

# Workers Unashamed

Study to show yourself approved unto God  
As a workman who does not need to be ashamed  
Accurately handling to Word of truth  
2 Timothy 2:15

## Phase One

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# Phase One

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# Workers Unashamed

## Phase One

### WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

Being a Christian is experiencing a spiritual change brought about by the power of God alone in the heart of a person [Jn.1:12,13].

#### A Christian is:

[A] Being indwelt by a new spirit/heart, having become a new creation [Ezek.36:26; 2 Cor.5:17].

[B] One who was dead in sin, but is now alive with the life of Christ [Eph.2:1; Jn.11:25].

[C] One whose sins are forgiven by Christ and is no more condemned [Eph.1:7].

[D] A follower of Christ [Mt.16:24].

[E] Someone who hates sin [I Jn.3:9; 5:18; Prov.8:13].

[F] One who possesses eternal life [Jn.3:36].

[G] Is reconciled to God and does not therefore live for himself, but for Christ [Col.1:20-22; Rom.5:1,2; 2 Cor.5:15].

### WHY DO WE NEED TO BE CHRISTIANS?

#### MAN IS SINFUL [Rom.3:23; Ps.51:5]

[A] All men are guilty before God, stand condemned, and deserve nothing but God's wrath and judgment [Rom.1:18; 2:8; Prov.20:9; Jas.2:10].

[B] No man can therefore enter or see God's kingdom in that condition [Jn.3:3,5].

[C] All men are in darkness, in bondage, and captivity in the devil's kingdom [Jn.8:44; Acts 26:18; 2 Cor.4:4; I Jn.5:19; Rom.1:21; 6:16-23].

[D] Man is powerless to help himself [Rom.5:6; 8:7,8; Isa.64:6].

#### GOD IS HOLY [I Pet.1:16]

No sinful man will be able to dwell in His presence [Hab.1:13].

#### HELL IS REAL [Ps.9:17; Rev.20:11-15]

Conscious eternal torment awaits every man who does not repent of his sins [Mt.25:41,46; Lk.16:23-26; Rev.14:10,11]. Because of this, man needs to be delivered from the penalty of his sins.

Man's true condition is that he is sinful, needing forgiveness; lost, needing to be found; doomed, needing deliverance; guilty, needing pardon; spiritually dead, needing life; blind, needing illumination; and slaves to sin, needing liberation. Because man is utterly helpless to save himself, he can only be rescued by a Savior.

## GOD'S SOLUTION TO MAN'S PROBLEM

At the fullness of time, when we were without strength, God demonstrated His love towards us and sent His Son, Jesus Christ to save sinful men [Gal.4:5; Rom.5:6,8; Jn.3:16].

The Lord Jesus Christ is God's solution to the Problem of man. He has satisfied the wrath of God against sinful men and delivers from the punishment of hell. Everything outstanding against man that hindered his being accepted by God has been cleared away by the Lord Jesus.

The Solution is not in religious ceremonies and systems, or by external practices and techniques to improve one's behavior. No, Christ Himself provides all that we could never do and is to us all that we could never be. Christ has solved every aspect of man's Problem before God.

He is the justifier of the condemned and guilty. His fullness of resurrection life cleanses the corrupt and relieves the miserable. Slaves to sin are set free from their bondage by the redemption of Christ.

Those without power are strengthened by His Spirit in the inner man. His life replaces sin's death. Enemies are reconciled and made friends and servants. The Light of Christ scatters the darkness of sin while the captives of Satan are delivered and translated to the kingdom of God's beloved Son.

Righteousness, once hated and feared, now can be our portion and delight. Hell's horrors no more await to swallow in its ruin and destruction, but instead, the bright joys of heaven have been secured and opened as an eternal hope.

Yes, it is Christ Himself that we need; not religious codes and practices. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" [Jn.3:16]. This is a glad Gospel indeed. Let us now consider the most important ways in which Christ is our Solution to the Problem of sinful man before the holy God.

[A] Substitution. This word means 'in the place of/in behalf of.' The Lord Jesus suffered in our place the judgment that we all deserve [I Pet.2:24; 3:18]. Christ became on the cross what He was not - namely, sin - that we might become what we were not - namely, righteous [2 Cor.5:21]. The Son of God became the Son of Man that sons of men might become sons of God.

[B] Propitiation. It means, "To win the favor of/to appease/to satisfy." The Lord Jesus satisfied every righteous demand of the holy God against sinful man [Rom.3:25; I Jn.2:2; 4:10]. This is the bedrock of our salvation. If God Himself is not satisfied with what the Lord Jesus has done in paying the price of our sins, then no one will ever be accepted into God's presence.

[C] Redemption. This word means, "Setting free by paying a ransom." The death of the Lord Jesus has fully paid the price to purchase us for God and to pay for our sins against God. [1] To buy back or remove from a slave market [I Cor.6:20; Gal.3:13]. [2] To effect a complete release/to completely loose [Jn.19:30; Eph.1:7; Col.1:14; Rev.5:9]. The idea is this, we have been redeemed [bought back] by God, the price paid for our release being the blood of Christ which satisfied the claims of Divine justice. We fell to Satan in the Garden of Eden and have been held captive by the devil ever since. But Jesus Christ bought us back by His blood; we are now owned by God [I Cor.6:19,20; Eph.1:7]. The life of Christ was the necessary price in the sight of God to secure our freedom from bondage to sin and Satan. The Lord Jesus Himself is our redemption [I Cor.1:30].

[D] Reconciliation. "To restore friendship between people who were enemies." God has made His enemies into servants and friends through the death of Christ. God has taken the initiative to restore fellowship with man who, through sin, became God's enemy [2 Cor.5:18-21]. God did this through His Son's death on the cross

[Rom.5:10,11]. In the beginning, God and man enjoyed each other's fellowship. But after man sinned, man became separated from the Lord and became His enemy. On the cross God provided the basis of forgiveness that He might embrace man once more in fellowship and peace.

[E] Justification. God declares righteous all who put their trust in Christ and His righteousness. It is a once and for all act by which God declares a man righteous on the basis of faith alone. God, the righteous Judge, declares a man "not guilty/righteous" because of Christ's payment for our sin [Rom.3:20-30; 4:16; 5:1,9; Gal.2:16-21].

[F] Regeneration. God imparts His life by His Spirit through being spiritually born again. Regeneration is effected by the Holy Spirit through the preaching and receiving of the Word of God [Tit.3:5; Jas.1:18; I Pet.1:23].

[G] Intercession. Christ Jesus Himself now represents us forever before the throne of God as the one Mediator between God and man [I Tim.2:5; Heb.7:24,25; 9:24; I Jn.2:1].

[H] Sanctification. To be set apart unto God. Christ has completely set us apart unto His Father with an everlasting acceptance [I Cor.1:30]. It is also the transforming process wherein we outwardly manifest what we are inwardly by God's grace in Christ. It is developing conformity to the moral and spiritual excellence of Christ, becoming like Him in every respect [2 Cor.3:17,18; Eph.4:24; Phil.2:5; I Thess.4:3-8; 2 Thess.2:13].

[I] Glorification. The ultimate purpose of God is to conform every believer to the moral excellence of Christ's character with each having a glorious resurrected body [Rom.8:30; 5:2; 8:18; I Cor.15:43; Col.3:4; I Thess.5:23].

The Lord Jesus is our salvation. In the past He saved us from the penalty of sin through justification [Jn.5:24; Rom.8:1]. In the present, He saves us from the power of sin through sanctification [Rom.6:1-14; 2 Pet.1:3,4]. In the future, He shall save us from the presence of sin through glorification [I Thess.4:13-18; Heb.9:28; Rev.7:13-17].

## HOW CAN SOMEONE BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

As we hear God's Word - the gospel that presents the problem facing man and the offered solution - our response must be to believe the Word of God that we have heard; to agree with God that we are sinners needing help and repent of those sins by receiving Christ.

[A] Believing. Biblical belief is to trust, put confidence in, and agree with God's Word, the truth, so as to obey. Faith and belief are synonyms in the NT. In Acts 2:37,38, the people were asked to repent upon believing Peter's message. We see the necessity of belief in the following verses: Jn.5:24; 8:24; Acts 10:43; 16:31; Eph.2:8,9; Heb.11:6]. As belief/faith without works is dead [Jas.2:17,18], so believing merely without confession of sin and repentance is dead.

[B] Confession. This means to say the same thing that God says. Through conviction of heart we agree with God that we are sinners and are deserving of His punishment upon those sins [Acts 16:30; 2:37; Rom.10:9,10; Prov.28:13].

[C] Repentance. To repent is to change one's mind and direction of life upon believing the Word of God and confessing one's sins. It is to take a U-turn in life by forsaking the old and pursuing the new [Lk.13:3,5; Acts 2:38; 17:30; Lk.24:46,47]. There is no salvation apart from repentance. Many claim to be Christians because they have faith in God, but have never actually repented of their sins [Jn.2:23-25]. Even demons believe, but lack repentance [Jas.2:19]. Others welcomed Jesus as King shouting, "Hosanna," but later crucified Him because they lacked repentance [Mt.21:9-11; Lk.23:20-23]. Many have come to Jesus, professing to believe in Him, but later departed [Jn.6:24-26,66]. Even Judas followed Jesus for three years in order to obtain money [Jn.12:6], but was never a Christian indeed, because he never repented [Jn.6:70; 12:4-6; 13:18; 17:12]. When he betrayed Jesus, he was remorseful and even confessed, but never repented [Mt.27:3-5]. His sorrow was that of the world that produces death [2 Cor.7:10. See also Ps.78:34-37].

[D] Receiving. Those who have repented of their sins must receive Him. To receive Christ is to welcome Him to abide in our lives as Lord, Savior, and life-giving source of godliness [Jn.1:12; 2 Thess.2:10]. The receiving of Christ into our lives comes with forgiveness of sin [Acts 26:18; Rom.5:17].

[E] Following. Once we have received Jesus into our lives, the next step is to follow Him [Mt.4:19; 8:22; 16:24; Lk.9:23; Jn.10:4,5,27]. We have been called to follow Christ's example [Jn.13:15; 1 Pet.2:21].

[F] Love. All who follow Christ must love Him as well as loving our neighbor and the brethren. This affectionate devotion must be demonstrated by our obedience to His Word [Mt.22:37; Jn.13:34,35; 14:23,24; 1 Jn.4:20].

[G] Baptism. All who truly love Christ must publicly demonstrate this to the world through baptism. Baptism is the outward testimony of the inward reality of having died to sin and being made alive in Christ. It declares to the world that the believer is a new man and no more walks in the way of the past, but now in Christ's newness of life. Baptism is for adults and older children who have repented of their sins [Mt.28:19; Acts 2:38; 8:36,37]. Nowhere in the Scriptures were infant children ever baptized. Even Christ, our example, was not baptized when He was a child [Mt.3:13; Acts 16:14,15,31-34]. A person must be truly saved according to what has been discussed in the above points A through F before he is baptized. Baptism does not save a man, but is an outward testimony that a person has been saved by the grace of Christ. The gospel is what saves a man [Rom.1:16]. Many, like Simon the sorcerer, have desired and agreed to be baptized, but discovered that they were not saved by doing so [Acts 8:13,20-23].

## WHEN DOES A PERSON BECOME A CHRISTIAN?

A man becomes a Christian the moment he ceases from his own efforts to save himself, and trusts in the person of Christ by resting in His work that has accomplished salvation in our behalf. The acceptable time to be saved is "Now," "Today" [2 Cor.6:1,2; Heb.4:7].

## HOW CAN I BE SURE THAT I AM A CHRISTIAN?

[A] Witness of the Spirit. We know by the witness of the Holy Spirit within the believer that eternal life is possessed [Rom.8:16; 1 Jn.4:13; 5:10].

[B] Joy and Peace. These will be experienced by the true believer [Jn.14:27; Col.3:15].

[C] Hatred of Sin. A true believer hates sin and loves righteousness [Prov.8:13]. Sin no longer controls him as a master [Rom.6:14]. Although he is not sinless, he will, however, sin less [1 Jn.2:1,2; 3:5,6,9].

[D] Love. A saved person loves the brethren from the heart [1 Jn.1:6,7; 2:9,10; 3:14; 4:12,13,20].

[E] Obedience. A Christian keeps the commandments of God [Jn.14:21,23,24; 1 Jn.2:3-5; 3:10,24].

[F] Does not love the World. A believer does not set his mind on earthly things nor love what is in the world. Rather, he seeks Christ and those things above [Col.3:1-3; Jas.4:4; 1 Jn.2:15].

[G] Good Works. God will begin and continue a good work in the life of a believer [Phil.1:6; 2:13]. Thus he is no more conformed to fleshly ways, but is being transformed by the renewing of his mind through the Word of God [Rom.12:1,2; Eph.4:20-24].

[H] Fruit. The life of goodness, righteousness, and truth produced by the Holy Spirit are evident in the life [Mt.7:16-20; Gal.5:22,23; Eph.5:9].

[I] Bible. There will be a love for the Word of God and an increasing desire to know the Lord through it [Jer.15:16; I Pet.2:2; Jn.8:31,32].

## FALSE CONCEPTS OF WHAT A CHRISTIAN IS

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but the end of that way is the way of death” [Prov.14:12]

[A] Natural Descent. No man becomes a Christian by physical birth or heritage. It is “not of blood” [Jn.1:13].

[B] Self Will. Just as a child cannot will itself to be born physically, so no one can by the effort of his own will power produce new life in Christ. Self improvement schemes are cancelled [Jn.3:4-6]. It is not “of the will of the flesh” [Jn.1:13].

[C] Human Agency. No human being, no matter how spiritual, can impart the new birth to another. No organization, religious activities, or social change can bring about regeneration. It is not “of the will of man” [Jn.1:13].

[D] Knowledge. An intellectual apprehension of the truths of godliness alone cannot save, there must be commitment to the Lord Jesus Himself [2 Tim.3:7]. Education cannot save you [I Cor.1:18-21].

[E] Change. There is no such thing as a gradual change into possessing life from Christ. Life cannot be developed where it does not exist, dead as we are in trespasses and sins [Jn.6:63; Eph.2:2].

[F] Religion. Being born again does not result from the sincerity of one’s convictions, being baptized or confirmed, joining a church’s membership, taking communion, paying of tithes and offerings, teaching Sunday school class, occupying a church office, singing in the choir, or even being a preacher/pastor. Even the great teacher of Israel, Nicodemus, did not have eternal life based on these things [Jn.3:1-11].

[G] Good Works. The very best that we can do is as filthy rags in the sight of God [Isa.64:6].

[H] 10 Commandments. No one is saved by law keeping [Gal.2:16]. Even if one keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all [Jas.2:10].

[I] Lodge. Membership in a lodge or secret society will only condemn your soul, but cannot save [Isa.28:14-19].

[J] Wealth. Riches will not profit in the day of wrath [Prov.11:4]. Only a fool believes that prosperity in this life insures acceptance in the next life [Lk.12:15-21; 16:19-26].

## ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves.  
Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? –  
unless indeed you are disqualified”  
[2 Cor.13:5]

# CHRISTIAN LIVING

## BECOMING A DISCIPLE OF JESUS

### NEW CREATION REALITY

Without a new birth you will never see the kingdom of God! “Born again” tells us that the entire life up until this time has been in vain. All that we have done, all of our religious works are worth nothing! We must begin afresh with a different kind of life because by natural birth, we are nothing more than flesh!

Our natural life in the flesh cannot take us into the life of the Spirit as Jesus said in John 6:63: “It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh profits nothing.” And so it is that the kingdom of God is hidden from the wise and intelligent and revealed unto babes. Jesus said: “Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” [Mt.18:3,4].

A babe has no wisdom of his own. He has no power to guide and provide for his own life. He is helpless apart from the protection of his father. The babe is humble, knowing his weakness and limitations. A babe is totally dependent upon his father for everything.

John 3:5 says that you must be born of the water and the Spirit or you will never enter the kingdom of God! The Lord Jesus did not refer to baptism when He said: “You must be born of water!” The Old Testament Scriptures clearly tell us in Ezekiel 36:25-27 what this means: “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean: I will cleanse you from all of your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new Spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in My statutes.”

Being born again means that you are cleansed from filthiness. God gives you a new heart and a new spirit and your spiritually dead cold heart of stone is replaced with newness of life.

What then is being born of water? Water is the means of cleansing. It is the means of washing away defilement. No outward ceremony such as baptism can cleanse the heart and impart newness of life.

What is it that the Lord Jesus uses to do such a work? Ephesians 5:26 says: “that He might sanctify and cleanse her by the washing of water by the Word.” Christ cleanses the church by the water of His Word.

Apart from this washing of the Word, none can be born again. Listen to what we are told in I Peter 1:23: “Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the Word of God which lives and abides forever.”

You must be born again! You must be convicted and cleansed by the Word! You must receive a new heart with newness of life from the Spirit of God. This is how all must begin in the spiritual life. If one has not been born again, he is still “dead in trespasses and sins” [Eph.2:1].

How can a person become born again? John 1:12,13 answers that question: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood [that is, not because of parents or forefathers], nor of the will of the flesh [that is, not by your own efforts or will power], nor of the will of man [that is, not by other people’s decisions and actions], but of God.” God is the only One who can give His own life to a man. That life is given when we receive the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must humble ourselves from being high to becoming low. We must lose our life and give up all trust in ourselves if we would have eternal life and be forgiven of our sins. If we only have our natural life, we cannot please God. “So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His” [Rom.8:8,9].

Belonging to Christ means that a new creation has taken place. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” [2 Cor.5:17]. We are no more under God’s judgment, but rather now accepted. Sin is no more our master, but righteousness is. Evil desires no longer rule in our hearts making us their slaves. Our lack of ability to obey God is replaced by His power unto godliness.

Christ Himself then becomes our life. “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me” [Gal.2:20]. Christ living in the believer by His Spirit is the meaning of a new creation.

Jesus illustrates this by saying that He is the Vine and we are the branches. “I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” [Jn.15:5]. All life comes from the Vine into every branch. It is that life which produces fruit in the branch. The branch cannot bear fruit in itself but only when it abides in the living source of its very existence.

Fruit shows the kind of tree that it is. The fruit produced by Christ in the life of the believer will show the same kind of life that Christ Himself has. What kind of life is this? “The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth” [Eph.5:9]. Christ within the heart of the Christian will be seen by the godly way the believer lives; by love, holiness, and truth shown to others.

There is no imitation or substitute for this fruit. Man cannot produce it naturally or by religious efforts. All of these qualities come from the Lord who is the source of everything good. “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” [Gal.5:22,23].

## LORDSHIP OF JESUS CHRIST

When we say that Jesus is Lord we mean that He is the one and only Master who must be obeyed. As Lord, He has absolute ownership with almighty power over His servants. He has bought believers with the costly price of His own blood and we are no longer our own as I Cor.6:19,20 tell us.

Because He is Lord, our own opinions, desires, and ideas are no longer to rule our lives; Christ does. Our only concern now is to hear and do the will of our Master, the Lord Jesus. He has spoken His mind and will to us in His Word, the Bible. If we will follow Him as Lord we must hear His Word and obey it.

If we do not obey Christ, it shows that we are servants of another master, but not Christ’s. Jesus said: “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” [Lk.6:46]. Obedience is the sign that we are truly His disciples and that He is our Lord. No man can serve two masters. Either we are serving God and righteousness, or we are serving self and sin as Rom.6:15-23 makes clear to us.

## GROWING IN GRACE

The Word of God instructs us that we should build ourselves up on our most holy faith [Jude 20]. The means to do this are through God’s grace and His Word through the Holy Spirit’s help [Acts 20:32].

## BIBLE READING

We first want to outline a useful way for *READING THE WHOLE WORD*. There are six sections. Each day you should read one chapter from each section, making six chapters read each day. Keep a book mark in each of the sections so you do not lose track of where you are each day.

### BALANCED DIET READING SCHEDULE

[1] *GENESIS – ESTHER* This section is Narrative/History and contains examples, warnings, and illustrations. [After reading Esth.10, return to Gen.1]

[2] *JOB – MALACHI* Contains Poetry and Prophecy [Psalms and Proverbs will not be read as part of this section since they are covered in #3 and #4]. [After reading Mal.4, return to Job 1]

[3] *PSALMS* Prayer, Worship, and Deliverance in Affliction. [After reading Psalm 150, return to Psalm 1]

[4] *PROVERBS* Wisdom for all of life. [After Prov.31, return to Prov.1]

[5] *MATTHEW – ACTS* Life of Christ and the Church. [After reading Acts 28, return to Matt.1]

[6] *ROMANS – REVELATION* Doctrine of the Scriptures. [After reading Rev.22, return to Rom.1]

The above schedule will provide a “balanced diet” approach to reading through the Scriptures. During the course of one year, Sections 1 & 2 will be read about once each. Sections 3 & 6 will be read about twice each, Section 5 nearly three times, and Section 4 twelve times.

In all of your study of the Word of God, it is very helpful to write down notes of what you learn. It may be only one verse. It may be more. But the things that the Lord shows you from His Word are good to note for your own and other’s blessing.

As well, as you read you will find verses that help to explain other verses in the Bible. These references should be noted neatly in the margin of your Bible near the verse they relate to. By doing this, you will develop your own cross-reference system for the future.

## MEDITATION

Listen to Joshua 1, verse 8: “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”

Day and night, do not depart from His Word. Read it! Memorize it! Ponder it! Rejoice in it! Treasure it! As the sheep chews its cud repeatedly, so reflect, again and again, upon its life-giving food for your soul. This is the meditation whereof He speaks.

Success and wisdom are gained in no other way. Prospering in the purposes of God cannot be achieved otherwise. The divine decree is: “Be careful to do according to all that is written in it.”

Obedience, walking according to directives, is success. Ordering our way aright according to divine command is prosperity. Walking in truth as it is in Christ Jesus is possessing the land.

Feeding upon the Word provides strength to walk in it. Eat well and often. Turn not to the right or left. Walk straightly therein and the Lord declares: “I will be with you.”

True prosperity must be judged from the standpoint of the throne of God. It is the throne of judgment at the last day that determines the value of everything here below in this world. It is from the Word that is forever settled in heaven sent forth from the throne of God that you will discover what true riches are.

# A SIMPLE GUIDE TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE

## CONTEXT

The Bible is God's Word written by His servants through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. "But know this first of all, that no prophesy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophesy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" [2 Pet.1:20-21].

Therefore the Bible must not be misused by a man to justify his own human thoughts and lustful desires. The Scriptures rather present the words of life to turn us from our own deadened spiritual condition. Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" [Jn.6:63].

A foundational principle of Bible study and interpretation is the importance of Context. The verses of the Bible are not to be read isolated from their surrounding context in the chapter. The following points will clarify this principle of Bible interpretation.

### *WORDS HAVE MEANING WITHIN A CONTEXT*

Words within their context will give understanding to their meanings in the passage. For example, the word "fear" is used three times in I Pet. 3, each with a different meaning. In verse 2 it means "respectful behavior," whereas in 14 it indicates "intimidation," and verse 15 signifies "reverence."

The context of a passage will inform if a word is to be understood literally or in a figurative secondary sense. It is immediately clear that references like Jn.11:35, "Jesus wept," are literal.

But when Jn.10:9 is read, a literal meaning of, "I am the door," could not possibly be the correct sense. Surely Jesus is not a measured wooden frame which can be opened and closed by our desire. Instead, Jesus is saying that He is the way of entrance into the presence of God.

Thus, when we are reading the Bible, we must discover the meanings of the words within their God-given contexts. The same words may vary in meaning within the same chapter. Some words may be used in a figurative way rather than in their primary literal sense. The context will tell us if we pay close attention.

### *SURROUNDING VERSES*

It is needful to read the verses before and after the one in question when studying and interpreting the Scriptures. For instance, a verse commonly quoted out of context is Prov.23:7, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." Many cite this partial reference and proclaim that one must think great things of himself, thinking positively about one's business, finances, and possessions.

But let's consider this verse in the context of its surrounding verses beginning from verse 1 through verse 8. These verses tell us this, "When you sit down to dine with a ruler, consider carefully what is before you, and put a knife to your throat if you are a man of great appetite. Do not desire his delicacies, for it is deceptive food.

"Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens.

"Do not eat the bread of a selfish man, or desire his delicacies; for as he thinks within himself, so he is. He says to you, "Eat and drink!" But his heart is not with you. You will vomit up the morsel you have eaten, and waste your compliments."

Taken in the whole context, this passage is a warning against greed and allowing covetousness to deceive oneself by what one hopes to gain. Verse 7 warns us that a rich greedy man's words are deceptive and do not

express what he truly thinks in his heart. Nowhere is positive/possibility thinking to be seen in Proverbs 23, nor anywhere else in the Bible for that matter.

If a verse of the Word of God is quoted out of context, a man can make it say whatever he wants with it. But if it is connected with its surrounding verses in the passage, its true meaning becomes clear.

#### FRAME OF REFERENCE

It is prudent to know the frame of reference of the author in his book to understand his concept in a particular verse. In the book of I Corinthians, to cite an example, Paul used the word “baptize” in several ways.

Numerous times in I Cor.1:13-17, Paul refers to baptism, each time referring to baptism by water. Verse 16 is cited as showing this use of the word: “Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas.”

When we read I Cor.12:13, it is obvious that he is speaking of baptism in a different sense than in chapter one. It says: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” Here the baptism is a spiritual one whereby the Holy Spirit joins each believer to Christ in one body.

How then are we to understand what he means by baptism in chapter 10:1,2? It reads like this: “For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.”

There is no indication in the Scriptures that the Jews were baptized in water by Moses or others during the time of their exodus from Egypt. Baptism, then, must have a figurative sense in this passage. But what is that secondary meaning? Paul’s frame of reference which we learn from chapter 12 gives us the clue.

Just as the Spirit of God joined us to Christ as our Head and Savior, so the Jews were “joined” to Moses as their leader and deliverer from Egypt. The cloud (picturing God’s presence) and the sea (showing their salvation from Egypt) became their new spiritual “environment” with Moses as their head.

In many instances, such as this, the frame of reference of the author can help us understand difficult passages. This is simply extending our examination of the immediate context of a verse to include the book in which the passage is contained.

#### SCRIPTURES AS A WHOLE

Sometimes we may need to broaden our searching of the context to include pertinent references found elsewhere in the Bible in order to understand our passage. This is especially true of New Testament verses which refer to things found in the Old Testament.

Many questions come to mind when considering, for example, the priesthood of Christ according to the order of Melchizedek as taught in Hebrews 7. This concept cannot be well understood without looking at the relevant portions of the Old Testament. A basic understanding of the following will shed much light on what otherwise may be unclear.

Gen.14 Describes Melchizedek’s first appearance to Abraham

Ex.28 Tells about the High Priest in the nation of Israel

Lev.8 - 10 Shows the consecration of the priests for their service

Ps.110:4 Is the key verse about Christ’s eternal priesthood

Mt.1 and Lk.3:23-33 Record the genealogy of Christ that He came from the tribe of Judah and not from Levi

Gal.3:23-25 The Law’s purpose was to lead us to Christ

I Tim.2:5 Christ is the one mediator between God and men

I Jn.2:1 Christ is our advocate/representative before God

From the above example we can see that some passages cannot be understood unless we rely upon the broader context of the Bible as a whole.

## SUMMARY

The Principle of Context tells us that we must note:

*WORDS HAVE MEANING WITHIN A CONTEXT*

*SURROUNDING VERSES*

*FRAME OF REFERENCE*

*SCRIPTURES AS A WHOLE*

## HARMONY

“All truth is one.” Truths are not contradictory but complement each other to give a comprehensive understanding of the subject in question. In the Scriptures, this makes the principle of harmony important in Bible interpretation.

### *CONSIDER ALL PERTINENT REFERENCES*

Harmony involves taking into account the pertinent references covering a particular subject. If any of them are left out or not given proper consideration, we will draw a partial conclusion, if not an altogether faulty one.

For example, Jn.2:13-17 says that the Temple was cleansed at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, while in Mt.21:12, 13, almost at the end of His ministry.

This is not contradictory as some may imagine, but merely shows that the cleansing was done twice. It’s not that one or both of these Apostles were mistaken, but simply that each spoke the truth about a similar event which happened at different times.

### *CLEAR PASSAGES INTERPRET THE UNCLEAR*

A second aspect of this principle of harmony is that the clear passages shed light upon the unclear. That is, the obvious interprets the obscure and not the other way around.

An example of the importance of the clear verses shedding light on the unclear can be seen in answering whether Judas Iscariot was chosen by Jesus or not. Jn.6:70, 71 states, “Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?’ Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.”

If we compare this with Jn.13:18, we discover that, though chosen in one sense, he was not chosen as one who was actually saved. It says: “I do not speak of you all. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.’”

The principle of harmony illustrates in what sense Judas was chosen. Without considering Jn.13:18, one may have thought that Judas was truly saved because he was chosen among the twelve disciples.

Now, is the Bible contradictory about this issue? No, not at all. One must consider all the verses relating to a question/subject before a proper understanding can be reached.

When we do, we can see that Judas rejected the very life of God to men, Jesus Christ, because he loved the world rather than God. Though he walked with Jesus as being chosen as one of the twelve, yet he despised all sound wisdom in preference for his self-chosen ways.

A careful consideration of all the relevant passages shows that Judas was not among those chosen and cleansed in the true spiritual sense. The clear statement of Jn.13:18 helps us to understand other passages about

Judas which are not as clear. We must therefore be diligent to apply the principle of harmony carefully before drawing a conclusion on a matter.

#### *A FAULTY PREMISE WILL RESULT IN A FAULTY CONCLUSION*

A faulty premise will always result in a faulty conclusion. This was the problem with those who rejected Christ because they thought He was from Galilee (Jn.7:41-42). Their faulty premise was that, since He was from Galilee, He must have been born in Galilee.

They didn't take into account all the relevant information before drawing their conclusion. If they had, they would have seen how the Christ being born in Bethlehem harmonized with His living in Galilee according to the Scriptures [Mt.2:4-6, 22, 23].

Since the Bible is God's Word, it must be our reference point rather than our own understanding when seeking to harmonize seemingly contradictory passages. This is what we are told in Prov.3:5: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding."

#### SUMMARY

*CONSIDER ALL PERTINENT REFERENCES*

*CLEAR PASSAGES INTERPRET THE UNCLEAR*

*A FAULTY PREMISE WILL RESULT IN A FAULTY CONCLUSION*

## PRECEPT

Precepts are the clearly stated commands or teachings of the Bible. It is these which will give us understanding of those passages which are presented to us as stories/narratives. Most of the stories about the behavior of people contain no comment in the narrative itself to tell us whether their actions were good or bad. To rightly understand them, we must apply this principle:

#### *NARRATIVE IS INTERPRETED BY PRECEPT*

Let us look at Abraham's actions in Gen.12:10-13 as an example. It says: "Now there was a famine in the land; so Abram went down to Egypt to sojourn there, for the famine was severe in the land.

"It came about when he came near to Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, 'See now, I know that you are a beautiful woman; and when the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife'; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.

"Please say that you are my sister so that it may go well with me because of you, and that I may live on account of you."

The narrative itself does not tell us whether this was right or wrong of Abraham. Someone may read this and say that Abraham's actions have been a "revelation" to him. He may think that it is permitted to tell a lie in a difficult situation as Abraham did to save himself from the problem he faced.

But was it good what Abraham did here? The narrative recorded in Gen.12 does not tell us. His actions must be judged by the clearly stated commands and teachings of God found elsewhere in the Scriptures.

A similar situation is seen in the story of Rahab the harlot in the city of Jericho. Josh.2:4, 5 says: "But the woman had taken the two men and hidden them, and she said, 'Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from.

‘It came about when it was time to shut the gate at dark that the men went out; I do not know where the men went. Pursue them quickly, for you will overtake them.’”

But what she said wasn't true, for she was hiding them upon the roof of her house. Does this mean that God was pleased with her untruth? That must be decided by the statements of the Scriptures outside the story itself.

Heb.11:31 tells us: “By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish along with those who were disobedient, after she had welcomed the spies in peace.” Was Rahab justified because of her lie or by faith in spite of it? Jas.2:25 adds this, And in the same way, was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

If we would judge Abraham and Rahab's actions by how they may seem to appear to us in the stories, we may draw wrong conclusions. But if we apply the clearly stated precepts of the Bible in verses like Col.3:9, we will immediately see that their actions were not pleasing to God.

Col.3:9 says: “Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices.” So, by precept, we understand that God is never pleased with lying in any situation.

Again, unless we apply this principle, we may reason incorrectly that, since David was a man after God's own heart and he had many wives, I can also therefore do the same. But such practices are condemned by the precepts of the Bible.

In Mt.19:5, Jesus quoted Gen.2:24 to show that one man should be married to one woman. “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” In fact, the king himself was forbidden by God to marry more than one wife. Deut.17:17 warns the king: “Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away...”

Examples such as these show us that we must interpret the stories of the Bible by judging the narrative with the clearly stated commands and teachings of the Scriptures. Failure to do this will make the Bible itself a stumbling block to those who read and interpret it with their own understanding without using this principle. But if we interpret by Precept, the Word of God will surely become light to our path.

## SUMMARY

### *NARRATIVE IS INTERPRETED BY PRECEPT*

## ILLUSTRATION

Some of the narratives in the Bible also may contain spiritual illustrations within them in addition to the historical truth presented in the story itself. At times these deeper spiritual meanings were not understood until sometime afterwards. This principle of interpretation is referred to as this:

### *NARRATIVE MAY CONTAIN SPIRITUAL ILLUSTRATION*

Ex.12:1-29 gives the account of the Passover for the nation of Israel upon the evening of their leaving Egypt. The details of this story contain many wonderful spiritual illustrations of Christ Jesus and His deliverance of His people from the power and bondage of the world.

Christ is our sinless sacrificial lamb. His own blood redeems us from the judgment of God that is coming upon the world of the ungodly. Jn.1:29 says: “The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, ‘Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.’” I Cor.5:7 adds this: “Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed.”

The story of Noah and the ark also reveals spiritual truths within the narrative recorded in Gen.6-9. The ark was the means of salvation from a condemned world, through judgment, unto a new creation. Here is a picture of Christ Jesus as the only means by which men can be saved from eternal destruction that will come upon the wickedness of men.

The waters of judgment fell upon the ark, not on those safe within. So also with Christ, the judgment of God fell upon Him, so that those who abide in Him are brought safely to newness of life.

Heb.11:7 says: "By faith, Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith."

Another example is the Temple or Tabernacle of the Jews in the book of Exodus. In it are contained many things which have spiritual meanings as well as literal. Christ is the true Temple of God [see Jn.2:19-22]. The veil is like His flesh [see Heb.10:20]. The high priest pictures Christ as He represents His people in the presence of God [see Heb.4:14-16].

Fine linen illustrates righteousness as seen in Rev.19:8. "And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints."

Incense shows the prayers of the saints according to Ps.141:2: "May my prayer be counted as incense before Thee, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." Rev.8:3 reveals this same spiritual illustration when it says: "Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden censer; and much incense was given to him, so that he might add it to the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar which was before the throne."

As well, certain names in the Scriptures are also spiritually meaningful. For example, "Gilgal" means "rolling." Josh.5:9 records that the reproach of Egypt [the fleshly identity of God's people with the world] was rolled away when they were circumcised at Gilgal. It reads: "The Lord said to Joshua, 'Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.' So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day."

Ex.17:7 tells us of Israel's quarreling against and testing of God at Massah and Meribah. The former means "temptation" and the latter, "strife." "And he named the place Massah and Meribah because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel, and because they tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord among us, or not?'"

How can we know if a story in the Bible also contains illustrations of other biblical truths? The key is whether a valid connection exists between the illustration and the thing illustrated. When we interpret narrative by precept, we will be looking at the stories in light of the clear teachings and commands of the Word of God.

Examining the narrative by clear Bible teaching will also help us to discover actual spiritual illustrations of that which is directly taught elsewhere in the Scriptures. In this way, we will be getting our doctrines from what is plainly stated and not building our teaching upon illustrations which we have made up in our own minds.

Many other passages could be cited to demonstrate this point. Where there exists an obvious parallel to clear biblical teaching, we can validly use the narrative passage to illustrate the truth of God's Word.

## SUMMARY

### *NARRATIVE MAY CONTAIN SPIRITUAL ILLUSTRATION*

# COVENANT

If the truth would be rightly divided, we must see the distinction between the Old and New covenants. Both are vitally related to one another. The Old is of the Law but the New is of Grace. The former is associated with Moses, the latter with Christ.

"The Law was given through Moses; but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" [Jn.1:17]. The Old Covenant foreshadows while the New is the fulfillment.

Jesus said: "These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" [Lk.24:44].

The basic difference between these two covenants is summarized in this principle:

WHAT IS TRUE OF THE OLD COVENANT EXTERNALLY AND PHYSICALLY

IS SEEN TO BE TRUE IN THE NEW INTERNALLY AND SPIRITUALLY

The Old and New Covenants are compared in this chart:

COVENANTS	
OLD EXTERNAL - PHYSICAL	NEW INTERNAL - SPIRITUAL
<b>Law</b> was written on tablets of stone - Ex.32:15; Deut.4:13	<b>Law</b> is written on human hearts - 2 Cor.3:3
<b>Temple</b> was built of stones and wood in Jerusalem - I Kings 5 & 6	<b>Temple</b> is built of believers as living stones - I Pet.2:5; I Cor.3:16
<b>Priests</b> were from the tribe of Levi only - Lev.8	<b>Priests</b> are made up of all believers in Christ - I Pet.2:5, 9
<b>Worship</b> consists in various required ceremonies - Lev.23	<b>Worship</b> is in Spirit and truth; not places and ceremonies - Jn.4:23, 24
<b>Giving</b> of Tithes was required of every Israelite to support the priests of Levi - Num.18:21-24	<b>Giving</b> is from the heart out of love without compulsion - 2 Cor.9:7
<b>Circumcision</b> was outward in the flesh as a sign of the Covenant - Gen.17:11	<b>Circumcision</b> is of the heart, by the Spirit through Christ - Rm.2:28, 29
<b>Sabbath</b> was one day per week as a day of rest - Ex.31:14-17	<b>Sabbath</b> is resting from our works in Christ's provision - Heb.4:3-11
<b>Sacrifice</b> consisted of various animals slain on the altar - Lev.1-7	<b>Sacrifice</b> is offering ourselves and our praise to God - Rm.12:1; Heb.13:15
<b>Battle</b> was with the sword against the wicked Canaanites - Josh.6-12	<b>Battle</b> is not against people but against spiritual forces by the Word - Eph.6:12, 17
<b>Blessings</b> were physical in the land of Canaan - Deut.8:7-9	<b>Blessings</b> are every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ - Eph.1:3

Therefore, we may not directly apply everything said in the Old Covenant to ourselves as Christians in the literal and physical sense that Israel could. The church is not an actual building as was the Jew's Temple. Of that Temple Jesus said: "Not one stone here will be left upon another, which will not be torn down" [Mt.24:2]. Whereas, in the New Covenant Jesus declares: "I will build My church; and the gates of Hell will not overpower it" [Mt.16:18].

Christ, our great and final sacrifice, has done away with the repeated animal sacrifices of the Old Covenant. “Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God” [Heb.10:11, 12].

There exists no more a distinction between the priests [clergy] and the common people [laity]. Each and every Christian is now a spiritual priest with equal access to God through Jesus Christ. “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” [I Pet.2:5].

Christ is a High Priest of a completely different type than the ones under the Old Covenant. They were sinful men, He is holy and undefiled “who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself” [Heb.7:27].

They were weak but He “is made perfect forever” [Heb.7:29]. “They were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, holds His priesthood permanently” [Heb.7:23, 24].

Those priests could save no one by their repeated ceremonies. But Jesus is “able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” [Heb.7:25].

Failure to understand the difference between the two Covenants will greatly confuse and hinder the Christian’s progress in the faith. Many mistakenly try to apply the codes and requirements of the Old Covenant to the believer under the New Covenant. But this cannot be done without spiritual ruin.

We are instructed clearly about this danger in passages such as Colossians 2:16-23. Following are selected quotes from this part of the Scriptures.

“Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ...If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ‘Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!’

“These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and false humility and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.”

Let us consider carefully the Law’s relationship to the Christian under the New Covenant. The Scriptures reveal the following things about the Law.

## LAW

### HAS BEEN CHANGED

“For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change in law also” [Heb.7:12]

### WAS WEAK

“There is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness” [Heb.7:18]

### MADE NOTHING PERFECT

“For the Law made nothing perfect” [Heb.7:19]

### IS AN INFERIOR COVENANT

“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, by as much as He is also the mediator of a better Covenant, Which has been enacted on better promises” [Heb.8:6]

### HAD FAULT

“For if that first Covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second” [Heb.8:7]

### HAS BEEN MADE OBSOLETE

“When He said, ‘A new Covenant,’ He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete ...is ready to disappear” [Heb.8:13]

CANNOT CLEANSE THE CONSCIENCE

“Gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make the worshiper perfect in conscience, since they relate only to food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until a time of reformation” [Heb.9:9, 10]

IS ONLY A SHADOW

“For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near” [Heb.10:1]

ITS SACRIFICES DO NOT PLEASE GOD

“Whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You have not desired, nor have You taken pleasure in them which are offered according to the Law” [Heb.10:8]

IS TAKEN AWAY

“He takes away the first in order to establish the second” [Heb.10:9]

IS AN UNBEARABLE YOKE

“Why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?” [Acts 15:10]

CANNOT MAKE RIGHTEOUSNESS

“For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one who believes” [Rm.10:4]

BRINGS A CURSE

“For as many as are the works of the Law are under a curse, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to do them’” [Gal.3:10]

BRINGS WRATH

“For the Law brings about wrath” [Rm.4:15]

SEVERS FROM CHRIST

“You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by Law; you have fallen from grace” [Gal.5:4]

IS THE POWER OF SIN

“The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the Law” [I Cor.15:56]

HAS FINISHED ITS WORK

“Why the Law, then? It was added because of transgressions... until the Seed would come to Whom the promise had been made. Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ... But now that the faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor” [Gal.3:19, 24, 25]

IS REPLACED BY CHRIST’S WORD

“You have heard...But I say to you...” [Mt.5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44]

Therefore, we cannot truthfully or rightly equate the priests of Levi with pastors or priests in the church. In the New Covenant, all believers are priests with none having a higher privilege than any others.

Neither are we to imagine that the tithes of the Jew’s food items are the same as Christians’ voluntary giving out of love. These are some applications of this principle of interpretation.

The Law, however, is not the “enemy” of the New Covenant believer. No, rather the “Law is... holy, righteous, and good” [Rm.7:12]. “We know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious” [I Tim.1:8, 9].

Christ “did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, I did not come to abolish but to fulfill” [Mt.5:17]. The mere external demands of the Law were only an instructor to lead us to Christ.

The Lord Jesus fulfilled the Law because He brought about a change in outward behavior by bringing about a change of heart within. If the heart is changed, the outward actions will change also.

A man who does not look “at a woman with lust for her” [Mt.5:28] will never commit adultery with her. But a man who never actually commits the deed, may yet commit “adultery with her in his heart” [Mt.5:28].

This is the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. The Old regulates from without while providing no ability to perform its requirements. The New works from within to transform the heart of a man by the power of God so that his outward actions also become righteous.

It is therefore of great importance in understanding the Word of God to pay careful attention to this principle. By doing so, we will avoid falling into the error of trying to mix the Old with the New; a thing which cannot be done without ruining both.

“No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will both tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old” [Lk.5:36].

## SUMMARY

### *WHAT IS TRUE OF THE OLD COVENANT EXTERNALLY AND PHYSICALLY*

### *IS SEEN TO BE TRUE IN THE NEW INTERNALLY AND SPIRITUALLY*

# DECISIONS

Some teachings of the Bible are very plain and straightforward. No real questions arise as to what God is saying. Others are not quite as clear. In fact, we are told that there are “some things hard to understand” [2 Pet.3:16].

How are we to interpret these things? The following guidelines will be helpful in deciding on unclear issues.

## DIRECT STATEMENTS

The direct statements of the Scriptures are to be given the first and most important consideration in deciding any difficult matter.

## PRINCIPLE

If there are no direct revelations in the Word about a certain issue or practice, we must evaluate it by principle. By principle is meant the general elements of truth and godliness found in the Bible. Following are

listed important principles to consider when deciding on something that is not specifically spoken of in the Scriptures.

Does it glorify God? - I Cor.10:31

Can I give thanks for it in Jesus' name? - Col.3:17

Does it have an appearance of evil? - I Thess.5:22

Will this practice somehow dictate to or control me? - I Cor.6:12

What real spiritual profit will result from it? - I Cor.10:23

Will it give offense to unbelievers or to the church? - I Cor.10:32

Will it cause my brother to stumble? - I Cor.8:13, Rm.14:13-21

Do I have a clear conscience about it? - Rm.14:22, 23

Does the peace of Christ rule in my heart? - Col.3:15

Do the spiritually mature agree? - I Pet.5:5, Heb.13:7

#### EXAMPLE

If an answer is not arrived at by the above, we can look at the example of the Lord Jesus Christ to see what He did or did not do in similar situations. He is our perfect example as "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" [Jn.14:6]. We can also gain instruction by seeing what other godly men in the Bible practiced or didn't do.

#### ANALOGY

The last aspect to consider is analogy. By analogy is meant comparing qualities and similarities between two somewhat related though different things. For example, we may want to know specifics of how we should raise our children.

Besides the understanding gained from the first three considerations, we may reason that, since God is our Father, we can learn some ways of training our children by reflecting upon how God brings up His spiritual sons and daughters.

#### SUMMARY

In deciding on unclear passages or on matters not specifically spoken of in the Word of God, we must carefully consider these guidelines:

#### *DIRECT STATEMENTS*

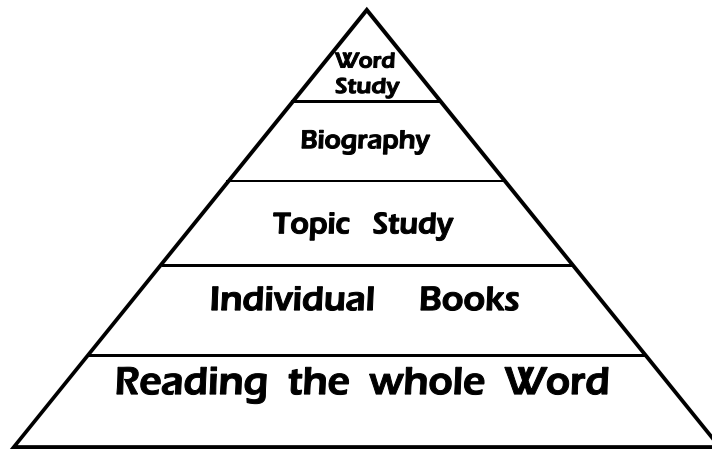
#### *PRINCIPLES*

#### *EXAMPLE*

#### *ANALOGY*

# STUDY

The study of the Word of God has the **Reading of the whole Word** as its foundation. With that as its base, we can then examine **Individual Books**. Based on our knowledge gained from these we can focus on various **Topics** and the **Biographies** of Bible characters. The last and most detailed part of Bible study is examining specific **Words**. This is shown in the chart below.



We have outlined a useful way for *READING THE WHOLE WORD* in the previous section about Bible reading. Let us now consider the study of *INDIVIDUAL BOOKS*.

[1] The first aspect of studying a particular book of the Bible is to become familiar with its contents by several readings of the entire book. This should be done quickly so as to not forget what you have earlier read before you reach the end.

By doing this you will begin to see the different subjects and sections of the book and the overall message of the writer. If you can read it in another translation as well, this will also be helpful.

[2] Next, carefully read through again, this time for the purpose of noting the main theme in each chapter. This time you will write them down. This will enable you to grasp the general message at a glance and provide a framework for the various details learned later.

[3] Each chapter should then be re-examined to see its particular sections of thought, again, writing down key thoughts in each sub-section. You are now beginning to develop your own outline of the book which will greatly aid in your understanding of the whole.

If you don't know the meaning of a word in a passage, you will not be able to properly understand the message. Use a dictionary, remembering that words have meaning within a context. Make a note of the meaning.

[4] Now, as you meditate upon the details of each chapter, you will be seeking the meaning according to the principles of interpreting the Bible contained in the previous chapters of this book. Always make notes of what you learn.

## GENESIS

Let us now use the book of Genesis for an example.

[1] As the book is read several times, you will see that it falls into two main parts: God's dealings with all mankind [chapters 1-11] and God's dealings with His chosen people [chapters 12-50].

It will be seen after a few readings that the first 11 chapters introduce several "beginnings"; that of heaven and earth, man, marriage, sin, Satan, death, murder, judgment, and languages.

Chapters 12-50 focus on the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and the tribes of Israel. These are the main divisions of the book of Genesis which are seen from several readings and should be written down in your notes.

[2] The basic chapter themes should then be noted so you can easily think your way through the book. These should be very brief. The purpose of this is to help you call to mind the contents of each chapter.

Chapter themes from the book of Genesis can be described as follows. This is not the only way that each chapter can be described. As you read, use your own words that will remind you of each chapter's contents.

1-creation, 2-Eden, 3-Sin, 4-Cain & Abel, 5-Adam's offspring, 6-9-Flood, 10,11-Babel, 12-God's call of Abram, 13-Lot and Abram, 14-Battle & Melchizedek, 15-Abram believes God, 16-Hagar, 17-Circumcision, 18-Lord visits Abraham, 19-Sodom, 20-Abimelech, 21-Isaac born, 22-Isaac offered, 23-Sarah dies, 24-Bride for Isaac, 25-Abraham dies & birth of Jacob and Esau, 26-Isaac's wells, 27-Jacob's lie, 28-Jacob's dream, 29-Jacob & wives, 30-Sons of Jacob & sheep, 31-Jacob flees Laban, 32-Jacob wrestles the angel, 33-Jacob meets Esau, 34-Dinah & Shechem, 35-God appears to Jacob at Bethel, 36-Esau's offspring, 37-Joseph's dream, 38-Judah & Tamar, 39-Joseph in Potiphar's house, 40-Joseph interprets dreams in prison, 41-Pharaoh's dreams & Joseph's rule, 42-Joseph's brothers in Egypt & confession, 43-Joseph's brothers return to Egypt with Benjamin, 44-Joseph hides cup in their sack, 45-Joseph reveals himself, 46-Jacob comes to Egypt, 47-Jacob blesses Pharaoh, 48-Jacob's blessing of Joseph's sons, 49-Jacob's prophesy to the 12 tribes, 50-Death of Jacob & Joseph.

[3] Following this, the sub-sections of the chapters can be written down in your notes. We will look at Chapter 1 of Genesis as a sample of this next step in studying a book. This should be done for each of the book's chapters.

Chapter 1 narrates the account of the creation of the heavens and earth. [Verse 1] – A summary statement of the whole. [Verses 2-5] – Day One: Let there be light. [Verses 6-8] – Day Two: Separation of the waters. [Verses 9-13] – Day Three: Dry land, plants, fruit, and seeds. [Verses 14-19] – Day Four: Sun, moon, and stars. [Verses 20-23] – Day Five: Fish and birds. [Verses 24-31] – Day Six: Man in the image of God.

[4] Having done all of this, you are now ready to begin to carefully meditate on the individual verses in each chapter. What you have done thus far has been to practically apply the first principle of interpretation, namely, CONTEXT.

As you now consider the individual verses, you have already placed them in a proper CONTEXT by your reading and noting the general flow of thought in the book and in each chapter and sub-section.

Since Genesis is part of the narrative portion of the Word of God, we must be careful to apply the principle that Narrative Is Interpreted By PRECEPT. The clear teachings and commands of the Word of God must be applied to the stories in order to understand whether the actions and words recorded there are good or bad. An example of this from Genesis is found in Chapter 3 of this book.

Always keep in mind that the narratives of Scriptures may also contain Spiritual ILLUSTRATION. As you read Gen.1:2-4, you may reflect that "Light" and "Darkness" are mentioned in many places in the Bible. In other passages, they have moral and spiritual meanings. "Light" represents righteousness and truth. "Darkness" shows us evil and error.

Does Gen.1:2-4 illustrate these deeper spiritual meanings through its record of the literal history of Creation? We might see in these verses an ILLUSTRATION of man; ruined in depths of sin. Only the Spirit of God moving upon man's heart can bring the Light of life and scatter our darkness.

And so, we have discovered a picture of our condition before God and His remedy for it. Write these things down in your notes as they will be a blessing to you for many years by doing so.

There are times when we will wish to gain an understanding of what the Lord says on a certain subject by doing a TOPIC STUDY. Here, we will need to relate together verses that teach us about one theme. This is an application of the principle of interpretation noted in Chapter 2, that of HARMONY.

This is where your reading of six chapters daily and the cross-references noted in your margin will be of great help in studying your TOPIC. A very useful tool for this type of Bible study is a concordance.

A concordance is a book that lists every word of the Bible in alphabetical order. Each word is shown as it is used in each verse of the Bible where it is found, beginning from the first time the word is used, and listed by the order of the books of the Bible.

The word "Counsel," for example, first occurs in Ex.18:19. As we look through all the references to this in the Scriptures, we discover that man's counsel is always against that of God's. Verses like Ps.33:10, 11 show this.

"The Lord nullifies the COUNSEL of the nations; He frustrates the plans of the peoples. The COUNSEL of the Lord stands forever."

As a TOPIC study progresses, you will need to note how the subject is treated in various passages in order to be able to summarize your findings after you Consider All Pertinent References. Thus, when you draw your conclusion, it will accurately state what the Word of God says.

It will be very useful to you if, in addition to your daily reading, you will study the book of Proverbs topically. List the key phrases from each verse that describes the fool, the righteous, the wicked, laziness, our tongues and speech, wisdom, fear, parenting, etc. This is a limited type of TOPIC study, one that is confined to one book as its reference.

A special type of topical study is that of *BIOGRAPHY*. Here you will be looking at all the references that describe the life of a particular person in the Scriptures. In the book of Genesis for example, Lot, Abraham's nephew, is mentioned.

If you study his life as recorded in Genesis 12, 13, & 19 along with the references found in Lk.17:29-32 and 2 Pet.2:6-9, a most sober warning against loving and being entangled in the world is discovered.

Our approach to study of the Scriptures has begun from the broad and general exposure to the Word gained by daily reading. From this wide base we moved to the more focused and specific study of individual books of the Bible.

Particular topics are even more limited in their scope than those which have considered. This leads us to the most specific and detailed of the various ways to study the Bible, the *WORD STUDY*.

A *WORD STUDY* is a more restricted kind of Topic Study. Here you are focusing upon the various definitions of a particular word as it is used in different verses. Let us illustrate this by looking at the word translated as "rule" in I Tim.3:4, 5.

This word is found in the following passages only in the New Testament: Rom.12:8; I Thess.5:12; I Tim.3:4,5,12; I Tim.5:12, 17; Tit.3:8, 14. It has a wide range of meanings.

It literally means, "to stand before," and is variously translated as "lead, attend to [with care and diligence], manage, maintain, direct, or rule." Which definition is proper in each passage?

Since we know that Words have meaning in a CONTEXT, we must see which definitions will make the most and best sense of each of these verses. In the verses cited, the best sense is not that of ruling over with authority and power, but rather standing before others as an example of service and help. As an exercise, insert the various definitions into the passages noted and see which make sense in the contexts.

Bible study is work. Truth rightly divided is not a simple or lazy process. All are to "study to show yourself approved unto God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth" [2 Tim.2:15].

Handling accurately and interpreting truthfully the Word of God is described in this verse as being done by a workman. Labor, diligence, humility, discipline, and seeking the mind of the Lord is required.

We are to love the Lord our God with all of our mind. There is no higher use of our minds than reasoning together with Him from His unchanging Word that is forever settled in heaven.

May the Lord Himself guide you into all truth through his Spirit who has been sent for that very purpose. And may that truth, rightly divided, enter your heart with conviction and power to set you free.

## WORSHIP

*Proskuneo* – This is the most frequently used word for worship in the NT. It means to kiss towards as in Ps.2:12; 95:6; 99:5.

Worship is that devotedness of heart so as to yield up one's body to serve the will and purposes of another, whether God, idols, or man.

Gen.22:5. This is the first mention of worship in the Scriptures. Imbedded in worship is the concept of sacrifice; a total willing delivering up of all that is precious in the life to obediently fulfill God's good pleasure. Abraham and Isaac both worshiped; both cast their entire future at the feet of God without reservation. It was not ceremonious; no order of service outlined the substance and procedure of such.

Worship and service are regularly linked in numerous passages, especially in relationship to false gods: Deut.4:19; 8:19; 11:16; 30:17, etc. In relation to the true God see Dan.3:28; Lk.4:8.

Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness [I Chron.16:29; Ps.29:2; 96:9]

Worship is directly related to understanding of truth [Neh.8:5,6; 9:3]

In fear of You, I will worship [Ps.5:7]

Forgetting all natural ties and influences makes His bride and queen a worshiper who is wholly desirable and yielded unreservedly to her King and Groom [Ps.45:10,11]

Him only shall you worship and serve [Mt.4:10]

Worship is to be in Spirit and Truth, not in ceremonial performance in specified places with man-made tradition, but having Christ as its glorious focus without making provision for the flesh [Jn.4:23,24; Phil.3:3]

Our reasonable and intelligent service of worship is the presentation of our bodies as living sacrifices [Rom.12:1]

# PRAYER

## WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is the most fundamental expression of faith in God. By it we demonstrate our trust in God. Through prayer we cast aside self-confidence in complete humility to seek the One worthy object of all true devotion, God Himself. Through prayer we seek the face of God [Ps.27:4,8]. The instinctive longing of a spiritual heart is to cry out, “Abba, Father” in prayer [Rom.8:15].

Yet in the knowledge and practice of prayer, we are all infants. None have mastered prayer. There is no secret technique of praying to God. Paul even included himself when he said that we do not know how to pray as we ought [Rom.8:26]. Jesus has taught us the essentials of prayer as recorded in Mt.6:9-13. Let us look at the four fundamental aspects of prayer contained in this passage.

**WORSHIP** [9] “Pray then in this way: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name.” If we are to pray aright, we must be worshipers of the Most High. The greatness of His majesty and the magnificence of His works occupy every worshiping heart [Ps.145:5]. Worship is that devotedness of heart so as to yield up one’s body to serve the will and purposes of God by ascribing to the Lord the glory due to His name [I Chron.16:29].

**INTERCESSION** [10] “Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” Worshipers who love their God also love His ways. They delight in His will and pray that His purposes will be established among men. They pray regularly regarding the concerns which occupy their Lord. Their desire is to see the rule of their King reign supreme in the hearts of His subjects. Many prayers in the Scriptures are concerned with the spiritual progress of God’s kingdom and His purposes being accomplished among His people here on earth. See Eph.1:16-21; 3:14-21; Col.1:3-12; 4:3,12. It is certainly the will of God that men would repent of their sins so as not to perish [2 Pet.3:9]. So we ought to intercede to the Father for the salvation of men as Paul did in Rom.10:1. As well, we are to pray for all of the governing authorities according to I Tim.2:1,2.

Only those prayers that are offered according to the will of God will be heard. He certainly cannot answer requests which are contrary to His purpose. “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him” [I Jn.5:14,15]. Only prayer according to the will of God will be heard; no amount of cajoling, manipulating, or attempts to obligate God will be move the Lord to act. Thus praying, “Your will be done” puts everything into its proper perspective. It exalts the wisdom, omnipotence, and sovereignty of God while exposing the ignorance, weakness, and self-centeredness of man’s desires. And praying in His will requires that we live according to His will [I Jn.3:22].

**PERSONAL REQUESTS** [11,13] “Give us this day our daily bread...and do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil.” Our needs in this realm fall into two categories, the temporal and the spiritual. We need food. We need purity. We are to ask our Father for the needs of this life which He knows very well are necessities. “Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things” [Mt.6:31,32]. Our personal requests are not for the purpose of becoming comfortable, self-satisfied, or prosperous. The Word directs us that “If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content” [I Tim.6:8].

Daily bread is needful that we might live. But if we are not delivered from temptation and evil, our living by daily bread serves no eternal and holy purpose other than to prolong our impending destruction in hell. The great need in life is for personal holiness. Prayers such as that of David in Ps.51:10 express this: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”

**CONFESSION** [12] “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Confession forms a proper and significant element in godly prayer; confession of the name of the Lord unto salvation [Rom.10:9,10] and confessing of sins unto God [Ps.32:5]. I John 1:9 summarizes this type of confession of sin. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

These are the true elements of prayer contained in the Scriptures. They do not include commanding God through our own decrees. That is not true prayer. Apart from worshiping and confessing, the very nature of

prayer is asking [Mt.7:7-11]. The child who demands from his father shows he has no proper sense of honor or respect. It rather reveals a heart intent upon his own self-will. It is not for the son to command, but to humbly request while awaiting his father's good pleasure.

#### PRAYER IN JESUS' NAME

When we ask, we are to ask in Jesus' name. "Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" [Jn.14:13,14]. Praying in the name of Jesus does not mean that you merely say these words after you have made your request, as if saying these words will guarantee gaining what you have asked. What it means to ask in another's name is illustrated in I Sam.25:5-9.

Here David sent his servants to greet Nabal "in my name" [I Sam.25:5]. He then gave them specific words to say that expressed his will. They were to make the request of Nabal that David himself would have made if he were there personally [v.6-8]. Verse 9 says: "When David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in David's name." To make request in another's name means that you present the person's request according to his word in behalf of the person you are representing. When we pray in Jesus' name, we are presenting before the Father the very things Jesus wants to accomplish according to His Word. Then we will be certain to be praying according to God's will. To present self-centered requests in the name of Jesus is to be guilty of taking the name of the Lord in vain.

#### HINDRANCES TO PRAYER

There are several things that hinder prayer from being heard and answered by God. [1] Sin tolerated and unconfessed in the heart cancels prayer [Ps.66:18]. [2] Neglecting or refusing the Word of God makes prayer an abomination [Prov.28:9]. [3] Wrong motives make prayer ineffective [Jas.4:2,3]. [4] Refusing to forgive others will result in God not hearing our prayers for forgiveness [Mk.11:25]. [5] Failing to live in a godly understanding way with your wife hinders prayer [I Pet.3:7].

## KNOWING GOD'S WILL

The following passages specifically inform us what God's will is for each believer [Rom.12:2; Jn.6:38-40; 2 Cor.8:5; I Thess.4:3; 5:18; I Pet.2:15; 4:19.] Let us examine them one by one.

Romans 12:1, 2. It is the will of God for every believer to be entirely devoted to Him in every way. Every aspect of the life is to be presented to Him willingly for His honor and use alone. This is evidenced by not being conformed to the world and its way of thinking and behaving but by being transformed by the renewing of our minds by God's Word. This results in a practical proof of God's good and perfect will being done in our experience.

John 6:38-40. It is the will of the Father that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him will possess eternal life and be raised up by Christ on the last day.

2 Corinthians 8:5. To give oneself unreservedly to God and to the brethren is God's purpose for each Christian.

I Thessalonians 4:3. Sanctification in body and soul is the will of God for the believer that he would abstain from sexual immorality.

I Thessalonians 5:18. The will of God is that we should not grumble and complain, but rather give thanks in everything since God is in control of all details of life.

I Peter 2:15. Having a good testimony by doing what is right is the will of God which will silence the foolishness of ignorant men who malign your good behavior.

I Peter 4:19. Patiently enduring suffering and affliction by committing our souls to our faithful Creator is God's will for His people.

The Lord's will for the Christian is that he would be saved by the Lord Jesus and then present his body entirely to God in holiness without reservation in order to glorify Him by giving thanks in every circumstance, even while suffering according to the will of God.

## FAITH & WORKS

Man's own efforts to save himself are works that can never make him acceptable to God. Works of the law can never save a man [Gal.2:16]. These are all works of darkness which will only condemn [Acts 13:12], wicked works that only make us enemies of God [Col.1:21]. It not by our works of righteousness that we will be saved [Tit.3:5], for our righteousness is only filthy rags in God's sight [Isa.64:6]. These are all dead works which we must repent of since they can never be accepted by the living God [Heb.6:1; 9:14].

Man is saved by grace alone through faith. It is the gift of God [Eph.2:8,9]. Grace is the full provision of God for every spiritual need supplied due to no worthiness on our part. Faith is simply believing God's promise and obeying His Word by the power He supplies. If a person has true faith and has actually received the grace of God, then the life of Christ is imparted to him. God Himself begins a good work within the life of the believer and continues to perform that work until the day of Christ Jesus [Phil.1:6].

Thus the man who is saved by grace through faith alone has a good work begun in him by God Himself. God is the One who has brought about this spiritual work of creation in the heart of man which introduces him into the good works that God has prepared for him to walk in [Eph.2:10]. Thus it is God who performs a good work within the believer, both the willing and the doing of it [Phil.2:13]. Our part is to work out what we have received from Him by His enabling power [Phil.2:12]. No man can earn salvation by working for it. Only a Christian in whom God is working can work out the salvation that has been freely received by grace.

James emphasizes this resulting work of God within the heart of a true believer in the second chapter of his epistle, verses 14-26. There he clearly expounds what we have just said; if there is no evidence of God being at work in a man, then surely the man's claim to saving faith is an empty one. Of what good is it to pretend to know God if there is no evidence that God knows you? Such "faith" cannot save because God has never begun a good work in that man.

We are justified [declared righteous] in the sight of God by faith alone. He is the One who justifies on this basis. We are justified [declared to be righteous] in the sight of men by works alone. They are the ones who testify if we are living in that righteousness that we claim to have before God. Men look on the outward appearance and justify us by our works. God looks upon the heart and justifies us if faith is discovered therein.

Abraham was justified by faith alone as recorded in Gen.15:6. Years later he was justified by works when he offered Isaac in obedience to the command of God [Jas.2:21-23]. Rahab was justified by faith [Heb.11:31] before the spies ever entered her home [Josh.2:8-11]. She was justified by works when she received them and did not betray them [Jas.2:25].

This is the true relationship between faith and works: No one becomes a believer by doing good works, but every true believer will certainly perform good works since it is God who is at work in him.

## LEADING & GUIDANCE

All of the Lord's leading of His people is in harmony with the truth of His Word. The Lord will never guide a person to a decision or action that is contrary to what He has clearly revealed in the Scriptures as His directive for all believers. This truth is expressed in passages such as Ps.73:24: "With Your counsel You will guide me and afterward receive me to glory." The Psalmist cries out in Ps.43:3: "O send out Your light and Your truth, let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill and to Your dwelling places."

God's guidance of the believer is for the sake of His glory and honor. Anything we do or say that is otherwise has certainly not been by His leading. Ps.31:3 declares: "For You are my Rock and my fortress; for Your name's sake You will lead me and guide me."

The Lord promises us that "I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you" [Ps.32:8]. God wants us to receive and understand the counsel of His Word that we might walk in it to fulfill His purpose unto His glory and our blessing. One of the great ministries of the Holy Spirit is to make His Word known unto us that we might then walk in His paths. "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth..." [Jn.16:13].

It is as we walk in the light of God's counsel that we experience His leading in the particulars of daily life. A consistent obedient walk by faith in known duty will guide us into godly specific decisions along the way. Prov.11:3 puts it this way: "The integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them." And so the integrity of a consistently godly life provides direction for the steps ahead that may as yet be unclear.

These are the general ways in which the Lord guides His people into paths of righteousness for His name's sake. There are, as well, numerous situations and decisions that the believer needs specific leading in order to make decisions for the glory of God. Principles to guide us in making such decisions are noted under the heading "Decisions" beginning on page 20.

# HOLY SPIRIT

## THE NATURE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Eternal - Infinite in time [Heb.9:14]; Everywhere - Infinite in space [Ps.139:7];

Infinite with respect to His character [Knowledge - Isa.40:13,14; I Cor.2:10,11 with Ps.147:5; Power - Lk.1:35];

God - [Acts 5:3,4]

The roles and relationships among the Godhead can be generally described in this manner:

The Father plans, the Son executes the will of the Father, and the Holy Spirit implements, applies, and makes effective what the Lord Jesus has accomplished

Lord - [2 Cor.3:17,18]

## THE WORKS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

### CREATION

[Gen.1:1,2; Ps.104:30]

The Holy Spirit ordered, arranged, and brought into a fully developed form what Christ brought forth by His creative power [Jn.1:3] according to the will of God.

### SCRIPTURE

[2 Sam.23:2; Neh.9:30; Mt.22:43,44; Eph.6:17; I Pet.1:10-12; 2 Pet.1:20,21; Rev.2:7,11,17,29; 3:6,13,22]

The Holy Spirit superintended, guided, and filled the human authors of the Scriptures so that the Word of God was written without error by them as a progressive, unified, sufficient, and complete revelation of everything necessary for life and godliness

### IN RELATION TO CHRIST

Birth [Lk.1:35]; Baptism [Mt.3:16]; Filling [Lk.4:1]; Leading [Lk.4:1]; Power [Lk.4:14]; Wisdom, Counsel, Understanding, Might [Isa.11:2]; Justice and Compassion [Isa.42:1-4]; Preaching Liberty [Isa.61:1-3; Lk.4:18,19]; Cross [Heb.9:14]; Resurrection [Rom.1:4; I Pet.3:18]; Glory [Jn.16:14; Rev.5:6]

### IN SALVATION

ADOPTED [Rom.8:15; Gal.4:5,6]

Adoption was a Roman ceremony wherein a naturally born son of his father was officially "adopted" into the family. In his early teenage years, the son was released from the servant who had served as his schoolmaster/tutor [Gal.3:23-26; 4:5-7]. After this ceremony of celebration, the son was no more subject to slaves but related directly with his father alone. He was then considered a fully mature adult member of the household who could discuss and participate in his father's affairs respecting the business of the house and inheritance.

Christians who have been born again as children of God are also adopted as fully mature sons who have direct access to the Father in heaven. We are no longer subject to the Law's ceremonial regulations, but now relate directly to the Father through the Spirit of adoption.

ANointed [I Jn.2:20,27]

Every Christian regardless of spiritual maturity or spiritual gift is anointed by the Holy Spirit. It is not a special enablement of the Holy Spirit for those engaged in gospel ministry. Anointing with oil is used as a symbol

of the Holy Spirit in places like Zech.4. The Spirit's anointing is for the purpose of instructing our hearts in the truth while guarding us from deception. This is a wonderful work that the Holy Spirit performs for all believers.

ASSURANCE [Rom.8:16; I Jn.3:24; 4:13]

The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are sons of God. It is an internal testimony to assure our hearts that we are truly born again and children of God.

BAPTISM [All NT references to the baptism of the Holy Spirit: Mt.3:11,12; Jn.1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:15,16; I Cor.12:13]

The baptism of the Spirit is the spiritual immersion of believers at the time of conversion into a whole new realm of life whereby the Holy Spirit unites the individual to Christ as a member of His body, the church. A person is either baptized by the Spirit and thus a true believer who will be gathered into heaven's storehouse or he does not bring forth fruit and will be baptized in the fire of hell.

CIRCUMCISION [Rom.2:29]

It is the spiritual cutting off of fleshly tendencies within the heart of the Christian by the Holy Spirit.

COMFORTER [Jn.14:16,17; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 9:31]

The Holy Spirit brings the presence and influence of Christ into the heart to instruct, assist, comfort, and guide.

CONVICTION [Zech.12:10; Jn.16:7-11]

The Holy Spirit convinces the unbeliever concerning the sinful condition of his soul and of the perfect provision to remedy sin through the Lord Jesus and His work of salvation.

CRUCIFY [Rom.8:13; Gal.5:24]

The Spirit of God enables the believer to judge and put to death the deeds of the flesh in his individual life. Galatians 5:24 relates the final outcome of this process in every Christian's experience.

DOVE [Mt.3:16; Lk.3:22; Jn.1:32]

The descent from heaven of God's purity and gentleness is symbolized by the dove.

FELLOWSHIP [2 Cor.13:12; Eph.4:30; Phil.2:1]

Through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit we enjoy communion with God while the Spirit shares with us the very life of God and spiritual blessings in Christ.

FRUIT [Gal.5:22,23; Eph.5:9]

Fruit is the outward result of the inward life of the Holy Spirit being evident by characteristics of moral excellence which are developed in the believer, summarized by Truth, Holiness, and Love.

FULLNESS [Ex.31:3; Eph.5:18]. [All NT references to being filled with the Holy Spirit: Lk.1:15-17, 41-45, 67f; 4:1f, 14,15; Acts 2:4; 4:8-12, 31; 6:3,5; 9:15-20; 13:9-11; Eph.5:18,19]

To be under the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit who empowers to speak forth His Word.

GLORY [I Pet.4:14]

The outshining of God's moral perfections is fully possessed and are communicated and imparted by the Holy Spirit to the believer.

GRACE [Heb.10:29]

Through the Holy Spirit the fullness of God's provision for every conceivable spiritual need for life and godliness is communicated to the believer.

GRIEVE [Isa.63:10; Eph.4:30]

The Holy Spirit is saddened by the distressing disappointment of a neglectful and/or sinful heart.

INDWELLING [Jn.14:17; Rom.8:9,11; I Cor.2:12; 3:16; 6:17,19; Eph.2:22]

There occurs a vital and living union of the Holy Spirit with the spirit of every true believer so that we become, both individually and collectively, a temple of the Lord. A temple is a holy place where the Lord dwells and displays His glory, where spiritual sacrifices take place, and the Word of God is proclaimed.

LEADING [Isa.63:14; Lk.2:27; Rom.8:14; Gal.5:18]

Daily guidance and direction is communicated to the seeking believer in the practical matters of life as well as being led to put to death the deeds of the flesh.

LIBERTY [2 Cor.3:17]

There is freedom in the Holy Spirit from the bondage of sin, the blindness of religious tradition, and an opening of the spiritual eyes to behold Christ in all His glory.

LIFE [Jn.6:63; 2 Cor.3:6]

Eternal life, the very life of God, is imparted to the heart of true believers by the Holy Spirit.

LOVE [Rom.5:5; 15:30; Col.1:8]

Love, the very nature of God, is implanted abundantly in the heart of the Christian by the Spirit's presence and enabling.

MINISTRY [Mt.10:20]

When needed wisdom and fitting words are required in order to testify for the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit will grant necessary grace to speak forth unto the glory of God.

NEW COVENANT [Isa.59:21; Acts 2:17,21; Heb.10:15-17]

In contrast to the Old Covenant's emphasis on physical and external regulations, the Holy Spirit imparts internally in the believer the will and ability to glorify God in obedience and joy.

POWER [Mic.3:8; Acts 1:8, 10:38; Rom.15:13, 18,19; Eph.3:16; I Thess.1:5; 2 Tim.1:7]

Through the Holy Spirit's enabling power, the Christian is given the needed strength to live to the glory of God in dependence upon the might of the Spirit.

PRAYER [Rom.8:26,27; Eph.6:18]

When we pray according to the guidance and burden of the Holy Spirit, we pray according to the will of God. The Lord knows what the mind of the Spirit is as He intercedes for us even when we do not know how to pray as we ought.

QUENCH [I Thess.5:19]

The Holy Spirit is quenched by willful neglect or refusal to follow His leading or by refusing to receive His work expressed through others.

REGENERATION [Ezek.36:26,27; Jn.3:3,5; Tit.3:5]

Our natural life in the flesh does not profit anything with respect to acceptance before God. The Holy Spirit causes those who trust Christ to become born again in their spirits with the very life of Christ.

SANCTIFICATION [I Cor.6:11; I Thess.4:7,8; 2 Thess.2:13; I Pet.1:2]

The Holy Spirit sets apart the believer unto the Lord and progressively imparts holiness into the life.

SEALED [2 Cor.1:22; 5:5; Eph.1:13,14; 4:30]

The Holy Spirit becomes the believers' stamp of approval as the Divine guarantee of our final acceptance before God.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS [I Cor.12:4-11]

The Holy Spirit imparts as least one spiritual gift to every believer according to His own will, not according to our choice. There is no one gift that is given to every believer.

TEACHING [Prov.1:23; Neh.9:20; Jn.16:13; I Cor.2:10; Eph.1:17]

By supernatural understanding granted, the Holy Spirit explains to the Christian the significance of the Word of God. Though the mind must be engaged, the spiritual illumination of the reading and study of the Scriptures is divinely imparted by the Spirit's revelation of Christ to the heart.

TRANSFORMATION [2 Cor.3:17,18; Rom.8:11-13]

Through reflection upon Christ revealed within the Word of God, the Holy Spirit changes the believer into the image of the Lord Jesus from one degree of conformity to His moral and spiritual excellence unto further experience and expression of that glory.

TRUTH [Jn.14:17; 15:26; 16:13,14; I Cor.2:10-16; I Jn.5:6]

The Holy Spirit alone knows the depths of God and reveals the thoughts of God to spiritual men through spiritual words contained in the Scriptures. He glorifies Christ by making known to us what He has seen with the Lord Jesus.

UNITY [Eph.4:3]

By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in each believer, the common life within joins the members of Christ's body to glorify Him as Head with one accord. Together as one flock, they hear the voice of the Good Shepherd in the Word of God and follow Him by the leading and enablement of the Spirit [Jn.10:4,5].

WALK [Gal.5:16,25]

With a single focus and determined purpose, successive steps of obedience are taken in a straight path by the Spirit's enabling to arrive at the desired destination.

WASHED [I Cor.6:11; Tit.3:5,6]

The Holy Spirit cleanses from the defilement of sin's corruption in the inner man.

WATER [Jn.7:37-39]

The Spirit of God is the ever present refreshing life-giving flow of God to the soul.

WIND [Jn.3:8]

The Holy Spirit is the invisible sovereign power from heaven that moves upon those of the earth whose influence cannot be channeled or controlled.

WORSHIP [Jn.4:23,24; Phil.3:3]

The Holy Spirit moves within the heart of the believer to express his devotion and adoration through praise, consecration, and loving spiritual service.

## LOVING ONE ANOTHER

WE ARE MEMBERS OF ONE ANOTHER [ROM.12:5; EPH.4:25]  
BE DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER IN BROTHERLY LOVE [ROM.12:10]  
BE OF THE SAME MIND TOWARD ONE ANOTHER [ROM.12:16; 15:5]  
LOVE ONE ANOTHER [ROM.13:8; I THESS.3:12; 4:9; I PET.1:22; I JN.3:11,23; 4:7,11]  
BUILDING UP ONE ANOTHER [ROM.14:19; I THESS.5:11]  
ACCEPT ONE ANOTHER [ROM.15:7]  
ADMONISH ONE ANOTHER [ROM.15:14; COL.3:16]  
GREET ONE ANOTHER WITH A HOLY KISS [ROM.16:16; I COR.16:20; 2 COR.13:12; I PET.5:14]  
HAVE THE SAME CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER [I COR.12:25]  
THROUGH LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER [GAL.5:13; I PET.4:10]  
BEAR ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS [GAL.6:2]  
BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE [EPH.4:2; COL.3:13]  
BE KIND TO ONE ANOTHER [EPH.4:32]  
FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER [EPH.4:32]  
SUBMITTING TO ONE ANOTHER [EPH.5:21]  
TEACHING ONE ANOTHER [COL.3:16]  
COMFORT ONE ANOTHER [I THESS.4:18]  
ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER [I THESS.5:11; HEB.3:13; 10:25]  
CONSIDER ONE ANOTHER TO STIR UP LOVE AND GOOD DEEDS [HEB.10:24]  
CONFESS YOUR SINS TO ONE ANOTHER [JAS.5:16]  
PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER [JAS.5:16]  
BE HOSPITABLE TO ONE ANOTHER [I PET.4:9]  
CLOTHE YOURSELVES WITH HUMILITY TOWARD ONE ANOTHER [I PET.5:5]  
FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER [I JN.1:7]

## CHRISTIAN HOME

*Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands.  
Husbands, love your wives and be gentle with them.  
Children, obey your parents in all things.  
Colossians 3:18-20*

### PURITY

Purity of heart and body is to be in the life of every follower of the true God. In every way we are to keep ourselves pure. The Word of God tells us that “Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body” [I Cor. 6:13]. A man must not touch a woman’s body in any way that might arouse unholy desires for sexual relations [I Cor.7:1]. Neither are we to look at others and want to do sexual things with them in our hearts.

The Lord Jesus said this, “Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” [Mt.5:28]. The living God tells us these things many times in the Holy Bible. Listen again to His Word; “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God” [I Thess.4:3-5].

Strong warnings are spoken by the Lord against all who disobey His Word. Hear well what He says, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” [Heb.13:4].

### CHOOSING A MARRIAGE PARTNER

Choosing a marriage partner is not a matter of wanting to have sexual activity with another person. No, these desires are only proper between a man and his own wife after they are married.

The first and most important reason for choosing a person for marriage is that he/she is a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. No other person should ever be considered for marriage by a Christian. This is what God’s Word says:

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?” [2 Cor.6:14].

The God of heaven forbids His believers to marry unbelievers. “Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the Lord will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly” [Deut.7:3,4].

The person chosen to marry must not only be a believer, but a godly obedient follower of the Lord Jesus. It is what the Bible tells us: “If some people do not obey what we tell you in this letter, have nothing to do with them so that they will feel ashamed. But do not treat them as enemies. Warn them as fellow believers” [2 Thess.3:14,15].

Godly qualities of life are to be sought for in a marriage partner. “Charm is deceptive, and beauty disappears, but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised” [Prov.31:30]. “A good wife is like a crown for her husband, but a disgraceful wife is like a disease in his bones” [Prov.12:4].

So, careful consideration is to be taken in this life-long decision before any proposal is made. “He who hurries his footsteps, sins. People’s own foolishness ruins their lives, but in their minds they blame the Lord” [Prov.19:2,3].

Do not rely on prophets, dreams, or impulsive desires. These are uncertain and unstable bases to make this most important decision of human life. God never says that a pastor or even the person himself must receive a vision from God before a Christian man and woman can marry.

Rather, seek the Lord patiently in prayer. “Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Never rely on your own understanding. Remember the Lord in everything you do, and He will show you the right way” [Prov.3:5,6].

“The Lord is good to everyone who trusts in Him, so it is best for us to wait in patience – to wait for Him to save us – and it is best to learn this patience in our youth” [Lam.3:25-27].

As children seeking to do the will of God, parents’ approval and blessing must be obtained long before marriage plans are made. “Honor your father and mother. This is the first commandment that has a promise with it – then everything will be well with you, and you will have a long life on the earth” [Eph.6:2,3].

“A wise son makes his father happy, but a foolish son disrespects his mother” [Prov.15:20]. In some tribes, the parents even choose husbands or wives for their children. Some of the marriages in the Bible were done in this way.

Abraham sent his servant to find a bride for his son, Isaac. He said, “Don’t get a wife for my son from the Canaanite girls who live around here. Instead, go back to my country, to the land of my relatives, and get a wife for my son Isaac” [Gen.24:3,4].

After the dowry was paid to them, her father and senior brother said, “Rebekah is yours. Take her and go. Let her marry your master’s son as the Lord has commanded” [Gen.24:51]. They asked the girl if she was willing to be Isaac’s wife as they had arranged for her. “Rebekah’s brother and mother said, ‘We will call Rebekah and ask her what she wants to do.’ They called her and asked her, ‘Do you want to go with this man now?’ She said, ‘Yes, I do’” [Gen.24:57,58].

They traveled back to Abraham’s land. “Then Isaac brought Rebekah into the tent and she became his wife. Isaac loved her very much” [Gen.24:67]. So, whether parents actually choose a husband or wife for their children, or if the children themselves choose a marriage partner, the parents’ blessing is to be had on the proposed union.

#### WHEN ARE PEOPLE MARRIED?

Two things make a marriage according to the Word of God:

[1]

A culturally recognized ceremony which tells everyone that this man and woman are now husband and wife.

[2]

The sexual union of the husband and wife after the ceremony.

This is seen from the very first marriage at the time of creation. This is what the Word of God says: “The Lord God brought the woman to the man. And the man said, ‘This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body” [Gen.2:22-24].

There is no one ceremony that God has given to all peoples in all places. The customs and ceremonies in your village may differ from others. Yours may be similar to Isaac’s marriage described before, or it may be like that of Boaz and Ruth’s; a public testimony before witnesses.

“Then Boaz said to the elders and to all the people, ‘You are witnesses today. I am taking Ruth as my wife.’ So all the people and elders said, ‘We are witnesses.’ So Boaz took Ruth home as his wife and had sexual relations with her” [Ruth 4:9-11, 13].

Though the ceremonies may vary from tribe to tribe, each one makes it clear to everyone that this man and woman are now husband and wife. Each custom shows that they now have the exclusive right of sexual relations with each other and with no one else.

However, Christians should not and must not include traditional practices in their ceremonies that are against the Word of God. No traditional idolatrous elements should be allowed or practiced.

These are the things that make a man and woman to be married according to the Bible. Having a marriage ceremony in a church building is one way to become married, but it is not the only way that is accepted by God.

## THE CHRISTIAN HUSBAND

The Christian home is to be like no other home. The believing man will love and care for his wife like Isaac did for Rebekah. The believing wife will submit to and help her husband like she was created to do from the beginning.

“Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. He died so that He could give the church to Himself like a bride in all her beauty. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they love their own bodies.

“The man who loves his wife loves himself. No one ever hates his own body, but feeds and takes care of it [Eph.5:25-29]. The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the Head of the church” [Eph.5:23].

The Christian husband is to love his wife by a self-sacrificing giving for her. He is the leader and head of the home. It is his responsibility to direct his family in the things of God.

“Fathers, do not make your children angry, but raise them with the training and teaching of the Lord” [Eph.6:4].

He is to answer his wife’s spiritual questions at home as the Word of God says to. “As is true in all the churches of God’s people, women should keep quiet in the church meetings. If they want to learn something, they should ask their own husbands at home” [I Cor. 14:34,35].

In addition to this spiritual provision for his wife and family, he is responsible to feed and clothe them as well. It is not the wife’s responsibility to feed and clothe the man and children. The man must do this according to the Word of God. “If any man does not provide for his own, especially those of his own household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” [I Tim.5:8].

Even though he is the head and leader, he is to be kind and respectful, not harsh and cruel. The Bible commands him, “Husbands, love your wives and be gentle with them” [Col.3:19]. The wife is not the property of the man as if she were some kind of goat purchased in the market. The following tells us how the Christian husband is to treat his wife.

### His Christian Wife is:

[1] to be honored, understood, and not mistreated since she is weaker [I Pet.3:7].

[2] to be loved as one’s own body, not treated as property [Eph.5:25,28,31].

[3] a helper, not an animal used as a sexual object for pleasure and to simply provide children [Gen.2:18-20].

[4] not a slave whose labor profits the man. The man is to provide for her [I Tim.5:8]. Man is not king [Gen.3:16].

[5] not to be divorced [Mal.2:16] and barrenness is no cause to do so [Lk.1:7; Gen.11:30; 18:10,11; I Sam.1:5-8].

[6] not under the authority of the extended family or clan. They have no rights over the wife of their male relation [Gen.2:23,24].

[7] not the one held responsible for the training of the children; the man is [Eph.6:4; Gen.18:19; Deut.11:18-21; Prov.4:1-4; Ps.78:3-8].

[8] not to be isolated and separate from the man and all that concerns him; no secrets covered up. All is freely shared [Gen.2:25].

[9] a fellow heir of the grace of life, not of lesser privilege [I Pet.3:7; Gal.3:28].

[10] not to be shared among other wives. Polygamy does not have God’s approval [Gen.2:18-25; Mt.19:4-6; Deut.17:17].

If the man is not kind, gentle, and respectful; if he does not sacrificially give himself for her in genuine love, then prayers will be hindered. And if prayers are hindered, his belief in God has become a form of godliness only, but without power.

## THE CHRISTIAN WIFE

The wife, as well, has specific ways to honor the Lord as a godly woman. These are the things that the Word of God says about the Christian wife.

“Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the Head of the church. And so wives must submit themselves completely to their husbands just as the church submits itself to Christ” [Eph.5:22-24].

“You wives should submit to your husbands. Then, if some husbands do not obey God’s teaching, they will be persuaded to believe without anyone’s saying a word to them. They will be persuaded by the way their wives live. Your husbands will see the pure lives you live with respect for God.

“It is not fancy hair, gold jewelry, or fine clothes that should make you beautiful. No, your beauty should come within you – the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit that will never be destroyed and is very precious to God.

“In the same way the holy women who lived long ago and followed God made themselves beautiful, submitting to their own husbands. Sarah obeyed Abraham, her husband, and called him her master. And you women are true children of Sarah if you always do what is right and are not afraid” [I Pet.3:1-6].

“Teach older women to be holy in their behavior, teaching what is good. Then they can teach the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be wise and pure, to be good workers at home, to be kind, and to be submissive to their husbands. Then no one will be able to speak evil of the teaching God gave us” [Tit.2:3-5].

It is here, in her home, to her husband and children, that is her primary area of service unto God [I Tim.5:14]. The Lord has neither called nor equipped her to teach men, have authority over them, or to lead in the church. This is what the Word of God says: “A woman must learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, she must be silent” [I Tim.2:11,12].

## ONENESS

As husband and wife, the man and woman are one. There cannot, however, be two leaders, two heads. Chaos would result. Yet they must not act independently from one another, each in their own isolated realms, or living apart in separate houses or villages.

Two become one in heart. As planned and commanded in the Bible, the home is harmonious. Each partner glorifies God in their appointed areas. They share all. Nothing is secret between them. There is openness. Their private existence has ended as the two have become one with nothing hidden. Decisions are discussed between them.

“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed” [Gen.2:25]. They share one purse, one dwelling, one bed, and are united in their instruction to their children.

## TRAINING CHILDREN

Together, as one, they teach and train their children in the ways of the Lord in His Word. This godly training involves two main things: Discipline and Instruction. “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself, brings shame to his mother” [Prov.29:15].

The rod is a cane used for beating disobedient children on the buttocks. “Don’t hesitate to discipline a child. A good spanking [beating] won’t kill him. You shall beat him with a rod and deliver his soul from hell” [Prov.23:13,14]. The children are to hear the reproof and instructions of their parents and learn from their discipline. Any child who does not is a fool.

“My son, keep your father’s commands, and don’t forget your mother’s teaching. Keep their words in mind forever. They will guide you when you walk. They will guard you when you sleep. They will speak to you when you are awake. These commands are like a lamp; this teaching is like a light. And reproofs for discipline are the way of life” [Prov.6:20-23].

Believing parents are the ones who are to teach the truths of God’s Word to their own families. It is no one else’s responsibility. This is what God commands fathers and mothers.

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength. Always remember these commands I give you today. Teach them to your children, and talk about them when you sit at home and walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” [Deut.6:5-7].

It is not good for the fathers and mothers to leave their children alone. A father cannot train his children when they sit at home, walk by the way, or when they lie down and awaken if he is not present in the home. A mother cannot instruct her children if they are left to themselves. These are shameful ways [Prov.29:15].

### AN OBEDIENT HOME

Obedied, the teaching of the Word of God brings great blessing to the entire family. This is what the believer's home is to be like:

“Finally, all of you should be in harmony, understanding each other, loving each other as family, being kind and humble. Do not do wrong to repay a wrong, and do not insult to repay and insult.

“But repay with a blessing, because you yourselves were called to do this so that you might receive a blessing. The Scripture says, ‘A person must do these things to enjoy life and have many happy days. He must not say evil things, and he must not tell lies. He must stop doing evil and do good. He must look for peace and work for it’ [I Pet.3:8-11].

But not everyone obeys God. Not everything in the home is done according to the Word of the living God. Instead of truth, there may be lying and deception. Cruelty, hatred, and abuse may chase love from the home. Purity might be spoiled by fornication and lust.

Money in the home might be wasted on the evils of palm wine and beer while the wife and children suffer for lack of food. Hear well these words of God: “Do not be drunk with wine, which will ruin you” [Eph.5:18].

Quarreling and fighting, laziness and neglect, and other evils like these may be found in the home. It is not good. The Lord of heaven and earth is not happy with things like these found among His people. This is what He says:

“Do not make the Holy Spirit sad, do not be bitter or angry or mad. Never shout angrily or say things to hurt others. Never do anything evil. Be kind and loving to each other, and forgive each other just as God forgave you in Christ” [Eph.4:30-32].

### DIVORCE

There are even times when a husband or wife wishes to divorce the other and end the marriage. This is a great sin which God hates. The Word of God is certain about this.

“The Lord sees how you treated the wife you married when you were young. You broke your promise to her, even though she was your companion and your wife by covenant.

“God made husbands and wives to become one body and one spirit for His purpose – so they would have children who are true to God. So be careful, and do not break your promise to the wife you married when you were young.

“The Lord God of Israel says, ‘I hate divorce’” [Mal.2:14-16].

Some people, even people in the churches, think they can divorce for any cause at all. It is not true. The godly man “always does what he promises, no matter how much it may cost” [Ps.15:4]. Here is what the Lord God says about keeping your promises to God and to your husband or wife:

“When you make a promise to God, do not be slow to keep it. God is not happy with fools, so do what you promised! It is better not to promise anything than to promise something and not do it.

“Don't let your words cause you to sin, and don't say to the messenger of God that it was a mistake. If you do, God will become angry with your words and will destroy everything you have worked for” [Eccl.5:4-6].

No, we may not divorce anyhow. The Lord Jesus made this very clear in the Word of God. He said, “So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body. So they are not two, but one. God has joined them together, so no one should separate them” [Mt.19:5,6].

The Lord's command from the beginning of creation is that one man would be married to one woman for their lifetime. No one is to separate by divorce what God has joined together. To do so is a great evil which the Lord hates.

There is only one exception to this. There is only one reason that a husband or wife can divorce the other with God's approval; it is if the other marriage partner has been sexually unfaithful to his/her spouse. This is what the Word of God says:

“I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery. The only reason for a man to divorce his wife is if his wife has sexual relations with another man” [Mt.19:9].

But even if your marriage partner is sexually unfaithful against you, divorce is not the immediate thing to be pursued. Forgiveness and seeking to restore the sinning partner is the first thing to be done. It is what the Bible directs us to do. This very thing happened to Hosea, one of the prophets of the Lord.

“The Lord said to me again, ‘Go show your love to a woman loved by someone else, who has been unfaithful to you.’ Then I told her, ‘You must not be a prostitute, and you must not have sexual relations with any other man. I will act the same way toward you’” [Hos.3:1,3]. Hosea forgave her. He welcomed her back as his wife. But it was done so only if she would stop sinning in this evil sexual way.

A husband or wife who refuses to stop their sexual immorality, violates the holiest and most basic expression of the marriage covenant. It is this one that the Lord says may be divorced. This is the only reason that God allows for divorce.

Re-marriage is permitted in such situations where the husband or wife has been treated unfaithfully by their sexually immoral partner. This is what the Lord Jesus said: “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery” [Mt.19:9].

There are also situations in which one of the married partners becomes a believer in the Lord Jesus after they have been married. The believer should not divorce his/her unbelieving partner if the unbeliever is happy to live with this new belief in the true God. Here is what the Word of God says:

“If a Christian man has a wife who is not a believer, and she is happy to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a Christian woman has a husband who is not a believer, and he is happy to live with her, she must not divorce him.

But if those who are not believers decide to leave, let them leave. When this happens, the Christian man or woman is free. God has called us to live in peace” [I Cor.7:12,13,15].

This situation is the only other time that a Christian can remarry after a divorce without committing adultery. In any other case, a second marriage is committing an act of adultery. These are the only two exceptions in which re-marriage is permitted after divorce from the first partner.

All other reasons for divorce are sinful reasons. The Word of God tells us this:

“Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman is guilty of adultery against her. And the woman who divorces her husband and marries another man is also guilty of adultery” [Mk.10:11,12].

Some people invent their own wrong reasons for divorce out of their own minds. The living God does not approve of this at all. A palaver of angry argument is never a reason for divorce. It is a reason to repent of sin so that the husband loves his wife and the wife submits to him, but not for divorce.

Money problems are never a reason for divorce. They are reasons to pray together to the Lord that He might “give us the food we need each day” [Mt.6:11]. Money problems are a reason to follow the example of the godly men of the Bible, but not to divorce.

“You yourselves know that you should live as we live. We were not lazy when we were with you. We worked very hard night and day so we would not be an expense to any of you” [2 Thess.3:7,8].

## BARRENNESS

Many people wrongly think that barrenness is a reason for divorce. Barrenness is never a reason for divorce. It is a sinful wicked act to divorce your wife because she has given you no child. It is the Lord who opens the womb to conceive children as His Word tells us. “When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, He opened her womb. But Rachel was barren” [Gen.29:31].

God is able to make the barren woman to give birth. This is what the Bible says. “Then God remembered Rachel. He listened to her and opened her womb. She became pregnant and gave birth to a son” [Gen.30:22,23].

The Lord is also able to make the fruitful women barren. Here is what the Word of God says: “The Lord had closed up every womb in Abimelech’s household” [Gen.20:18].

We are given an example in the Bible of a godly man and woman who had no child. We should imitate their obedience to the Lord as they trusted in God for many years before the Lord gave them a child. Listen to what God says in His Word: “Year after year this man went up from his town to worship and sacrifice to the Lord Almighty. He gave to Hannah a double portion because he loved her, and the Lord had closed her womb” [I Sam.1:3,5].

Note it well what we are told. It was for many years that they had no child. Yet all through those years the husband continued to worship the true God. All through those years he continued to love his barren wife and supply all her needs very well. He never even considered divorcing her because of his love for God and for his wife. This is the godly way for a husband to live which makes the God of heaven glad.

This woman “was so sad that she cried and prayed to the Lord. She made a promise, saying, ‘O Lord Almighty, see how sad I am. Remember me and don’t forget me. If You will give me a son, I will give him back to You all his life’” [I Sam.1:10,11].

Though barrenness makes us sad, it is a reason for us to pray to the Lord God. We may even need to pray for many years as this godly woman did. The very same God who had closed her womb also made her able to give birth. But it was after many years of continued prayer and worship of the true and the living God that this happened. This is the record of the Word of God:

“Elkannah’s family got up and worshiped the Lord. Then they went back home to Ramah. Elkannah had sexual relations with his wife, Hannah, and the Lord remembered her. So Hannah became pregnant, and in time she gave birth to a son” [I Sam.1:19,20].

## POLYGAMY

But many are not willing to wait patiently for the Lord God to give children to their barren wives. Some genuine followers of the living God have not trusted the Lord in this. Even Abraham sinned against God and his wife by not waiting upon the Lord for a child. The Word of God tells us this about Abraham’s disobedience:

“Sarah was barren. She had no child. So Sarah said to Abraham, ‘Look, the Lord has not allowed me to have children, so have sexual relations with my slave girl. If she has a child, maybe I can have my own family through her.’ Abraham agreed to what Sarah said.

Sarah his wife took her Egyptian maidservant Hagar and gave her to her husband to be his wife. Abraham had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant” [Gen.11:30; 16:2-4].

Here, Abraham committed a great sin against God and his wife. He took another woman to be his wife because his first wife was barren. It is sin against the God of heaven to marry more than one wife. Even if the senior wife agrees and the husband agrees, God is not happy. The Lord never approves of marrying more than one wife for any reason.

The great king David also disobeyed God in this way. He married more than one wife as the Word of God tells us: “Abigail became his wife. David also had married Ahinoam. So they were both David’s wives” [I Sam.25:42,43]. Yet he did this in direct disobedience to the Lord’s command. The Bible says: “The king must not have many wives” [Deut.17:17].

Even though they had sinned by marrying more than one wife, it did not keep Abraham or David out of heaven. Even this sin could be forgiven by the mercy of God. Though we sin in many ways, it is only the grace of God in Christ Jesus the Lord that saves anyone. If a person has sinned by marrying more than one wife, he should confess this sin to God. He should ask the Lord to forgive him. It is what the Word of God tells us to do about any sin:

“If we say we have no sin, we are fooling ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, He will forgive our sins, because we can trust God to do what is right. He will cleanse us from all the wrongs we have done. If we say we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and we do not accept God’s teaching” [I Jn.1:8-10].

A man does not need to send his junior wives away in order to be forgiven. This should not be done. We have seen already what God’s Word says about sending away his wife: “The Lord God of Israel says, ‘I hate divorce’” [Mal.2:16]. It is wrong for a man to send any of his wives away. There is not even one example anywhere in the Bible of a man sending his wives away so that he could be forgiven by God.

Abraham and Hagar is no exception. God insisted that she be sent away because of the Lord’s purpose to establish His covenant with Isaac, not to correct Abraham’s sin of taking her in the first place [Gen.17:18-21; 21:10-12; Gal.4:21-31]. Even after Hagar was gone, and while still married to Sarah, Abraham continued to have concubines [Gen.25:5,6]. A concubine was a slave-woman taken as wife who had no inheritance rights [compare Jud.8:31 and 9:18].

The Lord was not pleased with Abraham’s taking Hagar and concubines. God was not happy with David’s taking many wives. But, like Abraham and David, any man who humbles his heart and seeks forgiveness can enter heaven by the grace of Christ.

Some wrongly imagine that the God of heaven only recognizes the first wife as being the only true marriage in His sight: That, since she is the only genuine wife, the other wives are not wives at all. They are, they say, adulterous relationships. Therefore, it is said, a man must send them away in order to show “restitution” before God can forgive him. But this is not true. God never speaks of these wives as adulterous partners. He calls them wives. The Lord nowhere commands this imaginary “restitution.”

Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah are all referred to as Jacob's wives [Gen.29:21,25,28; 30:4,9]. David's wives were many even before he married Bathsheba [2 Sam.3:2-5]. The wives of Gideon were numerous [Jud.8:30].

In the inspired language of the Word of God, the Lord said they were wives. They were not concubines. They were not adulterous partners. God knows the differences between the relationships that a man can have with women. He has called them wives. Since they are wives, it is not possible for their own husband to commit adultery with them. A man can only commit adultery with someone who is not his wife, but never with his own wife.

A man's wives should not be sent away, divorced, and uncared for [Mal.2:16; I Tim.5:8]. Had David sent Bathsheba away, Solomon would not have been born. And if Solomon had not been born, Jesus Christ Himself would not have been [Mt.1:6-16].

This is no excuse for David marrying more than one wife. He should not have. But it does show that, once the woman is taken as a wife, God does not require that she should be sent away.

There exists, therefore, no biblical command, example, or reason to send junior wives away in order for a man to be forgiven by God and enter into eternal life. Thus, the practice of "restitution" is not the will of God. A man has a life-long responsibility to each of his wives and children. Hear what the Word of God says:

"If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" [I Tim..5:8].

A man must continue to provide the needs of his wives and children. Their food and cloth must be supplied in obedience to the Word of God. As well, a man must continue to be a husband to each of his wives according to the Word of God. "If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first wife from having food or clothing or sexual relations" [Ex.21:10].

A man who has more than one wife can be a genuine Christian if he believes the gospel. He can be a full member of the church, be baptized, and take of the communion/Lord's Supper. He can testify of his saving faith. But he will not be qualified to be an overseer/elder in the church of God. An overseer/elder is to be above reproach as an example to all Christians. Since he has more than one wife, he would be setting the wrong example for the church to follow because of his married condition.

The Word of God says that the overseer/elder "must be the husband of one wife" [I Tim.3:2]. But with the exception of being an overseer/elder, he can serve the Lord Jesus to the glory of God without hindrance.

Since marriage illustrates the faithful loving relationship of Christ and His church [Eph.5:22-33], there must be a true example of that seen in the leaders of God's people. It is for this reason, because the husband pictures Christ, and the wife, the church, that no Christian should ever marry more than one wife. It dishonors the Lord Jesus to portray Him as One with divided affections and loyalties. Polygamy is against what God made marriage to be from the beginning [Mt.19:4-6].

No Christian man should ever think about or actually marry more than one wife. It is never acceptable to God to do so. Taking more than one wife is never biblical. But if a man has already done this, he is not to commit another sin by divorcing her.

## SUMMARY

This is what the believer's home is to show; the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in His church as a testimony before angels and men.

For this we need grace, humility, and repentance. The average church-goer's home is little different than his unbelieving neighbor's. It is a shameful state. It grieves God and brings reproach upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. May the Lord help us.

## CHRISTIAN WORK

### OVERCOMING LAZINESS, DISHONESTY, & GREED

“The Lord God put the man in the garden of Eden to care for it and work it” [Gen.2:15]

“Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands,  
just as we commanded you” [I Thess.4:11]

“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘so that they may rest from their labors,  
for their deeds will follow with them’” [Rev.14:13]

### IMPORTANCE OF WORK

From the beginning of creation, the Lord God has given man work to do. The Lord saw all that He had done and said that it was very good. Giving work to man was very good. It is good to work. What we do in this life will follow us into eternity, whether good or bad.

Most of our waking hours are occupied with work. It is therefore of great importance that the main occupation of our lives be done to the glory of God. All of life is to be for the honor and praise of God. Even the very simple activities of daily living are to be for His glory. Hear what the Word of God says about this: “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” [I Cor.10:31].

This certainly includes our work. All work, whether at home, office, factory, or farm, is to be done for the glory of God. Both what we do and how we do it is to be for the Lord’s glory. What we do, why we do it, and how we work is all the concern of the living God. All of our works will be brought into judgment. The Word of God warns us of this:

“More than anything else, we want to please Him, whether in our home here or there. For all of us must appear before Christ, to be judged by Him, so that each one may receive what he deserves for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” [2 Cor.5:9,10].

We want to please the Lord Jesus in our work. He will judge us for all we have done in this life. The key principle of our work according to the Word of God is this: “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” [Col.3:23,24].

Whatever we do, we do for the Lord and not for men. He is the One we serve and the One who will judge all our works. He is the One we are to please, whose approval we seek. He sees everything we do and knows why we do it.

This makes the Christian worker different than other workers. The believer has another motivation than his unbelieving co-workers. He works in a manner other than the rest. The Christian who is glorifying God in his work ought to be the finest worker to be found. He should be the most honest, trustworthy, and diligent worker among them all.

## THE 3 TEMPTATIONS

There are three main temptations facing the believer in doing his work for the glory of God. They are:

### Laziness, Dishonesty, and Greed

#### LAZINESS

Since it is the Lord Christ whom we serve, diligent hard work ought to characterize every Christian. Will we lazily sleep in His presence? Will we carelessly sit idle when He is waiting for us to do the work He has given us? No, not at all. Listen to the Word of God:

“Go watch the ants, you lazy person. Watch what they do and be wise. Ants have no commander, and no leader or ruler, but they store up food in the summer and gather their supplies at harvest.

How long will you lie there, you lazy persons? When will you get up from sleeping? You sleep a little; you take a nap. You fold your hands and lie down to rest. So you will be as poor as if you had been robbed” [Prov.6:6-11].

The ants work hard without direct supervision. They know what must be done and go about doing it without waiting to be told. They faithfully work for the benefit of others besides themselves. Ants do not stop working because no ruler is watching them. The ant does not put off until later what could be and should be done now. They make the most of the present opportunity to work well for the good of all. This is how the true believer is to work.

Laziness is a great sin. The Bible has nothing good to say about a lazy man. “A lazy man does not roast his prey, but the precious possession of a man is diligence” [Prov.12:27]. The lazy man does not finish what he begins. He grows weary of the effort of doing good and quits before the good result is obtained [Gal.6:9]. He does not bring to completion what he starts.

This is not godly. The Lord always finishes what He begins. “God finished the work He had been doing, so He rested from all His work” [Gen.2:2]. God rested when His work was done. The lazy man rests often during his work and it does not get done. If we are to be godly, to be like our God, we must work in the same manner that He does.

“Those who work hard make a profit. But those who only talk will be poor” [Prov.14:23]. The Lord commands that “we love not only with words and talk, but by our actions and true caring” [1 Jn.3:18]. Many people talk much and do little. They are lazy. God is not happy with this waste of time.

“A person who doesn’t work hard is just like someone who destroys things” [Prov.18:9]. If the work is not done well and on time, others will have to make up for our laziness. They will have to “repair” what we failed to do. It is unloving to others and unfaithful to God to be lazy. To be this way is to destroy opportunities, lose profits, and ruin our own testimony as a Christian.

“Trustworthy messengers refresh those who send them. Trusting unfaithful people is like eating with a broken tooth or walking with a crippled foot” [Prov.25:13,19]. Laziness is a great hindrance in the workplace. Being diligent and faithful is a great blessing.

The true believer, at work, is not lazy. He will serve the Lord Jesus diligently, wholeheartedly, and consistently. He finishes what he begins. He works hard and well whether anyone else is watching him or not. He does what he knows needs to be done without regard for his own ease. He is full of action at work and not merely empty words that accomplish nothing. Those who lead the church, who serve the Lord by serving the believers, ought to be the best example to the others. The Apostle Paul was great because he was this type of lowly servant. Here is what we learn about him in the Word of God:

“You should live as we live. We were not lazy when we were with you. We worked very hard night and day so we would not be an expense to any of you. We worked to take care of ourselves so we would be an example for you to follow” [2 Thess.3:7-9].

Amos, the prophet of the true God, did the same thing. “Then Amos answered Amaziah, ‘I do not make my living as a prophet. I make my living as a shepherd and I take care of sycamore trees. But the Lord took me away from tending the flock and said to me, “Go, prophesy to my people Israel”” [Amos 7:14,15].

Even the Lord Jesus Christ spent most of His life working hard as a carpenter before He began His other

work of teaching, healing, and dying for our sins. Some people did not think that a simple carpenter could actually be the Son of God. The Bible tells us that men said, "He is but the carpenter, the son of Mary" [Mk.6:3].

All true believers should follow these godly examples of hard work. Laziness is never to be found among Christians, especially not among their leaders.

## DISHONESTY

### Uprightness in All Things

Truth, uprightiness, and honesty are to always be present in every work of the true believer. The Lord Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anything you did for even the least of My people here, you also did for Me" [Mt.25:40]. Here we discover again that our every dealing with men and all of our work is for the Lord Jesus. It is as if our every action is directly a service to the Lord Jesus Himself.

If we lie to someone, we are lying to Him. If another is cheated, we cheat our God. The person we are bribing is like bribing the Lord Jesus. The thing we steal is as if we took it from the hand of Christ Himself. "Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" [ I Cor.10:31].

Honesty and uprightiness is to be in every genuine believer at all times and in every work he does. The Word of God tells us: "Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than he who is crooked though he be rich" [Prov.28:6]. Nothing is worth being dishonest; no gain, no post, or promotion. Better to give them all up rather than disobey the Lord God. "Wealth gotten by fraud disappears quickly, but the one who gathers by labor increases it" [Prov.13:11].

### Lying

Fraud is deception and lying. It is misrepresenting facts in order to take from others and gain for self. The living God does not approve of this at all. "A false witness will not go unpunished, and he who tells lies will perish" [Prov.19:9].

Many times in our work we are tempted to lie; to our boss, thinking to keep ourselves out of trouble, or to customers, trying to keep their business. But, at the end of the day, we have lied to God. Any momentary gain we imagine that we have obtained thereby will only ruin us. "Wealth that comes from telling lies vanishes like a mist and leads to death" [Prov.21:6].

### Cheating

Cheating is another form of dishonesty which the Lord greatly hates. It is a wicked practice described by the Word of God: "Listen to Me, you who walk on helpless people, you who are trying to destroy the poor people of this country, saying, 'When will the Sabbath be over so we can bring out wheat to sell?

'We can charge them more and give them less, and we can change the scales to cheat people. We will even sell the wheat that was swept up from the floor'" [Amos 8:4-6].

The Lord hates this deceitful taking advantage of people. We must not charge one person more than another for the same thing. The Bible condemns this practice. "The Lord hates both these things: Dishonest weights and dishonest measures" [Prov.20:10]. The God of heaven sees every time we take more money than is right to do. He watches every cup of beans sold which is not full.

### Bribery

The living God knows all that we do. He knows every arrangement we make with others. He sees what passes from our hands to others. What we receive in secret is no secret to Him. We must be upright in all our dealings at work. Bribery is an evil that the God of Truth will never bless or approve of. Bribery corrupts the heart of man. The Word of God says this:

"A wicked man accepts a bribe in secret to pervert the course of justice" [Prov.17:23]. It is wickedness for a believer in the Lord Jesus to accept a bribe. It is wickedness to give a bribe. "Do not take away my soul along with sinners...in whose hands are wicked schemes, whose right hands are full of bribes" [Ps.26:9,10].

Bribery destroys all sense of justice. Nothing can be right when bribery is practiced. It corrupts the one who gives it, the one who receives it, and the people who tolerate it. It was a cause for the judgment of God to come upon His people. The Word of God warns us about this evil:

“Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves; they all love bribes and chase after gifts. Therefore the Lord Almighty declares, ‘I will avenge Myself on My enemies. I will turn My hand against you’” [Isa.1:23-25].

Those people said that they were believers. But no true believer can give or take bribes. Their rulers loved bribes and were judged by the Lord who hates such things. The godly man is blessed because he hates bribes. “He who hates bribes will live” [Prov.15:27]. In our place of work, as well as in every area of life, bribery must not be practiced by the believer in any form.

### Stealing

Neither shall the believer steal anything, in any amount, at any time. The Word of God is very clear about this: “You must not steal” [Ex.20:15]. This is a great temptation for the believer at his place of work. Small items such as pens, fruit, or cloth seem to be unimportant. They are not unimportant. If you steal even small things, you are stealing, not from men, but from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thinking that it is only a small matter spoils our character and corrupts us entirely. The Word of God is clear. “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much” [Lk.16:10].

He is the One we serve in our work. He will reward or punish us. We must not take anything that does not belong to us without the permission of the owner. The essence of true belief is in giving, not in the selfishness of getting; and certainly not in getting by stealing. Hear the Bible:

“Those who are stealing must stop stealing and start working. They should earn an honest living for themselves. Then they will have something to share with those who are poor” [Eph.4:28]. Earning an honest living is the will of God for all His workers. There is to be no deceit, injustice, corruption, or theft among believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. He will reward you if you honor Him in your work.

## GREED

### Coveting

Coveting wealth and promotion do not make the Lord happy at all. The Scriptures command us to keep our hearts free from these things. “Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be satisfied with what you have. God has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” [Heb.13:5].

Work is not for the purpose of making us rich. It is not to provide many comfortable things for our enjoyment. Work is what God has given for us to glorify Himself by doing His will on earth as it is in heaven. By working, provision for the basic needs of life is obtained. Through honest labor we will have “something to share with those in need” [Eph.4:28].

Greed has no place in the heart of a true Christian. The Word of God strongly warns us against this: “Those who have evil minds and have lost the truth think that serving God is a way to get rich. But godliness with contentment is great gain. If we have food and clothes, we will be satisfied with that.

“But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows. But you, man of God, run away from all those things” [I Tim.6:5-11].

Coveting leads to dishonesty in order to obtain what the heart is set upon. Wanting to be rich and longing for money have been the destruction of many men. The Lord God commands us to be content with having food and covering. Coveting turns the focus of the heart from God and spiritual things to self and the things of this world. The Word of God warns us: “You cannot serve God and Mammon” [Riches] [Lk.16:13].

Coveting makes us serve riches rather than the Lord. And when we do, we become idolaters. This is what the Word of God calls this longing after prosperity. “Put all evil things out of your life; wanting things that are evil, and greed, which is idolatry [Col.3:5]. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person – such a man is an idolater – has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God” [Eph.5:5].

## Debt

This evil desire for wealth has led many to the foolish practice of borrowing money when they have no means to repay it. We are not to allow greed to lead us into the evil of indebtedness.

The Word of God forbids this. "Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another" [Rom.13:8]. Our God has promised to supply all our needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus [Phil.4:19]. He has not promised to supply for our greedy desires; and if He has not supplied, it is not a need.

The one who borrows out of his desire for immediate gain rather than patiently waiting upon the Lord to supply his needs will not be blessed. He will find what the Word of God warns us of: "The borrower becomes the lender's slave" [Prov.22:7].

Believers are not to work with a greedy heart. We are to seek to please the Lord Jesus in all our efforts. It is Him we are serving. And this we do diligently, honestly, and free from the love of money. This brings glory to Him as well as blessing from Him.

"A good name is more desirable than great riches, loving favor is better than silver or gold" [Prov.22:1].

May we seek the Lord's grace to be genuine believers in our homes and at our work, for His name's sake.

# Giving

## Giving & Love

FOR GOD SO LOVED...HE GAVE  
[Jn.3:16]

Nothing is greater than love. It is the necessary requirement in all of life. “Let all that you do be done in love” [I Cor.16:14]. Every thought, word, and action is to flow from love. Love is the sure evidence of being born of God [I Jn.4:7]. It is the certain proof that we are true disciples of Christ [Jn.13:35]. Lacking this, we are no better and no different than any other sinful man [Lk.6:32].

Though you may have all faith, without love you are nothing [I Cor.13:2]. Possessing every spiritual gift will profit you nothing without love [I Cor.13:1-3]. In fact, love is the greatest commandment upon which all other commands depend [Mt.22:36-40]. To fail here is to fail in everything.

Love is what moved the Father to give His Son. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” [Jn.3:16]. It is the pure motive behind all true giving. The love that gives cannot be compelled. It is a voluntary decision of the heart to give of itself. It is a choice to be a blessing by giving to those in need with no thought of self-gain.

“The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us” [Rom.5:5]. This was the reason that the first church immediately and freely gave to their brethren in need [Acts 2:44-46]. No one taught them to do so. No laws were established requiring this behavior. They were simply “taught by God to love one another” [I Thess.4:9].

It is what is needed in our own generation to restore us to a selfless life that glorifies God and benefits men; the love of God poured out within our hearts, the love that gives.

## GIVING & SELF

AND NOT TO PLEASE OURSELVES  
[Rom.15:1]

Love does unto men as it would wish to be treated itself [Mt.7:12]. The focus of love is upon others, not upon self. “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; Do not merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others. Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus” [Phil.2:3-5].

Concern for people’s needs is possessing the mind of Christ. This is the example which He Himself has set. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich” [2 Cor.8:9].

He laid aside His own interests, emptied Himself, and gave of what He possessed for the everlasting good of many. This same selfless sacrificial spirit filled the hearts of the first Christians. “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had” [Acts 4:32]. A selfish man is interested in getting. A Christian man is looking to give without thought for himself. This selfless life is at the heart of true Christian living.

“He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf” [2 Cor.5:15]. This puts everything in its proper place. Living for self is God’s description of a sinful life that one must be saved from.

All believers must deny self or they are not true disciples at all [Mt.16:24]. Serving self and serving Christ cancel each other. A man can do only one or the other but not both. Selflessness is the principle of Christ which

governs the hearts of all His people. They give with no thought of reward in this life [Lk.6:30-36]. They lend “expecting nothing in return” [Lk.6:35].

Christians are so free from thought of self-gain, that they even work so as to give to others. “He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need” [Eph.4:28].

Even the rich among true believers are not selfishly seeking their own gain. Their hearts are set, not upon riches, but on sharing with others [1 Tim.6:17-19]. This type of selfless giving is a proof of the love of God within the heart of a man [2 Cor.8:8,24; 9:13]. It shows that self-seeking is not motivating their actions. They are “not affected by covetousness” [2 Cor.9:5].

Only a selfless man will do as Christ commands: “Sell your possessions and give to the poor” [Lk.12:33]. All that a Christian is and has is to be given for the blessing of others. Self is sacrificed for the good of others. Money is viewed in terms of how it may be put to use for eternal purposes. This is what the Lord Jesus told us to do with our resources.

The parable of Lk.16:1-15 describes a self-seeking man who devoted himself for his own personal gain. He was a corrupt man who sought money for selfish and unjust ends. Yet the man was wise according to the wisdom of this world. He looked ahead to coming days when he could no longer divert funds from his employer into his own pocket. He acted in the present to ensure a future reward.

This is the point of the parable. It is the lesson to be learned from the unrighteous steward: Use what you have now for enduring benefits beyond this life. “Make friends for yourselves by means of the Mammon of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings” [Lk.16:9]. Or, as the NIV translation says: “Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.”

Money is to be used as a means of blessing to the eternal well-being of men. It is not to be wasted upon self. Wealth is to be given freely and devoted to the purposes of the kingdom of God. All that we are and have is to be for the good of others. One day, riches will have finished their purpose in this life. What will we have done with what has been entrusted into our hands?

How have we used the means at our disposal to influence men for the kingdom of heaven? Will there be anyone in the eternal dwellings who will welcome us there due to our sacrifice here on earth for their salvation? Will anyone bless the Lord forever that we gave of our wealth here on earth so that they might hear the gospel?

I think we would all be happy with such a welcoming committee.

IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN RECEIVE  
[Acts 20:35]

## GIVING & OTHERS

YOU SHALL FREELY OPEN YOUR HAND TO YOUR BROTHER...  
NEEDY AND POOR  
[Deut.15:11]

Giving is to be a purposeful and responsible act of love. We are not to just give to anyone, anyhow. We are warned about giving without proper consideration of whom we are giving to.

Those who give to the rich will only come to poverty [Prov.22:16]. We should not give to the rich. Neither are we to give to so-called gospel workers who do not teach truth about the Lord Jesus. If we do, we are participating in their evil deeds [2 Jn.7,10,11].

We are not to give to disobedient lazy people who will not work to supply their own needs. Those types of people we are not to associate with [2 Thess.3:7-15]. “If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either” [2 Thess.3:10].

Clearly, the rich are not in need. Without a question, contributing to religious deceivers is doing nothing for the kingdom of God. Surely, supporting a lazy man is not right in God’s sight.

We are to give to two types of people. They are [1] the Poor and [2] Gospel Workers.

Jesus said: “The poor you have with you always” [Jn.12:8]. These ever-present ones are to be the objects of our compassion and giving. This concern for the unfortunate is a sign of having true religion in the sight of God [Jas.1:27].

The poor have been a major concern of the most spiritually-minded Christians of every generation. All the Apostles are in agreement with this emphasis. Listen to their statements to the Apostle Paul in Gal.2:10. “They only asked us to remember the poor – the very thing I also was eager to do”.

How we treat the poor indicates whether we love the Lord Jesus. According to His own words in Mt.25:34-46, if we shut our hearts and our hands to the poor, we have done so to Christ. When we see a real need and give to meet that need, it is as if we have given to Christ Himself.

True Christian giving is seen in sharing food, drink, clothing, and shelter with the poor. “The righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me’” [Mt.25:37,38,40].

Righteous Job was a blessing to many in need. He is a worthy example for all to follow. This is his own true testimony: “I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had no helper. The blessing of the one ready to perish came upon me, and I made the widow’s heart to sing for joy” [Job 29:12,13].

He was obeying the Lord’s commandment about the proper and godly use of money. The Word of God directs us in this way: “If there is a poor man with you...you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him...you shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your work.

“For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, ‘You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land’” [Deut.15:7-11].

Meeting the needs of the poor can be done in different ways. We may give, lend, or pay them for work they do for us. If the Lord leads you to give, it must be willingly and without complaint [Deut.15:10; 2 Cor.9:7].

God may direct you to lend in order to help the needy. Someone who borrows must surely repay when he is able to do so. Only “the wicked borrows and does not pay back, but the righteous is gracious and gives” [Ps.37:21]. Even so, the Lord Jesus says that a Christian should consider loaning to a man the same as if he had given. He commands us to “lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men” [Lk.6:35].

Or it may be that a poor man’s need may be met by providing some work for him to do. In this way he will show that he is not merely a lazy beggar, but a serious man, though having need. This method of helping the poor is seen in passages such as Lev.19:9,10:

“When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard. Leave them for the poor and the stranger. I am the Lord your God.”

Even if you have forgotten a bundle of grain in your field during harvest: “Do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands” [Deut.24:19].

It is true that in West Africa people may not understand that forgotten grain can be taken by the poor without being thought of as theft. But the point is, that God had His people Israel provide for the poor by allowing them to work to satisfy their needs. The book of Ruth is a wonderful story of kindness to the poor in this way.

True love is evidenced by providing the needful things of life to those who lack. It is the type of giving that the Lord approves of. “Whoever has the world’s goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?” [1 Jn.3:17].

If you see the need and have something to help with but do not give, you have a faith which cannot save you. “If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?” [Jas.2:15,16].

To do this is nothing more than disobedience, selfishness, and unloving rejection of those we ought to love. “Do not withhold good to those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, “Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,” when you have it with you” [Prov.3:27,28].

In fact, the Lord is provoked to wrath if we neglect the poor, but blesses those who care for them. “He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses” [Prov.28:27]. “He who

oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God” [Prov.14:31]. “If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered” [Prov.21:13].

As well as the poor, the needs of genuine gospel workers are to be supplied by loving giving. Even the Lord Jesus had the physical needs of this life provided in this way. “And many others were contributing to their support out of their private means” [Lk.8:3].

Those who benefit in spiritual things “are indebted to minister to them also in material things” [Rom.15:27]. Paul was helped many times in this way so he could continue his good work of teaching the Word of God. “You have done well to share with me in my affliction. You sent a gift more than once for my needs” [Phil.4:14,16]. Believers must not neglect the work of God or those doing it. True servants of God are depending upon God alone to direct His people to care for their needs. “The laborer is worthy of his wages” [Lk.10:7].

“Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the pagans. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth” [3 Jn.5-8].

Since the Lord “has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel” [I Cor.9:14], it is left for believers to supply their needs. But we must do so, not by force or unwillingly, but out of love for God, His kingdom, and His people. In this way, God is glorified and the gospel workers are encouraged and blessed by the love that gives.

## GIVING & LAW

CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW

[Rom.10:4]

Giving is a work of mercy, compassion, and love, not of obligation by law. Love moves a man from within, filling his heart with goodwill towards others. Law only regulates from without by placing demands upon a man whether he is full of love or not.

Obligation through law can never be a worthy substitute for the delight of giving from a loving heart. True Christian giving is never by compulsion. It is a voluntary response of the heart to the love of God and out of love to men. This principle of love governing godly giving is summarized in 2 Cor.9:7. Consider this verse well as it is stated in these Bible translations:

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” [NIV].

“Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: For God loveth a cheerful giver” [KJV].

“Each one must do just as he purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” [NASB].

“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” [NKJV]

“Each one should give, then, as he has decided, not with regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly” [Good News].

The words “compulsion,” “necessity,” and “duty” all result from the demands of a law requiring a man to give. Law makes no allowance for what a man may have decided in his own heart. No one who feels forced to do something does it cheerfully. Obligation can never be a reason for giving that is approved by God in a Christian.

No law can regulate love. Law rather cancels what would otherwise “overflow in the wealth of their liberality” [2 Cor.8:2]. It restricts the workings of love through the Spirit of God in a man’s heart. Love poured out generously cannot be limited to a demand to give 10% of one’s resources. The law of tithing that obligated the nation of Israel to give a tenth to the priests of Levi is not a requirement for Christians.

When the priesthood changed from that of Aaron and the Levites to that of Christ and the church, that law was cancelled. It has no relevance for a Christian under the New Covenant. The law of tithing for Israel does not apply to the church. “For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also” [Heb.7:12]. “There is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness” [Heb.7:18].

The law of tithing has been changed because it is unable to produce that glad giving out of love which God delights in. The laws of the Old Covenant do not apply to Christians under the New Covenant. The New has replaced the Old. "When He said, 'A New Covenant,' He has made the first obsolete" [Heb.8:13].

Christians do not have an earthly temple building in Jerusalem. There exists no special priestly tribe of Levi within the church. No animal sacrifices are burned on the altar by Aaron's sons. Not an earthly building, but believers in the Lord Jesus themselves are the "holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling of God in the Spirit" [Eph.2:21,22]. No special priestly tribe exists in the church because every single Christian is called "a royal priesthood...a people for God's own possession" [I Pet.2:9]. No sons of Aaron are found in the churches who offer up animal sacrifices. Rather, every Christian offers up "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" [I Pet.2:5].

What then was the law of tithing for? Why did God require it in the OT? How could they be obligated when Christians are not? Let us consider the teaching of the Word of God about these things.

God spoke to Aaron and the tribe of Levi that: "you shall have no inheritance in their land nor own any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel" [Num.18:20]. The reason for this was because of the special priestly duties the Lord assigned to them among all the tribes of Israel.

"The Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to serve Him and to bless in His name until this day. Therefore, Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers" [Deut.10:8,9].

It was because they had no land of their own as did the other eleven tribes that God made the provision of a tithe for them. They did not farm as did the rest of Israel and thus could not supply their own food. The tithe was designed to provide food for the priests of Levi in exchange for their work in the Temple. "I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting" [Num.18:21].

Tithing was to supply needed food for the Levites that they might continue to offer the required animal sacrifices in behalf of Israel. The tithe was always 10% of a person's farm produce. "You shall surely tithe all the produce from what you sow, which comes out of the field every year" [Deut.14:22].

Tithes are described as grain, new wine, and oil in Deut.14:23. Ten percent of one's oxen and sheep are mentioned as among the tithes of Israel in 2 Chron.31:6. Honey [2 Chron.31:5], ground meal and fruit [Neh.10:37], and garden herbs [Lk.11:42] were also to be tithed.

In every reference throughout the entire Word of God, tithing is always food items and nothing more. Azariah, the chief priest, rejoiced that "since the contributions began to be brought into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat with plenty left over" [2 Chron.31:10].

There is not even one verse in all the Scriptures where tithing was money. The people of God were never required to tithe money. God has never demanded of any man to bring 10% of his money. Tithing was always food items.

Even when Israel's self-appointed king began to rule over them, the tithe he forced them to bring was of seeds, fruit, and flocks [I Sam.8:15,17]. Tithing, even in this second demanded 10% beyond the one God required for Levites, was food items.

You may see for yourself that this is so. Tithing was never of money. All references to tithing in the Scriptures are listed here: Gen.14:20; Lev.27:30-32; Num.18:21,24,26,28; Deut.12:6,11,17; 14:22,23,28; 26:12; 2 Chron.31:5,6,12; Neh.10:37,38; 12:44; 13:5,12; Amos 4:4; Mal.3:8,10; Mt.23:23; Lk.11:42; 18:12; Heb.7:5,6,8,9.

Israel's tithes of food for the priests of Levi were to be brought to the Temple and placed in storerooms. "All Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses" [Neh.13:12]. There they were kept and distributed to the priests according to their needs [Neh.13:13].

Malachi 3:8-10, though one of the most often abused passages in the Bible on this subject, teaches nothing else than what we have already seen. Tithes are of food items required of Israel to feed the priests in the Temple. They were that, and nothing more.

It was the nation of Israel that was obligated by Old Covenant law to bring their tithes. "You are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!" [Mal.3:9]. The tithe they were to bring was not money, but food items, "so that there might be food in My house" [Mal.3:10].

It was not to a church collection plate that tithes were brought, but into the storerooms of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house" [Mal.3:10].

Besides the obvious misuse of verses about tithing in the church, there is much confusion about how Christians are to give. In our thinking, giving has been reduced to putting money into a Sunday morning offering. But in the NT, it was not this at all.

In the Scriptures, much, if not most, of the giving took place outside of the church meeting. The NT church had no buildings or institutions to maintain and collected no money for those purposes. Their giving was directly for the poor and the work of the gospel.

Most of this giving passed directly from the hand of the giver to the hand of the receiver. We are not to send away a needy person until a later time, but are to give to him directly and immediately [Prov.3:27,28].

If you see a brother or sister in need and do not give to them, the love of God does not dwell in you [I Jn.3:17]. It is to pass from our hand to theirs directly. When a person is in need of daily food, it does no good to tell them to wait until next Sunday and ask for something from the church then.

Jesus speaks about “when you give to the poor” [Mt.6:2], not about when you drop money into a church collection. When asked about how people should show their repentance, John the Baptist said this: “The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do the same” [Lk.3:11]. In this way Christian giving can be with “simplicity” [Rom.12:8] and “in secret” [Mt.6:4] in contrast to our modern man-made traditions and regulations.

When the gift passes directly to the receiver, we know that we have done a good work according to the leading of the Spirit. When we place money in a church offering plate, we have no idea where that money ends up. From your hand into another’s makes giving a purposeful and responsible act. Blindly placing money in an offering is irresponsible. In that way, you have no idea whether you have done a good deed or not.

Much of the money that comes into the hands of the church is misused. It is spent on things that have little or no relation to helping the poor or of supporting gospel workers. When we place money into another person’s hands, we ought to know what that money is being used for. If we do not, then we do not know if our gifts are being used for godly purposes or not. We do not know if we have been responsible and obedient in our giving.

There are times due to distance or convenience that a gift can be given to a faithful man to deliver to another in our behalf. But the man must be faithful and the gift designated for a specific stated purpose. The churches did this to assist the poor brethren in Jerusalem, sending it by the hand of the Apostle Paul.

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

A faithful servant of God may also be entrusted to deliver your gift to a gospel worker in a distant place. “But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent” [Phil.4:18].

But note it well. He received everything in full. Funds were not diverted for another purpose other than the reason they were given. The messenger must be faithful with what has been entrusted to him. And the believer must know that his gift is actually being used for a God-honoring purpose.

We are not to entrust the Lord’s money into the hands of just anyone to be used for things we do not know about. To do so is wasteful, foolish, and disobedient on the part of the one we have trusted when it is used for other purposes. This is an evil which must not be done. Rather we should do as was done by the responsible and honorable Apostle.

“We are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord Himself and to show our eagerness to help.

“We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of men” [2 Cor.8:18-21].

As was the case with this gift for the needy brethren in Jerusalem, the only collections taken in the NT church were for specific designated purposes. Weekly “offerings” at church meetings were not a NT practice. The only time a group collection was mentioned was for the relief of the believers affected by famine.

“Now about the collection for God’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that no collections be made when I come. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem” [I Cor.16:1-3].

From this passage, the modern church has established its own “law” of offerings by taking up collections at their meetings. But these verses clearly instruct God’s people not to blindly put money into a collection plate. Rather, they are to save their own money for the specific purpose of helping the poor and unfortunate.

If anything, this tells us that no collections should be taken at all unless they are for the express purpose of helping the poor and supporting gospel work. It shows that the believers must be agreed on the specific use of money collectively entrusted to another. It informs us that Christian giving is to be a voluntary individual matter motivated by love, not by man-made laws and procedures.

Love fills the heart of a man with good will to relieve the sufferings of men, both in this life and in the next. It gives willingly to help both the body and soul of fellow men.

Law can only threaten, intimidate, or obligate the one whose heart is lacking love. The love that gives hears no threats and is not subject to man-made regulations. It gives freely to bless others physically and spiritually apart from any law.

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

No law can produce such a result.

## GIVING & LUST

MEN OF CORRUPT MIND...THINK THAT GODLINESS

IS A MEANS TO FINANCIAL GAIN

[1 Tim.6:5]

Love has as its focus the good of others. Lust is intent only in satisfying its own unholy desires. Love wishes to give. Lust wants to gain.

Giving in the church has often become little more than a lustful affair to get something for self. We have turned giving into a commercial enterprise to generate funds for our own ends. Ministers threaten congregations to tithe and give very well so that money will continue to come into their own pockets. Congregations do so many times expecting that God will give them much more than they have “invested.”

The church has once again become a “house of merchandise” [Jn.2:16]. This shameless use of religion to gain for one’s self is hated still by the Lord Jesus. He overturned their money tables then and drove them out of His Father’s house. He will do the same today.

Giving has become, not a means of blessing to others, but a greedy way to enrich one’s self. Praise to Jesus is upon our lips, but we really only lust after His bread and fish while trying to use Him to get what we want [Jn.6:25-27].

There are many who “peddle the Word of God for profit” [2 Cor.2:17]. The things of God are employed in order to get wealth and prosperity in earthly things. It is no different than Balaam “who loved the wages of unrighteousness” [2 Pet.2:15].

Though he knew that the Word of God opposed his desperate lust for riches, he continued to seek gain for himself. He wanted by all means to find a way to get Balak’s promised reward by “using” God to obtain it. Thus he was for hire and prophesied for a price.

The Scriptures speak about Balaam’s way [2 Pet.2:15], his error [Jude 11], and his doctrine [Rev.2:14]. These give us sober warnings about following in his footsteps.

The way of Balaam is that motivating greed for self-enrichment. Love of money filled his heart. He cared nothing for the Lord or the Israel of God. That God would judge fornicating Moabite women and Balak himself did not disturb him in the least. Money was his one concern.

His error was imagining that God can be manipulated by repeated religious activities. He thought that if God did not approve of his prophetic ravings today, He may yet be persuaded tomorrow.

“Noise and religious acrobatics ought to eventually gain my own desires,” was the warbled error of his thinking. Balaam believed that God could be convinced to adjust His Word to grant his own. It is error indeed.

He taught Balak and all men thereafter the doctrine which bears his name. The doctrine of Balaam is that truth can be compromised to get what I want. His message is that the end justifies the means.

“As long as my purpose is achieved, it does not matter how it is accomplished,” was his deluded teaching. Truly, a doctrine of demons “whose condemnation is just” [Rom.3:8].

Balaam has millions of disciples faithfully following in his way. Of this modern church it truthfully must be said that “they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error” [Jude 11]. Following these shameless ways brings “the way of truth into disrepute” [2 Pet.2:2]. Even though we’ve been repeatedly warned about the “destructive heresies” [2 Pet.2:1] of these false teachers, we continue to follow.

They continue to demand and we continue to pay what they insist on. We are as foolish and wicked as these false teachers themselves. Teachers and congregations alike walk in the way of Balaam; the way of greed for self-enrichment.

“Through covetousness they will make merchandise of you with false words” [2 Pet.2:3]. Yet this could never be if we refused to pay what they require. We would never be taken advantage of by false words if we ourselves loved the truth.

But we do not. We love money and thus continue to tithe and give according to demand. We imagine that God *must* bless us with multiplied financial rewards because we gave according to the law of our self-made religion. It is not like that at all.

Rather, we fall under the condemnation of those who “think that godliness is a means to financial gain” [1 Tim.6:5]. This same verse says that it is only those who are “of depraved mind and deprived of the truth” who think this way. This reproves the wayward church of today who gives in the expectation of getting.

It is what Simon the sorcerer did. He gave his money in order to spiritually benefit thereby. He saw what he wanted and brought his offering in order to get it. This is lust.

He thought that if he gave money to Men of God, he would get what he wanted in return. He imagined that if he sowed his “seed of faith,” he could get things from God. If he paid the price, he would obtain the same “prosperity” as the Apostles.

Witchcraft employs such methods, but not Christianity. The ministers of today have raised multitudes to follow Simon Magus while quite willingly receiving the money which Peter rejected as unholy. Peter’s rebuke rightly falls upon these sons of Simon as they originally did upon the deluded sorcerer of Samaria.

“May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours” [Acts 8:20-23].

It is this shameless and deluded love of money which will condemn Simon and his children of today’s church. “Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful lusts which plunge men into ruin and destruction” [1 Tim.6:9].

The desire for money itself is enough to send this generation of church-goers into everlasting judgment. This verse calls wanting riches, “foolish and harmful lusts.” With this longing in the heart, already one has fallen. Temptation has overcome you in the snare of “the deceitfulness of riches [which] choke the Word” [Mt.13:22]. No reward awaits you, rather ruin and destruction.

“Love of money is the root of all evil” [1 Tim.6:10]. It will cause you to wander away from the faith [1 Tim.6:10]. This coveting will change you into an idolater, far from being a Christian at all.

“This you know with certainty, that no covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” [Eph.5:5].

Lust for money masquerades as giving in the church of our generation. We pretend that we are giving for the glory of God and good of others, but it is really for our own benefit.

Greed has deceived us into thinking that we can give to God as a means of having Him repay us for our “service.” The Word of God absolutely reproves this misguided thinking. “Who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?” [Rom.11:35].

We want it to be so that God will reward us with treasures upon earth. But Jesus has already warned us not to store up treasures upon earth or fix our eyes upon it [Mt.6:19-24]. “You cannot serve God and Mammon [wealth]” [Mt.6:24].

They are two different gods. There can be no compromise between them. The true and living God calls His servants with a heavenly calling to set their affections on the things above. The god of Mammon leads his slaves to focus on the things below, on self and wealth which ushers them into everlasting ruin.

Nevertheless, we pursue riches as if this was our God-given heritage. But only “a man with an evil eye hastens after wealth” [Prov.28:22]. And thus we show who we really are; idolaters [Col.3:5] who serve “the Mammon of unrighteousness” [Lk.16:11], but not the God of heaven.

Jesus’ own words rebuke our lustful giving in order to gain. “Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’” [Acts 20:35].

# SUMMARY

THEY BEGAN SELLING THEIR PROPERTY AND POSSESSIONS AND  
WERE SHARING THEM WITH ALL AS ANYONE MIGHT HAVE NEED

[Acts 2:45]

Love does what no system or law can do. It makes self-centered men gladly abandon their own interests and comforts for the good of others. Love leads to selflessness. Nothing but love can produce such results.

“Now brethren we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their generosity.

For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints.

And this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God” [2 Cor.8:1-5].

Several things are to be noted about these loving brethren. First, it was the work of God’s grace in their hearts that made them give as they did. Paul himself was amazed at this gracious work of love which went beyond his own expectations.

Secondly, they did not give out of a sense of obligation. No law prompted their actions. No command from the Apostle compelled them with a sense of duty.

Thirdly, tithing had nothing to do with their generosity. Ten percent of their deep poverty would never have even approached the amount that they freely gave. If tithing were their standard, they would have given far less than they did.

Fourthly, their love could not be discouraged or turned aside. Love made them insistent on giving from their own accord.

Fifthly, they did not give because the economy was good. Neither the amount of money in their hand nor their own level of comfort determined how they gave.

Sixth, gladness and joy flowed from their heart for the great privilege of helping others. It was the kind of giving that God loves.

Seventh, complete devotion to the Lord Jesus and His people was the underlying source of their sacrifice. Love motivated all.

The Macedonians were full of the love that gives. The people of God were blessed because of it. They themselves were blessed and the Father in heaven was delighted and glorified. It is how it should be.

We are tested by our use of money. God watches to see how we use what has been entrusted into our hands. If we are faithful to use it for godly purposes, the Lord will see that we are trustworthy. And if we are faithful in this very little thing, we will be faithful also in much.

“So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?”

[Lk.16:11]

IF YOU KNOW THESE THINGS,  
YOU ARE BLESSED IF YOU DO THEM

[Jn.13:17]

# THE CHURCH

## KEY PASSAGES: NATURE OF THE CHURCH

The church is portrayed in several ways in the NT. Living things cannot be reduced to strict mechanical definitions. They must rather be expressed by illustrations and accurate descriptions. The NT describes who the people of God are as distinct from the world. It also tells of the relationship that exists between these people and their God, and between these people and each other.

In the discussion of the following passages, various NT Greek words will be referred to. They will be identified by writing them in *ITALIC CAPITAL* letters followed by the actual Greek letters themselves.

### Foundation [Mt.16:16-19]

No blessing comes to any man who has a deficient view of Christ. Imaginary “christs” can do nothing for anyone because they don’t exist. Only what is revealed about Christ to the heart of a man by the Father in heaven will result in blessing.

Jesus is the Christ; the Anointed Priest and King. As Priest, there exists no other Mediator between God and man. No other sacrifice will avail to cleanse from sin. He alone is the Priest that can safely represent man before God without rejection.

As King, He rules and governs the heart of His servants according to the law of His kingdom. No other rulers, no codes or traditions can be accepted by His subjects. His Word exclusively must command His people.

Christ alone is the Rock upon which His church is built. The confession that there is no other King, no other Priest, is the unshakable Rock that all of hell’s wisdom and might cannot overcome. Hell cannot undo what has been supernaturally imparted to the heart of a man by the Father in heaven. There is no other means of entrance into this church that Jesus is building.

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” [I Cor.3:11]. “That Rock [PETRA, πετρα] was Christ” [I Cor.10:4].

Peter [PETROS, πετρος] is not that Rock [PETRA, πετρα] upon which the church is built. Peter is a stone [PETROS, in.1:42], like all believers are “living stones” [I Pet.2:5], but he is not the foundational Bedrock [PETRA] upon which the church stands: That is Christ alone. Keys of the kingdom [Mt.16:19] were placed in his hands by the Lord Jesus Christ. Peter was the initiator, a pioneer, who accessed several new gateways into fresh spiritual realms for the saints of God to follow thereafter.

Pentecost found him unlocking the stiff rusty gate of tradition unto the flooding light of salvation and a New Covenant for the Jew. Three thousand gladly rushed through the opened passageway to eternal life, accessed by the Key of the Gospel in his hand [Acts 2:14-42].

Through him doors of mercy swung wide unto the afflicted and sorrowing. Miracles were first introduced through the church to a suffering world at the Temple’s Beautiful Gate [Acts 3:1-10], and Peter held that Key of Compassion.

It was Peter who first passed through the door of persecution, imprisonment, and stripes for the sake of the Name [Acts 4&5]. The Key of No-compromise gained admittance to that prison cell of suffering in behalf of Christ.

Reluctantly, a key was withdrawn from an Israelite’s robe to extend salvation’s blessing beyond the borders of Judea unto the remotest part of the earth. Peter’s narrow thinking required arresting by repeated visions before that key would be inserted to unlock blessing to the “unclean” Gentiles [Acts 10:9-16].

Yet he yielded to the message from heaven. Peter arose without misgivings and threw open the barred door to the heathen in Cornelius’ house [Acts 11:1-18]. Thereafter, every tribe, people, tongue, and nation have thankfully streamed through it to the glory of God.

This final Key pulled from Peter's robe, was the golden one of Obedience; Peter's own obedience, which led to "the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for His name's sake" [Rom.1:5].

Peter, thus, is simply a servant in the kingdom, but not the foundation of it. Christ alone can support the church that He is building. It belongs to Him. He says it is "My church" [Mt.16:18]. We dare not shift to another foundation, another priesthood, another Christ, another Gospel, or another code of law.

This is the foundation of the church that is Jesus' possession and is the first mention of the church in all of Scripture. Study it well, the key lies at the door to all that is contained therein. There is no other church membership that will take you to heaven.

#### Father & Children [2 Cor.6:18]

The life of the Father is the common portion of all His children. He is exalted over all to whom all owe everything within the family. In this family, all are brothers. None have any place of superiority over others. Love and consideration characterize them all and obedience to a Father's will is their crowning glory.

#### Master & Slaves [Rom.6:15-23]

Slaves are purchased possessions. They have no rights, and their independent opinions and desires are not the concern of the Master. Their one concern is to know and obey the command of their Master [I Cor.6:19,20].

No man can serve two masters. There exists no place for men to lord it over fellow slaves in the church of Christ. Jesus alone is Lord.

#### Shepherd & Sheep [Jn.10:1-28]

There exists but one flock with one Shepherd [Jn.10:16]. Men are no substitutes for Christ. His voice alone is heard and followed by His flock. The voices of strangers will not be listened to or followed: Rather, the sheep will flee from any not speaking the Word of the Shepherd.

This identifies what true shepherd care is; speaking with the voice of Christ, leading in His paths of righteousness to feed upon His Word. This is what a shepherd is according to the heart of God [Jer.3:15]. Any who would draw men after themselves, speaking man's wisdom and tradition, are thieves and robbers [Ezek.34:1-16; Acts 20:30].

#### Foundation & Temple [I Cor.3:10,11,16; Eph.2:19-22]

In God's temple, everything says, "Glory!" The outshining of His character is seen, the excellence of His moral perfections shine forth. Truth is dispensed, sacrifices rise, and the Lord dwells in the midst with holiness overshadowing all.

Christ as the Cornerstone is the reference point for all that is built upon Him. He is the foundation that the Apostles and prophets have laid. Everything rests upon Him and He determines the dimensions and scope of the building. Man's substitutes and carnal contributions are rejected as worthless and not according to the Pattern of Christ.

This is the church that Jesus builds. It is not built with wood and cement. Living stones grow into a holy temple in the Lord. The church of the Lord Jesus is the pillar and support of the truth [I Tim.3:15], upholding and proclaiming the everlasting Word of God of Him who dwells within His spiritual house.

#### High Priest & Priests [Heb.4:14-16; I Pet.2:5,9]

A throne of grace is open to all who draw near to God through Jesus, the only High Priest who always lives to intercede for His own [Heb.7:24,25]. Each believer has equal privilege and access to the God of heaven, for all are spiritual priests.

From every believer without distinction, offerings are brought: Bodies are presented as living sacrifices [Rom.12:1,2], praise rises from grateful and fruitful lips [Heb.13:15], and good deeds of sharing abound [Heb.13:16].

No such thing as clergy and laity exist in the NT church patterned after Christ. No separate class of men officiate and rule over the spiritual life and ministry of the believers. All are priests.

### Vine & Branches [Jn.15:1-17]

“Apart from Me, you can do nothing” [Jn.15:5]; nothing to glorify the Father, nothing to truly benefit man. The life of the True Vine courses through each and every branch to produce the fruit of that Life; fruit of “goodness, righteousness, and truth” [Eph.5:9].

Fruit cannot be imitated as spiritual gifts may. Death has its own odor that cannot be masked. The fruitful fragrance of Christ is what is evidenced in all who are in living union with Him. Life produces fruit that no ceremonies, regulations, associations, or traditions could ever do.

### Head & Body [Col.1:18]

One Head governs the one body of Christ. There are not multiple heads in His church. No one’s body could live and function with two heads.

The members of the body receive their direction directly from the Head, not from fellow members. The hand does not dictate to the foot. If one suffers, that member sends a message of distress to the Head. The Head then orders the response of the other members to relieve the suffering member.

All is orderly and coordinated because the Head governs all. No imposed structure from without directs the church. Christ is truly the Head.

### Captain & Soldiers [2 Tim.2:3,4]

Soldiers do not entangle themselves in the affairs of life. Conflict for the sake of the kingdom is their concern. Commands from their Captain are all that they listen to.

Hardship, self-denial, and discipline are what their lives consist of. Pleasing the Commander and gaining victory over the foe fills their waking moments.

The church fights the good fight of faith, not with carnal weapons and fleshly might, but with the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. Error, evil, and hate is fought with truth, righteousness, and love. Only then is victory sure.

### Bridegroom & Bride [2 Cor.11:2,3; Rev.19:7-9; Eph.5:25-32]

Affectionate devotion and determined purity are what characterize the bride. She has an eye for none other. Her love is reserved for One alone.

She despises that friendship with the world which would defile her into harlotry [Jas.4:4]. She makes herself ready for the glorious day in which she shall appear spotless and radiant, with no stain or blemish.

Righteous deeds weave the whitened fabric of her beautiful dress while she gladly submits to His good pleasure. And so it is that the true church of Christ can say, “I am my Beloved’s, and His desire is for me” [S. of S. 7:10].

## KEY PASSAGES: LEADERSHIP

### Luke 22:24-27 [Mt.20:25-28; Mk.10:42-45]

Ruling and lording it over the people of God are never to be found in the church of Jesus Christ. He forbids it to be so. Dominating and exercising authority over inferiors is what the heathen do. It is worldliness and completely unlike the Pattern of Christ.

He humbled Himself as the lowliest of servants. This is what constitutes leadership in His kingdom, in His church; serving as a slave.

Leadership is by performing loving deeds of service, not by exercising authority over others. True leadership, according to Christ, is by an example of humbly serving others, not by having others perform my will. The youngest is the greatest.

In Lk.22:26, the word “chief” [KJV], “he who governs” [NKJV], “the one who rules” [NIV], and “leader” [NASB], are all translations of the word *HEGEOMAI* [ηγεομαι]. Jesus here says that the *HEGEOMAI* is a servant. This is the sense in which we must understand the meaning of this term in the church.

Without controversy, servants are not rulers, they are ruled. Therefore, the ideas of chief, ruler, or governor cannot possibly be the proper sense of a *HEGEOMAI* in the NT church. The meanings, “leader, guide,” are correct, as they alone are consistent with being a servant. A servant can lead and guide by an example of devoted care and truthful words. But no servant is a ruler, governor, or chief; that is a contradiction in terms.

#### Acts 20:28-32

Elders who are equipped by the Holy Spirit to oversee, are capable of shepherding the flock of God. It is the work of God to make a man in this capacity. Man’s appointment and ordination cannot make a man into someone and something that the Holy Spirit has not already done.

Elders [Acts 20:17,18] and Overseers [Acts 20:28] are terms describing the same individuals. An Elder [*PRESBUTEROS, πρεσβυτερος*] is an older man of proven spiritual maturity. An Overseer [*EPISKOPOS, επισκοπος*] describes the work that an Elder performs. That work is watching over and tending to the needs of the flock as a Shepherd would do.

The work of a Shepherd is essentially two-fold: to lead the flock to good pasture and to watch over them so that the wolf does not attack and destroy. The means provided by the Lord to accomplish both of these services are one and the same. The Word of God is what the believers are led to feed upon by mature godly teachers. That same Word, skillfully used in the hands of Overseeing Shepherds, is their means of protection against error and evil.

#### I Peter 5:1-6

Once again, it is the Elders who are performing the work of overseeing. Overseer is not a position or office of higher rank than that of an elder. The two words are simply describing the same individual, considered from different aspects of his qualifications of service to the saints.

Leaders, here called Elders, are among the brethren, not over them. Peter himself does not assume a ruling position over the brethren or other elders. He simply calls himself, “your fellow elder.”

Here it is clearly seen that an Overseer who watches over, must not Lord It Over. Overseeing is therefore never legitimately ruling and exercising authority over the brethren. Rather, Elders/Overseers are to be examples, both in loving and humble service as well as in purity of life and of doctrine. They do not dominate, they demonstrate.

#### Hebrews 13:7,17

NT church Leaders [*HEGEOMAI*] are not rulers. This has already been seen by our Lord Jesus’ use of this same word in the discussion above from Lk.22:26. They are guides; servants who lead by loving godly care while speaking the truth.

Believers are to carefully reflect upon both the godly lives of their Leaders and the Word that they have taught. It is then that they are persuaded to imitate their faith and submit to their guidance and example.

They obey because the Leaders’ doctrine and lives are persuasive to the spiritual hearts of the godly. The church does not obey because Leaders rule over them with authority as lords. Christ’s Leaders follow His Pattern by guiding according to example, combined with the persuasive power of truth.

The most frequent word in the NT for Obey is [*HUPAKOUO, υπακουω*]. It means TO OBEY, in the sense of submitting to authority; such as a believer to the Lord [Heb.5:9], a child to his parent [Eph.6:1], or a slave to his master [Col.3:22].

However, in Heb.13:17, a different word for Obey is used. That word, [*PEITHO, πειθω*], means TO CONVINCe, PERSUADE, OBEY. The obedience called for in Heb.13:17 is based upon godly spiritual persuasion, not upon submission to one in authority over others.

Thus, the meaning of the command in Heb.13:17 can better be expressed in this way: “Be persuaded by your Leaders and submit.” Their submission is to the truth of their leaders’ teaching from the Word that is also evident in the convincing example of their godly lives.

#### I Timothy 3:1-7

Oversight is a good and desirable work. It is truly a work of service, not occupying a position or assuming an office. The Overseer must possess essentially two qualifications. [1] He must be blameless in character. [2] He must be able to teach.

Thus the Overseer must be a consistently spiritual example and able to teach the Word; the same qualifications as were seen in Acts, I Peter, and Hebrews.

He must be one who Manages [*PROISTEMI, προϊστημι*] his own household well. If he is not a good example, leader, and caring helper there, how could he possibly be qualified to help the church?

*PROISTEMI* is a word that means, literally, TO STAND BEFORE, and is translated as LEAD, ATTEND TO [with diligent care], MANAGE, MAINTAIN, CONDUCT, BE CONCERNED ABOUT, CARE FOR, GIVE AID, DIRECT, RULE.

This wide-range term describes someone who is standing before others as an example of devoted service, help, care, and direction to them. [All NT references are: Rom. 12:8; I Thess. 5:12; I Tim. 3:4,5,12; 5:17; Tit. 3:8,14].

The sense in which Overseers are to “rule” [I Tim. 3:4,5 KJV] their household well is explained by the use of the term “take care of” in I Tim. 3:5. The word “take care of” [*EPIMELEOMAI, επιμελομαι*], is used in only three verses in the NT; Lk. 10:34,35 and I Tim. 3:5.

In the Luke passage, the good Samaritan did not rule, lord it over, or exercise authority over the man who had been robbed and beaten. Rather, he Attended to, was Concerned about, Cared for, Gave aid, and Directed for the care of the man in need. Provision was made at his own expense for the well-being and blessing of the wounded traveler.

This type of care is what is needed in the church and in the home. If one cannot Attend to, Concerned about, Care for, Give aid, and Direct the members of one’s own family, how could a man ever be of benefit to the church, the family of God? Ruling and exercising authority as a lord does not fit or qualify a man to either lead in his home or in the church.

#### Titus 1:5-9

Elders [*PRESBUTEROS*] and Overseers [*EPISKOPOS*] are addressed as being the same individuals. There exists no hierarchy of one over the other or of either over the brethren.

Any true Overseer must be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and refute those who contradict. Such is the work of a Shepherd; to feed with the Word and to defend with the same.

#### I Timothy 5:17-22

Those Elders who Care For [*PROISTEMI*] the brethren well are worthy of double honor, not because they are Rulers, but because they Attend to, are Concerned about, Care for, and Give aid to the people of God. They should be worthy, not only of honor, but even of financial support since they are working hard at preaching the gospel and teaching the believers.

#### I Thessalonians 5:12,13

Leaders are noted for their diligent work of Caring For [*PROISTEMI*] and admonishing the brethren according to the Word of God. These are the ones that we should draw close to in order to observe, know, and highly esteem their worthy examples and sound doctrine. Because of their good work, we love them dearly.

Here, it is those who are Attending to, Caring for, Giving aid, and Directing the brethren by their laboring in teaching and admonition that the saints are to lovingly esteem. They are not “over you” as ruling authorities, but are Standing Before the church as teachers and examples.

## LEADERSHIP: PLURAL OR SINGULAR?

Throughout the NT, leadership in the local assemblies was plural, and not singular. In other words, there was not one man who was the leader of a church or group of churches. There is to be more than one Elder/Overseer/Pastor in a local church gathering.

There is no one “priest,” bishop, reverend, pastor, primate, general overseer, or “man of God” who determines policy or who directs the actions of the believers and affairs of the church. The modern “pastor” as we have conceived him to be from the time of the Reformation, is not found in the pages of the NT.

The following passages show plurality of leadership in the NT church: [Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3,13; 14:23; 15:2,4,6, 7,12,13,22,32,35; 20:17,28; Phil. 1:1; I Thess. 5:12,13; ITim. 1:3,6,7; 3:1,8; 4:14; 5:17-20; 2 Tim. 2:2; Tit. 1:5; Philemon 1-3; Heb. 13:7,17; Jas. 5:14; IPet. 5:1-5].

## LEADERSHIP: MALE OR FEMALE?

There is no reference in the NT of a woman being a pastor, elder, overseer, or teacher in the church. The command to Christian women is clear: A woman is not allowed to teach or exercise authority over a man [ITim. 2:11,12]. And this is not a command limited to a particular situation or culture, but is the directive of God for all believers in every place at all times [ICor. 1:2; 4:17; 7:17; 14:37].

By creation, she is a follower, not the leader; a helper, not the initiator; the responder, not the director [Gen. 2:18; ICor. 11:9; ITim. 2:13]. She is indeed a fellow heir of the grace of life [IPet. 3:7], but not a fellow minister in the church as men are. Though one in Christ where there is neither male nor female with respect to salvation and its blessings [Gal. 3:28], she is not given the same sphere of ministry by God as are men.

Her God-given realm is in the home; loving her husband and children [Tit. 2:3-5], raising her children [ITim. 2:15; 5:14], and working at home [ITim. 5:14; Tit. 2:5] so that the Word of God will not be dishonored [Tit. 2:5]. Her sphere of teaching is in practical instruction in godliness to other sisters and children [Tit. 2:3-5]. Doing good by helpful works of service [Lk. 8:2,3], giving to the poor [Acts 9:36,39], and kindly hospitality [Acts 16:15,40; ITim. 5:10] are some of her great and needful contributions to the work of the gospel; fellow workers, not competitors or usurpers.

## BELIEVERS: INFERIORS OR EQUALS?

Christians are addressed as spiritual equals in the NT. There are no classes or ranks among the brethren. None are inferior to some who supposedly are ruling over others. [Acts 17:11; Rom. 15:14; ICor. 5:12, 13; 10:15; 12:7, 18-27; 14:26, 29-35; 2 Cor. 1:24; IPet. 5:1; Rev. 1:9].

## CHURCHES: ASSEMBLIES OR RULERS?

The Epistles in the NT that are addressed to assemblies are not addressed to the “rulers” in those churches. They are addressed to the entire fellowship of the brethren, not to an imagined hierarchy within it. [Rom. 1:7; ICor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:2; Eph. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:2; I Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1; IPet. 1:1].

## CHRIST THE PATTERN

Paul wrote so that believers would know how they ought to conduct themselves “in the house of God, which is the church of the living God” [ITim. 3:15].

Throughout the Scriptures, there has always been a pattern for the house of God. The Tabernacle had to be built according to the pattern shown on the mount [Heb. 8:5]. Solomon’s Temple had a divinely revealed plan [1 Chron. 28:12,19].

The re-built Temple in the days of Ezra was built according to the absolute standard of the plumb line that measured all from above [Zech. 4:9,10]. And Ezekiel’s Temple of the future has a carefully revealed and measured pattern [Ezek. 40:4; 43:10-12].

There exists a Pattern for the church as well, which has Christ Himself as the standard [ICor. 3:9-17; 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:3, 37, 38; 2 Thess. 2:15; ITim. 3:15; 2 Tim. 1:13,14].

In the NT church, everything revolves around and is measured by Jesus Christ the Lord. He truly has “first place in everything” [Col.1:18].

All life [Col.3:4], direction [1Cor.2:16], enabling [1Cor.1:24], and gift [Eph.4:7,8] come directly from the Lord Jesus Christ, the HEAD of the Body, His church.

As HIGH PRIEST, He is the one Mediator between God and man [1Tim.2:5] that all believers as Priests have equal access to.

Christ alone is qualified to command and rule His Servants as their KING and LORD. “You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men” [1Cor.7:23].

No traditions of men, rules, codes, ceremonies, or formulas can save or improve our condition. Christ is the TRUE VINE and source of all fruitfulness for every believer abiding in Him [Jn.15:5].

The church of the Lord Jesus Christ is built upon nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else than Himself as its FOUNDATION [1Cor.3:11]. With Himself as the CORNERSTONE, the perfect reference point for the church, the whole “Building is growing into a holy Temple in the Lord” [Eph.2:20, 21]. The church is not a literal building made of cement and wood, and does not depend upon any man, ministry, or denomination for its existence, guidance, or progress.

Sheep in His flock listen to and follow the voice of their one SHEPHERD, Christ Jesus. All other voices and messages are those of thieves and robbers and will be fled from by Christ’s sheep [Jn.10:4,5].

Purity from the defilement of the world is evident in His Bride whose devotion and affection is reserved for Christ alone, the BRIDEGROOM of His church.

## IN THE NT CHURCH

No man governs and rules. It is the right of the Lord Jesus to have such place among His people.

Christ Jesus dwells in the midst as the focus of every obedient, worshipful, and loving heart [Rev.2:1].

Our Lord leads, commands, directs, and draws out a response of love from those belonging to Him [Rev.19:7, 8].

He is truly honored as Lord as there are no competing “lords” among His people [2Cor.1:24; 1Pet.5:1-3].

Leaders are among the flock, not over them.

Overseers watch over as servants, but do not lord over as rulers.

All is done “decently and in order” [1Cor.14:40] because He is “not a God of confusion but of peace” [1Cor.14:33]. Yet no pre-arranged program is needed to direct the worship of the church. The Spirit of God, whose work it is to “glorify Christ” [Jn.16:13,14], will lead the people of God [Rom.8:14] “to worship the Father in Spirit and truth” [Jn.4:23].

Unity exists, not by outward conformity and association, but because the Spirit of God joins all to glorify Jesus as Lord [Eph.4:3,4] in a common life of godliness [Jn.17:21-23].

Each one contributes for the edification of all [1Cor.14:26] and all judge what is spoken by any [1Cor.14:29].

Everyone submits to each other in the fear of Christ, whether believer or leader, young or old alike [Eph.5:21].

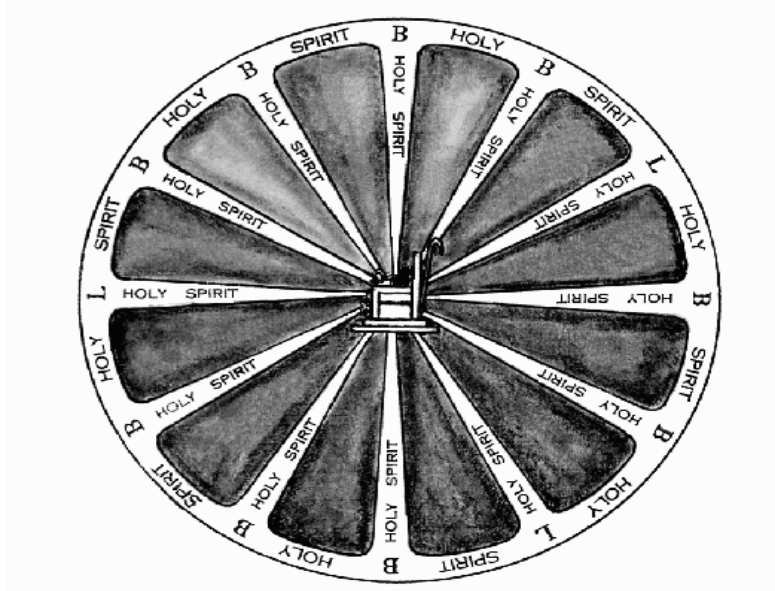
The Breaking of Bread [Lord’s Supper/Communion meeting] is the commanded meeting of the church. “Do this in remembrance of Me” [Lk.22:19]. Other gatherings are secondary or even optional.

Disobedient brethren are lovingly restored back into the way or regretfully removed from the fellowship by the church, not by its leaders alone [Gal.6:1,2; Mt.18:15-18; 1Cor.5:1-13].

The following diagram illustrates the relationship of Christ to His church and of the believers [B] to Him, one another, and to leaders [L]. Christ is in the midst as Lord represented by the throne. His life extends to every member of His body through the Holy Spirit, the only light amidst the darkness of this world.

Leaders are among the believers, not over them. All have equal access to the Lord Jesus as the Great High Priest over the house of God apart from human mediators. As Head, He directs the members of His body. Since He is the Bridegroom, all devotion and affection is focused upon Christ without rivals. And as Lord, His Word commands His servants, not the commandments and traditions of men.

Believers live in harmony and love one another as brothers since they share a common life in the Spirit of God being joined to Christ as the True Vine. In the church that Jesus is building, He has “first place in everything” [Col.1:18].



## BREAKING OF BREAD

“Do this in Remembrance of Me”  
 [Lk.22:19; I Cor.11:24]

In this simple request is contained the only command from our Lord regarding the meeting of Christians. All other purposes for gathering, however beneficial they might be, are secondary or even optional. This one is not. Several profound truths are contained in this text.

[1] “Do this in remembrance of Me.” The Lord Jesus is the central object and reason for the gathering. The focus is upward, upon Him. While there is undoubtedly benefit and blessing to the brethren, Christ is to have “first place in everything” [Col.1:18]. In our remembrance of the Lord Jesus with thanksgiving the assembled brethren are stirred up to love and good deeds [Heb.10:24,25].

[2] “Do this in Remembrance of Me.” One cannot remember someone he has never known. It is a meeting for true believers. Its purpose is not for other reasons. It is not a teaching meeting, though teaching is there. It is not a prayer meeting, though prayers are surely offered. Evangelism is not the focus though the gospel of the death of Christ must certainly be mentioned. If unbelievers happen to be present, the church’s devoted reflection upon Christ will surely bring conviction to their hearts as His person and work is remembered [I Cor.14:23-25; 11:23-26].

[3] “Do This in remembrance of Me.” Do this refers to something. The Lord Jesus said these words after He had done something: He had just given thanks. We are to do as He did: We are to give thanks for all that the bread and cup represent. They are symbols of His person, His body, and of His work of redemption, His blood. Who He is and His work at the cross to secure salvation are the cause and focus of our thanks.

[4] “Do this in remembrance of Me.” The command is plural. It is not a directive for one only to do this while others sit passively by. Each one is to have something to contribute to the collective giving of thanks in the remembrance of Christ [I Cor.14:26].

In that first meeting recorded in the Gospels, the Lord Jesus was the central focus in their midst [Lk.22:15-20]. Prayers of thanks were offered [Lk.22:19,20], teaching occurred [Mk.14:22-25], exhortation was given [Lk.22:21-23], hymns were sung [Mt.26:30], and they shared a meal together [Mt.26:26].

These are the key elements in our remembrance of the Lord Jesus. No formula or ceremonial pattern was laid down by our Lord to dictate our expressions of love to Him, though these elements will surely be present.

This gathering is actually an acted-out parable of sorts, expressing the life in Christ that is among believers collectively. Jesus Christ has first place in the midst as the adoring object of every worshiping heart. Love to Him as the Bridegroom and obedience to Him as Lord are the basis of unity among the saints.

Each are guided by the Good Shepherd and share a common life received from the Head of the body. Through the one Great High Priest, their sacrifices of praise ascend unto the throne of God. Fellowship and harmony prevail among the children of the one family of God.

Christians did meet for other reasons as well, but we must not neglect what is commanded for that which we think is beneficial. The types of meetings in the NT are shown in the following.

[1] Breaking of Bread [Acts 2:42-47; 20:7-11; I Cor.10:16-22; 11:17-34].

[2] Prayer [Acts 1:14,15; 4:23-31; 12:12; 21:5].

[3] Fellowship [Acts 2:42-46].

[4] Teaching [Acts 5:42; 8:25; 11:26; 13:1-3, 42,43; 14:21-23; 15:32-35; 16:40].

[5] Mission Report [Acts 14:26-28; 15:3,4; 21:19].

[6] Elders Meeting [Acts 20:17-37; 21:18].

[7] Church Discipline For Doctrine [Acts 15:1-30]. For Morals [I Cor.5:1-13].

[8] In General [I Cor. 14:1-40; Heb. 10:23-25].

## CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Christianity is a fellowship of love; love to God and love to the brethren [I Jn.4:7,8]. Love to God requires obedience or it is not love at all [Jn.14:21; I Jn.5:3]. Love can never be pleased with unrighteousness, but ever and always rejoices with the truth [I Cor.13:6].

Love therefore is always concerned about and cannot be content when sin is present in its own or another's life. Obedience to truth is to be the characteristic of all believers. The Lord has so composed the body of Christ that "there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it" [I Cor.12:25,26].

The fellowship of the brethren is maintained only while we walk in the light as Christ is in the light. If sin enters in, that fellowship is spoiled. "If we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" [I Jn.1:7].

Filled with both goodness and knowledge, mutual admonition maintains that purity among brethren in loving fellowship [Rom.15:14]. Those who are overtaken in a fault, are to be restored in gentleness by those who are spiritual [Gal.6:1]. In this way the burdens of brethren are borne and the law of Christ is fulfilled [Gal.6:2].

But there are times when erring brothers do not heed loving correction to forsake their folly and live. It is always a serious matter when brethren harden their hearts when reproved. Severe warnings are given against this. "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God...Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion" [Heb.3:12, 15].

Such refusal to repent and return to walking obediently on the way of life calls for further correction. If a brother does not heed the first attempts at correcting his sin in private [Mt.18:15], it becomes necessary to bring one or two more along to confirm the misdeed and impress upon the brother the seriousness of his actions [Mt.18:16].

Some still will not listen. It then must be brought before the entire church that unitedly they might speak to the brother to turn him from the error of his way [Mt.18:17; Jas.5:19,20]. If he will not listen to the admonition of the church itself, he has rejected the Word of Christ who is speaking in the midst of His people [Mt.18:18-20]. He is then to be put out of the fellowship of the brethren until such time that he repents [Mt.18:17; 2 Thess.3:6,14; 2 Cor.2:6-11].

The Lord Jesus says this is a matter finally for the church to decide, not for the leaders only. “And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector” [Mt.18:17].

All believers are to say the same thing with one voice about sin that has not been repented of. “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” [1 Cor.1:10]. It is the church itself that is the final decision making body in these matters, not the leaders alone.

Paul speaks to the entire body of believers at Corinth as being responsible to exercise this type of discipline. “For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore ‘put away from yourselves the evil person” [1 Cor.5:12,13].

Sin that is not repented of, whether moral [1 Cor.5:1-13] or doctrinal [Rom.16:17,18; 2 Thess.3:14; Tit.3:9-11; 2 Jn.9-11], is a serious matter. God takes up discipline of a believer when that of Christ through the church is rejected. “He who is often rebuked, and hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy” [Prov.29:1].

Discipline and correction is designed to lovingly restore the erring brother to fellowship and blessing. It is also designed to prevent corruption from spreading within the fellowship of the brethren who might be tolerating its presence rather than disciplining the transgressor.

“You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst...Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Clean out the old leaven...I have written to you not to keep company with any so-called brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person...put away from yourselves the evil person” [1 Cor.5:2,6,7,11,13].

## LEADERS WHO BECAME LORDS

Jesus Christ the Lord, who has the central place among the lampstands [Rev.2:1], hates “the deeds of the Nicolaitans” [Rev.2:6]. He hates it because they attempt to take over His rightful place as Lord.

Nicolaitan is a compound word in Greek. It comes from joining the words NIKAO [νικαω] TO OVERCOME and LAOS [λαος] THE PEOPLE.

Jesus hates the deeds of those who “Overcome the People.” Great men ruling the common people [Laiety in English comes from this word] and exercising authority over them is what the rulers of the Gentiles do.

It is what the rulers of the churches do. And it is hated by Christ.

There is a man in the NT who ruled in the church. He was a wicked man. He did not accept the Word of God. He oppressed the brethren who wished to follow the Scriptures. Those who loved the brethren were forbidden by him to do so. And those who would not obey his rule were thrown out of the church [3 Jn.9,10].

The root cause of his evil exercise of authority was that he “loved to be first among them” [3 Jn.9]. He is chief of all church rulers who follow in his steps, loving positions of power and authority .

The Scriptures state that Christ is “to have first place in everything” [Col.1:18]. But Diotrephes loved to have that first place. Yet two cannot possibly both have the honor of being first. One must of necessity occupy second rank.

There cannot be two heads in one body. Two kings have never sat together on one throne. If Diotrephes and the church rulers walking his crooked path would have first place, Christ must be pushed aside to make room for them.

This is the heart of the matter.

## GREAT COMMISSION

Before ascending into heaven, the Lord Jesus commanded the apostles and all believers as well to preach the gospel throughout the entire world [Mk.16:15]. The message is that “repentance for forgiveness of sins would be preached in His name among all nations” [Lk.24:47].

As the Father had sent Christ into the world, so He sends His followers into all the earth to bring the message of life to every people, tribe, and nation [Jn.20:21]. As we go, we are to not only preach, but to make disciples of all men who receive Christ, to baptize and teach them to obey His Word [Mt.28:18-20].

The Lord does not leave us to our own efforts to accomplish so great a task. Rather, He has sent the very Holy Spirit of God to empower and fill us to be His witness to the ends of the earth [Acts 1:8]. Proclaiming the gospel of Christ is not for evangelists and missionaries alone. The Christians themselves, regardless of their individual spiritual gifts, are the ones who are used by the Lord to bring the message of salvation to the perishing world.

All the believers were filled with the Spirit and preached the Word with boldness [Acts 4:32]. It was not the apostles who spread the message of Christ outside Jerusalem, it was all of the brethren themselves [Acts 8:1,4,5]. And what they had begun, they continued throughout their days [Acts 11:19-24].

It is the desire of every spiritual soul to see that Christ is preached throughout the world where His name has not yet been made known [Rom.15:20,21]. Because of this, the Lord Jesus commanded that we pray that the Lord of the harvest would send forth laborers into His harvest [Mt.9:36-38].

## TESTIMONY

Our testimony in the world is more than merely the message of the gospel that we preach. There must be a corresponding conformity of our lives to the truths we proclaim. The very quality of life of Christians is to serve as light to the world that men would see our good works and glorify the Father in heaven because of them [Mt.5:13-16].

Love is the crowning evidence that we are Christians. It is by this that all men will know that we are disciples of the Lord Jesus [Jn.13:34,35]. By bearing the fruit of the Spirit is what brings glory to the Father and proves to all men that we belong to Christ [Jn.15:8].

When the church began on the day of Pentecost, immediately they had this testimony of love and fruitfulness as evidenced by their selfless sharing and glad fellowship together [Acts 2:44-47]. The purity of an uncompromised holiness had great impact upon the multitudes, causing them to hold the believers in high esteem [Acts 5:11-14].

A life of conformity to godly example in the power of the Holy Spirit by patient endurance of persecution proclaims its own message along with the gospel that is preached [I Thess.1:5-10]. Attending to our own business and quietly working with our hands so as to not be in any need produces a favorable testimony among men who observe us [I Thess.4:11,12].

In all things we are to keep our behavior excellent among the unbelievers so that they will have nothing bad to report about us [I Pet.2:12]. In patient endurance of suffering by honoring all men, we will silence the ignorance of foolish men as we do what is right to the glory of God and thus obtain a testimony for Christ in this world [I Pet.2:13-20].

## DISCIPLESHIP

### THE TEACHING AND EXAMPLE OF CHRIST

Disciples are yoked to Christ as learners who walk with Him in meekness and lowliness [Mt.11:29]. By definition, a disciple is a learner and pride spoils the process. The goal of such association is conformity to the Master [Lk.6:40] through denial and even hatred of self [Lk.9:23; 14:26] by willingly suffering all for His name's sake [Lk.14:27].

Apprenticeship was ever Christ's method to instruct, train, and equip disciples. His practice was that His followers would learn spiritual principles by observation and participation. His life and teaching both in public and private were observed by them and later explained apart from the multitudes [Mk.4:34]. They also participated in serving men by way of preaching, teaching, healing, and giving to the poor.

For them to be able to repeat mechanically memorized information gained in a classroom setting was never His purpose. Rather, on the shores of Galilee or along the highways and in the marketplace, His school required men to reason about spiritual issues for themselves.

By encountering life situations with the Word of God and by the use of repeated questions, disciples' inner character was developed. The barrenness of a mere academic exercise of mind was not His aim and could never be thought of as training. Paul followed this example of developing men [2 Tim.3:10,11].

Jesus brought no gold from heaven to fund the work committed into their hands. As He trusted in His Father, so must His disciples. He built no temples, established no ceremonial procedures, and founded no institutions; a maximizing of power with a minimum of machinery. None of these external things can ever maintain godliness, only men who have been transformed by the Son of God.

No human means, entertainment, or enticements were used to attract men to Himself. Christ alone is the single desire of a disciple, not the bait of gain or interests of any other kind.

Jesus Himself was the Apostle [Heb.3:1] and knew what was required to be one. The word "apostle" means "sent forth." It describes one who by character and understanding can represent the interests of the one who sent him.

Christ did nothing except what He saw and heard from His Father, therefore apostles must go forth with no novelty of message and representation. They are ambassadors, and an ambassador dare not speak or act beyond what he has been authorized to do.

As the Apostle, He only did what He had authority to do from His Father. No independent message and judgment is fitting in an apostle.

"I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me" [Jn.5:30].

"I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak" [Jn.12:49].

This is the apostolic process: Men are chosen to first be with Him, separated from the unbroken tradition of their customary life until transformed. They then could be sent forth back into that culture without being overtaken by it when conformity to Christ's character and message was consistent with His own [Mk.3:14]. This explains why laborers are yet few. The Father does not send just anyone into His vineyard.

In the extension of the kingdom of heaven, Wisdom dictated to perpetuate life by life, not by pen or sword; the number of trees in one pawpaw cannot be counted. Grace dictated that those chosen be from the mainstream of common humanity and not from the exceptional or elite, that no flesh may boast in His presence.

And thus it was that unlearned fishermen [Acts4:13], a tax collector, a political zealot, and volatile sons of thunder became chosen vessels of worldwide blessing. It was a grassroots endeavor so that whatever noteworthy and commendable would be attributable to Christ and not to man.

Christ's prayer summarizes His apostolic work, "I have given to them the Words which You have given Me; and they have received them" [Jn.17:8]. Two by two they were thus sent forth, vindicating the wisdom of a three stranded strength entwined together with His own [Eccl.4:9-12].

## DISCIPLES ARE LEARNERS

Every disciple begins as an ignorant learner; that is what a disciple is. He does not know as he ought, and dare not therefore lean on his own understanding [Prov.3:5,6]. This is a condition that a disciple never grows out of.

Paul himself pressed on “that I might know Him” [Phil.3:10]. He admits that “I know in part” [I Cor.13:12]. Even when in prison at the end of his days, he was eager to pursue the knowledge of Christ. “The time of my departure is at hand...bring...the books, especially the parchments” [upon which the Scriptures were written] [2 Tim.4:6,13].

It is therefore a life-long process of becoming increasingly conformed to the image of Christ [Lk.6:40]. We become like Him when we are yoked to Him and walk in His path, learning from His meekness and lowliness of heart [Mt.11:28-30].

The Lord Jesus Himself followed in this process of discipleship. Every morning His ear was open to hear from His Father [Isa.50:4-7]. What He heard, He obeyed and did not turn back. Having heard and learned, He could sustain the weary with a Word. This is discipleship.

It requires hating all the influence of natural associations that would draw the heart from Christ as Lord; even, and especially, that of our own soul [Lk.14:25]. We must distrust our own desires and own assessment. If we are relying upon these, we are not listening to and learning from Christ: We are not disciples.

If we turn back because of the scorn and rejection of men; if we abandon the cross, we shall never die to self: We are not His disciple [Lk.14:26]. And there is no such thing as a disciple who has not lost his life for the sake of Christ [Mt.16:24,25].

All reliance upon our own resources must be given up: Discipleship is relying upon the strength, wisdom, and life of Christ alone. Trusting our own natural abilities, wisdom, and desires simply shows that we are not His disciple [Lk.14:33].

Disciples trust Christ to provide all that is needed to build a tower which will ensure a fruitful harvest in the coming Day [Lk.14:28-30. See Isa.5:1-4]. Disciples rely on Christ for all fruitful results.

How shall victory be secured when our might cannot match that of the enemy? [Lk.14:31-32]. The battle is the Lord's and He alone can defeat the hosts set round about against us [2 Chron.20:12, 15, 17; Prov.21:31]. Disciples do not look to self for victory and power.

## TIMOTHY: A DISCIPLE INDEED

Timothy was a disciple indeed. His testimony was recognized and known among the brethren he was in fellowship with [Acts 16:1-3]. He served Paul like a son serving his father; so much so, that sending Timothy was the same as sending Paul, to hear him was to hear the Apostle [I Cor.4:14-17].

There was no one else like him among all the servants of Christ. He was a genuine man of proven character who sincerely cared for the souls of men. “For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel” [Phil.2:20-22]. He is a worthy example of all true disciples.

## CHARACTERISTICS

A disciple, a learner, does not know as he ought to know [I Cor.8:2]. He does not lean on his own understanding [Prov.3:5]. He is not a fool, trusting in his own heart [Prov.28:26]. He is quick to hear and slow to speak [Jas.1:19].

Listening to, following, and yielding to reproof give evidence of being a true disciple. “He is on the path of life who heeds instruction, but he who ignores reproof goes astray” [Prov.10:17]. Those who refuse instruction, demonstrate that they are not disciples at all, but rather simply fools. “He who hates correction is stupid” [Prov.12:1].

Many have the outward show of being disciples, but few are genuine. “Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?’ From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more” [Jn.6:60,66].

A disciple will be like-minded with the one discipling him and will not seek after his own interests: The things of Christ fill his heart and mind [Phil.2:20,21]. He is first of all, a servant of the Lord Jesus and then also of the one discipling him; like a child serving his father [Phil.2:22].

Discipleship is a relationship of love and mutual respect without constraint. Even esteemed fellow-workers do not serve by forced necessity [I Cor.16:12].

A disciple follows the teaching and conduct of the one guiding him [2 Tim.3:10] so that they teach the same things whether together or apart [I Cor.4:17]. During discipleship, the disciple is sent under the direction of the one discipling him: Independence and self-will do not guide his movements [I Cor.4:17; Phil.2:19,23,25,28; I Tim.1:3; 2 Tim.4:12; Tit.2:5].

## PROCESS

The one discipling will preach [2 Tim.4:2], speak, exhort, and reprove with all authority [Tit.2:15], and lead [Heb.13:7]. He will prove to be an example [I Pet.5:3], teach [2 Tim.2:24], and correct [2 Tim.2:25].

A disciple will be reminded and solemnly charged [2 Tim.2:14], encouraged [Acts 15:32], and instructed with all patience [2 Tim.4:2]. But the one discipling does not, and must not, lord it over the disciple [Lk.22:25-27; 2 Cor.1:24; I Pet.5:3].

Lording it over men makes the disciples to be no longer servants of Christ. It turns them aside to being followers of men and the entire purpose of discipleship has been spoiled [Acts 20:30].

## PURPOSE

The purpose of discipleship is to train, instruct, and equip the disciple to become totally dependent upon the Lord Jesus. “Everyone, when he is fully trained, will be like his master” [Lk.6:40].

Conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ is the ultimate aim. “The goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith” [I Tim.1:5]. Development of character and not merely informing the mind is the goal. The Word is to come first to the disciple to instruct, reprove, correct, and train him in righteousness [2 Tim.3:16,17], before he would ever seek to instruct others.

Discipleship’s great task is to perpetuate the faith that has been once for all delivered to the saints. “The things you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” [2 Tim.2:2].

This can only be maintained by faith and love in dependence upon the Holy Spirit of God [2 Tim.1:13,14]. No program, institution, publications, or creeds can ever maintain the true doctrine of God in living reality.

## DEMANDS

The demands of discipleship are intense and rigorous [I Tim.4:15,16]. Diligent watch must be kept over one’s own heart, doctrine, and practice [Prov.4:23; I Tim.4:12]. Self-discipline is essential [Prov.2:1-5; I Tim.4:7,8]. Time is to be redeemed [Eph.5:16; Col.4:5].

Consistent daily reading and study of the Scriptures is mandatory if one is to be a disciple. “Study to show yourself approved unto God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth” [2 Tim.2:15]. He must be steadfast in the Word in times of departure when men are running after fables rather than sound doctrine [2 Tim.4:1-5].

He is a son who is strong in grace, a soldier disentangled from the affairs of the world, an athlete who strives according to the rules, and a farmer who diligently labors [2 Tim.2:1-7]; for a lazy man should not even be given something to eat [2 Thess.3:10-13].

## CAUTIONS

Disciples should aspire to lead quiet lives, mind their own business, and work with their own hands so that they will have a good testimony with those without and not be in any need [I Thess.4:11,12]. But he shall be free from the love of money [Heb.13:5] which will be the snare to his soul and plunge him into ruin and destruction. This he must flee [I Tim.6:9-11].

Interaction with the one discipling is to be purposeful, not as a busybody [2 Thess.3:11] nor as wasteful of time [Prov.25:17].

Since the disciple does not wish to give the enemy occasion for reproach [I Tim.5:14], he will abstain from every appearance of evil [I Thess.5:22]. Thus the disciple will relate to women in all purity [I Tim.5:2]. "It is good for a man not to touch a woman" [I Cor.7:1] nor to be alone with a woman in private so as to avoid temptation and evil suspicion on the part of others [Mt.6:13].

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