

BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP **THE JOURNEY**

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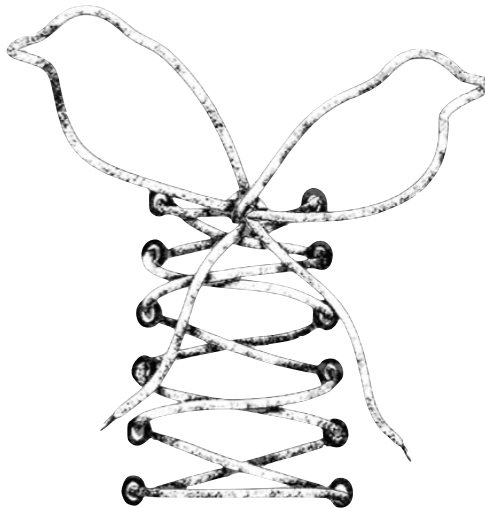


GUISBOROUGH CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP

THE JOURNEY 3

GUISBOROUGH CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



*Jesus came and told his disciples,
“I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth.
Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations,
Baptising them in the name of the Father, and the Son
and the Holy Spirit. Teaching these new disciples to obey all the
commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you
always, even to the end of the age.” **Matthew 28:18-20***

These notes have been compiled as a teaching aid to lead each and every believer into a deeper knowledge and understanding of their faith.

Through fulfilling the commands of Jesus as stated above we are confident that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work, until it is finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. *Philippians 1:6.*

This is merely the beginning. God’s Word is alive and active, take every opportunity to unlock its treasures so that you will be prepared and equipped to do every good work. The Holy Spirit will guide you and your love relationship with Jesus will grow in an amazing way.

There will be challenges but together with Jesus this journey will be incredible. Enjoy it!

*All Scriptures are taken from the New Living Translation unless otherwise stated.



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SECTION 3: PURSUIT

We pursue God because, and only because, He has first put an urge within us that spurs us to pursuit. “No man can come to me,” said our Lord, “except the Father which hath sent me draw him,” and it is this very prevenient drawing that God takes from us every vestige of credit for the act of coming. The impulse to pursue God originates with God, but the outworking of that impulse is our following hard after Him; and all the time we are pursuing Him we are already in His hand: “Thy right hand upholds me.”

I want deliberately to encourage this mighty longing after God. The lack of it has brought us to our present low estate. The stiff and wooden quality about our religious lives is as a result of our lack of holy desire. Complacency is a deadly foe of all spiritual growth. Acute desire must be present or there will be no manifestation of Christ to His people. He waits to be wanted. Too bad that many of us He waits so long, so very long, in vain.

A.W. Tozer: The Pursuit of God.

3.01

ESTABLISHING A DEVOTIONAL HABIT

The most important part of our daily walk with God is spending quality time with Him each day. This enables us to get to know Him better which in turn increases our faith. It also provides an opportunity for us to hear from God. How else will we receive direction for our lives? Every single one of us has a responsibility to establish an intimate relationship with the Lord for our personal guidance and the Spirit-led use of our ministry gifts building up the body of Christ.

PRAYER AND THE EARLY CHURCH

1. Prayer birthed the church. They prayed together. *Luke 24:49.*
The people of Pentecost were a people of daily prayer
Acts 2:42.
2. Prayer – a powerful force. *“Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o’clock prayer service.” Acts 3:1.*
See also *Acts 4:23,24,31 & Acts 6:1–4.*
The apostles needed time to continue in *“prayer and ministry of the Word.”*
For the believers in the early church, prayer was a daily practice; a habit as natural and important as breathing. Indeed, it was the breath of their new life in the Spirit!

DEVOTIONAL PRAYER - A DAILY HABIT

We like the idea of praying however,

- Morning Prayer time is no longer a daily habit
- It’s easier to read my bible than pray every day

We need to get back to school with Jesus. So how much time should I spend in morning prayer? Don’t set a specific time limit as you will defeat yourself from the start. Prayer can become a task or heavy

burden rather than a door into a loving relationship with your Heavenly Father. So:

1. Set aside time for prayer. Decide what must be removed so that prayer can take its place
2. Prayer is fellowship with Jesus. Once you establish a pattern or habit of prayer, it becomes a natural part of your life. What a privilege to greet the Lord at the beginning of each new day, and to know He desires to be a part of every detail of our lives.

SIX PART PLAN FOR PRAYER

1. **Thanksgiving and praise:** offering up yourself.

- Praise Him for who He is. *Psalms 100:4.*
- Praise Him for what He has done. *Psalms 9:1.*
- Offer up your body to the Lord. *Romans 12:1.*
- Sing a new song. *Psalms 96:1.*
- Worship Him in Spirit. *John 4:23.*

2. **Confession and Cleansing:** offering up your heart.

Invite a search. “*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.*” *Psalms 139:23–24.*

Don't be deceived: Three areas for deception:

A. **We Have No Sin: Hurting Hearts.** Those who believe they have no sin at all, keep having problems caused by their sin. But they don't know why they have them - or why their heart still hurts.

B. **We Don't Need to Confess: Hardened Hearts.** Those who sin but feel they don't have to tell God, because He forgives them anyway, can become hard of heart. After a while they don't even hear the Lord trying to warn them. To walk so far away from God is very dangerous.

C. **We won't be Forgiven: Heavy Hearts.** Those who feel that even though they tell God their sins, He will not really forgive and forget, will always have a heavy heart. They ever walk under a dark cloud of guilt and condemnation.

Set a guard over your mouth. *Psalms 19:14.*

Words are powerful – know when to speak.

3. **Order and Obedience:** offering up your day.

- Surrender your day to God. *Psalms 37:5,7.*
- Show child-like need. *Psalms 3:6,7.*
- Ask for specific guidance. *Psalms 25:4,5.*
- Obey instructions. *John 4:34.*

4. **Family and Church:** offering up those near and dear.

- Name your family members daily. *Job 1:1-5.*
- Open to your larger family. *Isaiah 58:7.*
- Remember the Father's family. *Ephesians 3:14,15.*
- Include the single. *Psalms 68:5,6.*

5. **Intercession** in reaching the world for Jesus.

What is intercession?

- Praying for and on behalf of others.
- Praying with power and direction of Holy Spirit.
- Knowing there will be divine results.
- Intercession for nations, evangelists, national leaders and peace.
- Be aware that intercession involves spiritual warfare.

CONCLUSION

Your Heavenly Father is waiting for you to come to Him just as you are. If you have some failures to confess, do it and receive His forgiveness. Then get on with your prayer life. This is the way to respond to His ministry of grace.

DISCOVER MORE

1. Why is establishing a regular devotional time important to your Christians walk?
2. Prepare a written plan to help you to establish your devotional time.
3. Discuss your intentions with someone close to you and give them permission to hold you accountable.
4. List what changes you will need to make in your lifestyle to accommodate this commitment. How do you intend to implement these changes?

TODAY I CHOOSE TO EXERCISE SELF-DISCIPLINE IN MY LIFE AND UNDERTAKE TO DEVOTE THE FIRST PART OF MY DAY TO TALKING TO THE LORD. I WILL ALSO KEEP A JOURNAL OF WHAT I BELIEVE HE IS SAYING TO ME DURING THESE TIMES WITH HIM.

THOUGHTS

[illegible]

3.02

SERVICE

Service refers to all sorts of work from the most inferior and menial to the most honoured and exalted. *Leviticus 23:7; Numbers 3:6.*

I WAS SHAPED FOR GOD'S SERVICE

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. Ephesians 2:10.

In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole Romans 12:4 (MSG).

The people I made especially for myself, a people custom-made to praise me. Isaiah 43:21 (MSG).

God has given each of you some special abilities; be sure to use them to help each other, passing on to others God's many kinds of blessings. 1 Peter 4:10 (LB).

Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, and then out; you formed me in my mother's womb. Psalm 139:13 (MSG).

S: Spiritual Gifts

H: Heart

A: Abilities

P: Personality

E: Experience

God wants me to accept my "SHAPE", enjoy my "SHAPE" and develop my "SHAPE".

Who in the world do you think you are to second-guess God? Do you for one moment suppose any of us knows enough to call God into

question? Clay doesn't talk back to the fingers that mould it, saying, "Why did you shape me like this?" Romans 9:20 (MSG).

Using my "SHAPE" to serve others is called 'Ministry'.

DEVELOPING A SERVANT'S HEART

Your attitude must be like my own, for I, the Messiah, did not come to be served, but to serve and to give my life... Matthew 20:27-28 (LB).

Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. Mark 10:43 (MSG).

1. My "SHAPE" reveals my 'Ministry'.
2. My Servant's heart reveals my 'Maturity'.

S: God gives every believer spiritual gifts to be used in Ministry
*It is the one and only Holy Spirit who distributes these gifts.
He alone decides which gift each person should have.
1 Corinthians 12:11.*

H: Your heart describes your desires, hopes, interests, dreams and Ambitions. *As a face is reflected in water, so the heart reflects the person. Proverbs 27:19.*

A: Abilities are the natural talents God gives you at birth.
*God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well.
Romans 12:6.*

P: Your personality will affect how and where you use your spiritual Gifts and abilities. *God works through different ways, but it is the same God who achieves His purpose through them all.
1 Corinthians 12:6 (TEV).*

E: You have been shaped by all of your Experiences.
God never wastes a hurt.
He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When others are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us. 2 Corinthians 1:4.

CHARACTERISTICS OF REAL SERVANTS:

1. Real servants do every task with equal dedication.
Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. Colossians 3:23 (NIV).
Share each other's troubles and problems, and in this way obey the law of Christ. If you think you are too important to help someone in need, you are only fooling yourself. You are really a nobody. Galatians 6:2-3.
2. Real servants maintain a low profile
If I were trying to please men, I would not be a servant of Christ."
Galatians 1:10 (NIV).

PROMINENCE AND SIGNIFICANCE ARE NOT THE SAME THING
When Christ shows up again on this earth, you'll show up, too – the real you, the glorious you. Meanwhile, be content with obscurity, like Christ. Colossians 3:4 (MSG)
3. Real servants don't worry about what other servants are doing.
That means we will not compare ourselves with each other as if one of us were better and another worse. We have far more interesting things to do with our lives. Each of us is an original. Galatians 5:26 (MSG).
Who are you to criticise someone else's servant?
The Lord will determine whether His servant has been successful. Romans 14:4 (GWT).

COMPETITION BETWEEN GOD'S SERVANTS IS ILLOGICAL

1. We are all on the same team
2. Our goal is to make God look good, not ourselves.
3. We have all been given different assignments.
4. We're all uniquely shaped.

"And if, as my representatives, you give even a cup of cold water to a little child, you will surely be rewarded." Matthew 10:42 (LB).

"For God is not unfair. He will not forget how hard you have worked for Him and how you have shown your love to Him by caring for other Christians, as you still do." Hebrews 6:10.

With all this going for us, my dear, dear friends, stand your ground. And don't hold back. Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for Him is a waste of time or effort. 1 Corinthians 15:58 (MSG).

For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God is in you through the laying on of my hands. 2 Timothy 1:6 (NASB).

CONCLUSION

Each one of us was put on earth to make a contribution, each one of us is unique. Nobody else can be like you! As a born again Christian, we serve God by serving others, this is a clear indication that service is not optional - we are saved to serve!

DISCOVER MORE

1. What is stopping you from accepting God's call to you to serve Him?
2. List your passions - what do you enjoy doing?
3. List your past experiences - the things that have happened in your life that you may be able to refer to in order to help others.
4. How can you combine the things you enjoy doing, and your life experiences to best serve other people and the Church?
5. Which of the characteristics of a real servant challenge you the most and why?

I UNDERTAKE THROUGH FURTHER STUDY AND WITH GOD'S HELP, TO EMBARK ON A JOURNEY TO DISCOVER MY PURPOSE ON THIS EARTH, AND TO GET INVOLVED IN A MINISTRY WHERE I CAN SERVE GOD AND OTHERS.

THOUGHTS

[illegible]

3.03

THE CALL OF GOD

God has a plan for the life of every individual believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only does His call involve a wonderful purpose for us throughout eternity, but we also have an expression of that call upon the earth now.

“Who has saved us, and CALLED us with an holy calling... according to his own purpose and grace...” 2 Timothy 1:9.

“Now if we are children, then we are heirs –heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ ...And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE.” Romans 8:17,28. See also 29,30.

God has Called Us

1. From The Foundation Of The World

“For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.” Ephesians 1:4,5.

See also 2:10 and Matthew 25:34.

2. To Be Separated Unto Him

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

1 Peter 2:9. See also Romans 9:23-26.

3. To Fulfil His Purpose

“So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord...who has saved us and called us to a holy life...not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace.” 2 Tim 1:8,9.

See also Romans 8:28, Philippians 3:14.

Our Call on Earth

“Paul, a servant (slave) of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God.” Romans 1:1.

In describing his own ministry, the Apostle Paul gives us an example of the call that is upon EVERY believer. It has three aspects:

1. The General Calling: “A Slave Of Christ.”

Jesus paid a high price for us: His own life.

“For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord’s free man; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ’s slave. You were bought with a price...”

1 Corinthians 7:22,23. See also 1 Corinthians 6:19,20.

When Paul calls himself a slave of Jesus Christ, he is pointing to an even deeper meaning. According to the custom of his day, if a slave came to the time when he could be set free, but because of love for his master chose not to accept his freedom, he then received a mark pierced in his ear. This was the sign that he was a “love slave” to his master for life” (*Exodus 21:5,6; Deuteronomy 15:16,17*). The Apostle Paul, by choice, declared himself a love-slave of the Lord Jesus.

2. The Special Calling: “Called To Be An Apostle.”

Just as the Apostle Paul had a special calling upon his life, so does every believer. Paul was called to be an apostle, but there are many different callings in the Body of Christ. See *Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-16*. The special part that God has for us to play will be revealed to us as we earnestly seek His will.

3. The Particular Calling: “Separated To The Gospel.”

Within each special calling there is a particular calling.

For example, Peter and Paul were both apostles, but one was the apostle to the Jews and the other to the Gentiles.

See Romans 11:13; 1 Timothy 2:7; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

We move into our special and particular calling only as we prove ourselves as “love-slaves,” for we must first learn to be wholly under the authority of Christ before we can be SENT by him.

See Matthew 28:18,19.

Why Does He Call Us?

1. **Because The World Is In Darkness**

*"We know that we ourselves are children of God, and we also know that the world around us is under the power of the evil one."
1 John 5:19 (Phillips).*

See also Ephesians 6:12 and Colossians 1:13.

2. **Because People Are Hungry And In Need**

*"When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd"
Matthew 9:36.*

3. **To Prove His Wisdom**

"His intent was that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly realms, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord" Ephesians 3:10,11.

4. **Because 'The Time is Short'**

*"Do you not say, "Four months more and then the harvest?"
I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for the harvest!" John 4:35. See also John 9:4.*

What Happens When We Are Called?

1. **We Are Made By Him**

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, and I WILL MAKE YOU fishers of men." Matthew 4:19. See also Jeremiah 18:1-10.

2. **We Are Taught By Him**

*"But the Counsellor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." John 14:26.
See also 1 Corinthians 2:12; 1 John 2:27).*

3. **We Are Sent By Him**

*"As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world"
John 17:18. See also Mark 16:15.*

When God calls, He comes and interrupts our lives.

Some examples of this in the Scriptures are:

- **Moses** (a shepherd): *"Go set my people free."* Exodus 3:1-12.
- **Samuel** (was a boy serving in the temple): *"Wake up, speak for me."* 1 Samuel 3:1-19.
- **Ezekiel** (was a captive in a foreign land): *"Stand up, I am sending you."* Ezekiel 2:1-7.
- **Disciples** (businessmen/fishermen): *"Come, follow me."* Luke 5:27, 28; Matthew 4:18-22.
- **Saul** (an enemy of the Church): *"Go, I will tell you what you must do."* Acts 9:1-9.

CONCLUSION

It's not about us, God created each one of us and called us for a specific reason, and each one of us has an assignment to complete for Him whilst we are on this earth. To be called by God is a privilege and when we walk in that calling we bring glory to His Name.

DISCOVER MORE

1. Write a paragraph explaining what you believe to be God's special call on your life.
2. Honestly assess your life and make a note of those areas that are not yet wholly under the authority of Jesus Christ.
3. You have committed to God's plan for your life, what steps will you take to align those areas of your life mentioned above?
4. What does the term "separated to the Gospel" mean to you?
5. Give two reasons why God calls us.

NOW THAT I REALISE THAT GOD HAS HAD A PLAN FOR MY LIFE EVEN BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD, I NOW MAKE A TOTAL COMMITMENT TO THIS PLAN AND WILL FOLLOW THE LORD ALL THE WAY. I WILL TEACH OTHERS ALSO ABOUT GOD'S CALL FOR THEIR LIVES.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

3.04

THE FRUIT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The word "fruit" is often used metaphorically in the Scriptures, in our key verse for this study, the Fruit of the Holy Spirit consists of all the Christian virtues.

"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!" Galatians 5:22-23.

1. The fruit of the Spirit is the character of Christ produced by the Spirit of Christ in the believer's life.
2. It is the character of the Christian life that replaces the self-life.
3. It is the result of a carefully cultivated relationship with Jesus.

DIVINE CHARACTER DEFINED AS FRUIT

The character of Christ is produced by the Spirit of Christ in the believer's life. *"Because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires."* 2 Peter 1:4.

Jesus calls **us** to be 'fruitful,' producing spiritual fruit.

"You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit..." John 15:16.

Unlike spiritual gifts, Spiritual fruit is not produced directly by the Holy Spirit in us; its production follows as the result of a process beginning with obedience:

1. We obey the Holy Spirit
2. The Holy Spirit produces the Christ-life within us
3. Holiness and the divine nature are manifest through us.

THE PRINCIPLE OF ABIDING

Abiding means maintaining a close, obedient relationship with Jesus through which spiritual fruit is produced. It literally means to 'stay within the realms of'. We abide through the following:

Meditate on the word

Psalm 1:2 states that the place we give the Word of God in our lives will determine our degree of fruitfulness. Embrace spiritual disciplines which cultivate this abiding relationship. We do this by:

1. Hearing the anointed Word preached.
2. Spending time in prayer and worship.
3. Fellowshiping with other believers.

Live in abiding obedience

This secret to abiding in Christ involves every aspect of our person:

1. Believe in our spirits,
2. Obey in our souls,
3. Yield our flesh to the power of the Holy Spirit.

THE PRUNING PROCESS

1. Abide in Christ. *"I am the true grapevine, and my Father is the gardener." John 15:1.*
2. Bear fruit. *"He cuts off every branch of mine that doesn't produce fruit..." John 15:2a.*
3. Pruned to bear more fruit. *"...and he prunes the branches that do bear fruit so they will produce even more." John 15:2b.*

Pruning includes the chastening of God. *"Cutting away the leaves of self-indulgence." Hebrews 12:11.*

Yielding to the pruning process positions us to bear more fruit and even 'much fruit.' *John 15:8.* See also *Hebrews: 12:11.*

1. God is glorified when we bear much fruit. *John 15:8.*
2. God is the Husbandman so we need not fear pruning. *John 15:1.*
3. The Word is the pruning instrument. *Hebrews 4:12.*
4. Pruning is God's work, not man's.

Our fruitfulness increases as we embrace the pruning process:

1. Study the word.
2. Apply it to our lives.
3. Walk in obedience.
4. Yield to revelation of the Holy Spirit.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS:

DIVINE LOVE

“But the fruit of the Spirit is Love...” Galatians 5:22.

The preeminent Christian virtue: God is love

Evidence of true relationship with God. *John 13:35.*

Completely supersedes human affection

DIVINE JOY

“...Now I am coming to you. I told them many things while I was with them in this world so they would be filled with my joy.” John 17:13.

Love’s response to God’s mercies, blessings and benefits that we might become joyful ambassadors of the kingdom of God in the earth.

1. *For the Lord your God is living among you.*

He is a mighty saviour.

He will take delight in you with gladness.

With his love, he will calm all your fears.

He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.” Zephaniah 3:17.

2. Joy accompanies the baptism and infilling of the Holy Spirit – the result of the dynamic overflow of God when He takes up residence within us. See Acts 2:28, 13:50-52.

DIVINE PEACE

“But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ. For Christ himself has brought peace to us.” Ephesians 2:13-14.

A soul-harmony that comes from the Christ-rule living within us.

Freedom from an agitated, quarrelsome, contentious spirit; seeking to live peaceably with all men.

DIVINE PATIENCE

“...make every effort to respond to God’s promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.” 2 Peter 1:5-7.

Perseverance. Patience; the ability to endure graciously a less-than-desired state for an extended time

DIVINE GENTLENESS

“But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favouritism and is always sincere.” James 3:17

Kindness; the tangible expression of Christ’s love in our lives.
Matthew 11:29.

DIVINE GOODNESS

“I long to obey your commandments! Renew my life with your goodness.” Psalm 119:40.

The state of being virtuous, benevolent, generous, upright and righteous.

DIVINE FAITH

“God will make this happen, for he who calls you is faithful.” 1 Thessalonians 5:24.

Pistos (Greek) – faith; also faithfulness, including concepts of trustworthy, trustful, sure, and true.

FAITH: learning to fully rely on God, to stand on His Word in every situation. It is a calm, constant, unchanging trust in God’s character.

FAITHFULNESS: yielded dependence on the Holy Spirit resulting in personal dependability.

BOTH FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS involve dependence and reliance leading to trust.

TRUSTFULNESS: lack of suspicion, believing the best of every person.

DIVINE HUMILITY

“Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

Matthew 11:29.

The gentle humanity exhibited by those at peace with God, with themselves, and with their fellow men. A combination of gentleness, obedience, and submission expressed through a humble, unpretentious attitude.

DIVINE SELF CONTROL

“Better to be patient than powerful; better to have self-control than to conquer a city.” Proverbs 16:32.

Self control over every phase of life. The true kind of self-love: respecting oneself as the temple of the Holy Ghost and thus exercising control over impulses and motivations.

Self control frees from the tyranny of the flesh and carnal nature and qualifies believers to hold places of leadership. It is cultivated by submitting our appetites and desires to the Lordship of Jesus.

CONCLUSION

We have noted that the fruit of the Spirit, in essence, is love. However, the aspects of love, relating to their effect on our relationships, logically divide into three clusters as well. The first cluster – love, joy, peace – ripens toward God. The second cluster ripens toward others – patience, gentleness, goodness. The third cluster, those aspects of love that grow in the shade of the vine, ripen toward ourselves – meekness, faithfulness, self control. As the fruit of love develops in these three dimensions in our lives, we will bear the character of Christ.

DISCOVER MORE

1. What are you doing to cultivate your relationship with Jesus?
2. List the Fruit of the Spirit and honestly compare them to your character traits,
3. What action do you intend to take to rectify those areas where you fall short?
4. Consider the second cluster of fruit and honestly assess whether or not you display those three characteristics towards your spouse/those close to you.
5. Write a paragraph describing what "abiding in Christ" means to you.

I UNDERTAKE TO EXPLORE THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT FURTHER AND FROM TODAY TO MEASURE MY CHARACTER TRAITS AGAINST THOSE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND MAKE THE NECESSARY CHANGES SO THAT I CAN BE CHANGED INTO HIS IMAGE AND LIKENESS.

THOUGHTS

[illegible]

3.05

SPIRITUAL GIFTS 1

Simply stated, a spiritual gift is a skill or an ability that enables each Christian to perform a function in the body of Christ with ease and effectiveness. Spiritual gifts are neither identical to natural ability nor are they totally different. There are both similarities and differences.

Both gifts and talents have their source in God. *1 Corinthians 4:7*. Even the quality of the talent and gift may be similar. But there are some very definite differences between the two. Natural abilities are those talents which man receives at birth, spiritual gifts are rarely given at birth, although it does happen, the prophet Jeremiah is one example (*Jeremiah 1:5*) they are usually given after the conversion experience.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GIFTS AND FRUIT.

FRUIT: When you are “Born Again” you receive the Holy Spirit into your life. Your spirit is like a baby and needs to be fed so it can grow into the “Image of Christ.” Fruit takes time to grow.

GIFTS: are given freely to us from God. We may receive one or more at any time. You may often see a new Christian operating in a gift (e.g. healing) but they lack character or judgement. It means that God has given them a gift, but they still have to mature and grow fruit. We must be careful to guard our own hearts from criticism or jealousy.

WHO DOES GOD GIVE SPIRITUAL GIFTS TO?

Only Christians possess spiritual gifts. Only those who possess the Holy Spirit possess the gifts of the Spirit (*Romans. 8; 9,14,16,17; 1 Corinthians 12:7*). In direct contrast the Bible refers to the unbeliever as the one who does not have these gifts. (*1 Corinthians 14:16,23,24*). In addition, we should desire the gifts (*1 Corinthians 14: 1-6*), we should not be ignorant of the operation of the gifts (*1 Corinthians 12:1*),

we should be motivated by genuine love for the Body (1 Corinthians 13), and a pure desire to edify the Body (1 Corinthians 14:12) and we should seek to excel in the operation of the Gifts (1 Corinthians 14:12).

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS?

Gifts are given for serving God. Whenever God gives us an assignment, He also equips us with what we need to accomplish it. Your spiritual gifts are not given for your own benefit, but for the benefit of others, just as other people are given gifts for your benefit.

WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

1. They keep the body balanced. The variety of spiritual gifts keeps the body moving in many directions safeguarding us against extremes or preoccupations.
2. They keep the church healthy. Since every believer has a spiritual gift the burden of ministry can be shared equally.
3. They keep the focus clear. When spiritual gifts are working together God is glorified.

THREE DIFFERENT SOURCES OF GIFTS

Gifts of the Father (Basic Life Purpose and Motivation.)

“Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don’t think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ’s body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.”
Romans 12:3-8

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

“To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.” 1 Corinthians 12:8-11.

Gifts of the Son (To Facilitate & Equip the Body of the Church.)

“When he ascended to the heights, he led a crowd of captives and gave gifts to his people.”...Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ. This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.” Ephesians 4:11.

“Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church: first are apostles, second are prophets, third are teachers, then those who do miracles, those who have the gift of healing, those who can help others, those who have the gift of leadership, those who speak in unknown languages.” 1 Corinthians 12:28.

CATEGORIES OF GIFTS

Support Gifts

Apostleship

Prophecy

Evangelism

Shepherding (Pastor)

Teaching

Word of Knowledge

Service Gifts

Administration

Leading

Exhortation

Faith

Giving

Helps - Serving

Showing Mercy

Sign Gifts

Discerning of Spirits

Miracles

Healing

Gift of Tongues

Interpretation of Tongues

Word of wisdom

Support Gifts: The support gifts are foundational. Like the heart and lungs, they are vital to the body of Christ because they provide direction and leadership for the church.

Service Gifts: The service gifts work behind the scenes quietly encouraging and building up the body.

Sign Gifts: The sign gifts supernaturally manifest the Holy Spirit's power authenticating God's presence in the Church.

CONCLUSION

This list is not exhaustive, in the next lesson we will discuss the meaning of the gifts in more detail. We will also look at some practical tips to help you identify what your spiritual gifts are.

DISCOVER MORE

In preparation for Session 2, prayerfully make three lists:

- What activities are you passionate about?
- What things are you good at?
- What areas of ministry do you believe you could get involved in?

THOUGHTS

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3.06

SPIRITUAL GIFTS 2

In the last lesson we learnt where the spiritual gifts come from and who they are given to. Here we will briefly explore the different gifts.

ADMINISTRATION: *To pilot or steer a ship.*

Description: The divine enablement to understand what makes an organisation function, and the special ability to plan and execute procedures that accomplish the goals of the ministry.

Traits: Thorough; objective; responsible; organised; goal-oriented; efficient; conscientious.

APOSTLESHIP: *To be sent with a message.*

Description: The divine ability to start and oversee the development of new churches or ministry structures.

Traits: Adventurous; entrepreneurial; persevering; adaptable; culturally sensitive; risk taking; cause-driven.

CRAFTSMANSHIP: *To craft, design, build.*

Description: The divine enablement to creatively design and/or construct items to be used for ministry.

Traits: Creative; designer; handy; resourceful; practical; behind-the-scenes; helpful.

CREATIVE COMMUNICATION: *To communicate artistically*

Description: The divine enablement to communicate God's truth through a variety of art forms.

Traits: Expressive; imaginative; idea-oriented; artistic; creative; unconventional; sensitive.

DISCERNMENT: *To separate or make a distinction, differentiate.*

Description: The divine enablement to distinguish between truth and error. It is able to discern the spirits, differentiating between good and evil, right and wrong.

Traits: Perceptive; insightful; sensitive; intuitive; decisive; challenging; truthful.

ENCOURAGEMENT: *To come alongside.*

Description: The divine enablement to present truth so as to strengthen, comfort, or urge to action those who are discouraged or wavering in their faith.

Traits: Positive; motivating; challenging; affirming; reassuring; supportive; trustworthy.

EVANGELISM: *To bring good news.*

Description: The divine enablement to effectively communicate the Gospel to unbelievers so they respond in faith and move toward discipleship.

Traits: Sincere; candid; respected; influential; spiritual; confident; commitment-oriented.

FAITH: *To trust, have confidence, believe*

Description: The divine enablement to act on God's promises with confidence and unwavering belief in God's ability to fulfil His purposes.

Traits: Prayerful; optimistic; trusting; assured; positive; inspiring; hopeful.

GIVING: *To give part of, share.*

Description: The divine enablement to contribute money and resources to the work of the Lord with cheerfulness and liberality. People with this gift do not ask "How much money do I need to give to God?" but, "How much money do I need to live on?"

Traits: Stewardship-oriented; responsible; resourceful; charitable; trusts in God; disciplined.

HEALING: *To restore instantaneously.*

Description: The divine enablement to be God's means for restoring people to wholeness.

Traits: Compassionate; trusts in God; prayerful; full of faith; humble; responsible; obedient.

HELPS: *To take the place of someone.*

Description: The divine enablement to accomplish practical and necessary tasks which free-up, support, and meet the needs of others.

Traits: Available; willing; helpful; reliable; loyal; dependable; whatever-it-takes attitude.

HOSPITALITY: *To love strangers.*

Description: The divine enablement to care for people by providing fellowship, food, and shelter.

Traits: Friendly; gracious; inviting; trusting; caring; responsive; warm.

INTERCESSION: *To plead on behalf of someone.*

Description: The divine enablement to consistently pray on behalf of and for others, seeing frequent and specific results.

Traits: Advocate; caring; sincere; peacemaker; trustworthy; burden-bearer; spiritually sensitive.

INTERPRETATION: *To translate, interpret.*

Description: The divine enablement to make known to the body of Christ the message of one who is speaking in tongues.

Traits: Obedient; responsive; devoted; responsible; spiritually sensitive; discerning; wise.

KNOWLEDGE: *To know.*

Description: The divine enablement to bring truth to the body through a revelation or biblical insight.

Traits: Inquisitive; responsive; observant; insightful; reflective; studious; truthful.

LEADERSHIP: *To stand before.*

Description: The divine enablement to cast vision, motivate, and direct people to harmoniously accomplish the purposes of God.

Traits: Influential; diligent; visionary; trustworthy; persuasive; motivating; goal-setter.

MERCY: *To have compassion.*

Description: The divine enablement to cheerfully and practically help those who are suffering or are in need, compassion moved to action.

Traits: Empathetic; caring; responsible; kind; compassionate; sensitive; burden-bearing.

MIRACLES: *To do powerful deeds.*

Description: The divine enablement to authentic the ministry and message of God through supernatural interventions which glorify Him.

Traits: Bold; venturesome; authoritative; God-fearing; convincing; prayerful; responsive.

PROPHECY: *To speak before.*

Description: The divine enablement to reveal truth and proclaim it in a timely and relevant manner for understanding, correction, repentance, or edification. There may be immediate or future implications.

Traits: Discerning; compelling; uncompromising; outspoken; authoritative; convicting; confronting.

SHEPHERDING: *To shepherd a flock.*

Description: The divine enablement to nurture, care for, and guide people toward on-going spiritual maturity and becoming like Christ.

Traits: Influencing; nurturing; guiding; discipling; protective; supportive; relational.

TEACHING: *To instruct.*

Description: The divine enablement to understand, clearly explain, and apply the Word of God, causing greater Christ-likeness in the lives of listeners.

Traits: Disciplined; perceptive; teachable; authoritative; practical; analytical; articulate.

TONGUES: *Tongue, language.*

Description: The divine enablement to speak, worship, or pray in a language unknown to the speaker. People with the gift may receive a spontaneous message from God which is made known to His body through the gift of Interpretation.

Traits: Sensitive; prayerful; responsive; trusting; devoted; spontaneous; receptive.

WISDOM: *To apply truth practically.*

Description: The divine enablement to apply spiritual truth effectively to meet a need in a specific situation.

Traits: Sensible; insightful; practical; fair; experienced; common sense.

PRACTICAL TIPS TO HELP YOU IDENTIFY YOUR GIFT

PASSION: An important part of discovering your *servant profile* is understanding your passion. When you have a passion for an area of ministry, you are more enthusiastic and motivated to serve. Passion is the God-given desire that compels us to make a difference in a particular ministry.

FAITH: The search begins with faith. You must believe that you are gifted. God doesn't ask man to do what he hasn't equipped him to do. Listen to what Jesus says to his disciples *"you didn't choose me. I choose you. I appointed you to go and produce lovely fruit always so that no matter what you ask from the Father, using my name, he will give it to you"* John 15:16. Accept it by faith. You are gifted. Thank God for the gifts he has given you and continue your search.

PRAYER: The Lord has already given you the means to discover the unknown. *"You do not have because you do not ask"* James 4:2. Pray for understanding. "But I have asked God to show me my gift. I want to know what it is" Perhaps you have asked God this; perhaps you have a desire to know. But your gifts may still be hidden because of wrong motives. God doesn't want us to pray for understanding in order to satisfy our curiosity. He wants us to ask with commitment. Our attitude must be "Lord show me my gifts so that I can begin to develop and use them". That's commitment. Tell the Lord you'll use your gifts as He reveals them to you. Be prepared for Him to open your eyes to some exciting potential. You will soon find opportunities for service.

AWARENESS: Besides faith and prayer, be aware of what gifts are available to you.

RESPONSIBILITY: In what type of service are you presently involved? You may be a Sunday school teacher, youth leader, praise and worship member, or evangelism team member. What is important is that you are involved in something. Why? Because as you serve the Lord He'll show you what you can and cannot do. And its possible that he will reveal new gifts to you.

COMMON SENSE:

1. Consider your desires, what do you enjoy doing?
2. Consider the needs of others. What need do you see that you want to do something about?
3. Consider your experience. What past ministries have you enjoyed? In what areas of service have you already had some success?
4. Another help in discovering your gift is in the confirmation of others. What do others say about you? In what areas do people look up to you?

CONCLUSION:

Service is for a lifetime; your unique contribution is serving in a way that expresses your uniqueness of passion, spiritual gifts, and personal style. Personal style has to do with how you do what God has called you to do, it is God given and there is no right or wrong personal style.

DISCOVER MORE

1. Explain in your own words the Gift of Creative Communication.
2. Prayerfully consider and note down your personal passion/s.
3. Analyse each of the spiritual gifts you have learned about and make a note of those you think describe you.
4. What ministries can you get involved in that will enable you to flow in your gifts?
5. Write an action plan to ensure that you set the process in motion.

BASED ON WHAT I HAVE LEARNED, I UNDERTAKE TO DISCOVER MY SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND BEGIN TO USE THEM TO BENEFIT THE CHURCH AND BRING GLORY TO GOD, AND TO BECOME AN ACTIVE, INVOLVED PARTNER.

THOUGHTS

[illegible]

3.07

THE BODY OF CHRIST

The Bible exhorts us in *Hebrews 10:25* not to give up meeting together. The Christian gathering is called the Church; all the believers in the world are also called the Church. Some of the descriptions of the Church mentioned in Scripture are Members of God's Household, the Temple of God, the Bride of Christ and the Body of Christ.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

The English 'Church' comes from the Greek word *kuriakos* which means 'belonging to the Lord', but it also stands for another Greek word, *ekklesia* which means 'called out', and denotes 'an assembly.' The word *ekklesia* was adopted in the New Testament times to refer to the local assembly or congregation of Christians meeting together. The other is the universal church composed of every believer in Jesus Christ.

WHO MAKES UP THE CHURCH?

Nowhere in Scripture does the word 'Church' identify a place of worship, but rather a group (or body) of believers. In the Old Testament the Church was a group of 'gathered together' Hebrew believers, a congregation. In the New Testament the Church technically was a group of 'called out' Christian believers. The Church therefore, consists of those who have repented of their sins and come to the Lord to serve Him.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

- To be entrusted with the oracles of God. *Romans 3:2*.
- To preach the Word. *2 Timothy 4:2*.
- To bring peace and reconciliation. *Psalms 22:27-31; 2 Cor. 5:19*.

- To bring spiritual enlightenment. *Isaiah 2:3*.
- To bring moral transformation. *Isaiah 32: 3-4; Zephaniah 3:9*.
- To share the love of Christ. *John 13:34-35*.
- To be the salt and light of the world. *Matthew 5:13-16*.
- To give praise and worship to our Lord. *Exodus 20:3; Matthew 4:10*

THE BODY OF CHRIST

Jesus Christ is the ‘cornerstone’ or the foundation of the Church. *Ephesians 2:20*.

1 Corinthians 12:27 tells us that we are the body of Christ, and each one is a part of it. In *Romans 12: 4-8*, Paul uses the concept of the human body to teach how Christians should live and work together. Just as the parts of the body function under the direction of the brain, so Christians are to work together under the command and human body to emphasise how important each part is. Even if a seemingly insignificant part of the body is taken away the whole body becomes less effective. Each part has a specific function that is necessary to the body as a whole.

How many of us who are Christians know that we are not only believers but also members of the body of Christ? Members of the body of Christ belong to and support one another. The body of Christ is not just a teaching; it needs to be entered into experientially.

God allows us to be individuals, but He does not allow us to be individualistic! Before we enter experientially into the body of Christ, we are full of individualism (leading ones own life in ones own way).

At Pentecost Peter preached, and three thousand people were saved in one day, the eleven other apostles stood up with Peter. *Acts 2:14-40*. Did the other apostles ever jealously complain, saying that if Peter could save that many people they too should be able to do the same? Or did Peter ever boast, saying that he could save people and the others could not? We know that no such thing ever happened.

God does not look for an individual vessel but is out to get a corporate one. If you truly see the body of Christ, you will neither be jealous nor proud. Whether the work is done by you or by me or by others makes no difference. All of His body matters, nothing is purely individual.

We therefore need to see ourselves not only as believers but even more so as a member. I am a member; I am not the whole - not even the half - but only a small part of Christ's body.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE BODY OF CHRIST

Ephesians 5:23 says that the head of the Church is Jesus Christ. In *Acts 20:28* the government of the Church was committed by the Apostles to Overseers, Elders and Deacons. *1 Timothy 3* and *Titus 1* clearly describe the qualifications for one to hold such a position in the Body of Christ. Their responsibility before God is to shepherd believers.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF BELIEVERS TO LEADERS

- To encourage. *1 Corinthians 16:10-11*.
- To esteem. *Philippians 2:29; 1 Timothy 5:17*.
- To imitate their example. *1 Corinthians 11:1; 1 Peter 5:3*.
- To obey and submit. *Hebrews 13:17*.
- To reimburse. *1 Corinthians 9:7-23; Galatians 6:6; Philippians 4:10-18*.
- To seek instruction from. *Malachi 2:7*.

THE EARLY CHURCH - OUR EXAMPLE

They devoted themselves to the Apostles and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. *Acts 2:41-42*. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. *Acts 8:4*. The Apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts, and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ. *Acts 5:41-42*.

CONCLUSION

To be part of the Body of Christ is both an awesome privilege and a responsibility to be taken seriously. Where there is unity God commands a blessing, where there is sin in the church all members are affected. Each member is important - we should all use the gifts we have been given and encourage others to do the same. If we don't, the body of believers will be less effective.

DISCOVER MORE

1. Prior to this teaching, what did being part of the Church mean to you?
2. In what ways has your thinking been changed?
3. Do you see yourself as an individual in the body, or individualistic? Why?
4. List three reasons why you chose to join our Church.
5. To help make Church more meaningful to you consider: arrive early for the Service to pray for the proceedings; bring your Bible, make notes on the sermon and apply them to your life, meditate on the words of the choruses/songs.

NOW THAT I UNDERSTAND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BEING PART OF THE BODY OF CHRIST, I RESOLVE TO TAKE MY ROLE SERIOUSLY AND TO GET INVOLVED SO THAT THE PART OF THE BODY WHERE I HAVE BEEN PLANTED CAN OPERATE MORE EFFECTIVELY.

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3.08

WAITING ON GOD

As Christians we have been gifted to perform a function in the body of Christ however, fear of your inadequacies will keep you from being successful. Do you believe you are too weak to be a strong leader? Perhaps you have already been thrust into a position and are facing frustration or even failure. If so, take heart. God has good news for you.

GOD USES THE WEAK

When God calls and gifts a person, He doesn't choose them on the basis of how clever, talented or educated they may be. In fact, these are things which God may have to modify (or sometimes destroy) before he can use us. The Bible says, *"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."* 1 Corinthians 1:19. In 1 Corinthians 1:25-28, the Apostle Paul is teaching us that through our weakness, our faltering, our failings, God reveals His wisdom. Look at *Psalms 8:2* – God uses the praises of babes and sucklings to defeat His enemies. It's as if God takes delight in humiliating Satan by using the weakest members of His creation to still the enemy.

THE PEOPLE GOD CHOOSES

Look at the people God chooses to do particular jobs!

Paul: Paul had studied the scriptures under Gamaliel (who was a great master teacher). And as a candidate for the Sanhedrin (a prestigious Jewish men's group who interpreted the religious laws in Israel) Paul had to memorise and quote the first five books of the Old Testament. From a human viewpoint, no one could have been more suited to the task of evangelising the Jews but God sent him to the ignorant, outcast Gentiles who had little appreciation for Paul's great learning and mastery of Jewish law – to convince people that Jesus

was their Savior, Paul had to rely on the Holy Spirit. *Galatians 1:17, Philippians 3:4-8, 1 Corinthians 2:4.*

Peter: Though Peter opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, he remained in Jerusalem among the elite Jews of the Roman Empire. He had no learning or education – he was a simple fisherman, yet God qualified for the job by the power of the Holy Spirit. *Acts 4:13.*

TURN WEAKNESS TO BLESSING

1. **Depend more on God.** Our spiritual blindness and lameness should drive us to a prayerful dependent relationship with God. If we respond in this way, we will find “He gives power to the faint, and to those who have no might ... He increases strength.” *Isaiah 40:29.* This attracts His attention and draws Him to us, causing Him to gloriously manifest His power through us.
2. **Confess the Word.** What psychologists call an “inferiority complex” is usually a carnal preoccupation with ourselves. It says, “I am no good! God can never use me.” Instead we must say about ourselves what the Bible says, and then we will be overcomers: “*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens (empowers, enables) me.*” *Philippians 4:13; Luke 10:19.*
3. **Draw near in Prayer.** The kind of weakness to which God responds is that which produces a sense of dependence on Him. This sense of need will help in the development of a healthy devotional and prayer life. Recognise that God is your strength and you need not be afraid. *Psalms 27:1.*
4. **Exchange your strength for His strength.** “*Those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.*” *Isaiah 40:30, 31.* The key word in this verse is “renew” – as we wait upon the Lord, He will take away our strength and replace it with His own. It’s not a combining of our strength with His but a complete removal of our strength to put on His. What does the Lord ask us to do before He will exchange strength with us? Acknowledge your need. Look at David in *Psalms 34:6* or Asaph in *Psalms 73:22* who humbly acknowledged their need and weakness. There is a powerful promise for all who do the same in *Isaiah 41:17-20* – “*When the poor and needy seek water...*”

LEARN TO WAIT ON GOD

“Those who trust in the Lord will find new [exchange] strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles.” Isaiah 40:30.

Two things to consider:

1. **Waiting God’s time.** Take no major action until God shows you it is time to act. Learn what the will of God is for you, not your will. Don’t say “Let’s go now!” rather, learn to wait. God acts in his own time, not yours. Often, the time of waiting is a time of training and equipping. Even the sending of Jesus took place *“in the fullness of time...” Galatians 4:4* – God controls the times and seasons and will show us when the time is right.
2. **Waiting in prayer and fasting.** *“Don’t let those who trust in you be ashamed because of me” Psalm 69:6.* If we are to exchange our limited strength for His unlimited power, we must establish a consistent daily devotional habit. This is difficult for a leader with pressure of daily schedules and activities.

How do daily devotional times help? We are like a pitcher, filled with the water of our own strength. As we spend time with God each day in prayer and reading the Bible, God begins dropping in stones of His strength and power. These stones of grace begin displacing the water of negative unbelieving attitudes, those ‘I can do it without God’ attitudes.

How should I conduct my devotional time? The following is helpful:

- **Confess sin:** ask the Lord to bring any unconfessed sins to mind. Acknowledge them, ask for and receive forgiveness. *1 John 1:9,10.*
- **Praise God:** give thanks and praise to God for who He is and what He has done. *Psalm 100.*
- **Surrender the day to God:** tell God how much you need His direction and guidance. Obey any instructions you feel God gives you in prayer. *Psalm 143:8.*
- **Pray:** for family, church, all believers. Pray for leaders, missionaries, evangelism. Pray in other tongues – welcome the Holy Spirit in your prayers and speak in tongues. *Ephesians 1:16-19*
- **Write down** what the Lord gives you and do it! – Write what you feel God is saying to you and take obedient action. *Jeremiah 30:2*

How do trials help us? Peter warned us, *“don’t be surprised at the fiery trials you are going through, as if something strange were happening to you.” 1 Peter 4:12*. Nowhere do we hit resistance like we do when we decide to establish a quiet time. As we wait on God, He turns on the fire of trials, tests and temptations and our lives heat up. Two things result: (1) Sin and self are purged away; (2) God's power begins working in us. It's like boiling a pot of water on the stove – it's the heat of God that brings about the boiling of water in our lives. We experience inner change, our motives are purified, our desire to sin is burned away – through no action of our own...it's God!

CONCLUSION

God equips those He calls, ours is to be obedient to His call and then to wait on Him to develop us and use us as He sees fit. Waiting on God develops patience in us.

DISCOVER MORE

1. What personal reservations do you have regarding your ability to serve in the Church?
2. How do you plan to deal with your perceived weaknesses in light of this teaching?
3. Rewrite *Isaiah 40:30-31* in your own words.
4. What two concepts must you consider when learning to wait on God?
5. Briefly describe how you should conduct your devotional time.

IT IS MY HEART'S DESIRE TO BE USED OF GOD, AND I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT IN MY OWN STRENGTH I CANNOT DO IT, I THEREFORE COMMIT TO TAKING ALL THE NECESSARY STEPS TO TURN MY WEAKNESS TO BLESSING.

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3.09

HEARING GOD'S VOICE

Is God still speaking today? Is it possible to hear the voice of God? Some believe that God can guide us and give direction when we need it. Others say God only speaks to us by what we read in the Bible. But, the truth is that God still speaks to us today by His Holy Spirit just as He did in Bible times. We are admonished *"Anyone with ears to hear must listen (present tense) to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches."* Revelation 2:7; 3:22.

THE NEED TO HEAR

Jesus said, *"People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God"* Matthew 4:4. The word 'comes' speaks of a present-continuing function. That means something that happened in the past, is happening in the present and will happen in the future. God, Who spoke in ages past, is speaking in the present and will continue to speak in the future. God is not a dumb God! Oh how we need to hear His voice! We can only have the life and blessing of the Lord in our churches today by hearing every word that continues to proceed from God's mouth to our hearts.

To Know God's Will: Every Christian faces this question, "What does God expect me to do and what am I to leave up to God to do? Where does my responsibility end and God's begin?" *Luke 12:47* clearly teaches that God holds His servants responsible to know His will and to take action to do the will of God. God wants His people who know and do their Lord's will. The will of God establishes the limits of our responsibility. If we don't know His will, we will be judged less harshly, though we will still be judged. To do the will of God we must know His will. To know His will - we must hear His voice. It's that simple!

HINDRANCES TO HEARING

1. **Hearts not perfect before God:** *"The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him."* 2 Chronicles 16:9. The people in Bible times understood the heart to be the seat of the emotions or affections; the motives, and the intentions of the person. God is vitally concerned with these things.
 - **The emotions or affections.** If our affections are set on things on the earth rather than things in Heaven, this offends God. *1 John 2:15.* The Bible tells us to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. *Matthew 22:37.*
 - **Impure motives.** If our motives (or motivation) are impure like the prophet Balaam (*Numbers 23*) then God will severely judge us. Balaam bartered God-given miraculous gifts for money, fame and prestige.
 - **Wrong intentions.** Ananias and Sapphira (*Acts 5*) were pretending to give all their money to the work of the Lord, but were really keeping back much of it for themselves. Because their intent was wrong, God killed them.
We need to guard our affections, motives and intentions to make sure they are pure. God knows our hearts. *1 Samuel 16:7.*
We can't hide these things from the Lord. And if we do not keep our hearts right in His sight, we will not hear God's voice.
2. **Hardness of Heart:** *"Today, if you want to hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."* Hebrews 4:7. Unforgiveness not only affects our physical bodies, but it stops God's voice. Forgiveness on the other hand, brings healing and a return of God's voice.
3. **An Unregenerate Condition:** Many do not hear the voice of God, because although they believe and go to Church and possibly even hold positions of leadership in the Church, they have never been born again of the Spirit of God. There is a difference between saving faith and intellectual agreement. When we are born again, our Spirits witness with this fact. *Romans 8:16.* Once you are born again and you know you are, you are a candidate for the Lord to start speaking to you. You can hear His voice. Jesus said *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them and they follow me."* John 10:27.

4. **Disobedience** stops God's voice: To hear God's voice doesn't mean just to hear with your ears. It means to respond obediently to what He said. A great hindrance to our obedient response is pride. Many of us have been held back from doing what God is saying to us because we fear what others will think. *Proverbs 29:25*. Many who desire to do the will of God are held back by fear of man. Preconceptions also hinder obedience. When things do not happen as we thought they will - it undermines our image and we, like Naaman (*2 Kings 5*), stalk away angry and resentful because God did not conform to our preconceptions.
5. **Being bound by tradition** stops us hearing God's voice: Our theology (a preconception about God) often comes into conflict with the Spirit's guidance in our life - and when it does, we face the grave danger of missing the will of God. Do not let your traditions keep you from doing what God says. Hear and obey the voice of God despite opposition and criticism. *"Be sure that you make everything according to the pattern I have shown you here on the mountain."* *Hebrews 8:5*

CONCLUSION

It is God's will that we hear His voice. He spoke audibly to Samuel (*1 Samuel 3*). Many of us, like Samuel, don't realise that it's God's voice we are hearing. The secret to Isaiah's ministry was that he heard and obeyed God's voice. *Isaiah 6:8-9*. You are important to God and He created you for a purpose. *Jeremiah 1:4-5*.

DISCOVER MORE

1. Are you satisfied in your Spirit that you are truly born again?
If not please speak to someone who can help you be sure.
2. When last did you hear the voice of God? What did He say to you?
3. What are the hindrances to hearing God's voice?
4. Which of those hindrances do you feel are active in your own life?
5. Ask the Lord to show you if you are holding unforgiveness.
If He reveals someone to you, choose to release that person.

**I COMMIT TO ASK THE LORD TO DELIVER ME FROM MY DISOBEDIENCE,
PRECONCEPTIONS, TRADITIONS AND HARDNESS OF HEART WHICH PREVENT
ME FROM HEARING AND OBEYING HIS VOICE.**

THOUGHTS

[illegible]

3.10

OBEYING GOD'S VOICE

We normally fall under five principal authorities which require obedience: first, as a child (*Colossians 3:20*); then in school (*Proverbs 5:12-13*); then in industry or business (*1 Peter 2:18*); fourthly, the government (*Romans 13:1-2*) and lastly, and principally, God (*Genesis 26:5*). The supreme test of faith in God is obedience. He who obeys because he loves God is very wise.

LOGOS AND RHEMA

There are two Greek words translated as 'word' in our English Bibles, 'Logos' and 'Rhema'. Logos often refers to the written word. *Rhema* often refers to the living or life-giving word. Jesus said, "*The Scriptures say [logos], 'People do not live by bread alone, but by every word [rhema] that comes from the mouth of God.'*" *Matthew 4:4*. It was said of the Bereans. "*And the people of Berea were more open-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they listened eagerly to Paul's message [rhema]. They searched the Scriptures [logos] day after day to see if Paul and Silas were teaching the truth.*" *Acts 17:11*.

These verses illustrate the inseparable bond between the logos and the *rhema*. They always work together. We must know the Scriptures (logos) to judge whether the word (*rhema*) that comes to us is really from the Lord - or some other spirit. The Holy Spirit (*rhema*) and the Holy Bible (*logos*) always agree.

A Rhema from God: A *rhema* is usually a communication from God designed and empowered to apply to a specific situation. When we are reading the Bible and a certain verse suddenly strikes us with power, we are receiving a *rhema* (living word) for our personal need.

When we have been praying for God's wisdom or God's answer for an insoluble problem and suddenly God speaks the solution into our hearts in clear practical terms which solve the problem that is a

rhema. When we are in the midst of some ministry-related activity and we have a sudden impression to take some specific action, which results in great blessing that is a *rhema*.

A word of caution: We should not assume every urge, impression or feeling is a *rhema*. No *rhema* will ever be contrary to the Scripture (*logos*) - God's eternal Word.

When God speaks to you - faith comes. If you will obediently respond to what God has said, miracles will take place for you just like they did in Bible times.

RELATIONSHIP - NOT FORMULA

We need to realise that God's life-giving word seldom comes in response to religious forms or formulas. Jesus healed one blind man by mixing dust and spittle, forming mud and applying it to the blind man's eyes. The blind man was then sent to the pool of Siloam to wash the mud out of his eyes and was healed. *John 9*. If we mixed dust and spit and put it in blind men's eyes, probably all they would get is mud in their eyes. If God told us to do it (as He told Jesus), then the blind would be healed. It is not the formula. It is hearing God's voice and taking obedient action in response to what God has said. On other occasions, Jesus healed the blind with other means. *Matthew 9:29; Mark 10:52*.

A proper relationship with His heavenly Father was the secret of Jesus' ministry. Jesus said *"And the one who sent me is with me—he [my Father] has not deserted me. For I always do what pleases him. John 8:29*. Because the condition of Jesus' heart was always right with His heavenly Father, He could easily hear and obey His Father's voice.

Jesus made it clear, *"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself. He does only what he sees the Father doing."* *John 5:19*.

THE REAL THING - NOT SUBSTITUTES

It's all about God's Word and Spirit, not academic knowledge. Our Christian training should be turning out men and women of faith like Stephen and Philip, Phoebe and Priscilla - who will challenge the powers of darkness and triumph in the process. Then we will see *"the Good News about the Kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world..." Matthew 24:14*.

If we continue substituting academic knowledge for the *rhema* of God, we are destined to failure. One of the great dangers of higher education is turning out people of pride instead of faith. To paraphrase Paul *“while knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church.” 1 Corinthians 8:1.*

THE MESSAGE - NOT THE MORTAR

As you study Church history, you discover the more backslidden the church, the more the leaders invested in massive structures which did little to help people or to spread the gospel. Observing how the church operates you would be left with the distinct impression that Jesus' last words were, “Go into all the world and build cathedrals for every creature.” The top priority of many church leaders is to “build a bigger barn”. God's priority is summed up in what Jesus said *“Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.” Mark 16:15.* God puts the priority on the message not on the mortar. God puts emphasis on helping people whereas man puts the emphasis on more mortar (buildings). We must re-prioritise our resources to do what God has said in the Bible, and what He is telling us by His Spirit to do.

CONCLUSION

As born-again believers we have teamed up with an all powerful God. By ourselves, we couldn't shake anything. But working together with God, learning and listening to hear His voice, we can bruise that old serpent, Satan, and set the prisoners of sin, sickness and poverty free. (*Romans 16:20*). When God speaks we obey. Mary, the mother of Jesus said something we should take heed to: *“Do whatever he tells you” John 2:5.*

DISCOVER MORE

1. In your own words, describe the difference between *logos* and *rhema*.
2. Relate an incident when you received a *rhema* word from God.
3. How can we be sensitive to the voice of the Father and increase in faith?
4. What is more important academic knowledge or God's Word? Why?
5. Why must we re-prioritise our resources?

LORD JESUS, I WANT TO HEAR YOUR VOICE. LET FAITH COME TO ME NOW BY HEARING YOUR VOICE. I SURRENDER MY LIFE, MY CHURCH, MY MINISTRY TO YOU. GUIDE ME BY YOUR WORD (RHEMA) AND TRUTH (LOGOS). AMEN.

THOUGHTS

[illegible]

3.11

UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE

The Bible is not merely a collection of ancient writings; it is God's supernatural revelation to mankind. Written over approximately sixteen centuries by more than forty authors from vastly different backgrounds, it presents one unified message: God's redemption of humanity through Jesus Christ. Kings, shepherds, prophets, fishermen, physicians and scholars all contributed to its pages, yet its message remains astonishingly consistent. This unity points beyond human authorship to the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible declares itself to be living and active. Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away."* Matthew 24:35. Scripture is not simply information to be studied intellectually; it is truth intended to transform lives. When approached with humility and faith, the Word of God becomes alive in the heart of the believer, revealing God's character, exposing sin, bringing wisdom and drawing us into deeper fellowship with Him.

The Scriptures are divided into two major sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament lays the foundation, revealing God's holiness, His covenant with Israel and mankind's need for redemption. The New Testament reveals the fulfilment of those promises through Jesus Christ. The Old Testament anticipates Christ; the New Testament unveils Him. Together they form one complete story of salvation history.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Bible is its intricate design. The Bible could be described as an integrated message system from outside our time domain. Though written across many centuries, its books contain patterns, prophecies and connections that no human mind could have orchestrated alone. Themes introduced in Genesis are completed in Revelation. Symbols, types and prophetic shadows in the Old Testament find their fulfilment in

Christ. The sacrificial system, the Passover lamb, the tabernacle, the priesthood and the feasts of Israel all point prophetically toward Jesus.

Biblical prophecy is one of the strongest evidences for the divine inspiration of Scripture. Hundreds of detailed prophecies concerning nations, kings, cities and the Messiah were written centuries before their fulfilment. The Old Testament foretold Christ's birth, ministry, rejection, crucifixion and resurrection long before He came. Scripture also reveals God's sovereign control over history. Unlike any other religious text, the Bible places itself on the line through predictive prophecy, demonstrating that God sees the end from the beginning.

SUPERNATURAL STRUCTURE

The Bible is also unique in its structure. Beneath the surface of the text lies a remarkable unity of design. Genealogies, names, numbers and historical events often carry deeper spiritual significance. Every detail in Scripture matters because God is deliberate in His communication. The more deeply one studies the Bible, the more its supernatural design becomes evident.

The central figure of the Bible is Jesus Christ. From Genesis to Revelation, the Scriptures testify of Him. In the Old Testament He is foreshadowed through types and symbols; in the Gospels He is revealed in human flesh; in Acts He is preached; in the Epistles He is explained; and in Revelation He is unveiled as the coming King. Jesus Himself declared that the Scriptures testify of Him (*John 5:39*).

The Bible also presents a coherent view of reality. It explains the origin of the universe, the nature of mankind, the problem of evil and God's plan for redemption. Scripture teaches that man is not an accident of nature but a creation made in the image of God. Sin entered the world through rebellion against God, bringing death and separation. Yet from the beginning, God promised a Redeemer who would restore what had been lost.

Unlike human philosophy, the Bible does not merely offer moral advice; it reveals God's plan of salvation. Salvation is not achieved through human effort or religious works but through grace by faith in Jesus Christ. The death and resurrection of Christ stand at the centre of history and form the foundation of the Christian faith. Every page of Scripture ultimately points to God's redemptive purpose through His Son.

HISTORICALLY RELIABLE

The Bible is historically reliable and astonishingly preserved. Despite persecution, attempts to destroy it and centuries of scepticism, Scripture has endured unchanged in its essential message. Archaeology repeatedly confirms biblical people, places and events. Discoveries throughout history have consistently strengthened confidence in the reliability of the biblical record.

Yet the greatest proof of Scripture is not merely intellectual but personal. The Word of God changes lives. Through the Bible, countless people have encountered forgiveness, freedom, purpose and eternal hope. *Hebrews 4:12* declares that the Word of God is “*living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.*” Scripture penetrates the human heart, revealing truth and drawing people to God.

To understand the Bible properly, it must be read as a unified whole with Jesus Christ at the centre. Scripture interprets Scripture. The Holy Spirit illuminates the Word to believers, helping them grow in wisdom, discernment and spiritual maturity. The Bible is not simply a book to admire — it is a revelation to believe, obey and live by.

God has spoken through His Word, and His message stands above every human philosophy, culture and generation. The Bible remains the most extraordinary book ever written because behind its pages is the voice of the eternal God.

OLD TESTAMENT

The Law (Pentateuch): *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.*

These books lay the foundation of God’s relationship with mankind. They reveal creation, the fall of man, God’s covenant with Israel and the sacrificial system that ultimately points to Jesus Christ as the perfect Lamb of God and fulfilment of the Law.

History: *Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.*

These books record Israel’s journey in the Promised Land, their victories, failures, kings and exile. They demonstrate mankind’s continual need for a righteous King, ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Poetry and Wisdom: *Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon.*

These books explore worship, suffering, wisdom, love and the meaning of life. They reveal the heart of man's relationship with God and prophetically point to Christ as the source of wisdom, peace, joy and eternal love.

Major Prophets: *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel.*

These prophetic books contain warnings, visions and promises concerning Israel, judgement and restoration. They include some of the clearest prophecies about the coming Messiah, His suffering, His Kingdom and His eternal reign.

Minor Prophets: *Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.*

Though shorter in length, these books carry powerful prophetic messages calling God's people to repentance. They point forward to the coming Day of the Lord and prepare the way for Jesus Christ.

NEW TESTAMENT

The Gospels: *Matthew, Mark, Luke, John.*

These books reveal the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each Gospel presents a unique perspective of Jesus as the promised Messiah, Servant, Son of Man and Son of God.

History: *Acts.*

Acts records the birth and expansion of the early Church through the power of the Holy Spirit after Christ's resurrection and ascension. It shows how the message of Jesus spread throughout the world.

Paul's Letters (Epistles): *Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.*

These letters explain the meaning of Christ's death and resurrection and teach believers how to live by faith, grow spiritually and function as the Body of Christ.

General Letters: *Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude.*

These letters encourage believers to remain faithful, mature in holiness and defend the truth of the Gospel. They deepen understanding of Jesus as High Priest, Saviour and coming Judge.

Prophecy: *Revelation*

Revelation unveils Jesus Christ in His glory as King of kings and Lord of lords. It reveals God's final victory over evil, the fulfilment of prophecy and the establishment of Christ's eternal Kingdom.

DISCOVER MORE

1. What evidence convinces you that the Bible is more than a human book?
2. How does the Old Testament point toward Jesus Christ?
3. Read *Luke 24:27* and reflect on how all Scripture centres on Christ.
4. Study one Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament and its fulfilment in the New Testament.
5. Begin a habit of daily Bible reading and memorise one verse each week.

I RECOGNISE THAT THE BIBLE IS THE INFALLIBLE WORD OF GOD, AND I ACKNOWLEDGE THAT IT IS LIFE I THEREFORE COMMIT TO SPENDING TIME EACH DAY READING, STUDYING AND PRAYERFULLY MEDITATING ON THE WORD.

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