Potter’s house reveals transformation from clay soil to a ceramic pot. Let us consider the process:

- I. There is collection of the raw soil and sieving from stones.
- II. There is grinding, and mixing with water.
- III. There is molding of the softened clay into the desired shape of a pot
- IV. There is baking in fire and regular checking until the pot is well cooked,
- V. Then there is decoration of the pot, pricing, and marketing.

B. How does this transformation mean to a Christian? All believers need change (Prov. 12: 27), and this happens when we trust God’s promises:

- I. A new beginning (Jer. 18: 6).
- II. A new state, new function, role, purpose (Rom. 12:1; 2 Tim. 2:8).
- III. A new value, price (Prov. 12:27).

APPLICATION: In which area of your life are you expecting transformation? What should you do to allow God to mould you to fit His purposes?

CONCLUSION: God can remold any person to experience a change of state and purpose (Tim. 2: 20). Hold unto God till He fulfils His plan for your life.

MESSAGE 127

YOU CAN GO BEYOND THE LIMITS

INTRODUCTION: Many people have tried to use their human limitations and weaknesses as excuses to run from God's call. Moses, Gideon, Saul, David (by his father), Queen Esther, Jeremiah, etc, are few in the roll call. The disciples of the Lord were different because they were prepared to go beyond the limits.

MAIN TEXT: Acts 4:13; Genesis 15:4-6; Romans 4:18-20.

Background: In Acts 4:13, the word used for the disciples was "ordinary people," which also means "idiots," "untrained," one who is quite ignorant.

Question: How did the Apostles who were hitherto unschooled become so transformed that they were able to oppose learned 'gurus' of their day? The solutions are in the following discussion:

- A. **Turn your eyes from your limitations** (vs. 5a): The more you look at your present limitations, the more you belittle God's power to transform you.
- B. **Set your eyes on the divine invitation:** God is inviting you to greater heights, to a level where impossibilities become possibilities. Respond!
- C. **Identify your barriers:** The Apostles were initially unschooled and decided not to remain in that limitation. They allowed the Lord to train them till they were able to do what hitherto they could not.
- D. **Be prepared to tackle your challenges.** The disciples endured the Lord's training till they overcame their limitation. Later, they preached boldly, performed miracles, and an illiterate like Peter wrote two books.
- E. **Cling to your faith and practice it.** The Hebrew, '*āman*,' means "to believe, to hold firm, to endure, to trust" (Gen. 15:6). Abraham had faith that God can transform him from "no child to a nation," so he endured, practiced, and had results (Rom. 4:18-20).

APPLICATION: If you agree that it is time to go beyond your limits, what steps have you identified in order to help you overcome your limitations? Explain.

CONCLUSION: God is inviting you to a walk that will transform you from an ordinary to the extraordinary person. You need to come out from your small enclosure to God's Hall of Fame. Just fix your eyes there; God is able to do it.

MESSAGE 128

YOU CAN EXPERIENCE GOD'S FAVOR GREATLY

INTRODUCTION: Prophet Isaiah predicted a period when God's favor would be experienced greatly, and the Lord Jesus referred to His period onwards as the fulfillment of God's favor. Every believer knows God's favor is important. But if you want to enjoy it this study will help you realize it.

MAIN TEXT: Luke 4:14-21; Isaiah 61: 1-2; Luke 1:28; Ephesians 1:6.

What is favor? The Hebrew word transliterated as *rosa* or *rason* means "to have the favor, to be pleased with, to be accepted with delight." The root word in the NT, *charitoo*, is translated "charisma," also means to receive God's favor, grace, kindness, or to be loved. Favor denotes the reaction of a superior to an inferior; it is God's special dealings with man. To enjoy God's favor, you need to accept some facts:

- A. **It is a prophetic message:** In Isaiah 61:1-2, the prophet predicted the coming year of God's favor. God can do what He says (Num. 23:19).
- B. **The promise is fulfilled already:** Under the influence of God's Spirit, the Lord Jesus declared that we are in the period of God's favor; the year has come (Luke 4:14-21).
- C. **The time to experience it is now:** God promises a special "Spirit of the Lord" that all who will receive Jesus will have. Favor comes with this Spirit; if you have received the Spirit you have the favor of God as well.
- D. **There should be evidence of God's favor:**
 - I. God's favor on Joseph was accompanied by breakthrough: delivered him from harm, made him succeed in Potiphar's house (Gen. 39:2-4), and made him great, next to Pharaoh (Gen. 37:28; 39:5-9, 21).
 - II. God's favor upon the Church brings growth, peace, etc. (Acts 2:46-47).
- E. **Believe and expect it:** Since we are in the Year of our Lord, what is required after this discussion is to believe, earnestly desire, and seek it. We have to experience **God's favor**.

APPLICATION: What should you do to experience God's favor greatly?

CONCLUSION: When God's favor is on you, both God and people will be delighted in you. God's favor will make you a blessing to others.

MESSAGE 129

IT IS TIME TO ARISE AND SHINE

INTRODUCTION: Any time God issues a command there are conditions as well as blessings. Obedience to the conditions leads to the blessings while disobedience leads otherwise. Just like the days of Prophet Isaiah, God's command is sounding loudly but who will respond?

MAIN TEXT: Isaiah 60:1; Ephesians 5:13-14; Psalm 119:105, 130

Background: Light is a sensation that makes what is hidden to be seen; it brings knowledge, insight, revelation, etc. The tone of the message shows that God has already directed or is about to direct His light on you.

- A. Why is it necessary to arise and shine?** It is necessary because:
- I. There is darkness on the people around; no one can shine when there is no light.
 - II. You can shine, "your light has come," and others are looking up to you.
- B. What are the conditions for fulfillment?** Between the promises and fulfillment, one needs to acknowledge, and satisfy the ff. conditions:
- I. **There is cost involved:** There is no prize without a price; no crown without a cost. Be prepared to suffer for the sake of God's work. To shine requires lots of polishing.
 - II. **It needs commitment:** Give diligence to knowledge of God's word and prayer. Neglect not God's gift in you (1 Tim. 4:12; 6:20).
 - III. **Purity is necessary:** Do not create any opportunity for people to despise you. Be careful of filthy life or greediness. Do not let anyone doubt God's grace upon you. Behave yourself in God's house.
- C. What should be the believer's response:** To "arise and shine" is a command. It calls for a response to a "time of service that will lead to honor or exaltation, and is definitely an occasion for blessing, etc.
- I. Light brings illumination which in turn leads to knowledge. Appropriate use of knowledge leads to achievement and greatness.
 - II. When people see what God has done, His glory begins to show in you.

APPLICATION: What steps should you take to make you shine for God? How will this study help you to arise and shine for the Lord?

CONCLUSION: God is prepared to make you great that is why He has issued the command; Arise and shine! You cannot afford to waste this opportunity to shine for God. Arise and begin to take steps that will make you shine for God.

MESSAGE 130

IT IS TIME TO FUIFILL YOUR DESTINY

INTRODUCTION: A lot of Bible characters were faced with uncertainties until they met God. Such encounters were all that they needed to make them fulfill their destinies. Each and every believer is likely to have a similar encounter with God. And when it happens, “God will not leave you until He fulfills all His perfect plans concerning your life.”

MAIN TEXT: Genesis 28:10-22; Jeremiah 29:10-12; 2 Corinthians 8:9.

MEMORY VERSE: “...For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future...” (Jer. 29:11).

Background: God’s plan is that you enjoy a successful and hopeful future.

Below are the major areas of the study for consideration:

A. Important questions that need to be answered:

- I. What is destiny and what do you see as God’s destiny for your life?
- II. Are you on the road to fulfilling God’s destiny for you?
- III. If yes, what is left to be done as far as you are concerned? If no, what can you do to fulfill your destiny?

B. Important issues to take note of:

- I. Take note of God’s promises to Jacob after the dream/vision,
- II. Take note of Jacob’s realization of God’s good plans for his life,
- III. Identify with Jacob’s commitment to live for God throughout his life.

C. What steps should you follow to fulfill your destiny?

- I. Do a thorough self examination; rededicate your life to God?
- II. Make every effort to strengthen your relationship with God
- III. Seek God’s plan for your life by wrestling in prayer,
- IV. Trust God’s word, and follow a planned life.
- V. Fulfill your financial obligations to God, and be open to giving.

APPLICATION: How do you act on God’s word to have your destiny fulfilled?

CONCLUSION: God is ready to change your destiny and make you great. This is your opportunity to hold onto God. This might be your time of fulfillment.

MESSAGE 131

DEAL WITH YOUR LIFE'S MOUNTAINS NOW

INTRODUCTION: Life is full of challenges, and every individual is likely to face some challenges at one point or the other. These challenges appear like mountains that one has to climb. If a person does not give up but manages to climb to the top, everything else comes under him/her.

MAIN TEXT: Zechariah 4:6; Isaiah 40:4-5.

Background: Zerubbabel led the first group of Jews to return from Babylonian captivity to build the temple of God in Jerusalem. But they had problem with the building because there was opposition which became like “mountain” before Zerubbabel. He almost gave up. But God’s word came through Prophet Zechariah that “the mountain shall become level ground.”

The following are major areas of the message that should be understood:

A. What are mountains?

- I. They are usually made of rocks at the core and covered by soil.
- II. They project up on smooth surface and make the surfaces rough.
- III. They are hard to overcome by travelers, road contractors, etc.

B. What does God say about the mountains of life?

- I. Mountains of life might stand for problems, hard issues to overcome.
- II. God by Zechariah said to Zerubbabel, “...Not by might...”
- III. It is only by the Spirit of God that the mountains shall be destroyed.
- IV. Isaiah said every mountain will become a plain ground (Isa. 40:4ff).
- V. God’s glory will surely be revealed (Isa. 40:4-5).

C. What needs to be done in order to overcome life mountain(s)?

- I. To overcome and reach the top of life, there is the need to persevere.
- II. There is the need for God’s spirit to break down any life’s mountain.

APPLICATION: What inspiration have you received to help you overcome obstacles in life?

CONCLUSION: As believers, God wants us to know that no matter what the life’s mountains are, they are surmountable. Surely every mountain shall give way for God’s glory to be revealed. God is ready now, but you have to play a part to make it happen. Are you ready?

MESSAGE 132

NEVER ALLOW YOUR FAITH TO FAIL

INTRODUCTION: To most people faith is usually expressed in a deity, that is, Supreme Being or a god, in order to enjoy help, peace, receive blessing for now, comfort and hope for future, etc. But such faith can fail when expectations fail. Faith in God is not only accepting Jesus as the Living Savior but also walking with Him in obedience and submitting to His will.

MAIN TEXT: Prov. 24:10-12; Num. 14:1ff; Luke 7:50; James 5:8; Eph 6:10-18

Background: Jesus Christ is the Eternal Son of God, the God-man, Second Adam, and the One who died in mankind's stead to make for our possible justification with God, the adoption into the family of God, our sanctification, and our glorification in the end.

Definition of Faith: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for...Without faith it is impossible to please God..." (Heb.11:6).

A. Faith is obtained through the following:

- I. Hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:27).
- II. Experiencing God based on a vision from Him (Abraham's experience).
- III. One's personal encounter with God (Paul on the road to Damascus).
- IV. Receiving real testimony of what He has done or can do (Mark 16:16).

B. Where to put your Faith: Faith is trusting in:

- I. The Lord and the redemptive work accomplished at Calvary
- II. The truth in the teaching of Jesus, i.e., the scriptures.
- III. Total submission to Jesus and accepting to live as a witness for Him

C. How does the believer affirm his/her faith?

- I. Regular confession of one's faith in the Lord renews his/her strength.
- II. Being filled and led constantly by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

APPLICATION: How are you involved in strengthening your faith in the Lord so that you do not become like Ten of the Twelve spies whose faith failed them?

CONCLUSION: The faith that leads one to accept the Lord needs to be confessed every moment in order to make the believer more convinced and accountable for his/her decision. Our faith should never fail us.

MESSAGE 133

LET YOUR FAITH GROW IN STRENGTH

INTRODUCTION: To God, having faith in Him is to accept Him as Living, Supreme one and submitting to His will. Faith has a foundation and to most people faith is usually expressed in a deity; the Supreme Being or something that can bring: help, receive comfort, hope for future, blessing for now, etc.

MAIN TEXT: Prov. 24:10-12; Mark 16:16; Luke 7:50; James 5:8; Eph. 6:10-18.

MEMORY VERSE: Faith is the substance of things hoped for...Without faith it is impossible to please God... (Heb.11:6).

Background: Upon accepting Jesus Christ as the Eternal Son of God, it is important to strengthen our faith in God until our glorification.

A. Why is it important to strengthen our faith? The reasons include the ff:

- I. Faith is the basis of a believer's life in Christ (Mark 16:16; Luke 7:50).
- II. All issues of our redemption are built on faith; the Holy Spirit's presence, justification (Rom. 3:28); sanctification (Acts 26:18); and glorification.
- III. If our faith is weak our relationship with God is drastically affected; if it is strengthened our position in the Lord is secured.

B. How does the believer strengthen his/her faith?

- I. Faith is expressed in the form of action or a step taken. If faith is not accompanied by action or works it is no more a living faith but knowledge or dead faith (James 5:17; Gal. 5:22).
- II. Faith requires a desire for the believer to draw closer to the deity in order to know more about the deity. Faith grows/increases in magnitude or is strengthened by experience (Luke 17:5).

APPLICATION: In what way(s) are you involved in the faith-growth process?
How can you lift up your level of faith in God or His word?

CONCLUSION: Faith is a virtue that requires effort to make it grow into maturity. Like a mustard seed, faith begins as a small spark and grows into a great and unquenchable fire. A believer's maturity is shown by the person's level in the midst of challenging circumstances.

MESSAGE 134

DEMONSTRATE YOUR FAITH BY WORKS

INTRODUCTION: Faith is one of the most important attributes of God. It is a virtue that every believer who wants to succeed in God needs. The Bible says that without faith it is impossible to please God. But faith is only revealed through a deed/work. This message is to help believers appreciate the demonstration of our faith.

MAIN TEXT: Numbers 13: 26-32; 1 Samuel 17:4-11, 32-45

Background: Faith is nothing except it is backed by works. Demonstrating a “working of faith” is where a believer does things in response to professed and confessed faith.

A. Kinds of faith: The following are the kinds of faith revealed in the life of David, especially during his encounter with Goliath. They are typical examples of “working faith.”

- I. Extraordinary faith: It is the immovable faith in God (1 Sam. 17:32ff).
- II. Risking faith: This type looks beyond the situation (1 Sam. 17:34)
- III. Experienced faith: This sees what God did previously (1 Sam. 17:37).
- IV. Expectant faith: This type expects new things (1 Sam. 17:46-47).
- V. Unyielding faith: This does not fail during opposition (1 Sam. 17:26ff).

B. How do we also demonstrate working faith?

- I. Do not go with the majority because they are not always right. Always be prepared to stand upon God’s word and not the words of men (Num. 14:6-30; 1 Sam. 17:32).
- II. Do not let the situation be magnified above what God can do, e.g., “...The battle is the Lords” (1 Sam. 17:47; Exod. 14:14; Jer. 32:27).
- III. Never fear to take risk or to adventure because God is an adventurous God; “Risk is a faith-step to every Christian” (1 Sam. 17:37).
- IV. Step forward; a journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step; e.g., Caleb said, “Let us go quickly...” (Num. 13:30-32); David moved forward quickly towards the enemy (1 Sam. 17:48).

APPLICATION: Is your faith able to let you stand and do exploits or not? How?

CONCLUSION: If we need results, we have to demonstrate a working faith towards God. David is a typical example of one whose faith was workable.

MESSAGE 135

GOD EXPECTS WHOLE-HEARTED DEVOTION FROM YOU

INTRODUCTION: To be devoted is to be consecrated for a special purpose. That is, separated for special use, or dedicated for sacred purposes. But what does it mean to show a whole-hearted devotion to God? This study explains.

MAIN TEXT: Num. 14:24; Deut. 6:4; 1 Chron. 29:19; 2 Kings 20:3

Background: The **heart** is the seat of devotion. It is the innermost centre that shows the natural condition of man (Esther 7:5; 1 Cor. 7:37; Rom. 6:17). It is the centre of bodily life, the spiritual nature of man. The heart is the seat of love (1 Tim. 1:5). It is the origin of all thought (Matt. 12:34; Mark 7:21)

Major areas of the discussion:

A. What does whole – hearted devotion to God mean?

It is where one is committed to God and is ready to act like the following:

- I. Risk his/her life for God like David did (Num. 13:31).
- II. Sacrifice his/her life for God like John the Baptist did (Mark 8:34-35).

B. Why the need for whole – hearted devotion to God?

- I. It is commanded by God.
- II. It is required for His blessing (1 Chron. 28:8-10; 29:19)
- III. God hates hypocrites, but helps His devotees (Isa. 29:13).

C. What is the result of whole – hearted devotion to God?

- I. God delights in people who serve Him wholeheartedly (Josh. 14:24).
- II. God will honor such people with Eternal crown in the end (Neh. 13)

APPLICATION: How do you become whole-heartedly devoted to God?

CONCLUSION: To have a whole – hearted devotion is NOT; always coming to church, giving huge offering, or thinking of doing great things for God. It is the genuine love, faith, willingness, etc. that a person shows towards God. It is to become completely dedicated (or consecrated) to God for special purpose.

MESSAGE 136

DO NOT MURMUR AGAINST GOD

INTRODUCTION: In today's study, we will engage one of the historical approaches to the discussion of a selected Psalm. Psalm 90 is one of the Psalms that was written to reflect the exodus of Israel from Egypt to the Promise Land (Canaan). It reveals something that the author wanted people of every generation thereafter to understand. Let's continue the study.

MAIN TEXT: Psalm 90; Numbers 14-21, 21-7

MEMORY VERSE: "...You have set our iniquities before you..." (Ps. 90:8).

Background: This Psalm was probably written between 1446 – 1406 B.C., that is Moses' time. The background of this Psalm is likely Numbers 14 to 21.

Historical Facts:

- It is about the reflections of the Psalmist concerning some past events.
- Israel disobeyed God by showing lack of faith in taking His promise
- They murmured against God as a result of the twelve spies report
- God decreed that these above twenty years will not see the Promised Land, but will wander in the land for forty (40) years, until they all die.
- Moses uttered the words of this Psalm as prayer of appeal to God.

APPLICATION:

- Do you lack faith in God's promises/doubt His ability to fulfill them.
- Has your lack of faith led you to murmur against God at any time?

If your answer to any of the questions is yes, then your action is just like the Israelites. You need to repent/plead with God before His anger turns on you.

- This Psalm serves as basis for an intercessory or repentant prayer in times of disaster or calamities as a result of a person's sins. In what other ways can you apply it?

CONCLUSION: Christian's are called to faith in the Lord and it is important we demonstrate it at all times in respect of God's word to us as individuals or as a body. God is faithful!

MESSAGE 137

WAIT ON THE LORD LIKE THE EAGLE

INTRODUCTION: There are certain passages of scripture in which God uses lower creatures to speak to humanity. The reason for such symbolisms can be conjectured by some Bible readers. But Job 12:79 gives us the best reason why God does so, “These animals and birds teach a lot about God.” In this lesson the focus is on one of the characteristics of the eagle.

MAIN TEXT: Isaiah 40: 28-31; Matthew 10:16; Proverbs 6:6; Job 12:79

MEMORY VERSE: “Go to the ant...consider her ways...be wise...” (Prov. 6:6).

Definition: What is waiting? Waiting comes from Hebrew word, *qavah*. It refers to tarry, patiently remain for sometime by waiting.

A. Characteristics of the eagle: (Heb. *mesher*)

- i. The strongest and the swiftest bird, “king of the air” (Job 9:26).
- ii. A carnivorous bird; it needs strength to catch its prey.
- iii. Known to live for about 40 years (and over).
- iv. Size; usually 1 m high and about 2 m (outstretched wings).
- v. Makes its rest at high places; tallest trees, top of mountain, etc.

B. Lessons from the eagle: One lesson that could be learned by studying the eagle is ability to wait on God. The eagle is known to spend 70-80% of lifespan in confinement, just waiting (Isaiah 40:31; Lam 3:25-26). Why does the eagle practice waiting?

- i. For the right time / opportunity to move out.
- ii. It is to become well prepared for action and to gain experience.
- iii. It is to prove equal to the task.

APPLICATION:

- What lesson can we learn from the eagle? Waiting in ministry is very important. Most servants of God did it; Abraham, Moses, David, etc. Even Jesus, our Lord, and the disciples did it (Luke 2:41-52; Acts 1:4).
- You can also mount up like the eagle by waiting on God. The question is, are you prepared now?

CONCLUSION: As Believers, we need to wait in order to renew our strength to do His work effectively. This is the period for waiting, and we shall overcome.

MESSAGE 138

RENEW YOUR STRENGTH LIKE THE EAGLE

INTRODUCTION: In the previous study, we learned that God uses lowered creature to speak to men in certain passages of scripture. Job 12:79 says that God uses such lower creatures “to teach a lot about God.” In this lesson the focus is on another feature of the eagle, how to renew our strength.

MAIN TEXT: Isaiah 40: 28-31; Matthew 10:16; Proverbs 6:6; Job 12:79.

MEMORY VERSE: “I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

Background: In the previous study, we understood that the eagle is the strongest and the swiftest bird, “King of the air,” (Job 9:26), known to live for over 40 years, a size of about one meter high, about 3m, and that it makes its nest at high places; tallest, top of mountain, etc.

The strength of the eagle: The Eagle is a carnivorous bird; it needs strength to catch its prey. It is a very strong (Exod. 19:4). This is why it renews its life regularly. One of the lessons that could be learned is by studying the eagle.

A. How does the eagle renew its strength?

- I. It is done through **molting**. This is the shedding old exoskeleton for new.
- II. Its strength/swiftness depends on its wings which are always growing.

B. What lessons does the eagle teach Christians?

- I. The Apostles renewed themselves when they were trained through the period of 3^{1/2} years. They were also asked to wait to receive power or strength (Acts 1:8). They waited to receive power and then launched out.
- II. Contemporary believers should also be able to put away our old life put on new life through hard work, new ideas in God’s word pray more etc.

APPLICATION: Where does your spiritual strength come from? Do you seek daily renewal? If yes, how do you do it? If no, when will you begin to do it?

CONCLUSION: If Believers can ask God to help us continuously renew our strength, we can mount up like the eagle. We need to learn from the eagle and the Apostles. Let’s put away every weight and press on (Heb. 12:1-3).

MESSAGE 139

DEVELOP YOUR VISION LIKE THE EAGLE

INTRODUCTION: It was mentioned in the two previous studies that there are certain passages in the scriptures which God uses lower creatures to speak to people. We learned that God uses such lower creatures because of what they teach about God himself. In this last lesson, we shall study the last characteristic of the eagle that we need to know, its excellent vision.

MAIN TEXT: Isaiah 40: 28-31; Matthew 10:16; Proverbs 6:6; Job 12:79.

Definition of Vision: To have good vision is to see well or to be able to see ahead into the future. It is to have foresight; being able to stay focused and directing attention on target.

- A. **The vision of the eagle:** The last lesson that could be learned by studying the eagle is reliable vision. Since the eagle is a carnivorous bird;
 - I. It needs good vision to spot its prey.
 - II. The eagle has one of the best visions.
 - III. It is able to see from far, beyond 2km.
- B. **What was the importance of vision to the Apostles?**
 - I. The apostles needed God's vision for the Church (Acts 1:1-8).
 - II. Paul received his vision on the way to Damascus (Acts 26:15-20). He could perceive advancing calamity (Acts 27:10; cf. 27:21-25), and at another point he said he had finished the race (2 Tim. 4:7).
- C. **What is the importance of vision to the contemporary Christians?** Like the Apostles, we also need clear vision of God's plans for our lives and ministry. We need insight into scriptures to what God wants us to do.

APPLICATION: Why does God want you to learn from the apostles who waited on Him in order to receive spiritual direction, and power? How do you plan to do it? What other benefits can you receive by waiting on God?

CONCLUSION: All Believers need to have clear visions of what God wants us to do like the eagle. We can benefit from this gift as some who were blessed in time past. Let's ask God for insight, and direction into the issues of life!

MESSAGE 140

BE CAREFUL YOU DO NOT LOSE YOUR FIRST LOVE

INTRODUCTION: The wind of worldliness that is blowing in various Christian fellowships and churches are indications of the need for spiritual sensitivity and revival. In the book of Revelation, the Lord through His angel talks to angel of the Church of Ephesus, "...You have forsaken your first love." Today's study looks at how this can happen to the Christian.

MAIN TEXT: Revelation 2:1ff; Haggai 1:7, 8.

- A. What is the first love?** This is the deepest form of love or commitment that a person demonstrated for another at the beginning of a relationship. It is love for one another; brotherly, friendship, sensual, etc. To the Christian, 'first love' drives the person (or Church) to engage in the ff. (i) share, (ii) evangelism, follow-up or visitation (iii) free-will or special offering, tithes, etc., with much zeal.
- B. How can somebody (or a Church) forsake the 'first love'?** Loss of first love is a fall in the way one used to demonstrate love, according to the definition of love (1 Cor. 13:1-13). Loss of first love can best be experienced by the individual and therefore has to be addressed by the individuals making up the church. But it might be revealed in the ff. ways:
- i. When an individual is entangled in sin
 - ii. When a believer's desire in the spiritual matters shows a dip.
 - iii. When an individual becomes too complacent with spiritual matters.
 - iv. When an individual is overburdened with unhealthy activities.
- C. The effects of the lost of the love.** It includes the following:
- i. It devalues the believers' personal devotion for Christ.
 - ii. It makes the person lose his/her position/blessings from the Lord
 - iii. The believer falls from God's grace, i.e., from a privilege position.
 - iv. It makes the believer forfeit the privilege of witnessing for the Lord

APPLICATION: Evaluate your spiritual level now; very high, average, and low? God wants us to realize/address the situation. Can you make amends now?

CONCLUSION: We need to repent, remember where we have fallen and begin to renew our joy in the Lord. Loss of 'first love' occurs secretly and makes the believer spiritually weak. There is need for revival when we lose our 'first love.'

MESSAGE 141

REVIVE YOUR FIRST LOVE

INTRODUCTION: In the previous study, we learned how in the book of Revelation, the Lord through His angel talks to the Ephesians' Church about their lost of 'first love.' "...You have forsaken your first love." Today's studies will look at how to maintain or renew our first love.

MAIN TEXT: Revelation 2: 1ff; Haggai 1:7, 8

How do we maintain, renew (revive), or improve upon our first love?

- A. The importance of spiritual revival:** Revival will cause us to have Christ-like love which is sacrificial love (John 13:34). Our answered innermost desire and prayer should portray the following:
 - I. Inspired/ challenge us to draw closer to the faith in God.
 - II. Cause us to testify about the power of God to others, drives us into prayers, and increases our joy in the Lord.
 - III. It challenges us to continue waiting on God,
 - IV. It causes us to examine our lives and draw closer to God.
- B. We need constant spiritual renewal:** Renewal is the answer because:
 - I. It brings a change of life and renews commitment and prayer habit.
 - II. It renews spiritual efforts and makes God's power to work (Acts 4:31).
 - III. It renews the operation of the gifts of God and adds more grace to do it.
 - IV. It promotes growth, brings abundance and blessings, (Acts 5:14).
 - V. It strengthens faith and hope in God and brings God's glory
 - VI. It destroys Satan's activities, brings deliverance (Psalm 85:6).
- C. Regular counseling and encouragement:** When believers find that a colleague has lost his/her first love (back-slided), the person should be called and counseled immediately.

APPLICATION: What is your response to the study above? Explain. We need immediate, examination and proper Holy Spirit infilling in order to withstand the wind of coldness that is making Christians to lose their first love.

CONCLUSION: As believers we should also remember that we owe each other our love; Romans 12:9, 10; 13:8-11; 1 Peter 1:20-23. **Revival is the answer; we need it, and it must start now.**

MESSAGE 142

WHO IS A BACKSLIDER-IN-HEART?

INTRODUCTION: One of the greatest challenges of the Christian is how to maintain his/her spiritual commitment against backsliding. Backsliding in heart does not consist of not having excited religion feelings. No, having these great spiritual feeling may be an evidence of it, but is not the cause of such a state. This study will reveal more about 'backsliding in heart.'

MAIN TEXT: Heb. 10:38; Rev. 2:4; Luke 9:62; Jer. 8: 4; 1 John 2:1; Micah 7:8

Definition: A backslider-in-heart is a Christian who has withdrawn from genuine devotion to God and has come under the control of a self pleasing spirit. Such a person has turned back from the consecration to God and the commitment that constitutes true conversation. The backslider shows lack of faith in God and loss of one's first love.

The following are some evidence of back-sliding in heart. Discuss them.

- A. A lack of interest in spiritual issues (Matt. 12:34).
- B. An outward religious excuse with no godly zeal and faith.
- C. An exhibition of uncontrolled temper, and lack of self-discipline
- D. A search for amusement and unhealthy conversation, etc.
- E. Loss of interest in the Christian brotherhood, and insensitivity towards the needy, no passion for the lost soul.
- F. Showing a fault-finding, self-satisfactory, and defensive spirit
- G. Excuses to prayer meeting; prayer becomes a burden than privilege
- H. Lack of interest in spiritual activities (1 Cor. 10:31)
- I. Showing attitudes of depression, frustration, and confusion, etc.
- J. Full of own desires, showing feelings of unrest, sadness, etc.
- K. Filled with excuses and own cares (Jam. 3:8); full of troubles.
- L. Becomes arrogant, self-centered, and self-satisfied.

APPLICATION: How do you evaluate yourself in the light of the above features of the backslider? How will you overcome any drive towards backsliding?

CONCLUSION: Sometimes, we make covenant and decrees before God and effect positive things in our life (Job 22:28). We no longer have faith in God and are unable to control ourselves. Let us stand firm in the grace of our Lord.

MESSAGE 143

DO NO BE A BACKSLIDER-IN-HEART

INTRODUCTION: In our earlier studies, we have understood that the backsliding in heart consists of loss of excitement for spirituality. While lack of spiritual interest may be an evidence of it, it is nevertheless not a criterion for any conclusion with respect to a backslider-in-heart. Since such a state is quite difficult to determine and deal with, it is better to prevent it. Today's studies will reveal more about "backsliding in heart."

MAIN TEXT: Heb. 10:38; Rev. 2:4; Luke 9:62; Jer. 8: 4; 1 John 2:1; Micah 7:8

Background: A backslider-in-heart has been defined as a Christian who has withdrawn from genuine commitment to God to live a self pleasing life.

How does one recover from back-sliding? The following steps might help:

- A. Address yourself to the situation. Admit yourself and be ready to do your first duties (Rev. 2.5; 1 John 1:9, 10)
- B. Remember from where you have fallen and realize the situation; compare your first state with the present (Rev. 2:1ff).
- C. Be ready to make a change by repenting at once (if necessary confess your sins to a trusted Christian who can help you). Repentance should be from the heart, it requires a deep heart to talk with God which allows God to deal with you (1 John 1:9).
- D. Quickly search for spiritual inspiration. Begin everything in the joy of forgiveness. Zealously resume and practice all spiritual disciplines: Bible reading, prayer, fellowship, follow-up, etc.

Note: As you do these you will notice that you are being revived.

APPLICATION: Are you determined to stay away from backsliding? What have you learned in this study to help you overcome any drive towards backsliding?

CONCLUSION: One characteristic of the backslider is a loss of the power of godliness such that there are outward acts of religiosity and selfish motives in the Christian. If by any means we fall from the grace of God let us quickly realize our spiritual bankruptcy and rise up.

MESSAGE 144

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE EVERYWHERE

INTRODUCTION: The Lord Jesus Christ is the sinners' friend and the light of this world. Therefore when He came into contact with the religious leaders who condemned people for their sins though they themselves were guilty for greater things He warned Christians not to be like them. Rather we are to be like Him as the friend of sinners and the light of this world.

MAIN TEXT: John 8 and 9; Gal. 5:1-1, 9; Col. 3:16; 17; 2 Cor. 3:1, 2.

Memory verse: "Ye are the light of this world...Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16, KJV).

Discuss the following questions from the passage:

- A. What wrong thing(s) do you see about the Scribes and Pharisees and people who always tried to pick others mistakes meanwhile, they themselves are sinful? (Rev. 20:18; John 8:3-6; Matt. 23:13-15)
- B. Jesus replied, "He that is without sin among you, let him be the first to cast stone at her." What does the Bible mean by, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God?" (John 8:7-11; 10:10, Matt. 20:28)
- C. What should our attitude be when we hear or see that a brother or sister has fallen into sin? (James 5:16; 1 John 2:1-4; Gal. 6:1-5; 1 Cor. 12: 26)
- D. List the distinguishing characteristics said about those who follow the light and those who do not (John 8:31ff; 9:35-41; 1 John 1:5-7).
- E. Knowing that Jesus Christ is the "Light of the world," what are the consequences for a person who does not believe in this "Light"?

APPLICATION: In what ways are you supposed to be light of the world, and for the communities in which we live? How bright is your light shining?

CONCLUSION: Many a times we make weak believers fall completely from the faith. God wants us to be compassionate with people's weaknesses and to help them out through prayer and encouragement from the word. We have been called as "LIGHT" for the people around us who are groping in darkness. Let's shine for them to see.

MESSAGE 145

GOD IS MINDFUL OF YOU

INTRODUCTION: Psalm 8 is one of the psalms that David probably wrote before he became king of the United Kingdom of Israel. It reveals the reflections of someone who is overwhelmed by the greatness of God, the Creator, as shown by creation. In utter gratitude, he bursts out in praise of his creator, particularly on the grounds of who man is with respect to the rest of creation. Let us learn some lessons from this psalm.

MAIN TEXT: Psalm 8; Genesis 1:26-28; 1 Samuel 15-17.

MEMORY VERSE: "...What is man that you are mindful of him..." (Psalm 8:4a).

Background facts:

- A. It was probably written between 1040-970 BC, i.e., David's time:
- B. The background of this Psalm is likely Gen. 1:26-28 (or 1 Sam. 15-17).

What is the message of this Psalm?

- A. This psalm is an attempt by David to help Israel praise **Yahweh** as the sole Creator of everything in heaven, on earth, as well as in the Sea.
- B. It was prompted by a forceful impression produced in the writer's heart as he pondered over the creation of God; its beauty, wonder, complexity, provision, mysteries, etc.
- C. The Psalmist pictures the greatness of God as seen in His creation.
- D. He is grateful that God is mindful of him and burst into worships.

APPLICATION:

- Do you reflect on God's greatness that is revealed all around you?
- Do you appreciate/praise God for His mercies to you as an individual?
- Are you satisfied with God even when your expectations are not met?

If you are in doubt of any of the questions, then it is likely that you are guilty. In that case, you need to repent/plead with God for being ungrateful to Him.

- Psalm 8 can be used as appreciation to God for His grace on our family/Church/nation. What other occasions can this Psalm be used?

CONCLUSION: Every person is fearfully and powerfully positioned among creation. We need to let God know we appreciate His works in our lives.

MESSAGE 146

GOD WILL BE YOUR DELIVERER

INTRODUCTION: The author, of Psalm 59 is undoubtedly King David of Israel. It is one of the psalms that were probably constructed in remembrance of the period of David's persecution and flight from King Saul. In this Psalm, David pleads with God for deliverance and protection from all the plots and plans of his enemies. We can learn from this psalm.

MAIN TEXT: Psalm 59; 1 Samuel 19:11-18

MEMORY VERSE: "Deliver me from my enemies, O God..." (Ps. 59:1).

Background facts:

- A. This Psalm was probably written between 1040-1010 BC, i.e., David's time.
- B. The background of this Psalm is likely to be 1 Samuel 19:11-18.

Historical facts of the Psalm:

- A. David was in the house of King Saul as a musician after killing Goliath.
- B. King Saul, out of jealousy, planned to kill David when he visited Michal.
- C. Through Michal, David's wife who is also King Saul's daughter, David escaped.
- D. David constructed this Psalm to praise God as the true Deliverer.

APPLICATION:

- Do you reflect on God's protection provided all around you?
- Do you praise God for His daily deliverance to you from all the attacks of the enemy?

If you are in doubt of all that God does for you by way of protection, then you need to repent and plead with God for being ungrateful to Him.

- This Psalm can also be used as a daily appreciation to God for the protection He continues to provide for us as a family, Church, or as a nation. What other appropriate occasions can this Psalm be used?

CONCLUSION: God's protection and deliverance for those who trust in Him is 100%. You have to rely on it daily as you pray and meditate on His word. You also need to rejoice and praise God for His assurance of deliverance.

MESSAGE 147

YOU ARE SAVED FOR GOOD WORKS

INTRODUCTION: As we consider more closely the practical Christian life, we shall look at the need to be hearers and doers of God's Word. This study will help us to understand that Good works are part of the ingredients for growth in the Lord and appreciation for salvation.

MAIN TEXT: James: 1:19-27; 2:1-26; Ephesians 2:9-10

MEMORY VERSE: "But will thou know...that faith without works is dead? (James 2:20)

A. Follow your faith with works: Faith without works is dead.

- I. Why do you think, faith without works is dead?
- II. How is faith without works illustrated in James 2:15-16?
- III. From verses 17-26, does it imply that believers who are not practicing what they profess have dead faith? Explain.

B. Avoid any discrimination in your works:

- I. How does James chapter 2:4 and 9 describe the Christian who discriminates in his or her good services to others?
- II. In what ways do you find yourself discriminating? How can you stop it? (Eph. 4:1-5; 1 Cor. 12:12-26)

C. Be obedient to God's word:

- I. How can you now be a doer of the word of God? (Jos. 1:8)
- II. Have you been practicing what is taught at Church?
- III. What would be the result if we do not do good deeds according to God's word as mentioned in the above answers? (Ps. 22:26; 25:9; Prov. 4:20; 13:13)
- IV. From James 1:19-22, what must be our attitude to God's Word?

APPLICATION: Are you a Christian who practices what you profess? How?

CONCLUSION: Our belief must be demonstrated. This is the only means to show people that we believe what you say. As said by a preacher man if we were to practice one fourth of all that we are taught our communities would have changed for the better or the best.

MESSAGE 148

REGULAR EVALUATION OF OUR LIVES IS IMPORTANT

INTRODUCTION: It is important to carefully analyze our daily and weekly schedules to see how much we spend in studying the Bible, prayer, evangelism (i.e., witnessing and follow-up), academic work, social activities like games, cooking, etc. If we do these regularly, it will help us to know where we need a balance and how to improve upon it. This is achieved through evaluation.

MAIN TEXT: Prov. 16:3, 9; 20:4; 24:33; 1 Tim. 4:7-8; Ps. 42:1-2; Jer. 20:8-9.

Background: Does your soul feed on proper “spiritual food”? Are you growing in your Christian life in proportion to what you have been receiving spiritually? Does God’s word cause you to have passion for soul? You may use these questions for your evaluation.

Questions for personal Christian evaluation include:

- A. Do you believe that you are important to God? How do you prove this? (2 Pet. 1:9)
- B. Do you really know God as your Lord and willing to obey Him? (Philip. 3:8-10; John 14:21-24; Titus 1:15-16) What are your reason(s) for being a Christian?
- C. What have you counted as loss in order to know God?
- D. What you have to do in order to reflect the love of God (John 21:15-17; 1 John 4:7-13).
- E. Examine your witnessing and follow-up life. Consider some appropriate strategies you can use to improve them (1 Tim. 4:5; 1 Cor. 9:16-23).
- F. How many people do you know in Christ that are growing in their faith? Are you concerned about your family and friends’ lives? How can you improve your concern for them (Matt. 23:13-15; Ezek. 33:7-9).
- G. In what ways can you demonstrate your Christianity as the solution to the needs of fellow Christians?
- H. Which area of Church ministry are you active in? (Eph. 6:5-8) What caused God to put you in that particular ministry area? (1 Pet. 2:9)

APPLICATION: How will this evaluation help your growth in the Lord? Explain.

CONCLUSION: Sometimes our concerns for life are genuine but God cares much more than we do. He cares for both our Spiritual and physical needs.

PART VIII

**MARRIAGE
SHOULD
BE
HONORED
AS SACRED**

MESSAGE 149

HOW TO BE A SINGLE IDEAL WOMAN OR A NOBLE MAN

INTRODUCTION: Every person usually passes the stage of singleness before family life. It should be stressed that the conditions that every person faces in singlehood will depend upon a lot of factors like, position in life, place of stay, family background, etc.

MAIN TEXTS: Hebrew 13:4; Song of Solomon 2:7b; Genesis 39:6ff.

A. Who is a spinster or bachelor?

- I. A person who is NOT married and has NEVER been married.
- II. The lifespan of a person between adolescence and MARRIAGE.
- III. There is no specific age period because it varies from one to another
- IV. There is no specific length of time; it varies from person to person

B. What are the general characteristics of an unmarried life? It is a period of:

- I. Mental maturation and experience as a single individual.
- II. Less dependence on others and more dependence on ourselves (e.g. in terms of finances, decision, time management etc.).
- III. Proper life planning, crucial decision, choice making, instability, temptations, etc.
- IV. Preparation towards responsible family life.
- V. Singlehood is usually characterized by a lot of fears such as:
 - i. Fear of independence and responsibility.
 - ii. Fear of inadequacy (of being trapped/making wrong choice).

C. What are the strength, expectation, and joy of unmarried life?

- I. Joy of a having matured into a stage of life where you are independent to experience a bright future life full of success.
- II. Joy of an enjoyable marriage life with a very beautiful or handsome partner, satisfied sex life, and nice children.
- III. Joy of letting everybody know you made no mistake in your choice.

APPLICATION: How do you hope to apply what you have studied to your life in order to be a **single ideal woman like Ruth or a noble man like Boaz?**

CONCLUSION: We first have to honor God as an unmarried. This can be done when a person decides to set him/ herself apart for God until marriage. God honors the person with proper marriage rites and with pomp (Gen. 2:18ff).

MESSAGE 150

RIGHT ATTITUDE OF A SINGLE WOMAN OR MAN

INTRODUCTION: Clearly, every person usually passes the stage of singleness before family life. It should be stressed that the conditions that every person faces in singlehood will depend upon a lot of factors like, position in life, place of stay, family background etc.

MAIN TEXT: 1 Timothy 5:1-2; Hebrew 13:4; Song of Songs 2:7b; Gen. 39:66ff.

Background: A Spinster or Bachelor is a person who is not married and has never been married. In this study the unmarried can be applied to all single persons of marriageable age.

Expected attitude and behavior of a single life: The bachelor or spinster's attitude should be guarded by Colossians 3:17. Be led by Joseph's attitude in Potiphar's house, or Paul's exhortation to Timothy (1 Tim. 5:1-2).

A. Spiritual attitude expected of a Single life: Such a person should be:

- I. Holy and have a balanced spiritual life.
- II. Very watchful and prayerful for a successful future and marriage life
- III. Strengthened by the Holy Spirit (through prayer and scriptures) to avoid lustful advances/temptations by the opposite sex.

B. Mental attitude expected of a Single life: Such a person should have a positive mental attitude to succeed when he/she finally marries.

C. Social Attitude expected of a Single life: Such a person should be careful about the following:

- I. Male friends/associates
- II. Female friends/associates
- III. Your appearance.
- IV. Gifts, praises, invitations, visitations, etc.
- V. Utterances/jesting and jokes.

APPLICATION: What have you studied so far, and will you apply it to your life? Are you showing right attitude as a single woman or man? Explain.

CONCLUSION: We first have to show the right attitude in life especially when we are single. This can be done when a person decides to set him/ herself apart for God until marriage. God honors the person with proper spiritual, physical, mental, and social attitude towards marriage (1 Timothy 5:1-2).

MESSAGE 151

LOOKING FOR A MARRIAGE PARTNER: THE RIGHT MAN

INTRODUCTION: As already indicated, every person is honored or glorified in many ways. Wherever a person decides to honor God, God also honors the one. There are so many ways that we can honor God, and Marriage life is one.

MAIN TEXT: Hebrews 13:4; Proverbs 31: 10; Ruth 2; John 17:4-5; 1 Sam. 2:30

Question for discussion: “Who is the right man?”

A. The qualified husband-to-be is not one who is:

- I. Just handsome /well built, well educated
- II. Very rich/ extravagant/ globe trotter.
- III. Very thrifty /loose/ unstable, and not womanizer.

B. But the qualified husband-to-be is one who is:

- I. Loving, Caring, Faithful and Reliable, Humble and yet Bold
- II. Accountable to God, hardworking, stable in life, sensitive.

C. Below is a summary of the qualities expected of a man before marriage.

Qualities for good husband

Qualities for a bad husband

H-Humble

H-Harsh

U-Understanding

U-Ungrateful

S-Sympathetic

S-Selfish

B-Bread-winner

B-Bully

A-Appreciating

A-Accuser

N-Natural

N-Neutral

D-Darling

D-Dangerous

APPLICATION: What have you studied so far, and do you hope to apply it to your life? If you are indeed looking for the right marriage partner how have you began the search in accordance with this studies?

CONCLUSION: “... Whoever finds ... finds a good thing ...” Such a man should be **prayerful, patient, hopeful, diligent, watchful**, etc. Example is Boaz.

MESSAGE 152

LOOKING FOR A MARRIAGE PARTNER: THE RIGHT WOMAN

INTRODUCTION: Wherever a person decides to honor God, God also honors the one. There are so many ways that we can honor God, and Marriage life is one. Honor can be given before marriage.

MAIN TEXT: Prov. 31:10; Heb. 13:4; Ruth 2; John 17:4-5; 1 Sam. 2:30

Background: Proverbs 31:10 reveals some qualities of Rubies expected of a woman of noble character: hardest precious stone, hard to find, used for decoration, first stone in the priestly garment, showing excellent in honor.

Question for discussion: “Who is the right woman?”

A. The qualified wife-to-be is not one who is:

- I. Physically/bodily/facially beautiful, protruding breast with nice hips, rounded calves, etc., and sexually seductive/loose/a flirt.
- II. Well educated in classroom/from a special tribe/rich home, etc.

B. The qualified wife-to-be, according to Prov. 7:6-27; Ruth 3:7-13, should be:

- I. A believer (same yoke), and one who fears the Lord
- II. Be respectful, obedient, chaste, serviceable, humble, supportive, etc.
- III. Be acknowledged by both her house, church, workplace/ community

C. Below is a summary of qualities expected in good woman before marriage:

<u>Qualities of good wife</u>	<u>Qualities of a bad wife</u>
W-Wise	W-Wasteful
I-Industrious	I-Incorrigible
F-Faithful	F-Flirt
E-Economical	E-Extravagant

APPLICATION: Mention three steps one has to take in finding such a woman?

CONCLUSION: “... Whoever finds a wife finds a good thing ...” Any woman expecting a good marriage should be **wise, devoted, faithful, serviceable, humble**, etc as Rebecca, Ruth, and Abigail.

MESSAGE 153

ENTERING MARRIAGE: FROM SINGLE TO MARRIED (I)

INTRODUCTION: As already indicated, every person is honored or glorified in many ways. Wherever a person decides to honor God, God also honors the one. There are so many ways that we can honor God, and Marriage life is one. Honor can be given to God during the preparation towards marriage.

MAIN TEXT: Hebrews 13:4; Proverbs 31:10; Ruth 2; John 17:4-5; 1 Sam. 2:30.

The major question of the discussion is: How should marriage begin?

A. Mistakes potential marriage person should try not to commit:

- I. Never pick any stranger or a street-lady as a marriage partner.
- II. Never press to marry a physically beautiful partner (Prov. 31:30).
- III. Never expect a spectacular encounter (i.e., through vision/ dream).
- IV. Never gather more partners in order to make a selection.
- V. Never touch a partner or have a taste before or even after proposal.
- VI. Never make up your mind to get everything in life before marriage.
- VII. Never misconstrue the following for courtship:
 - a. Wrong Attachment- I'm in it because there's nobody else
 - b. Wrong Cohabitation – I must stay with him, one day it'll work.
 - c. Wrong objective– I am going with him/her because I'm getting late.
 - d. Wrong Helplessness – I can't do without him/ her

B. Where to find such a partner:

- I. Usually a good partner comes from a home or has a family link in life.
- II. The one is separated for God and has the support of God's people.

A. Marriage preparation: The Proposal

Bible says the righteous are bold as a lion. Thus when the right person comes, there is no need to play hide-and-seek. The man should go straight to her and propose. In some cultures, it is inappropriate for the woman to propose marriage. But the woman can help the process by opening up to the man.

- I. The proposal can be done privately, i.e., you and the lady alone.
- II. The proposal can be done in the company of family, friends, etc.

APPLICATION: Have you studied anything to apply to your life? Explain

CONCLUSION: Do not allow your emotions to mislead you. If you are hoping for the right marriage foundation God is ready to fulfill His promises concerning marriage in your life if you will allow Him to lead you to make the right choice.

MESSAGE 154

ENTERING MARRIAGE: FROM SINGLE TO MARRIED (II)

INTRODUCTION: As already indicated, every person is honored or glorified in many ways. Whenever a person decides to honor God, God also honors the one. Marriage is one of such honors. And honor can be given to God during the preparation towards marriage.

MAIN TEXT: Hebrews 13:4; Proverbs 31: 10; Ruth 2; John 17:4-5; 1 Sam. 2:30

The major question of the discussion is: How should marriage be executed?

A. Marriage preparation: The Courtship

- I. **When is it?** It is the period between proposal and marriage.
- II. **What is it?** It usually begins after a formal proposal of marriage.
- III. **Why is it?** It allows the future couple to study/know each other better.
- IV. **How is it?** It is also a planning time for the marriage

NOTE: The duration of COURTSHIP should not be prolonged unnecessarily.

B. Right behavior during courtship: During the period of courtship, the good news is that there are stronger bonds of fellowship and a lot of fruitful interactions. But there are even greater temptations to sin. Thus, much care should be taken such as the following:

- I. Do not desire closed-door meetings or hide details from each other.
- II. Plan and prepare, share and pray for the actual marriage together
- III. Seek counseling from experienced/ mature brethren.

C. Preparations to end singlehood involves considering the following issues:

- I. How to introduce the lady or discuss the marriage plans with your parents, pastor, spiritual friend, etc., before taking a step forward.
- II. What form of marriage ceremony you should prepare towards?
- III. Where you will stay after marriage (i.e., if you are not already settled).
- IV. Where you will get funds to support your wife/family after marriage.

D. Perform a marriage ceremony you can afford; do not try to impress people.

APPLICATION: Have you studied something to apply to your life? Explain.

CONCLUSION: Since you have studied and understood the discussion you will be blessed if you put what you have learned into practice at the right time.

MESSAGE 155

A HEALTHY MARRIAGE: HONOR GOD IN YOUR MARRIAGE

INTRODUCTION: Not all marriages are bound to succeed. A typical example is the sons of Naomi and the Moabite women (Ruth 1:1ff). Its foundation was against God's precepts right from the onset. But marriages set on a good foundation are likely to succeed.

MAIN TEXTS: Hebrews 13:4 (Prov. 31: 10; Ruth 2; John 17:4-5; 1 Sam. 2:30)

How do we ensure a successful marriage life? Areas to consider include:

A. Honor God's role in marriage:

- I. **God created** marriage, i.e., created both man and woman (Gen. 1:26).
- II. **God ordains** marriage, i.e., prepares both partners ahead (Gen. 2:15).
- III. **God initiates** the marriage process (Gen. 2:15ff).
- IV. **God officiates** the marriage (Gen. 2:15ff).
- V. **God mediates** the marriage (Gen. 2:15ff).

B. Honor God's Principles for marriage: God respects and honors any marriage that is established on His principles (Mal. 2:13-16). In worldly marriages, $1 + 1 = 2$, (i.e., the couple live as individuals), in Christian marriage it is $1 + 1 = 1$ (i.e., the couple become a unit, one). Let us note these characteristics:

- I. Marriage is for **comfort** and **partnership** – (Gen. 2:18; 24:67).
- II. Marriage is for **conjugal satisfaction**- (1 Cor. 7:1-5).
- III. Marriage brings **procreation** (that is, if God permits)
- IV. There is **total compatibility**; What God gives is fitting in everything
- V. There is **total separation** from environment-parents, friends, etc,
- VI. There is **total transparency** –both in spiritual, and in physical matters
- VII. Parties **do not expect** too much from each other.
- VIII. For **problem solving**, it is God first, Pastor second, all others later.

(III) **Honor God as a parent:** This is by being a responsible parent when children are born to you. God will let your children honor you (Eph. 6:1ff).

APPLICATION: What new things have you learned that will help you? Explain.

CONCLUSION: What have you studied so far, and do you hope to apply it to your life? If you are indeed looking for fruitful marriage God will help you as you obey His teachings and practice this study.

ENDNOTES

****Note:** a couple of the messages were developed from discussions that the author has made in some of his books.

1. All messages with asterisks (*) were largely developed from cell group discussion materials prepared by (Inter-Hall Christian Fellowship – UST between 1985 and 89).
2. *The Word for you Today: June, July, August:* (Alpharetta, GA; 2007). P. 10-11

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- ***Pacesetters of Divine Ministry: Let us learn from them***
- ***Suffer to gain: How the Righteous should overcome Difficult Times***
- ***A Model for Hebrew - English Translation and Application: The Biblical Hebrew Student's Companion***

It is expected that all classes of people, especially those in position of leadership and curriculum development and teaching in Churches, will find a lot of help, interest, and fulfillment in the living streams that flow from the gracious exposition of this simple servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

¹ *The Word for you Today: June, July, August:* (Alpharetta, GA; 2007). p. 10-11