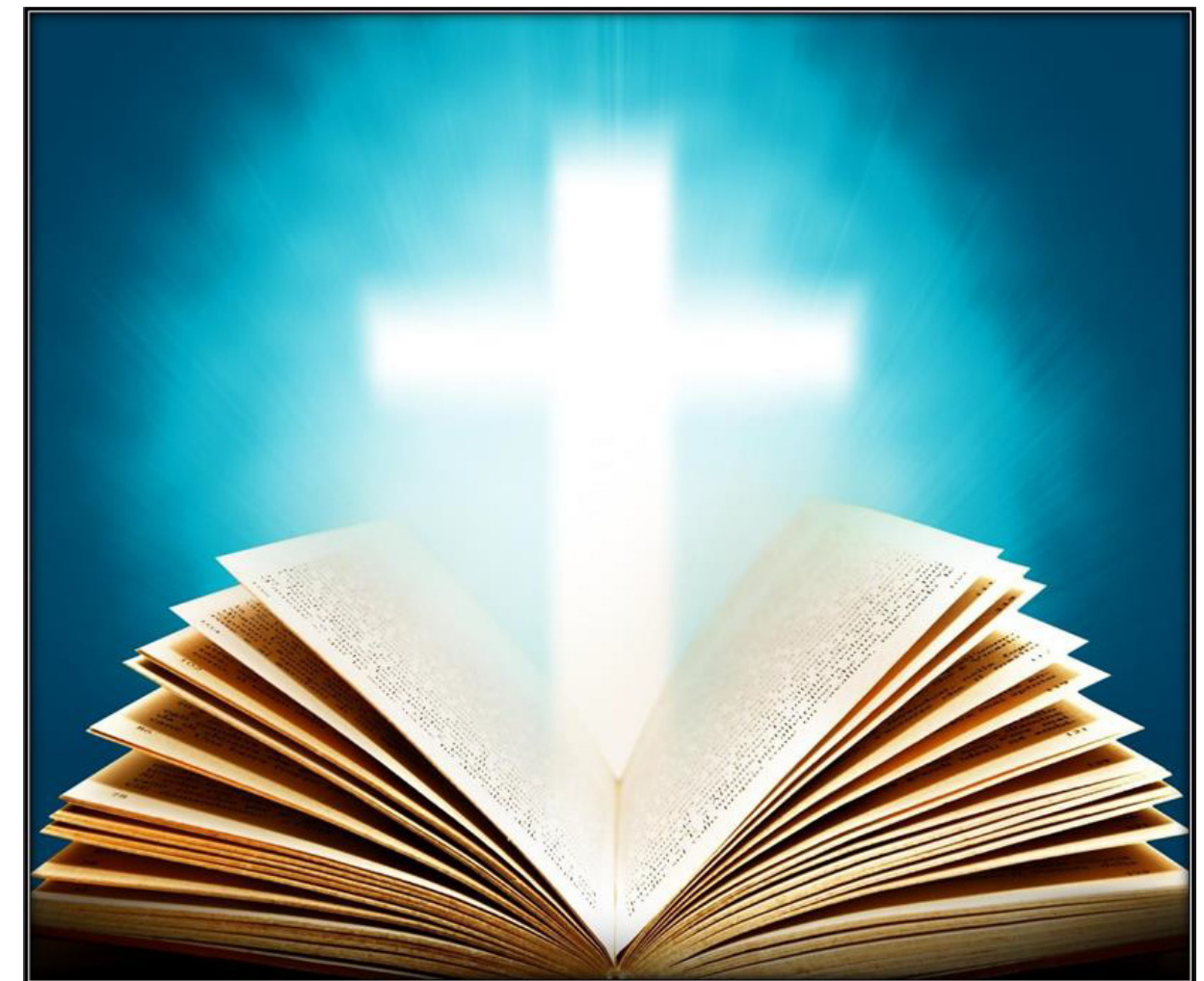


EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS



School of Global Missions

EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS

KINGDOM DISCIPLESHIP

DISCIPLESHIP 103

Biblical Discipleship

School of Global Missions
Dr. Frederick Osborn, M.Div., D.Min.

The School of Global Mission course curriculum for EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING is divided into six parts. Classes will meet one evening each week for one hour. Each part will be 12 lessons. It will take two years to complete all six parts.

Students will be required to take home extra materials and class handouts to read and study on their own.

At the end of each year (36 Lessons) each student will be required to submit a written summary of what they have learned (submission must be no less than three typed pages, single space, Times New Roman 12 pt. font). However, if the student has no access to a computer, special arrangements can be made for a handwritten paper to be submitted.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Frederick Osborn traveled the world teaching and preaching the Word of God from 2005 - 2017. His first trip to South Asia was in 2001, and since 2005 he has been fully involved in ministry. His books and study guides have been used in classrooms by hundreds of students around the world.

In 2013 he earned his M.Div. from Andhra Christian Theological College in Hyderabad, India and in that same year was officially ordained into the ministry in a holy convocation administered by Indian pastors representing AG, CSA, and other independent ministries. In 2017 he completed his D.Min. from Covenant Bible College & Seminary, Florida, USA.

He and his wife, Deena now live near Atlanta, GA where he continues to write, teach, and publish his books and study guides.

Evangelism and Church Planting Movements

Discipleship 103
Biblical Discipleship

Copyright © Rev. Dr. Frederick Osborn, 2014, 2018, 2023

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means – electronic, mechanical, digital, photocopy, recording, or any other – except for brief quotations in printed reviews without prior permission of the author.

Parts of the teaching materials of Discipleship 102 were previously published under the title, “Kingdom Discipleship” but they have been edited and reformatted by the author for the SGM course in Evangelism and Church Planting Movements.

Unless otherwise indicated all images were obtained through Internet searches on public platforms. Copyrights are shown when included.



www.school-missions.com

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.



www.bfaBooks.com

Course Materials for EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS

Introducing World Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Practical Survey, Second Edition, A. Scott Moreau, Gary R. Corwin, and Gary B. McGee, © 2004, 2015, Pub. Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI

Encountering Theology of Mission: Biblical Foundations, Historical Developments, and Contemporary Issues, Craig Ott, Stephen J. Strauss, with Timothy C. Tennent, © 2010, Pub. Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI

Developing A Strategy For Missions: A Biblical, Historical, and Cultural Introduction, John Mark Terry, J. D. Payne, © 2013, Pub. Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI

Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for intercultural Ministry, Tom Steffen, Lois McKinney Douglas, © 2008, Pub. Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI

Reference Material Published by Dr. Frederick Osborn:

Church Planting Movements: India

Exploring the New Testament

Kingdom Discipleship: Becoming Like Jesus

Messiah: The Mission of Jesus of Nazareth

Reviving A Nation

The Apocalyptic Vision: Understanding the Apocalyptic Writings of the Bible

The Book of Acts: The Holy Spirit's Handbook for Church Planting Movements

The Holy Spirit in You: Nourishing the Life of Holiness and power in You

The Revelation of Jesus Christ: John the Apostle's Heavenly Vision of Christ the King

The Way, the Truth, and the Life: the Teachings and Ministry of Jesus the Messiah

This Gospel of the Kingdom

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

School of Global Missions

SGM BIBLICAL STUDIES: DISCIPLESHIP 101-103

COURSE SYLLABUS - PROFESSOR

Dr. Frederick Osborn, Academic Dean | Chancellor/President, SGM
678-702-1597 frederickosb7@outlook.com | SGM www.school-missions.com

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

This course in EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS is designed to teach and train three groups: (1) those who are preparing to go to unreached people groups in foreign mission fields (2) those indigenous workers who need more teaching and training for the work they are doing, and (3) to provide materials for indigenous church planters to teach and train others for evangelism and church planting.

CREDIT VALUE:

SGM uses what is known as a *Trimester Calendar* for holding classes. In a trimester system, students have three terms of 12 weeks in each school year. The students will cover a full year's worth of teaching in a normal two-semester year. This course in EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS has a 30-credit hour value (Three Terms in Evangelism and Church Planting Movements Studies in the first year and Three Terms in Evangelism and Church Planting Studies in the second year).

COURSE TEXT:

The only required text for all School of Global Mission courses is THE HOLY BIBLE. We recommend that each student has a good Study Bible, if possible.

NOTE TO STUDENTS: SGM recommends the website, www.blueletterbible.org for Bible translations and reference materials for Bible study. The site is also available on Mobile apps for your phone or tablet.

NOTE TO PROFESSORS: Additional materials are included in the teaching materials that you may or may not wish to take advantage of. Anything that is identified as HANDOUT material is NOT seen by the students unless you copy and give it to them as supplemental material. It will be up to the individual teacher to review the teaching materials and decide what to emphasize in their class time. Whatever is not covered in the class, the students will be able read and study as homework assignments.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE STUDENTS:

1. Read the required texts.

NOTE TO PROFESSORS: Because the Bible is the only required text for all BIBLICAL STUDIES classes, the students should read the relevant chapters from the Scriptures. The chapters and verses covered in each class should be given at the beginning of each lesson.
2. Attend all classes in person or online, or review recording of an excused class (maximum two per term).
3. At the end of each term (12 weeks) write a term paper of at least three typewritten pages (12 point, Times New Roman font, single space.)

EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS (FIRST YEAR LESSONS)

EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS: DISCIPLESHIP 101 LESSONS

(LESSONS 1 – 12 *The Book of Acts: The Holy Spirit's Guide for Church Planting Movements*)

1. Introduction: From Jerusalem to the World, “Christ is Lord”
2. Jerusalem: A Move of the Holy Spirit
3. The Message: Kerygma & Personal Testimony
4. Paul’s First Missionary Journey: The Holy Spirit Prepares the Way
5. Paul’s Second Missionary Journey: A Church Planting Movement Takes Shape
6. Paul’s Third Missionary Journey: A Church Planting Movement is Established
7. Learning Points for Modern CPMs From Paul’s Missionary Journeys
8. Disciples Making Disciples: A Church Planting Movement is Extended (Part One)
9. Disciples Making Disciples: A Church Planting Movement is Extended (Part Two)
10. Developing A Strategy for Church Planting Movements: The Apostle Paul’s Missionary Strategy (Part One)
11. Developing A Strategy for Church Planting Movements The Apostle Paul’s Missionary Strategy” (Part Two)
12. Obstacles to A Church Planting Movement

EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS: DISCIPLESHIP 102 LESSONS

Kingdom Discipleship

1. Introduction to Biblical Discipleship
2. The Key Parable of “The Sower and the Soils” pt. one “Not for Everyone”
3. The Key Parable of “The Sower and The Soils” pt. two: “The Strongholds”
4. The Key Parable of “The Sower and The Soils” pt. three “The Thorns of Money, Sex, and Power”
5. The Key Parable of “The Sower and The Soils” pt. four “The Good Soil – A Heart Prepared to Receive”
6. The Terms of Discipleship “Counting the Cost”
7. The Terms of Discipleship “A Supreme Love for Christ and A Fervent Love for All Who Belong to Christ”
8. The Terms of Discipleship “A Deliberate Choosing of the Cross”
9. The Terms of Discipleship “Confronting the Giants of Self”
10. The Terms of Discipleship “A Life Spent Following Christ”
11. The Terms of Discipleship “An Unswerving Continuance in His Word”

12. The Terms of Discipleship “Abiding in Christ”

EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS: DISCIPLESHIP 103 LESSONS

Encountering Missionary Life and Work

1. “Decision-making and the Will of God”
2. “Missions & Spiritual Formation”
3. “Ministry Readiness”

Theology of Mission

4. “The Task of Missions: Convictions and Controversy”
5. “The Task of Missions: Convergence and Conclusions”
6. “The Purpose and Nature of Mission”
7. “The Justification of Mission: *Missio Dei*”

The Holy Spirit in Ministry Life and Work

8. “The Fruit-bearing Life”
9. “The Fruit of the Spirit”
10. “The Gifts of the Holy Spirit”
11. “The Ministry Gifts of the Spirit”
12. “The Kingdom of God and Missions”

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 103 – BIBLICAL DISCIPLESHIP

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Encountering Missionary Life and Work

103-1 “Decision-making and the Will of God”	12
103-2 “Missions & Spiritual Formation”	22
103-3 “Ministry Readiness”	35

Theology of Mission

103-4 “The Task of Missions: Convictions and Controversy”	46
103-5 “The Motivation for Missions”	57
103-6 “The Church and Mission”	68
103-7 “The Justification of Mission: Missio Dei”	78

The Holy Spirit in Ministry Life and Work

103-8 “The Fruit-bearing Life”	88
103-9 “The Fruit of the Spirit”	99
103-10 “The Gifts of the Holy Spirit”	111
103-11 “The Ministry Gifts of the Spirit”	123
103-12 “The Kingdom of God and Missions”	134

NOTE: ALL HANDOUTS FOR THIS COURSE ARE IN A SEPARATE FILE. HANDOUTS ARE NOT INCLUDED WITH THE STUDENT NOTES. THE HANDOUTS MAY BE COPIED FOR THE STUDENTS AT THE TEACHER’S DISCRETION.

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

NOTE TO THE TEACHER

Some of the material for these lessons of the School of Global Mission’s DISCIPLESHIP 102 COURSE are taken from other materials written by Dr. Frederick Osborn. The source material has been edited and reformatted from the original to conform to the hour-long lessons. No part of these TEACHING NOTES may be copied and distributed to others without the written permission of the author or the School of Global Missions administration.

These special *Teaching Notes* are intended for the teachers only; they are in Times New Roman #14 for ease of reading while teaching. A separate set of notes for the students has been produced and are intended for the student to read and follow as you use the Teaching Notes.

Because this course uses the Inductive Method of Bible Study, you will notice a number of places where words, phrases, or sentences are in **bold print and underlined** these are intended for the students as fill-in-the-blank answers in their Student Notes as they follow your lesson.

In some lessons, there are more notes in the teaching materials than can be taught in the one-hour class time. So, it is best to review each lesson before you start teaching and refer to the student notes for reading and homework assignments. The additional materials in the *Teacher’s Notes* allow the teacher some flexibility in how they teach this course. The teacher may look through the HANDOUTS and select which of the additional materials they want to copy and distribute to their students.

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 103-1

INTRODUCTION: “Decision-making and the Will of God”

NOTE: The primary source for this lesson is *Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for Intercultural Ministry* © 2008 by Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids. We recommend that the students and teachers obtain a copy of this work for further study, if possible.

Non-Christian Methods of Decision Making

From the beginning of human religion at Babel, people have sought different ways to seek divine guidance using oracles, signs, talismans, and other supernatural means. However, the false gods of pagan religions often misled or confused the inquirer with false predictions, mysterious directions, or vague answers. Ancient mythologies are saturated with stories of the gods sending the hero of the tale on one epic quest or another to fulfill what sometimes turned out to be a tragic fate.

The oracles of the ancient and modern false prophets stand in stark contrast to the biblical prophecies and divine directives revealed to God’s servants in both the Old and New Testaments. It is made clear from the earliest chapters of Genesis to the end of the book of Revelation that God always intends to give clear instructions and 100% accurate prophecies to His people (Amos 3:7). The prophecies in the book of Daniel are just a few of the many examples of how the LORD is faithful to reveal the truth to his servants. After revealing the contents and meaning of Nebuchadnezzar’s mysterious and troubling dream to him, “The king answered Daniel, and said, ‘Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret.’” (Daniel 2:47).

Superstitious people often look to nature for signs of God’s favor or judgment. Every natural disaster (earthquake, storm, flood, drought, or plague) may be interpreted by religious people as God’s judgment. So, the ancients offered prayers, sacrifices, and ablutions to earn their deities’ favor and protection and to ward off evil. The Bible tells us that the LORD can use nature to reveal His will to stubborn and obstinate people who refuse to listen to His prophets, but it takes spiritual discernment to know whether or not a specific event is intended by the LORD to communicate to His people. (See HANDOUT “Oracle in the Bible”)

Urim and Thummim: Before the Holy Spirit was given to all born again believers, God made a provision for His people to obtain divine answers to their inquiries through a pair of sacred stones called “Urim and Thummim” (light and perfection), which were kept behind the breastplate of the High Priest. These mysterious stones are introduced in the Scriptures without detailed descriptions, indicating that this method of consulting the LORD must have already been familiar to the Israelites (Exodus 28:30; Deuteronomy 33:8). When Joshua was inaugurated to succeed Moses as the leader of all Israel, he stood before Moses and Eleazar, the high priest “who shall inquire before the LORD for him by the judgment of the Urim. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, he and all the children of Israel with him—all the congregation.” (Numbers 27:21_b). In his final blessings on the tribes of Israel, Moses said to the priestly tribe of Levi, “Let Your Thummim and Your Urim be with Your holy one,” (Deuteronomy 33:8).

Exactly what the Urim and Thummim were made of and how they were consulted is not certain. However, the 1st century Jewish historian Josephus and the rabbis believed that the stones answered the High Priest by supernatural illumination. The article on the Jewish Virtual Library online says: “Interpreting Urim to mean ‘those whose words give light’ and Thummim as ‘those whose words are fulfilled,’ the rabbis explain that the oracle was effected by rays of light shining on the letters, or protruding from them and forming themselves into groups (Yoma 73b), so that the high priest could read them. Only priests speaking by means of the holy spirit and upon whom the Shekhinah rested could invoke them.” The rabbis believe that the Urim and Thummim no longer spoke to the High Priests after the destruction of Solomon’s temple.

In their chapter on “Decision Making and the Will of God” Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas show the importance of defining and discerning God’s will for the person seeking to serve the LORD in full-time ministry by asking a series of important questions 21st century Christian workers must ask themselves before heading out to some distant mission field:

“How does God reveal his will today to twenty-first-century cross-cultural Christian workers? Is it different from Old Testament models? How do you know if you are ‘called’ to missions? Who should be your mate? Where should you go to school? How will you know which people group God wants you to minister among? Should you serve at home or abroad? Should you focus on conventional ministries such as evangelism, church planting, or Bible translation, or move in the direction of community development or establishing a business? Should you teach English? Start a national school? Should you go out under a church? A mission agency? As an independent? How do you

choose the right one? Should you go short-term? Long-term? How will your children be educated? At what socioeconomic level should you live in the host country?” (p.48)

This lesson will help the person seriously praying about giving a significant amount of time working as a cross-cultural missionary.

The first step in the process of discovering God’s will for you is **defining God’s will**. It is surprising that so much confusion exists in the church today over the simple question, “What is the will of God?” The internet is filled with articles stating the “Two Wills” of God, the “Three Wills” of God, the “Four Wills” of God and so on. When the Bible becomes our sole source for defining God’s will, most of the confusion over the question “What is the will of God?” disappears. Of course, there is not one definitive answer that all can agree on as the single answer to that question. But however the answer is framed, if the word of God is the foundation and pattern, it will encompass the most important points that all believers can adopt. Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas refer to three understandings of God’s will that are recognized by Christians: God’s sovereign will, His moral will, and His individual will.

The Sovereign Will of God. God’s sovereign will can be defined primarily as the right of God to exercise His **ruling (kingdom) power** over his creation, and secondarily, but not necessarily, as **the exercise** of this right. In what Christians call “The Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13), Jesus specifically instructs His disciples to pray, “Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” *The Preacher’s Outline & Sermon Bible* commentary (Copyright 2000 by Alpha-Omega Ministries, Inc.) states, “‘Your will be done’ says three critical things to God. (1) That we will work to please God in all we do. We will do our part to see that God’s will is done on earth. (2) That God can do with us as He pleases. No matter what He chooses for us, we put ourselves at His disposal, for His use – even if it requires the sacrifice of all we are and have. (3) That we will not be displeased with what God does. We may not understand; it may not make sense; there may be question after question; but we know that God’s will is best, and He will work all things out for good.”

The Moral Will of God. The second will of God that all Christians should agree upon is God’s will revealed in His commands that teach us how we ought to behave and live as God’s holy people on this earth. We see God’s moral will expressed throughout the Scriptures. The Ten Commandments given at Sinai were affirmed in Jesus’ teachings (Matthew 5:17^{ff}) and in the Epistles. 1 Peter chapter one contains some clear instructions for disciples concerning the moral will of God and believers:

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’” (1 Peter 1:13–16)

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9–10).

The Individual Will of God. Quoting again from Tom Steffen’s and Lois McKinney Douglas’ chapter on the will of God: “This aspect of God’s will provides general principles that are universal in nature yet not applicable to every decision. In marriage, for example, followers of Christ are told not to marry an unbeliever but are not told which believer to marry. God’s individual will for a person refers to ‘God’s ideal, detailed life-plan uniquely designed for each person.’ The person who follows this is described as being in God’s perfect will in every decision of life.” (p48).

The Old Testament is filled with stories of individuals who were called by God for specific purposes and acted accordingly (Note Hebrews chapter 11). Paul described himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:1). It is clear from his testimony in Acts chapter 26 and elsewhere, that Paul believed he was following God’s individual will:

“Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.” (2 Timothy 1:8–11).

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

The history of the expansion of the church from its beginnings in Acts to this very day may be traced by the countless people who answered God’s individual will for them to participate in His sovereign will that the gospel of the kingdom will be preached to the ends of the earth as “a witness to all the nations” to the end of the age (Matthew 24:14).

Finding God’s Will

There is very little disagreement among believers concerning God’s sovereign and moral wills. However, there is a great deal of controversy over the how the individual will of God for a believer is to be determined. Denominational differences, and divisions between Pentecostal, Charismatic, and non-Charismatic evangelical Christians have opened wide chasms between believers concerning how a Christian may discover God’s personal, individual will for their life in any given situation. What a Christian believes about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual believer, and what they think of the supernatural gifts for the church in general will determine their steps to find God’s will for themselves. (We will go into more detail on the Holy Spirit in ministry life and work in Lessons 8 – 12 of this course.)

What is certain is that the Christian’s methods for discovering God’s personal will for themselves should be unique and distinct from the superstitious and supernatural methods of the non-Christian religions. The Rev. Billy Graham gave some wise and practical advice to believers on the “6 Steps on Finding God’s Will” (<https://billygrahamlibrary.org/6-steps-on-finding-gods-will>). Referring to Psalm 32:8 – “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you” Graham wrote, “Tragically, many people spend their lives trapped in an endless cycle of bad choices – and bad choices always have bad results. The Bible is right: ‘A man reaps what he sows’ (Galatians 6:7). It also warns, ‘He who sows wickedness reaps trouble’ (Proverbs 22:8). Even Christians aren’t immune from making wrong choices.”

1. **“Commit your decision to God.** Make it a matter of regular prayer, asking God to guide you and make His will known to you.”

What separates Christians from the mediums of the false religions is that the mediums were detached from the inquirer and told their prophecies to the priest or priestess who then relayed the message to the original person who asked the question. Christians may get into trouble when they seek instant answers from God or when they ask directions from a third party who may have their own agenda depending on the question asked.

2. **“Read the Scriptures.** Does the Bible give any direct guidance about the decision you are facing? Does any principle in the Bible apply to your situation? Did anyone in the Bible ever face a similar decision, and, if so, how did they deal with it? (We can even learn from the wrong decisions some of them made.)”

Common practices among the pagan oracles include writing answers on slips of paper for the oracle to choose from, using special cards, sticks, or objects to give directions, and some people sought answers from the dead. But God has given His people clear instructions in His word that will give guidance to anyone honestly seeking to know His will for them.

3. **“Understand your circumstances.** God isn’t only working in us; He also is working around us. Often God guides us through our circumstances.”

Our God does not change His will depending on the circumstances. Trying to communicate with the idols of other religions for guidance is not only unreliable, but it is foolish. Depending on the god that one wants to speak to, the priest or priestess must follow a script to get the attention of the god. The pagan priest or priestess knows which of the dozens of chants, incantations, or rituals must be followed, if they want to get the attention of the god being questioned. Christians must beware of those who say their prayers will be answered if they the right words and use words like “in Jesus’ name” like an incantation.

4. **“Seek godly advice.** God has given some people a special gift of wisdom, and when we face a decision, it’s often helpful to seek their counsel.”

Seeking the counsel of a godly person is different from the pagan practice of seeking a shaman or medium who claims to have a special connection to the spiritual realm. The Scriptures are filled with wise sayings and godly counsel; but sometimes it helps to seek the voice of experience from those who have spent a lifetime walking with the LORD to help us see the right path to choose.

5. **“Trust the Holy Spirit’s guidance.** When we honestly seek His will, God often gives us an inner conviction or prompting to confirm which way He wants us to go. The Bible says, “Whether you turn to the right or to the left,

your ears will hear the voice behind you saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it’ (Isaiah 30:21).”

Every born-again believer has been given the fulness of the Holy Spirit to lead them and guide them, but the Holy Spirit cannot help us if we do not seek Him. If we have spiritual eyes to see and ears to hear, the Holy Spirit can speak to us first through the Scriptures (His Sovereign and Moral wills to guide us in our decision-making process), second, through godly men and women experienced in walking with the LORD, and third through our circumstances; God can open doors that no man can open and close doors that no man can shut (Revelation 3:8). Billy Graham reminded us that “God loves you, and He wants you to know His will. Seek it... discover it... and then do it. His way is always best.”

6. **“Trust God for the outcome.** Once God leads you to make a decision, don’t draw back. Instead, trust His leading, and believe He goes before you – for He does. The Bible says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6).”

Another great difference between Christians and pagans seeking God’s will is that the prayers of the pagans are often intended to control and manipulate their fates by knowing their future. Therefore, the ancient oracles often made their answers difficult to understand. Our LORD is not like the false gods and their prophets who sometimes tried to trick someone who was being presumptuous in their inquiry or that tried to “bribe” the god or goddess for a favorable outcome with gifts and sacrifices in the hope of obligating the god to give them a favorable outcome.

Christians understand that our God is Sovereign; He cannot be bribed or manipulated into doing what we want. When we pray “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done...” it means that we are to seek HIS will in prayer and not to pray in such a way that we try to make OUR will His will for us.

Does God Still Use Supernatural Means to Reveal His Individual Will?

A tremendous amount of controversy swirls in and around the church today concerning the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. One extreme position is that all the supernatural gifts including healing, prophecy, signs, speaking in tongues, etc. ceased with the passing of the New Testament Apostles. The other extreme position is that all supernatural gifts are for all believers at will; all the believer has to do is exercise enough faith to use those gifts. The problem with both extreme positions is

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

they undermine the sovereign will of God; where, when, and how God moves and who He chooses are all done according to His sovereign will.

No one person can solve this issue. Both sides quote Scriptures that seem to support their views. No doubt, this controversy will continue until the LORD returns at the end of the age. But no matter which side you are on or what you believe about the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, attacking the opposite side with accusations of heresy or apostasy will only move the church further from the LORD’s desire for all believers to be united in Him. However, by examining the ways God guided His people in the past in the Scriptures, it may give us some insights into how God guides His people today.

The first thing to note is that in both the Old and New Testament times God never allowed His people to use any form of idol worship, magic, sorcery, spells, or necromancy (contacting the dead) to seek His will or divine intervention in anything.

The earliest and most often used method to find God’s will was to hear from God through His prophets. From Abraham’s calling to the Apostle John’s Revelation, God spoke to His people and the nations through those He had specially called for that purpose. However, it must be noted that false prophets proliferated the landscape, even God’s people were not immune from being misled by those who posed as prophets of God but were not. It is also important to note that not anyone could be a prophet; true prophets were few and prophets that had the authority to speak to the nation as a whole were rare. The holy character of God’s prophets was without question, and they all possessed a high degree of spiritual maturity. The most important factor by far, is that a true prophet of God was always 100% accurate in everything they prophesied. Prophecy is not a guessing game; it is not hit-and-miss; it is not telling people what you think they want to hear. Biblical prophecy is most certainly not like the magic of those who use psychic power to “read” the minds of others to make predictions for them.

Cessationists often quote from Hebrews 1:1-2 (“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things...”) to prove that anyone who says they are a prophet of God is mistaken or lying. However, after the LORD’s ascension and Pentecost the prophetic gifts continued and there are no indications in any of the writings of the New Testament that any of the supernatural gifts ended. However, if the gift of prophecy is understood correctly, it must be exclusively for the glory of God and the edification of the church; when prophecy is for the glory of the prophet and personal edification, it should be rejected by the body of believers as coming from the person prophesying and not from the Holy Spirit.

The same can be said of dreams and visions that is said of prophecy. God speaking to individuals through these means appear often in both Testaments, but no

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

pagan practices were involved to produce them. Pagans often use ecstatic rituals and mind-altering substances to dull their consciousness and enter trances where they receive a vision. The problem with dreams is that with rare exceptions, they are too personal and too obscure to be clearly understood as a message from God, which makes relying on dreams and visions for divine directions doubtful.

Another method of receiving divine guidance found in both Testaments is physically hearing God’s voice directly or through the Angel of the LORD. Hearing God speak in an audible voice is very rare, but not unknown. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Elijah, Gideon, David, Ezekiel, and Zechariah are only a few of the Old Testament saints who heard an audible message from God. Audibly communicating His message did not stop with the Old Testament; Philip, Saul (Paul), and John all heard God’s voice. But unlike the oracles of the pagan religions, when God spoke directly or indirectly through one of His agents, the words spoken, and directions given were always aligned with His sovereign and moral wills that had already been revealed in other circumstances.

Relying solely upon supernatural means to confirm a missionary call or call to ministry, places the person receiving the call, in danger of missing the mark and failing to fulfill their commitment the LORD and to anyone who helps send them. Anyone who believes they received their call supernaturally should bear in mind that it should be confirmed by at least two or three witnesses that their call is genuine. Several foundations must be laid down in the life of a believer before answering any call. In their book, Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas referred to Thomas L. Austin’s *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (2000, 645 – 646) for their sidebar “Foundations for Receiving a Missionary Call”). These foundations are essential for anyone considering if their call to missions is authentic:

1. **Belief in and commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ** such that it produces unconditional love for him and obedience to his will.
2. **A commitment to obey the will of God** in our walk with him.
3. **Openness to the leading of the Holy Spirit.**
4. **Belief in the Word of God as authoritative** and a commitment to obey the principles and guidance laid down in it.
5. **An understanding that the Great Commission was given by Jesus to all Christians**, and therefore each person should be involved in helping to fulfill this command.

The call to missions is not the same for everyone. Some people may be called to a lifetime commitment to one country or one people group; others may be called for a limited time – short or long. Some people are called to a mission near to home, while others may be called to travel to a distant place where they will have to adjust to an unfamiliar language and culture. The one thing that unites everyone called to missions is their absolute commitment to Jesus Christ as the LORD of their life, which involves obeying His Great Commission to “go” into all the world, preach the gospel, make disciples by teaching them to obey all of the LORD’s commandments, and to glorify God in all that they do.

God is not looking for perfect people – flawless individuals who always know the right answers and always know the right thing to do in any given situation. What God is looking for is people who will answer the call. God wants those who will pay any price, bear any burden, make any sacrifice, suffer any inconvenience just to be used by Him to make a difference in the lives of others by sharing with them the “good news” of salvation in the hope that some will hear and believe in Jesus Christ. Following Christ is not an easy road; it involves great sacrifice and commitment which is why it is the narrow way that few people will walk it. But those who choose to follow will discover great rewards and an incalculable treasure waiting for them at the end of the journey.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON ONE

1. Review Hebrews chapters 11 – 13. Note the verses in those chapters that refer to the three wills of God discussed in this lesson.
2. How do God’s Sovereign and Moral wills help the believer seeking God’s individual will for their life?
3. Why does God never allow God His people to use any form of idol worship, magic, sorcery, spells, or contacting the dead to seek His will or divine intervention in anything.
4. What role (if any) do you believe the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit can help someone confirm their calling to missions?
5. Why are the five foundations listed in this lesson so important for considering if the missionary call of a person is genuine?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 103-2

“Missions And Spiritual Formation”

NOTE: The primary source for this lesson is *Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for Intercultural Ministry* © 2008 by Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids. We recommend that the students and teachers obtain a copy of this work for further study, if possible.

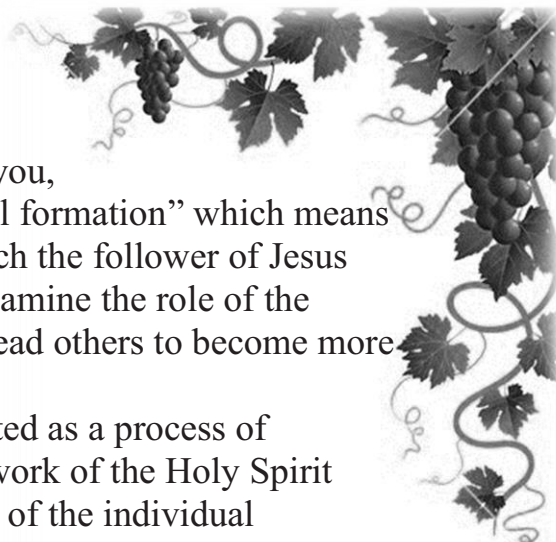
“We are being shaped into either the wholeness of the image of Christ or a horrible destructive caricature of that image—destructive not only to ourselves but also to others, for we inflict our brokenness upon them. This wholeness or destructiveness radically conditions our relationship with God, ourselves and others, as well as our involvement in the dehumanizing structures of the broken world around us. We become either agents of God’s healing and liberating grace or carriers of the sickness of the world.” **Robert Mulholland Jr.**, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation*, InterVarsity Press

What is Spiritual Formation?

Referring to Galatians 4:19, Dallas Willard said, “That Christ be formed within you, is the eternal watchword of Christian spiritual formation” which means that spiritual formation is the process by which the follower of Jesus **becomes more like Him**. This lesson will examine the role of the missionary, evangelist, or church planter to lead others to become more like Christ.

Spiritual Formation is generally accepted as a process of becoming more **Christ-like**. It is an inward work of the Holy Spirit but is accomplished only by the co-operation of the individual applying spiritual disciplines that bless those who practice them. Meditating on scripture, practicing silence and solitude in the presence of God, and following the promptings of the Holy Spirit to pray and fast are the spiritual disciplines that aid the Holy Spirit’s work of **inward transformation** of the disciple. Serving others in the church and in the community are examples of the **outward works** that produce

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.



a deeper love for God and others. The mission of the church in the world is to glorify God by worshiping Him in spirit and truth, to seek and save the lost, and to reproduce themselves by making disciples.

It has been said by some that “Spiritual Formation is about discovering oneself in order to live out one's calling.” But the problem with this idea is that it turns the process towards the self-centered life and away from the Christ-centered life that spiritual formation is intended to develop. Spiritual formation may involve elements of self-reflection, self-examination, and self-perception but if they become the focus of the spiritual life, they will defeat the purpose of other spiritual disciplines - like fasting prayer, meditation on the Scriptures, and self-denial – that are designed to produce the fruit of the Spirit that abiding in Christ should bring forth (John 15:1-17). Scottish theologian, Sinclair B. Ferguson said, “Too often we fail to appreciate that apprehension of God is not only the test of our worship, but also the test of our spiritual growth. A Christian’s real development in spiritual life will always be revealed by how he or she thinks about God – how much he thinks about Him, and how highly he thinks about Him.”

Although the term “Spiritual Formation” was coined in the twentieth century, the concept of spiritual growth is nothing new (see HANDOUT “14 Verses on God’s Intention for Spiritual Growth”). The philosopher and theologian, Dallas Willard (1935 – 2013), was one of the small group of theologians who were instrumental in promoting the spiritual formation movement. The movement started to take its modern shape with the publication of Richard Foster’s book, *Celebration of Discipline*. Within a few years of its publication, many Christians who had never considered solitude, silence, or meditation as part of the Christian experience started practicing these disciplines. But not all evangelicals were on board with the spiritual formation movement and some thought it was part of a “New Age Heresy.”

However, after a few years, and as more Christian leaders became convinced that the writings of men like Eugene Peterson, Thomas Merton, James Houston, and Henri Nouwen were grounded in Scripture, their books were being read by more and more mainstream Protestants, leading to the wider acceptance of the spiritual disciplines that were being highlighted in the movement. The growing acceptance of spiritual formation was seen as a sign of a growing hunger and need in the contemporary church for a deeper spiritual life.

When teaching others about practicing spiritual disciplines, it is very important to avoid the mistake of making the practice an end in itself. The disciplines are intended to be **means to the end** of becoming more like Christ. Discipleship is a process by which the disciple becomes more like Christ in their thoughts, emotions, and will. Spiritual disciplines are an aid to the Holy Spirit’s work and do not make someone more spiritual or more sanctified.

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

Spiritual formation is not a tool for attracting more people to come to church; the growth that discipleship training is intended to produce is **inward not outward**; it cannot be measured in church attendance records. Last of all, spiritual formation is not a race or competition with others. No person is greater or more spiritual in God’s eyes than someone else. Despite the abuses of practicing spiritual disciplines, when practiced correctly, spiritual formation will make the disciple humbler and lead them into a life of greater servanthood. “And He (Jesus) sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” (Mark 9:35).

Discipleship and spiritual formation are terms that may be used almost interchangeably. Discipleship is the process of devoting oneself to the Holy Spirit as the teacher to learn from Him and become more like Christ. The Christian evangelist, preacher, or teacher guides the process. The disciple learns the teachings of Jesus and follows the disciple-maker’s example of obedience through the power of the Holy Spirit. Discipleship not only involves the process of becoming a disciple but of the disciple making other disciples. Katie French wrote in her online article on spiritual formation (<https://www.logos.com/grow/what-is-spiritual-formation-and-why-does-it-matter>):

“Though spiritual formation and discipleship both involve a process of growth and change, spiritual formation is directed by the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life, whereas discipleship is the ongoing process by which the believer *learns to live as a transformed individual*. Spiritual formation begins with the understanding that we are sinners in need of a Savior. Then, once saved, God calls us to change—to allow the Holy Spirit to begin working in our life so we can become more and more like him. The essence of spiritual formation is this: hearing God in his Word, growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, and bearing lasting fruit (Gal 5:19–23).”

Although it was not named as such, the practice of spiritual formation can be traced back to the beginnings of the church. New believers went through a period of teaching and discipling from the Scriptures: “Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.” (Hebrews 6:1–3).

Paul and the other Apostles labored among the new believers to teach them in word and deed to move beyond the foundations they had learned so

that they might live, and worship God in spirit and truth. Spiritual formation has been an essential part of the spiritual life of the Eastern Orthodox and Western Church throughout their histories. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century the Puritans kept the disciplines of spiritual formation alive. The Puritans taught and lived by the idea that “all of life is God’s.” The spiritual life of the Puritans was rooted in acts of devotion such as Bible reading, prayer, and church attendance, but because they saw all their activities as belonging to God their pieties extended equally to the everyday activities of work and family life. Because the early church and other Protestant groups like the Puritans took spiritual formation seriously, they kept the disciplines of spiritual formation alive to this day. Their dedication to God and their understanding of spiritual formation continue to inspire modern-day believers who are in search of a deeper spiritual life as well.

What Are the Disciplines of Spiritual Formation?

The disciplines of spiritual formation may be exercised both individually and corporately. God commands His church to worship with one another, he also invites us to maintain a personal, intimate, relationship with him. Almost all churches or organizations that encourage their members to engage in the disciplines of spiritual formation include these four practices to be performed on a regular basis: prayer, fasting, Bible study, and meditation on bible verses (devotions). The church planting missionary should incorporate these disciplines for their own life. If the church planting missionary is going to develop spiritually strong and healthy congregations, from the beginning, every member of each new church they plant should be encouraged to practice the same disciplines of spiritual formation.

1. Prayer

Volumes have been written about prayer. No great man or woman of God who ever accomplished anything great for God ever did so without prayer. Prayer to the Father, in the name of His Son Jesus, in the presence of His Holy Spirit is the key to everything in the Christian life. Apart from the foundation of prayer, no ministry can be built; apart from prayer, the other disciplines of spiritual formation will be of little effect.

“Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!
The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our refuge.” **Psalm 46:10–11**

In spiritual formation, prayer must be more than seeking God only when we need or want something for ourselves or others. Prayer must be more than a one-way street where we do all the asking, expecting God to perform for us. In spiritual formation, prayer is taught as a communication between the believer and the LORD.

The point of waiting silently in the presence of God’s Holy Spirit is to listen and wait for Him to speak to our inner, spiritual man. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10). It is often the case that Christians do not hear God’s voice because they are too busy asking God for their own will to be done.

Spiritual formation teaches the disciple not to take prayer lightly. Prayer, the primary means of conversing with our LORD and Savior, Jesus Christ should be an ongoing conversation with God: “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16–18).

“God speaks, we respond, and the conversation goes forward. Prayer is much more than asking God for favors. It takes many forms, from jubilant praise to cries of sorrow, from heartfelt thanks to desperate pleas for help, from humble confession to bold appeals for life transformation.” Peter K. Nelson, *Spiritual Formation: Ever Forming, Never Formed* (Westmont, IL: IVP Books, 2012).

When we teach “The Lord’s Prayer” (Matthew 6:9-13) as more than words we recite as part of Christian liturgy, then Jesus’ teaching on prayer unlocks His keys to effective prayer. When asked by His disciples, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught His disciples.” (Luke 11:1), Jesus answered them with the same principles of prayer that He taught earlier in His Sermon on the Mount:

1. Address God as **Father**
2. In reverence to His **holiness**
3. Asking His **kingdom to come**
4. His **will to be done**
5. Asking for our needs to be met – not our “**wants**”
6. With an attitude of **grace and mercy** (forgive others as God forgives us)
7. We are a fallen people, living in a fallen world and need His **protection**

In spiritual formation, prayer draws us into the spiritual realm of His heavenly kingdom and humbles us in the presence God’s power and glory where we are transformed into His image. “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror

the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

2. Fasting (See HANDOUT “How to Begin, Conduct, and Break Your Fast” by Bill Bright.)

Although abstaining from food for a set time may cause us some physical discomfort, the spiritual goal of the exercise is not self-abasement, but is to create in us a hunger for the presence of God. In his book on spiritual formation, Peter K. Nelson said, “Fasting is a kind of prayer in which we ‘say’ to God, using body language, that we long for his presence and working in our lives more than we long for our next meal. Practicing the spiritual disciplines expands our ‘vocabulary’ for interaction with God and enriches our experience of resting in his presence.”

In spiritual formation, the discipline of fasting is to not to show others how spiritual we are, but should be done as a personal, private matter between the disciple and His LORD. Jesus said, “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” (Matthew 6:16-18).

Fasting should not be made into a fetish where strict rules and regulations are equally applied to all. In spiritual formation, fasting is taught as a freewill offering of the individual and not as demand all believers must slavishly follow when called upon to do so. Obviously, there are those who, for physical reasons cannot abstain from all food for long. However, the New Testament did not lay down any rules for disciples to follow. Therefore, some Christians may observe fasts that restrict quantity and type of food, or may give up a particular bad habit, or pleasurable thing to focus their attention on God and His heavenly kingdom.

In spiritual formation, fasting is not used as a means to force an issue with God by refusing to eat until a favorable answer is given. Fasting should never be used by the Christian to “bribe” God with our suffering. Fasting is not used to make us more “spiritual” but when done with the right attitude of heart, fasting is able to make disciples more heavenly-minded.

3. Bible study

Apart from Bible study, the Christian’s faith will quickly become anemic. The missionary, evangelist, church planter, etc. will never be able to make a lasting impact upon others if their preaching and ministry is experiential only. Those who emphasize supernatural gifts such as healing miracles, signs, wonders, prophecy, etc.

will soon discover that once the excitement and drama of the supernatural event passes away, the crowds will quickly disappear and people will gradually return to their old ways and familiar religion.

Bible study is essential to spiritual formation “...we should view our daily consumption of God’s Word as our lifeblood. Alongside the Holy Spirit’s continual working in us, reading and studying the Bible will keep us spiritually alive, especially in moments of desperation when nothing else can. *Alongside the Holy Spirit’s continual working in us, reading and studying the Bible will keep us spiritually alive, especially in moments of desperation when nothing else can.*” – Katie French.

After preaching the gospel, the evangelist or missionary may move on, but the God’s written word, placed into the hands of new believers will remain behind. But the problem for almost all new believers is how do they understand and apply the Scriptures. Who do they turn to for answers when they read difficult passages? Bible distribution is important, but what is even more important is developing sound Bible studies led by trained leaders. Bible studies are necessary for spiritual formation because they:

1) **Build a Sound Knowledge Base of The Word of God for All believers**
(Hosea 4:6; Acts 18:9-11; Acts 17:11)

2) **Provide an Overview of God’s Word for the Context of Bible verses** (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

In order to better understand the Word of God, it is essential for the disciple:

- a. To see the Bible as a whole, unified, and progressive revelation of the **nature of God** and His **redemptive work** in all creation
- b. To understand the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament
- c. To gain confidence in our faith based upon **knowledge** of God’s Word.
- d. To Provide a **Christian Theology** to Understand Bible Concepts and Truths
- e. Teach Scripture Concepts with coordinated lesson materials

3) Causes the Disciple to take Seriously the **Complexity and The Holiness** of The Scriptures.

Spiritual Formation Includes Training God’s People To Study And Apply In Our Hearts And Daily Living The Word Of God; Not Merely Reading And Mousing It. (Ps. 119:9-12; Lk. 4:4; 2 Cor. 4:2)

4) Equip Disciples to **Study and to Teach** The Word Of God to Others, Handling The Word of God With **Confidence and Accuracy** (Acts 17:2-3) “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15

“We should view our daily consumption of God’s Word as our lifeblood. Alongside the Holy Spirit’s continual working in us, reading and studying the Bible will keep us spiritually alive, especially in moments of desperation when nothing else can. *Alongside the Holy Spirit’s continual working in us, reading and studying the Bible will keep us spiritually alive, especially in moments of desperation when nothing else can.*” Katie French

The benefits of Bible Study to Spiritual Formation include:

- **STABILITY:** the Word of God brings together all the ministries of the church, “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God...” (Isaiah 40:8; Acts 13:44; 18:11; Ephesians 4:12–15; 1 Thessalonians 2:13)
- **WISDOM:** the Word of God gives insight and guidance for life to every believer (Deuteronomy 8:3; Psalms 18:30; 119:9–16; Prov 3:5–6; Jeremiaiah 8:9; 1 Corinthians 2:13-16)
- **SPIRITUAL MATURITY:** The stability and wisdom that comes from the study of God’s word produces mature, fruit-bearing disciples (Matthew 13:23; Colossians 3:16-17; 1 Peter 2:2-3).

Evangelists, pastors, and church planters should not downplay how important reading and studying God’s Word is to spiritual formation. The cost of neglecting Bible study is spiritual immaturity (1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:14), foolishness (Proverbs 10:14; 1 Corinthians 3:18-23; and instability (Matthew 7:26-27; James 1:22-24). Prophecy may only be judged as true or false by the Word of God previously revealed and recorded in Scripture (the modern legal term is “precedent.” Not knowing and understanding God’s Word is a hindrance to developing the strong relationship with God that is essential to spiritual growth. “Spiritual growth depends on two things: first a willingness to live according to the Word of God; second, a willingness to take whatever consequences emerge as a result.” – Sinclair B. Ferguson.

4. Biblical Meditation

In mystical observances of Eastern religions and the aesthetic practices of the Christian mystics, meditation is intended to “empty the self” so that communion with the Divine may happen. However, that is not what the Bible means by “meditation.” In the Hebrew, to “meditate” means to contemplate, utter, speak a complaint, devotion, prayer, or devotion. The Greek term for “meditate” means “contemplate, ponder, think, consider, or deliberate. So, Christian meditation is completely different in practice and scope than what mystics practice. Christians meditate upon the Word of God to fill their hearts and minds with emotions and thoughts that are acceptable in God’s sight.

Psalm 119 outlines the breadth and depth of God’s nature for our meditations (see HANDOUT 5 Truths You Need to Know About Psalm 119). Practicing biblical meditation using the Scriptures to guide us will help to keep our mind from wandering to other thoughts that distract us from focusing on God. Quiet times with an open Bible will help us to be still and calm in the Lord’s presence:

“Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!” **Psalm 46:10**

The discipline of meditation on the Scriptures, taking time for silent contemplation on His Word, is essential to internal spiritual formation because it focuses our thoughts on God and deepens our relationship with him. The purpose of every spiritual discipline is always to recenter our being on our relationship to God to achieve the goal of spiritual formation. Leaders who believe in the importance of every Christian becoming individually conformed more and more into the image of Jesus Christ, will take seriously those Scriptures that call believers to mature and grow in Jesus Christ.

“When we talk about spiritual formation we are talking about framing a progression of life in which people come to actually do all things that Jesus taught.” Dallas Willard

Corporate Disciplines

“For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” **Romans 12:4-5**

Spiritual formation includes more than the internal disciplines of prayer, fasting, Bible study, and meditation; it includes corporate disciplines that edify the

whole body of Christ. Internal and corporate disciplines work together to build the disciple’s faith. Abiding individually and together as branches in Christ the Vine (John 15:1-11) fulfills the LORD’s purpose for our spiritual formation.

“Christian Community means community through Jesus Christ and in Jesus Christ. There is no Christian community that is more than this, and none that is less than this. Whether it be a brief, single encounter or the daily community of many years, Christian community is solely this: we belong to one another only through and in Jesus Christ.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer from *Life Together*.

The corporate disciplines that are for the spiritual formation of the body of Christ are: worship in community, worship in song, and corporate confession.

Worship in community

It is crystal-clear from Jesus’ teachings that His disciples understand that purpose of their salvation is to become individually and corporately a part of God’s family. Man was created to be a part of something much greater than themselves. Human beings are more than cogs in the wheels of evolution, and more than beasts of burden to serve the State. In Christ, believers become a community, united in one spirit by the Holy Spirit:

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” **John 17:20-23**

Our internal worship of God is insufficient to complete our spiritual formation. We need community; we need other believers, and we need to worship corporately. Paul and the other Apostles described Christians, as individuals, who come together as Christ’s body (1 Corinthians 12:12), as living stones in His temple (1 Peter 2:5), as His adopted sons and daughters (Ephesians 1:5), and as His royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). The body of Christ has many members, but all are designed to work together as one body, in one Spirit. When believers worship together, all drink of one Spirit.

Every Christian is unique, and all are essential for the corporate growth of the entire body, which is why the writer of Hebrews encourages the church to gather for

corporate worship (Hebrews 10:19-25). Corporate worship causes all believers to think how to stir up one another to love and good works. Almost without exception, believers that habitually neglect the opportunities to meet with other believers are not growing in faith and holiness. Gathering with other believers for worship not only benefits the body of Christ, but it also benefits the individual by increasing their love for God and others. Spiritual formation cannot take place on a corporate level apart from increasing love and service toward one another.

Worship in song

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” **Colossians 3:16**

The practice of congregational singing has been essential to the worship of God from ancient times. King David “a man after God’s own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14) wrote many of the Psalms that are used for worship today by both Christians and Jews (see HANDOUT, “The Levite Choir and Orchestra: What, Who and How?”).

“To the Chief Musician. A Contemplation of the Sons of Korah.

¹As the deer pants for the water brooks,
So pants my soul for You, O God.

²My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When shall I come and appear before God?

³My tears have been my food day and night,
While they continually say to me,
“Where is your God?”

⁴When I remember these things,
I pour out my soul within me.
For I used to go with the multitude;
I went with them to the house of God,
With the voice of joy and praise,
With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast.

⁵Why are you cast down, O my soul?
And why are you disquieted within me?
Hope in God, for I shall yet praise Him
For the help of His countenance.” **Psalms 42:1-5**

Worship in song is encouraged throughout both Testaments not only because it edifies God’s people, but also because it engages the emotions of the worshiper. Worship that uses the Scriptures for its content transforms the worshiper’s feelings and over time they will start loving the things that God loves and hating the things that God hates. Spiritual formation takes place especially when Scriptures are sung in worship because Christlikeness includes not only the behavior (will) and the mind (thoughts) but must also include the feelings (emotions) of the born-again believer: “And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD; It shall rejoice in His salvation.” (Psalm 35:9).

Congregational worship in song involves three audiences: God, self, and each other. When believers sing to God about God, they sing to align their hearts to the Holy Spirit. Singing to one another in the collective presence of God is where the transformative power of God within is experienced by the body of Christ.

Corporate confession

“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” (James 5:16)

Corporate confession of sins has almost completely disappeared in the contemporary church. The power and efficacy of the corporate discipline of confession of sins has been lost almost completely on Christians attending Western churches. Too many Christians have been heavily influenced by the secular values of tolerance and pluralism which waters-down the power of the Gospels’ message of forgiveness of sins.

I John 1:9 states clearly that “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” However, the thought of making any kind of public confession of sins causes many Christians to feel uncomfortable in their seats and sends them running to the doors to go out and find another “more tolerant” church.

Fear of rejection, pride, and lack of transparency between strangers are normal human emotions that keep believers from encouraging one another not to hold onto secret sins. Not wanting to confess your sins to a complete stranger is understandable, and that is not what the LORD is demanding of the believer. Confession of corporate sins in a general sense is appropriate in large gatherings. Someone may feel compelled to make a public confession of their sins, and when one believer speaks openly about a personal sin they are struggling with, others are more likely to join in and confess that they, too, face the same sin. However, it is in

the small group settings where believers gather for more intimate study and fellowship that confessing sins to one another can freely take place.

Confessing sins to another believer not only helps the one who confesses to grow in their relationship with Christ, but their transparency may encourage the other person to do the same. Sins held in secret are toxic to spiritual formation. A believer may think that they are concealing their sins, but they are foolish if they believe they are hidden from God. The most famous example of this from Scripture is David’s sin with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband to cover it up (2 Samuel 11:1 – 12:25), but there are many more examples we could point to.

The fear of rejection that causes many Christians to conceal secret sins from others may be overcome if they are in intimate fellowship with other Christians they can trust (see HANDOUT “The 59 One Anothers of the Bible”). Once one believer is daring enough to speak out about a personal sin struggle, others will quickly and thankfully step up and acknowledge they, too, face a similar battle because the truth is we are all sinners, saved only by the grace of God and there are none who are perfect (Romans 3:23; 5:12), but the LORD has prescribed the only remedy for sin: confession. Confession exposes our sinful hearts to the light where the blood of Jesus may be applied to wash it away.

The powerlessness of Christianity to impact the world where sin abounds unchecked is largely due to unconfessed sin in the corporate body of Christ; if sin is not dealt with biblically and swiftly, it will cause all sorts of trouble (2 Peter 2:17-22).

“But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.” **Jude 20–23**

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON TWO

1. Explain the difference between making disciples and spiritual formation.
2. Name and briefly describe the disciplines of spiritual formation.
3. Name and briefly describe the corporate disciplines of spiritual formation.
4. What is the main obstacle to corporate confession and how can congregations overcome it?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 103-3

“Ministry Readiness”

NOTE: The primary source for this lesson is *Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for Intercultural Ministry* © 2008 by Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids. We recommend that the students and teachers obtain a copy of this work for further study, if possible.

“What do cross-cultural Christian workers need to know, do, and be so that effective, realistic, sustainable cross-cultural ministry can take place? It seems that everyone involved in providing cross-cultural training has his or her ideas about what constitutes quality preparation, what roles certain institutions should take in the process, and the time required to complete the training. Some consider two weeks sufficient, others require two years of Bible study, while still others will accept nothing less than a Master of Divinity (MDiv).” ©2008, Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas, p.102

In their chapter on “Ministry Readiness” Steffen and Douglas noted the conclusions of The World Missions Conference held in Edinburgh in June of 1910. After Eight Commissions made their presentations at the Conference, four specific areas were targeted where improvements were needed if the goal for “The Evangelization of the World in This Generation” was going to be completed. The four areas of preparation that need improvement are:

- The spiritual
- The moral
- The intellectual
- The physical

The Lessons on Discipleship in this course describe the spiritual improvements needed to prepare and sustain missionaries to complete the Great Commission of evangelizing and discipling the nations. The intellectual preparation is addressed by the Biblical Studies courses offered by the School of Global Missions. This Lesson will describe



the moral aspect of “Ministry Readiness.” What constitutes ministry readiness varies widely from one mission agency to another. Whether they take any warm body that comes their way, or if they are extremely selective of the education, skills, training, and background of the people they choose, what is often overlooked in their selection process is the **moral character** of the candidate.

Of course, it is easier to assess the education, skills, training, and physical background of the prospective cross-cultural church planter than to assess their true Christlike character. In their chapter on “Ministry Readiness” Tom Steffen and Lois McKinney Douglas included a chart to make a profile of a cross-cultural church planter. The chart included a list of “Character Qualities” with co-responding ministry skills, and applicable Knowledge Goals. Charts like this may be helpful in some circumstances, but in the end, the two most important questions to ask are:

- 1.) **Has God truly called this particular person to this ministry?**
And
- 2.) **Is this a man (or woman) who meets God’s qualifications for ministry?**

These are the two most difficult questions to answer, but their answers are critical to the success or failure of the missionary.

In their chapter, Steffen and Douglas offered several important points to consider when evaluating the readiness of an individual who is called to ministry:

- **Memorable Moments** – a memorable moment is any life-changing situation that stands out in the mind of the individual who believes God is calling them to ministry.
- **Gain Spiritual Maturity** – in the previous lesson, we discussed the importance of Prayer, fasting, Bible study and meditation to spiritual formation. Those who are heading for ministry – cross-cultural or not - should show signs of being mature in the Lord – not just in years, but in spiritual growth.
- **Connect with God’s People** – The corporate disciplines of worship in community, song, and confession serve to unify God’s people. Both Testaments emphasized the need for God’s people to gather together as a worshiping community of believers. Those who are called to minister into the lives of others must not bypass the local church before beginning their first mission. Connecting with God’s people over a period of time allows the leadership of the church to evaluate their character, commitment, and qualifications before they are sent out.
- **Contextualize the Storyline Without Compromise** – Simply put, wise Christian workers in the harvest fields of the world must be able to

communicate the Gospel message from the Scriptures in a way that their unreached audience will be able to understand it. This often means using creative methods to tell stories from the Bible without compromising God’s Word.

- **Take Vision Trips** – “Pre-field training can begin with a local church’s short-term vision trips at home and abroad. Established benchmarks in commitment, competency, and character provide participants opportunity to gauge advancements. But unlike most short-term trips, emphasis is placed on taking a ‘learner’ role, rather than a ‘helper’ role.” *Encountering Missionary Life and Work: Preparing for Intercultural Ministry*. (p.109). Before launching out into the unknown waters of a foreign culture, it is important for the missionary to discover as much as possible about the people and places they will encounter. Books, videos, and listening to the stories of those who have been to the place where the new missionary is going are all helpful, but, if at all possible, they should take the time to explore for themselves. A short-term trip to experience first-hand the people and places where the missionary intends to live and work for the long-term will be invaluable to them.
- **Gain Cross-cultural Experience** – In the 21st century world, encountering others from a different culture who live in the same city or neighborhood has become almost commonplace. Since the beginning, there have always been opportunities for Christians to live and work in cosmopolitan cities. The Greek cities like Corinth, Ephesus, Colosse were culturally diverse. And the city of Rome was populated by citizens and slaves from all over the Empire. Steffen and Douglas noted that “even minimal pre-field cross-cultural exposure and experience at home or abroad go a long way...” to prepare the person seeking to become a cross-cultural missionary. Seeking out and encountering people from other cultures in your church, neighborhood, or city and learning how to interact with them can help the missionary learn some of the skills they will need before they land in a different culture.
- **Acquire Appropriate Education and Training** – Exactly what “appropriate” education and training mean opens up a wide range of answers. Some missions sending organizations or denominations require a minimum of four years of seminary teaching and training before they will consider anyone to be a candidate for the mission field. Others require only a few weeks of teaching and training. Some require fluency in the mother tongue of the people group being targeted. Some organizations place their emphasis on practical experience in ministry, while others want to put the missions candidate through a series of tests, training exercises, and

simulations to assess the person’s potential for cross-cultural ministry before sending them out. If “experience is the best teacher” then some pre-missions teaching and training with a health dose of practical experience on the field may be the best way to balance the need for teaching and training with the practical experience that only being on the frontlines of missions can bring. No one can say with absolute certainty that their way is the best way. Each mission candidate will have to decide for themselves what is the best course for them, but only after seeking the trusted counsel of the spiritual leadership of their church.

- **Join Together with Other Missionaries or Missiologists** – Numerous established missions and missionaries are active throughout the world. Latest estimates put the number of full-time missionaries serving in another country at 430,000. Estimates are that another 1,135,000 home missionaries are serving their communities while churches and other Christian organizations send anywhere between one and four million short-term missionaries every year. Depending upon the goal of the short-term mission, the leadership, how well it is organized with the host ministry, and the make up of the team members, the effectiveness of short-term missions varies widely. For the person considering a long-term mission in the near future, connecting with an experienced missionary, seeing first-hand their way of life on the field, and exploring their area of interest should be the primary goals for their trip.
- **Investigate Avenues of Service** – Before making the major expense of time and finances to take a short-term mission trip, the missionary should make sure that their intended purposes for going will be understood by the host and the sending agency. Steffen and Douglas wrote, “Approach this challenges as you would looking for a lifelong spouse. Do not be afraid to ask lots of questions...and start the courtship process early.” (p. 118).
- **Find a Mentor** – “Every cross-cultural worker will benefit from finding a mentor who will push you and not be content to simply let you sit still.” (p. 118). The role of a mentor differs from the discipler in that the mentor is more like a counselor or advisor whereas the discipler is much more. The mentor challenges the believer and offers wisdom based upon experience. Everyone can benefit from the counsel of those experienced in the ways of God. Seeking a mentor from those already in the field where the cross-cultural worker intends to minister will be especially beneficial to them.

“Ministry Readiness” encompasses more than pre-field teaching and training; it needs to continue on the field, and once the mission is over, post-field learning is

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

required. The disciplines of spiritual formation, along with the demands of living as a disciple of Jesus Christ follow the disciple their entire life. “Cross-cultural Christian workers must not rely solely on passion, entrepreneurialism, or spontaneity, but like the airplane pilot boarding a plane full of passengers, must also know the answers to the when, what, where, how, and why questions of the trade” (p.121).

NOTE: The primary source for the rest of this lesson is *The Man God Uses* © 1999 by Henry T. Blackaby and Tom Blackaby, Published by Broadman & Holman, Nashville We recommend that the students and teachers obtain a copy of this work for further study, if possible.

The Man (or Woman) God Uses on Mission with Him

In the first chapter of their book, *The Man God Uses*, Henry and Tom Blackaby describe the character of the person God uses in ministry:

“God is known for taking the ordinary and making it extraordinary. Throughout Scripture God used ordinary men to affect his kingdom in extraordinary ways. One thing, however, set them apart. If we look carefully, we can see something they had in common. Each man God used had a responsive heart ready to hear God and a life that was available to obey God. Each also possessed the integrity to honor God.” (p. 3)

What is often lost when preaching or teaching about being Christlike, is that the quality of Christlikeness is not about being “spiritually minded” and speaking prophetically or performing miracles with signs and wonders. Faith healing and wonder-working do not necessarily indicate a person is like Christ in the things that matter. “You will know them by their fruits” Jesus said in His Sermon on the Mount, “Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.” (Matthew 7:16–20).

Talents, college degrees, titles, accomplishments, awards, or reputations are meaningless if the roots of the tree are poisoned. As the Scripture says, “For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7). The LORD searches the hearts of those He chooses and sees in them someone whose heart is broken and humble enough to be used by Him. Anyone who is considering a life of ministry (short-term or long-term) should begin by searching their own heart and motives for ministry:

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart;
Try me, and know my anxieties;
And see if there is any wicked way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.” **Psalm 139:23–24**

In their first chapter, Henry and Tom Blackaby described the “Qualities of Good Character” for the man God uses in ministry:

- Holiness
- A Pure Heart
- A Contrite Heart
- Fear of God
- Faithfulness
- Obedience
- Seeks and Loves God
- Servant of the LORD



When combined, these attributes are a perfect picture of what Christlikeness looks like. Henry and Tom noted the biblical “plumb lines” (Amos 7:7-8) revealed in Scriptures that are there to lead His people through life and ministry.

FIRST: A heart that is fit for God’s use must be set on following God in every area of life (Luke 14:33).

SECOND: A heart that is fit for God’s use must be yielded (inclined or leaning) in God’s direction, “our first and immediate inclination in any situation must be toward God and his standards.”

THIRD: A heart that is fit for God’s use must be cleansed. “To commit our hearts to God we must give up those things in our lives that have given us ‘heart trouble.’” To be a fit vessel for God, our heart must be cleansed of all evil and wicked thoughts, “But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (**Colossians 3:8–10**).

FOURTH: A heart that is fit for God’s use must be guarded. The Scriptures remind us of the importance of keeping our hearts right before God (Proverbs 3:1; 4:23; Philippians 4:7). Practical instructions for guarding the heart include:

- Do not put yourself into compromising situations.
- Place around you things that remind you of your love for God.
- Ask fellow Christians to hold you accountable.
- Refuse to give into temptations when they are in front of you.

FIFTH: A heart that is fit for God’s use is not too hardened or stiff-necked to hear God speaking to them. A “stony heart” is a heart that has hidden strongholds buried deep within it. These rocks and stones resist the seed of God’s word when it is sown into the heart and prevent spiritual growth.

“You may be asking, ‘Who possibly could meet up to this God-sized challenge?’ I mean, if you ever met a man who met the entire criterion, you might not feel worthy to walk in his footsteps! That’s the point. We really are not worthy, because the only one who truly matches this criterion is Jesus Christ. But Christ in us can make the impossible possible.” (pp. 23-24).

The key to walking in Christlike character is to allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in us. Christians are to “put on” Christ (Romans 13:14), to clothe ourselves in Christ (Galatians 3:27), and to be conformed to the likeness of Christ (Romans 8:29), which are God’s provisions for us to become like Christ:

“...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ.” **2 Timothy 1:9–10**

The most important principle to remember about the process of spiritual formation is that it is the work of the Holy Spirit in us that empowers us to **want and to do** God’s will through us. Our role is to cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s work within, and let Him change us, mold us, and prepare us for the ministry and mission to which we have been called by Him.

In their chapter “How God Shapes a Man”, Henry and Tom Blackaby describe those experiences that God uses to shape, grow, and discipline His people. God has a unique plan for each of us and the circumstances of our past – good and bad – can be used by God to bring glory to Himself. “In times of serious crisis men realize

their dependence on God’s love. Even so, God can use every day and every circumstance to teach and deliver us. As God does, he shapes us to make us more useful to himself.” (p. 28).

Consider the patriarchs in Genesis, Moses, Joshua, the Judges, the kings of Israel, and the prophets. Their stories from the Old Testament are not written down for us to study as ancient Jewish history, but they were preserved down through the centuries as examples of how godly character is developed and shaped by blessings and adversities. “When crises occur, you can discover more about yourself as you listen to the words that come out of your mouth, as you see what actions you take, and as you monitor your attitude and evaluate how Christlike it is.” (p. 30). Henry and Tom described God’s pattern for using a man found in Scripture:

- **It is God who calls a person and knows the plans He has made for those He has chosen:** “You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and I have appointed you [I have planted you], that you might go and bear fruit and keep on bearing, and that your fruit may be lasting [that it may remain, abide], so that whatever you ask the Father in My Name [as presenting all that I AM], He may give it to you.” (John 15:16 *The Amplified Bible*, 1987. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.)
- **God’s call to the person He has chosen is an invitation, not a demand.** “And when Jesus saw great multitudes about Him, He gave a command to depart to the other side. Then a certain scribe came and said to Him, ‘Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head.’ Then another of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ But Jesus said to him, ‘Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead.’” (Matthew 8:18-22)
- **After calling, God shapes His chosen vessel to best accomplish His will.** Note what God said to Ananias about Paul: “... Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake.” (Acts 9:15–16).
- **Through His chosen vessel’s faithfulness, God entrusts greater responsibilities.** In His parables of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) and the minas (Luke 19:11-27) Jesus taught that those who are faithful in the little that has been given them will be given more.

No better examples of God’s pattern (**choose, call, prepare, use**) are found in Scripture than in Jesus’ calling and training of His disciples. When read carefully, it

becomes clear that by far, Jesus spent more time teaching and training His disciples than any other activity between His baptism and ascension.

“‘Follow Me,’ said Jesus to the fishermen of Bethsaida, ‘and I will make you fishers of men.’ These words...show that the great Founder of the faith desired not only to have disciples, but to have about Him men whom He might train to make disciples of others: to cast the net of divine truth into the sea of the world, and to land on the shores of the divine kingdom a great multitude of believing souls. Both from His words and from His actions we can see that He attached supreme importance to that part of His work which consisted in training the twelve.” A.B. Bruce. From *The Training of the Twelve*

Those who believe they have been called to a life of ministry or full-time missions must recognize first of all that Jesus does not call us to a job, a mission, a profession, or a ministry. All believers – including those who are in ministry – are called to be **in a relationship** with our Father in heaven. As we follow Christ, we must be obedient to Him:

“Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’” **1 Peter 1:13–16**

The Spirit-filled Life

“The Christian life is Christ living out his life in you just as God lived through Christ.” (p.33). No person should attempt to embark on a life on mission with God if they are not living a “Spirit-filled” life. This leads us to ask the question “What does a Spirit-filled life look like?” Based upon Mark 16:15-18, Charismatics claim that a Spirit-filled person is one who speaks in tongues, prophesies, works miracles, casts out demons, heals the sick, and raises the dead, etc. On the other hand, there are those who believe that salvation means they can live their own lives their own way until they go on to heaven where more blessings await them. However, those claims do not take into account the weight of Scriptures that speak of the **demands of discipleship**: cross-bearing, sacrifice, the fruit of abiding, obedience to the Word of God, manifesting Christlike character in our life and relationships.

Although Paul and the other Apostles experienced first-hand the miracle gifts, the evidence from their Epistles shows that they always emphasized the character of those who believed above the supernatural gifts as proof of their salvation. Paul and

the other Apostles proclaimed a salvation for righteousness that is from faith to faith (Romans 1:16-17).

In Romans, Paul wrote that followers of Christ live as those who are dead to sin and alive to God (Romans 6:1-14). Believers have been freed from the law of sin and death so that “...what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” (Romans 8:3-6).

Our identification as adopted sons and daughters means we no longer live according to the flesh, but we have “put to death the deeds of the body” so we might live by the Spirit of God. The Spirit-filled life means the Holy Spirit is there to help us in our weaknesses; He helps us to pray according to God’s will; He searches our hearts and “makes intercession for saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:18-27).

Certainly, Paul did not ignore the spiritual gifts (Romans 12:3-8), but he understood the gifts in relation to the responsibility of believers to be “living sacrifices... holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). Paul saw that the spiritual gifts were given “according to the grace that is given to us...” (12:6) but that Christlike behavior was not optional “Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.” (12:9-21). Henry and Tom Blackaby wrote, “God not only has expectations for us, but he also has requirements in order for us rightly to be called Christians. God is searching for men of integrity to ‘stand... in the gap on behalf of the land so [He] would not have to destroy it’ (Ezek. 22:30).” (p. 40). They go on to ask if the reader will be that person, “Will you take your relationship with God seriously enough to purify your heart and renew your commitment to serve him without reservation?”

Those who are seeking a place in ministry will be tested based upon what is in their heart. Life as a full-time worker in the harvest fields of the LORD is hard labor; it takes dedication and perseverance, which is why the workers are so few: “Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:37–38).

There will be many trials and temptations along the way as we minister to others. The LORD allows these things to test our level of faith and the quality of our spiritual life. Pure gold is a precious metal that has been refined in the fire to remove its impurities. We may fail one test, but if we return to the LORD, He will put us

through the fire again and again, until we come through the process like gold refined seven times over (note: “seven” is the number that represents spiritual perfection):

I Will refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them.
I will say, ‘This is My people’;
And each one will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’” (Zechariah 13:9).

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.”

1 Peter 1:6–9

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON THREE

1. Why are the spiritual, moral, intellectual, and physical characteristics of the candidate so important to the selection process for ministry?
2. “Ministry Readiness” involves several important points to consider when evaluating the readiness of an individual called to ministry. Describe how these points help you to determine your readiness for ministry.
3. In *The Man God Uses*, Henry and Tom Blackaby described the “Qualities of Good Character” for the man God uses in ministry. How do the disciplines of Spiritual Formation affect the development of these qualities?
4. Henry and Tom Blackaby noted the biblical “plumb lines” (Amos 7:7-8) revealed in Scriptures that lead His people through life and ministry. In what ways do the disciplines of Spiritual Formation function as “plumb lines”?
5. Explain why moral character is demanded for following Jesus into ministry, while the spiritual gifts are optional.

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 103-4

“The Task of Missions: Convictions and Controversy”

NOTE: The primary source for this lesson is *Encountering Theology of Missions* © 2010 by Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids. We recommend that, if possible, the students and teachers obtain a copy of this work for further study.

“Make no mistake, there is a difference between mission and missions. By mission, I mean the total redemptive purpose of God to establish His kingdom. Missions, on the other hand, is the activity of God’s people – the church – to proclaim and to demonstrate the kingdom of God cross-culturally to the world.” Henry T. Blackaby



In chapter five of *Encountering Theology of Missions*, Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss wrote, “The task of *missions* (plural), as opposed to the purpose of *mission* (singular), describes the specific undertakings of the church in the world to fulfill its mission.” Put another way, we could say that the *mission* of the church is to proclaim to the world John 3:16: that God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him will have eternal life. Whereas the task of missions is found in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20: go into the entire world, preach the gospel, make disciples, teach them to follow Jesus’ commands, and glorify the Father in all that we do and say to the end of the age.

However, the questions and controversies arise in the different ways the tasks are defined and how they are to be carried out. How those questions about missions are answered determines which missionaries are commissioned and what their work will be. Historically, the church has rarely been on the same page when it comes to where, when, and how to fulfill the Commission of the church to pronounce the

“good news” of salvation in Jesus Christ to the world. In this lesson we can only speak in general terms of the primary movements concerning missions:

- **Proclamation and Conversion**
- **Church Planting and Growth**
- **Civilization and Moral Improvement**
- **Philanthropy, Humanization, and Liberation**

PROCLAMATION AND CONVERSION AS THE TASK OF MISSIONS

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” **Acts 1:8**

From the very beginning, the task given to the church has been the proclamation of the gospel for “conversion” (repentance and faith in Jesus Christ). Peter’s sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-39), Peter’s and John’s preaching at the Portico of Solomon at the Temple in Jerusalem (Acts 3:11-26), and Stephen’s address to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:1-60), along with the early preaching of Paul and the others mentioned in the book of Acts were all designed to convert those who heard them. As the book of Acts progresses and the gospel is being preached to the Gentiles, Paul’s preaching is followed by detailed instructions on holy living from the Scriptures, which is the major theme for most of the New Testament’s Epistles.

Before the Protestant Reformation, the evangelistic efforts of the church remained focused on the conversion of the pagans to bring them into the fold of the Roman Catholic Church in the West or the Orthodox Church in the East. At first, Protestant missions were concerned with reform of the established churches in Europe. As the Reformation spread, efforts to preach the Gospel for the salvation of the indigenous peoples of North America, and throughout the British colonies in Africa and Asia became the primary focus of missionary efforts of the church. The “lostness” of humanity and the need for personal salvation overshadowed all other humanitarian efforts to educate, provide medical assistance, and lead social reforms in “uncivilized” regions. “Church reform – not church planting – was the goal, and this reform was to come through spiritual renewal of the individual. As such, groups began sending missionaries whose primary focus was on individual conversion.” (*Encountering Theology of Missions* pp. 107-108).

Protestant missions grew slowly. At first, mass conversions were not expected where the gospel had not been sown before. The first fruits of nations were gathered into small fellowships where a handful of new believers were expected to remain faithful until the Lord’s return at the end of the age. Church planting

movements were not emphasized. The goal of missions was conversion of individuals, and all missionary activities were to be means to the end goal of the conversion of the gentiles. The two Great Awakenings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries transformed the understanding of Protestant missions. “Emphasis clearly lay on the importance of personal conversion, and mission was primarily a matter of proclamation... This was typified in the preaching of John Wesley, George Whitefield, and in later generations Charles G. Finney, Dwight L. Moody, and Billy Graham. Conversion came to be understood in terms of a personal decision of faith, usually with some form of public confession.” (*Encountering Theology of Missions*, p. 108).

In the twentieth century, it was generally accepted that the evangelization of the world should be the goal of the church. In order to achieve this, confessional and denominational allegiances would have to be set aside and independent missions organizations needed to set aside planting churches linked to a particular denomination. Faith statements of missions organizations avoided any doctrinal declarations beyond the general convictions that the individual sinner is destined for eternal judgment and that only by repentance and a declaration of faith in Christ can anyone be saved from eternal damnation. Declaring that Jesus Christ is the answer to every human need and the gospel is the solution for all human suffering became the primary evangelistic message to the world.

“Thus hearing the gospel is every human’s deepest need, and proclaiming the gospel the most urgent missionary task, The very thought of thousands perishing without Christ created a great sense of urgency. Leaders such as Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission could passionately speak of a Niagara Falls of thousands of souls perishing daily without hearing the gospel. Nothing should distract missionaries from getting the gospel as quickly as possible to as many people as possible. The Student Volunteer Movement and later student mission movements promoted the evangelization of ‘the world in this generation.’” (*Encountering Theology of Missions*, p. 109).

Late in the nineteenth and throughout most of the twentieth century, the evangelization of lost souls remained the primary work of missions. Sending missionaries for the salvation of souls remained the essential work of the church. Individual conversions had as its ultimate goal, the Conversion of “every tribe and tongue and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9). However, in the second half of the twentieth century, mission as social action (in the form of liberation theologies) weakened the priority of the proclamation of the gospel to the lost. Liberal

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

theologians in the West systematically undermined the clarity and authority of the Scriptures upon which the proclamation of salvation in Christ alone was based. Missionaries who doubt the absolute authority of the Scriptures and the absolute truth of the Bible as the word of God tend to make the presentation of the gospel of salvation as secondary to social works. Proclamation and conversion have also been weakened by liberal theologians that encourage cross-cultural missionaries to seek common ground with non-Christian religions and enculturate their preaching to make it less offensive.

NOTE: Enculturation is the process by which people learn the dynamics of their surrounding culture and acquire values and norms appropriate or necessary to that culture and its worldviews.

However, the proclamation of the gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ is the heart of the New Testament and is the only basis for the Great Commission (see HANDOUT “The Evangelistic Proclamation of the Apostle Paul”). Social works and cultural exchanges may be good things and may present opportunities for presenting the gospel, but they should never take the place of the emphasis on the proclamation of the good news of salvation. “To remove explicit communication of the saving acts of God in Christ from missions is to remove the very core and climax of salvation history and the only message that can bring eternal salvation from judgment and reconciliation with God to sinful men and women. Whatever might be added to the task of missions, proclamation cannot be eliminated from it.” (*Encountering Theology of Missions*, p. 110).

Taking a single-minded approach to Proclamation and Conversion as the task of missions tends to create problems for the new believers left behind once the evangelist/missionary moves on. Proclamation and personal conversion are important aspects of the mission of the church, however there are other aspects of the Great Commission that are essential to its fulfillment:

1. **New converts must be made to understand the whole Gospel.** Emphasis on rapid communication of salvation FROM sin and death without communicating that they are saved TO a live a life worthy of God, will lead to superficial and shallow conversions (Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25-27; 28:23, 31; 1 Thess. 2:10-13; 4:1-7).
2. **To be fulfilled, the Great Commission must include discipleship, church planting and preaching the gospel of the kingdom.** When added to Mark 16:15-18; Luke 24:46-49; and Acts 1:8, Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 28:18-20, makes it clear that teaching new believers and church planting follows preaching the gospel. “The apostle Paul not only proclaimed the gospel but

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

also gave considerable effort to the ongoing development of the believers in their churches. Proclamation alone cannot be considered fulfillment of the Great Commission.” (*Encountering Theology of Missions*, p. 112).

3. **Proclamation that asks only for a verbal declaration of faith in Jesus as “savior” without a commitment to follow Him as the LORD of their life, misunderstands biblical discipleship.** Most evangelists are shocked to discover that nowhere in the New Testament is the commandment made to go and make converts. No follower of Jesus is ever called a “convert” but they are only called “disciples.” To be a convert, requires no commitments beyond the initial response to believe in Jesus Christ. A disciple is a follower of Jesus and that means a total commitment to Him as the LORD of their life. “True evangelism calls people not only to receive forgiveness in Christ but also to radical discipleship as followers of Christ. As such, it will inevitably impact the whole life and community.” (*Encountering Theology of Missions*, p. 112).
4. **Proclamation that presents a one-sided emphasis on individual decisions and what it means to them personally, does not take into consideration the importance of the unity of all believers in fellowship with one another.** Jesus taught His disciples that it was His Father’s will for all believers to live in unity:

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.” (John 17:20–23).

As people become Christians, it is God’s desire that churches are formed. Fellowships where faith is nurtured and lived out in community is the normal pattern for the New Testament churches described in Acts. Healthy churches where Christians grow together in unity and community do not automatically spring up wherever the Gospel is preached. “Although proclamation alone cannot be seen as an adequate definition of the missionary task, it certainly is the necessary starting point of mission. The explicit statements of the Great Commission, the example of the apostles, and the logic of the gospel make proclamation fundamental. Mission that does not explicitly bring the good news of God’s salvation in Jesus Christ to the world cannot be

considered biblical mission.” (*Encountering Theology of Missions*, pp. 112-113).

CHURCH PLANTING AND GROWTH

Throughout most of its history, the Roman Catholic Church has made church planting the primary task of their missions. The traditional view of missions made their goals the salvation of souls through the proclamation of the gospel, and the internal conversion of the heart, leading to baptism and incorporation into the Church. Newly established churches were quickly brought under the authority of Rome. In the twentieth century, a second school of missions placed primacy on church planting over individual salvation as the means to make the visible Church (represented by the Roman Catholic Church) “within reach of all souls of good will.”

Historically, Eastern Orthodox missiology has taken an “incarnational approach of learning the culture of the audience, translating the Scriptures and liturgical texts into the language of the people, training native clergy, imparting the full Orthodox theological heritage of doctrines and patristic wisdom; and ultimately establishing a regional, self-ruled hierarchy.” (orthodoxwiki.org).

Early Protestant church planting grew out of the reformers’ beliefs that the lost had to be saved and prepared for the coming Kingdom of God. Proclamation, church planting, and doxology (praise, worship, and thanksgiving) were the primary tasks of Protestant missions. Puritan and Pietist revivalists emphasized church renewal through conversion as the primary task of missions. Only as more people became Christians it would be necessary for them to be gathered into churches, but the formation of new churches was not their primary motive for proclaiming the gospel. Later on, as more church-based mission agencies were formed, Protestant missions became more focused upon church planting.

Indigenous Church Planting

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Church Growth Movement developed into a major movement for missions strategies. At first, proclaiming the gospel, planting growing churches, and persuading individuals to become disciples of Jesus as faithful members of His church was seen as the best way to alleviate social ills. Proponents of church planting strategies believed that wherever missionaries planted churches, social ills such as poor health, illiteracy, poverty, hunger, and injustice would see improvements because “The church is the most powerful instrument known for the alleviation of social ills.”

Donald A. McGavran, an early leader in the Movement, said, “Nothing will advance the cause of world evangelization more than for church leaders and

missionaries to cease thinking exclusively in terms of good work of one kind or another and begin thinking of *the central task* in terms of incorporating responsible converts in ongoing congregations and multiplying these in natural social units.” (*Understanding Church Growth*, 1970, 1980, pp. 455-56).

Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss noted in their book that “The experience of planting churches, especially with often non literate new believers in strange cultures, was a new one that had not always been carefully considered.” In almost all cases, new churches planted among “the heathen” were operated and sustained by foreign missionaries. However, long before the modern Church Growth Movement appeared, a movement among Protestant missionaries promoted the idea of planting independent, indigenous churches. William Carey of India (1761 – 1834), Rufus Anderson of America (1796 – 1880), and Hudson Taylor of China (1832 – 1905) are credited with developing indigenous church planting strategies that were designed to make **self-propagating, self-governing, and self-supporting** churches as soon as possible.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, indigenous church planting movements were being promoted in regions around the world that had previously resisted missionaries because they were often seen as foreigners attempting to impose their religion, culture, and lifestyles on others. The collapse of foreign missions in China after the Communists took control, the stagnation of British missions in India after Independence, and the rise of nationalism in former colonies of the Western nations, all point to the serious flaws of a missions strategy that does not emphasize the major tasks of building strong indigenous leadership of churches. In the post-colonial era, the teaching and training of indigenous pastors, evangelists, and missionaries became of equal or greater importance to the task of missions as individual conversion.

STEPS TO BUILDING INDIGENOUS LEADERS

1. **Make disciples of new believers**
2. **Organize new believers into a church**
3. **Give leadership of the church to the nationals as soon as possible**
4. **Make the ministries of the church independent**
5. **Cause the local churches to be financially self-sustaining, and**
6. **Teach disciples to be self-propagating**

When the primary task of missions becomes propagating the gospel and making disciples, not converts, then strong, independent, churches led by Christlike leaders will naturally follow. However, the more dependent the nationals are upon

the financial support and leadership of foreign missionaries, the less likely the churches planted will be able survive on their own. Today, those who emphasize church planting and growth among “unreached peoples” and “frontier missions” state their goal is to plant an indigenous church for every distinct social or ethnic group around the world. Not until a church has been successfully planted can they say with certainty that a people group can be considered “reached.”

“John Piper presents the most articulate and biblically reasoned case for the unreached peoples’ understanding of missions in his immensely popular *Let the Nations be Glad!* (1993, 2003). He unequivocally states,

Missions exists to plant Christ-purchased, God exalting worshipping communities of the redeemed in all the peoples of the world.

The passion of a missionary – as distinct from that of an evangelist – is to plant a worshipping community of Christians in a people group who has no access to the gospel because of language or cultural barriers. (2003, 208)”

Encountering Theology of Missions © 2010 by Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids.

The importance of planting self-propagating, self-governing, and self-supporting churches around the world has become of utmost importance in the 21st century as the global population and center of Christianity moves from the northern hemisphere to the south:

“Today, the most vibrant centers of Christian growth are still in Africa itself, but also around the Pacific Rim, the Christian Arc. Already today, Africans and Asians represent some 30 percent of all Christians, and the proportion will rise steadily. Conceivably, the richest Christian harvest of all might yet be found in China, a nation of inestimable importance to the politics of the coming decades. Some projections suggest that by 2050, China might contain the second-largest population of Christians on the planet, exceeded only by the United States. More confidently, we can predict that by that date, there should be around three billion Christians in the world, of whom only around one-fifth or fewer will be non-Hispanic whites.” (*The New Faces of Christianity*, © 2006, Philip Jenkins, Oxford University Press, NY, p.9)

When compared with the tasks of civilizing, “improving” the morality of non-Christians, charity, and liberation of oppressed social groups, the tasks of proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and planting vibrant churches filled with disciples of Jesus Christ must far outweigh those other noble tasks. The New Testament Scriptures never separate individual faith from the need for Christian community. From the book of Acts forward, the church has remained God’s primary agent to accomplish His purposes to seek and save the lost, make disciples of every nation, and glorify the Father until the end of the age. The New Testament Epistles emphasize the need to plant healthy, growing churches wherever evangelists and missionaries went.

Today, missionary organizations recognize the need to keep church planting movements free from advancing a particular religious institution, denomination, or organization. If a church planting movement is dependent upon an established denomination, it can easily turn into “denominational flag raising, sheep stealing, number counting, or ecclesial kingdom building” (*Encountering Theology of Missions*, p.120) which have nothing to do with the New Testament’s description of the church and its mission described specifically in the book of Acts.

On the other hand, those who argue that social activism and liberation of oppressed groups should be part of a holistic approach to modern missions must take into account the fact that the Scriptures make evangelism and church planting of supreme importance to the fulfillment of the Great Commission, not social works. Any activities of the church that do not contribute to the will of God to bring reconciliation of man with God through Jesus Christ should be low priority. The primary task of missions remains to communicate to the world that Jesus Christ is the answer for every human need. Compassionate caring for the poor, the sick, and the downtrodden of this world should not be neglected, but they must be put into proper perspective with God’s heart to bring salvation to the nations.

It should be understood by Western missionaries from affluent countries that the advocates of a holistic approach to the mission of the church often come from places where the human suffering caused by poverty and injustice cannot be ignored. Those who minister to people who are suffering from hunger, poverty, or social discrimination based upon race, class, or cast believe strongly that the gospel lacks credibility and relevance if it ignores the physical needs of those who need to be set free spiritually by the proclamation of the gospel. Those who promote liberation theologies believe the proclamation of the gospel should include a demand to end the power structures that oppress the poor and downtrodden in society.

“The preaching of the Gospel and the service of men’s need are equally authentic and essential parts of the church’s responsibility. But neither

is a substitute for the other. No amount of service, however expert and however generous, is a substitute for the explicit testimony to Jesus Christ. No human deed can of itself take the place of the one deed by which the world is redeemed and to which we must direct men’s eyes. There is no equivalent to the Name of Jesus. But equally, the preaching of that Name will be empty if he who speaks it is not willing to deal honestly and realistically with the issues that his hearers have to face. An escapist preaching which refuses this involvement is not true witness to the Kingdom. We are not to be reporters only, but also signs of the Resurrection, and that means that we are living out in our flesh the experience of victory over the powers of evil... The true relation between the word and the deed is that both must be visibly rooted in the same reality; namely in that new community which is created and indwelt by the Holy Spirit.” Leslie Newbigin

The Scriptures leave little doubt that the LORD has always been concerned with the condition of the poor, widows, orphans, and foreigners encountered by His chosen people. The Gospels record Jesus’ compassion for the lost sheep who flocked to Him. Throughout the book of Acts, the Apostles demonstrated the power of God to bring victory over the powers of evil, injustice, and oppression – both physical and spiritual. In their letters, the Apostles wrote about the new life in Christ that begins with the forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God, and the spiritual power to live righteously.

The preaching of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ is recognized by the church as the primary task of missions. However, Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss point out that “...rightly understood and received the gospel leads to transformation at both the personal and the social level in this life” (p.144). When discipleship of new believers is prioritized over quick conversions and token church membership, the church will naturally affect the social conditions of those around them. Transformed lives of Christ followers will not only have the desire to share the gospel of salvation with others but will express the love of God for those less fortunate. The church is the primary instrument through which God shows his concern for the poor and oppressed. “Sin affects not only personal but also corporate life, and Christs are called to resist sin in whatever form it appears” (p.144).

FINAL ASSESSMENT OF THE TASK OF MISSIONS

- **Verbal witness** to the gospel cannot be separated from practical demonstrations of **love and action addressing human need**.

- Both Old and New Testaments reveal God’s concern for **the poor and oppressed**, and He expects His people to share that concern.
- Although meeting **physical and social needs** cannot be completely separated from the mission of the church in the world, addressing the spiritual needs for **repentance and salvation** by faith in Jesus Christ (John 3:1-21) is the primary task of missions.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON FOUR

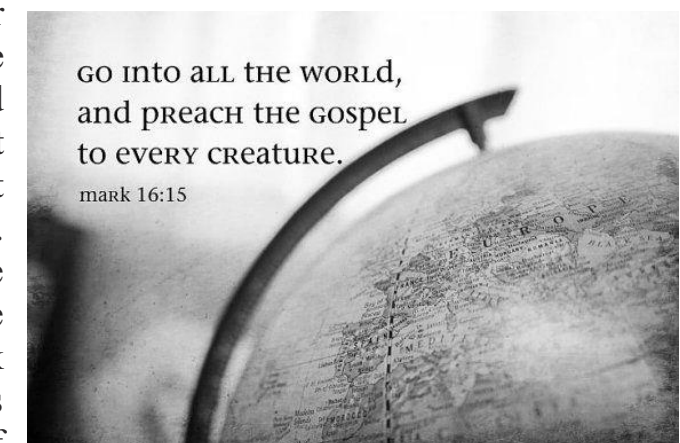
FIVE WAYS THE PRIMACY OF EVANGELISM MIGHT BE UNDERSTOOD <i>(Adapted from Ronald Sider 1993, 167-68)</i>	
1.	A logical question: Can you have Christian social responsibility without first having Christians?
2.	An ontological question: Is anything (or indeed everything in this world as important as a living relationship with the living God that leads to eternal life?
3.	A vocational question: Are not different Christians gifted with different callings, and do they not therefore properly allocate their time very differently?
4.	A temporal question: Does not the immediate circumstance (e.g., a devastating flood) influence what in particular situations one does first?
5.	A resources question: How do we allocate scarce resources of time, personnel, and money?
REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION	
1.	What biblical teaching or examples might the various points listed above?
2.	Describe a situation where evangelism would take priority over social responsibility.
3.	Describe a situation where social action might take priority over evangelism.
FROM: <i>Encountering Theology of Missions</i> © 2010 by Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids. (Sidebar 6.1, page 147)	

**SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS
DISCIPLESHIP 103-5**

“The Motivation for Missions”

NOTE: The primary source for this lesson is *Encountering Theology of Missions* © 2010 by Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids. We recommend that, if possible, the students and teachers obtain a copy of this work for further study.

In the two-thousand-year history of Christian missions, the motivations for evangelism and church planting movements have not always been guided by the best intentions. Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss began their chapter on “The Motivation for Missions” saying: “The motivation for missionary work should flow out of our understandings of the purpose, nature, and task of mission. But knowing *what* we should do is not the same as understanding *why* we do it... Motivation influences the *spirit* and the *commitment* with which missionary work is conducted. Motivation reflects attitudes, and attitudes in turn impact relationships and methods in profound ways.” (p.165).



The countless missionaries that followed in the footsteps of Paul and Barnabas have gone out into the world motivated by Bible verses, sermons, books, and the testimonies of missionaries who served or are serving in the field. The questionable motivations for missions discussed by Orr and Strauss include:

- Civilization, Colonialism, and Cultural Superiority
- Ecclesial Power and Denominationalism
- Condescending Pity
- Asceticism (self-denial)
- Adventure and Romantic Ideals
- Self-Realization and Edification
- Gender-Related Motives (Greater opportunity for women to lead ministry)

This lesson will discuss only the six *Appropriate Motivations for Mission* discussed by Orr and Strauss in their chapter on motivations for missions.

COMPASSION AND HUMAN NEED

“Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.’ (Matthew 9:35-38)

Matthew records the greatest motivation for mission given to His disciples by Jesus Christ. From the beginning, Christ’s disciples were to model the Master’s compassion for the lost sheep who flocked to Him. Luke chapter 15 is Jesus’ response to the Pharisees who questioned His concern for the tax collectors and sinners who drew near to Him seeking salvation. He begins with the parable of the lost sheep in which the good shepherd leaves the 99 safe ones and goes in search of the one lost sheep and searches until He finds it. He tells the parable of the lost coin to describe the sinner’s value once found. Finally, Jesus tells the story of the lost son who is reconciled to his loving, compassionate father. Once we truly understand God’s heart for the lost sinners of the world, Jesus’ mission to the world, recorded in John 3:16 (“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life”) becomes clear.

Apart from an unselfish, pure love (*agape*) for those the missionary is ministering to, the motives for going out become tainted with self-centered agendas. The desires to make themselves look good in the eyes of others, to feel good about themselves, to always be in the right and know better, to be in control over their own ministry, to take personal advantage of those they are supposed to be serving, to hide personal agendas, and to remain undisturbed, unchanged, and unmoved by the needs of others will destroy the effectiveness of their mission to seek and save the lost. In short, only after the minister has denied themselves, picked up their cross and started following the Master Jesus Christ, can they be motivated by compassion and the need for the lost to know Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28–30).

Without genuine compassion and love for those we are ministering to, our feelings will quickly descend into condescending pity. People will not respond to those who are patronizing and disdainful of them. Jesus never felt superior to those who needed Him and without *agape* we will sound high and mighty to those we have come to help. Therefore, as the Scripture says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” (Philippians 2:5-8).

THE “LOVE OF CHRIST”

“For we do not commend ourselves again to you, but give you opportunity to boast on our behalf, that you may have an answer for those who boast in appearance and not in heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; or if we are of sound mind, it is for you. For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.”
2 Corinthians 5:12–15

The *Love of Christ* is related strongly to the **compassion for the lost** and **responding to human need** as the motive for missions. Christ’s love motivates the missionary in two ways. First, it is **Christ’s love for the unbeliever** that compels the believer to take the knowledge of Christ’s love to those who have not yet heard. Christ’s love for others motivates the missionary to be His agent of reconciliation for those who are lost. Second, it is **Christ’s love for the believer** that motivates the missionary to serve. As Christ pours His love into the believer, it creates in them a passion to share that love with others. In thankfulness, the believer serves with the attitude, “Because Christ loves me, I must love and serve others.”

When addressing the issue of motives in missions, Dr. Larry Dinkins of O.M.F. said, “Man is concerned with outward acts, but God goes deeper and is able to weigh unseen motives... If the motivation for our service is God’s glory and the furtherance of his kingdom then there will be a reward, but things done in the flesh for our own glory will be burned up and we will suffer loss. Thus, if our motives for wanting to be a missionary are potential accolades for the ‘sacrifice’ we make for God, then the Lord will make a righteous evaluation. No doubt much of such fleshly service will be burned up. Yet if our motive and constraining focus is our love for Jesus and his creation, then there is the promise of a reward. May we all live in such

a way that our service for God will be grounded in God’s love for us and our response of loving service to others.” (<https://omf.org/us/what-motivates-us-to-be-missionaries/>)

The love of God for all people should be the primary motivation for our mission to seek and save the lost. Any sacrifice the missionary may make in the process will be overshadowed by the great joy that is experienced when we are serving God and others in the name of Jesus Christ.

“When considering a mission that matches the magnitude of God himself, therefore, we need a motivation that is worthy of the cause. And the only motivation that fits this bill is the love of Christ himself.”
Cliff Jordan

The Apostle Paul was often accused of having selfish motives for preaching the gospel. He wrote to the Corinthian church to assure them that his motive for preaching was the love of Christ: “For the love of Christ compels us...” Those who realize that Christ died for all will conclude that they who live “should no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died for them and was raised.” All of the Apostles’ letters affirm the belief the love of Jesus Christ should be the motivation for the church’s mission to preach the gospel of salvation to the ends of the earth. Jesus loves those he died to save. Even those who crucified the Son of God were forgiven and given the opportunity to repent and believe. As He hung on the cross, some believed and were saved, but some did not.

The most dangerous prayer any Christian can pray is to ask God to give them the same love for the lost that He has for them. When that prayer is truly answered and received, it will radically transform the heart of the believer. Like Paul and the other Apostles, Christ’s love will **“compel” them to action**. There is no sacrifice that is too great for the Christian who feels the deep love God has for them and for the lost. God will point them to the nation, tribe, or people He has prepared to receive them.

“And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.” Acts 16:9-10

At the heart of God’s command to “Go. Preach the gospel to all nations and make disciples...” is the truth that not only has He prepared the gospel for all

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

peoples, but He has also prepared all peoples for the gospel. The missionary may arrive on the scene as a stranger to a strange people, but they will soon discover that those strangers are already known and loved by Jesus. “Suddenly it is enough to know that the God we love has loved these people to death—literally. In this way, the cross leads us to regard everyone as someone who Jesus thought worth dying for.” (Pastor Cliff Movement Church, Richmond, Virginia).

OBEDIENCE TO CHRIST’S COMMAND

In their chapter, “The Motivation for Missions” Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss said, “Obedience may not be the noblest of motives, but it does call the whole church to account as stewards of the gospel with unmistakable marching orders from its Lord.” (p.182). But obedience to the commandment of the LORD to “Go...” and preach the gospel, faded after the Christianization of the Roman Empire. After the first few centuries of its existence, the church reached the farthest corners of Europe. Leaders of the church turned their attention to educating and caring for Christians and the emphasis upon proselytizing non-Christians faded into the background. Missions were given to a few clergymen but were not intended for the laity to pursue.

Protestant missions emerged slowly after the Great Reformation was launched in 1517. The Encyclopedia Britannica online article states, “William Carey’s *Enquiry into the Obligations of Christians, to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathens* (1792) became the ‘charter’ for Protestant missions and produced the Baptist Missionary Society. In 1793 Carey went to India. His first letter to an England stirred by the Evangelical Revival resulted in the formation of the London Missionary Society (1795). The Scottish Missionary Society (1796) and the Netherlands Missionary Society (1797) soon appeared. Anglican evangelicals organized the Church Missionary Society (1799), and many others followed. Like the SPCK and SPG, they were founded not by churches, but as autonomous societies supported chiefly by denominational constituencies.”

By the end of the twentieth century, Christian theologians had developed a clear **theology of mission**. Missiology – the study of missions – grew out of a deeply rooted biblical theme that the kingdom or “rule” of God touches every aspect of the human condition. The command to **“go and make disciples of all nations”** has been restored to its central role as the continuation of Christ’s mission to reconcile all peoples to Himself. Today, the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-20) is no longer an option, but has become a mandate for the church that all Christians are encouraged to participate in.

“One might ask how the gospel can be credible and powerful enough that people would actually believe that a man who hung on a cross

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

really has the last word in human affairs. Undoubtedly, the only answer, the only hermeneutic of the gospel, is a congregation of people who believe it and live by it (Phil. 2:15-16). That is to say, only a Church in mission can give an adequate answer to the need for reconciliation, which the world unwittingly cries out for.” Systematic Theology, Stanley M. Horton, General Editor, © 1994, 1995, Logion Press, p.574

DIVINE CALLING OR INNER COMPULSION

“You don't know how many people I've met who have said to me ‘Keith, I agree that more people need to go to the mission field, but I've never heard God tell me to go.’ Well, the truth is that God has already told you to go in His Word. In fact, He commands you to go... ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.’ (Mark 16:15) That's right... YOU ARE CALLED!

In fact, if you don't go, you need a specific calling from God to stay home. Has God definitely told you not to ‘go’ somewhere outside your country to preach the Gospel? If He hasn't, then you'd better start praying WHERE to go, instead of IF you should go - for again, you're already called!” Keith Green

Those who acknowledge the Great Commission and understand that it applies to all Christians in a general way are correct (see HANDOUT “Why You Should Go to the Mission Field”). However, before a believer packs their bags and starts their missionary journey, they should know **where God is calling them** to go and **what their mission** will be. There is no excuse for a Christian to return from the mission field defeated and their faith in shambles because they found out too late that they “missed” their calling – that they went somewhere they were not called by God to go and were attempting a ministry they were not equipped to do.

In some cultures around the world, there is an expectation that the son will follow their father as pastor of the church the father led until retirement. When leadership is passed from father to son when the son was not called by God to pastor the same church, it turns the ministry into **the family business** and not the LORD's ministry. In fact, there are many wrong motives for embarking on a mission trip. Long-term or short-term, it does not matter; where, when, and how one responds to the command to “go” must be guided by **the Holy Spirit's call** or the mission will fail to achieve any substantial growth of God's kingdom.

One of the great dangers of going on a mission trip without a specific calling is that the mission will only be about the missionary. Ministry must be **Christ-**

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

centered, or it will quickly descend into a **self-centered** experience that puffs up the missionary who produces the artificial fruit of the self and not the genuine fruit of the Spirit-filled, and Spirit-led life of abiding in Christ.

Reading the biographies of some of the great missionaries and ministry leaders who truly worked to expand the kingdom of God to the ends of the earth, it is clear that everyone of them acted upon a calling from God and not from selfish motivations. “The sense of divine calling, supernatural guidance, or even just the sense of inner compulsion has been a powerful motivation for missionaries throughout the generations. This may come through a supernatural vision, a burden of compassion, the sense of Christ's love, or other means and related motives. **Personal testimonies** often describe such guidance as a **burden**, as compelling against human reason, or as virtually **irresistible**. This motivation has the power of being linked not merely to a general sense of need or obligation but directly to the convictions of the explicit **divine will** for an individual.” (*Encountering Theology of Missions* © 2010 by Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, p.182).

DOXOLOGY: TO THE GLORY OF GOD

“The exaltation of Jesus Christ to the Father's right hand, that is, to the position of supreme honour, provides the strongest of all missionary incentives.” R.W. Stott

Christians understand that God's glory is a display of who He is. His glory is the manifestation of His character. Although His ultimate power, transcendence, and moral perfection is completely above man and his limitations, God reveals himself to His creation so that we can worship and follow him:

“For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down,
My name shall be great among the Gentiles;
In every place incense shall be offered to My name,
And a pure offering;
For My name shall be great among the nations,”
Says the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 1:11)

In His final prayer before His arrest and crucifixion, Jesus declared to His Father, “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. I have glorified

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” (John 17:1–5).

Before completing His prayer (John 17:1–26) Jesus made it clear that **God’s glory** is displayed in Himself. And central to Jesus’ mission and work on earth, was not only to glorify His Father, but also to make the whole world aware of **God’s glory**. In Christ, God was physically present in this world, and it is His intention that God’s glory would be reflected in the lives of His people. The mission of Jesus’ disciples is to “be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

“Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
And let them say among the nations, ‘The LORD reigns.’”
(1 Chronicles 16:31)

Paul wrote to the Corinthian church that the more we know Christ, the more we reflect His glory (2 Corinthians 3:7-18). Whenever someone turns to the Lord and is born again, the veil that keeps them from seeing the Spirit of the Lord is removed. “So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.” We become like that which we behold; by beholding the nature of God with unveiled minds, we can be more like him.

The missionary who is motivated by **the glory of God**, preaches the gospel because they believe when anyone sees the truth about Christ, it transforms them spiritually. Orr and Strauss noted that “the highest purpose of mission is God’s glory: the gospel is to be brought to the nations so that from every people there will be those who become glad worshippers of the King. This purpose in turn could be considered the highest motivation for mission.” (p.184). The glory of God transforms the believer’s **moral character** as they understand and apply it. The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit deepens their **knowledge of God** so they can understand how wonderful Jesus Christ is and what He is really like. As our knowledge of God deepens, the Holy Spirit helps us to become **Christlike**. (Spiritual formation is a progressive experience [Romans 8:29-30; Galatians 4:19; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:1-3]).

“Churches that are not centered on the exaltation of the majesty and beauty of God will scarcely kindle a fervent desire to ‘declare his glory among the nations’” John Piper

ESCHATOLOGICAL MOTIVATION: WITH A VIEW TO THE END

“Scripture leaves no doubt that the redeeming work of the Lamb of God will in fact purchase men and women from every tribe and language and people and nation (Rev. 5:9, 7:9). Those who respond by receiving the gospel may be a minority (Matt. 7:13), but they will respond. Though the church may be reluctant and though missionaries may be feeble and flawed, of this the church can be assured: God will accomplish his purposes for the nations in this age. This eschatological hope should be great encouragement to persevere in the face of opposition and in spite of human imperfection.” *Encountering Theology of Missions* © 2010 by Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, p.188

Throughout church history, several eschatological motives have inspired Christian missionaries. Jesus’ promise that the gospel of the kingdom will be **preached to all the nations** before the end comes (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10) motivated believers to take the gospel to the ends of the earth. As the end of the age approaches and nations of the world experience greater distress, Jesus’ promises offer hope and assurance that the task of evangelizing the world in His name will prevail.

The politicians, economists, and scientists of the world cannot offer the hope that the *good news* (the gospel) of salvation that Christ Jesus offers. The only ones who can truly offer **hope to the world** for a future filled with peace and righteousness, without pain, suffering, destruction, and death are those who speak of the “new heaven and new earth” promised in the final chapters of the book of Revelation. “Mission not only entails the announcement of the coming kingdom but is itself a sign of the kingdom that has already been inaugurated with Christ’s first coming. This hope, the only hope, must be shared with others. It is the good news that the world must hear.” (pp. 186-187).

Built into the eschatological message of Christ’s Second Coming is a sense of urgency: the message of salvation must be preached to everyone **before it is too late**, and the Great Tribulation begins. The belief of many Christians that missionary proclamation of the gospel of salvation to the world will **hasten Jesus Christ’s return** further motivates the church to complete the task of world evangelism. “In this view, missionary proclamation becomes a means to fulfill conditions for Christ’s return. Responsibility is placed on the church to fulfill this condition, and in its least thoughtful expressions, makes human effort the key.” (p.187).

Eschatological motives run throughout the church’s history of world evangelism. However, it was not until early in the nineteenth century that **eschatology** started to play a stronger role in motivating the church to complete its mission of world evangelization. Protestant millenarian speculations that the return of Christ would usher in a thousand-year reign of the Messiah and His church became a strong motivation for saving the perishing “heathen” (see HANDOUT “The Millennium Controversy in the book of Revelation). After the belief that worldwide missions would **hasten the return of Christ** faded, the idea that missions were needed to meet the deepest needs of the nations became a great motive for recruiting and sending out missionaries.

Today, the eschatological motive for evangelism is not to create a “Christianized world” for the Messiah to rule over, but is to make way for the King of kings and Lord of lords to return in His chosen time:

“Can our mission efforts hasten Christ’s return? This question calls for a more guarded assessment. First, slogans calling the church to hasten Christ’s return easily give the impression that Christ’s return is contingent upon human effort... The church is God’s primary instrument to spread the gospel and fulfill his purposes for the nations in this age, but emphasis is misplaced when the impression is given that if we fail, Christ cannot return, and God’s plan or timing is thwarted. God remains sovereign, and if one church fails, he will raise upon another to accomplish his purposes.” *Encountering Theology of Missions* © 2010 by Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, p.189

When considering our motives for joining the church’s mission to evangelize the unreached peoples of the earth, we must examine those motives from every angle. It is a foolish person who sets out on a missionary journey without first **considering the cost** and if their motives are **strong enough** to endure the hardships that a life on mission with God entail. “For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it – lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish...’” (Luke 14:28–30).

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON FIVE

1. Review the primary motivations for missions discussed in this lesson. Do you find these motives persuasive today?
2. What biblical justification exists for pleading for more missionaries to be sent to unreached peoples around the world? (Be sure to include Scripture references in your answer.)
3. Do you believe a person is acting foolishly if they set out in missionary service if they do not have a clear understanding of their motives for going?
4. Think of a great missionary that you know or have studied. What are the biggest differences between their stated motivation for missionary service and yours?
5. In the old hymn “Recue the Perishing”, Fanny Crosby wrote:

*Rescue the perishing, duty demands it.
Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide.
Back to the narrow way patiently win them.
Tell the poor wand’rer a Savior has died.*

What motivations for missions are evident in this famous hymn?

6. Times and circumstances of missionary work are constantly changing. Just in the last one hundred years missions have dramatically changed. Do you believe that this should also change the nature of missionary motivation today? Explain your answer.
7. It has been said that the church is by nature missionary and if it ceases to be missionary it has not just failed in a task, but it has ceased to be the church. Do you agree that the church without mission ceases to be the church? Would you describe your church as “missionary”? Why do you think so few churches see mission as central to their reason for existing?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 103-6

“The Church and Mission”

NOTE: The primary source for this lesson is *Encountering Theology of Missions* © 2010 by Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids. We recommend that, if possible, the students and teachers obtain a copy of this work for further study.

The church was never intended to be a comfortable sheep pen to house the sheep on Sunday mornings. From the beginning, the church was supposed to be a **training ground for disciples** – a place where the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles were learned and applied in practical ways. Church leaders who are content to feed off of the sheep from their tithes and offerings, and who only want to plug volunteers into ministries that make the sheep feel welcome and comfortable inside the walls of the sheepfold, do not know what the mission of the church they lead is supposed to be. “The fact that many churches exist primarily to serve their own needs, relegating mission to a project or line item in the budget, is only testimony to their failure to understand the centrality of mission to their true identity and mission as the basis of their very existence.” (*Encountering Theology of Missions* © 2010 by Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss, p.194).

Pastors in affluent countries often measure the success of their ministry by the numbers of people who attend their services and by the size of their weekly offerings. These pastors strive to make as many people as comfortable as possible every Sunday. They want their services to be entertaining, their facilities to be pleasant, their nurseries and Sunday schools well-staffed by volunteers. Their sermons may be informative and entertaining, but there is really no expectation that the people who listen to them will respond with appropriate changes in lifestyle. After a simple prayer of salvation, there is nothing more required of the sheep but to attend services and give financial support.

The pastors who believe it is their mission to turn their church into a sheepfold that keeps as many sheep as fat and happy as possible may have the praise of men and may be seen as successful by the world’s standards of success, but they have failed the Lord’s commandment to **make disciples**. Paul’s letters to his disciples Timothy and Titus are clear: “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us.” (2 Timothy 1:13–14). And, “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And

the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also...” (2 Timothy 2:1–2). And to Titus, Paul wrote, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you... holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” (Titus 1:5, 9).

The pastors and ministry leaders who are not actively engaged in discipling all members of their congregation who are willing and able to lead and preparing them for a life on mission with God (to seek and save the lost, make new disciples, and glorify the Father everywhere they go and in everything they do) will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment coming at the end of the age (James 3:1). The sad truth is that our churches are filled with people who have never been encouraged or admonished to go out and teach others what they have learned from years of Bible study, listening to sermons, and experiencing God’s presence in the Holy Spirit:

“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits.” (Hebrews 5:12–6:3)

In their chapter “The Church and Mission” Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss said, “God has called the church into existence for the very purpose of **serving his mission**. Jesus himself is the builder of the church, which is *his* church (Matt. 16:18) Jesus sends his disciples on a continuation of his mission, to be sent into the world as he was sent (John 20-21). Nothing could be clearer from the book of Acts than this: the church in the power of the Spirit becomes **God’s instrument** to bear witness to the redemptive work of Christ and the coming kingdom.” (pp.192-193). Paul and the other Apostles understood their obligation to teach and train new believers to participate in the **missionary purpose** of the church. Acts 19:8-10 describes Paul teaching in Ephesus for two years “so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.”

From the beginning of its existence the church and mission have been **inseparable**. “We cannot biblically speak of mission apart from speaking of the church, and we cannot speak of a church apart from speaking also of mission. A missionless church and a churchless mission are theological oxymorons...” (p.193). In the Old Testament, the nation of Israel was chosen by God; protected, nurtured, and blessed by God to glorify Him among the nations. God had plucked one man, Abraham, from the land of Ur, and made his insignificant tribe into a great nation so that all the nations would turn and worship YHWH as the one, true, living God over all people of the earth (Genesis 12:1-3). But because of their idolatry, Israel failed in their mission and God set in motion the plan of salvation He intended from the beginning by sending His only Son into the world to be the substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the world. When the work of the Son of God on the earth was complete, the church was called by God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to **fulfill His mission** (1 Peter 2:9-10). Instead of nations turning to Jerusalem, now the church must go out to the nations and take the gospel of salvation to the ends of the world to make them disciples of Jesus Christ.

“Mission is about establishing God’s reign through the redemptive and transformative work of Christ, and the church is a living sign and witness to the kingdom. The church as God’s kingdom people manifests the character of the kingdom in its common life as a redemptive community of love and in its public life as salt and light in the world.” (*Encountering Theology of Missions*, p.196). In other words, individually and corporately, disciples are called to be the “**salt of the earth**” and the “**light of the world**.” And to truly fulfill its purpose as citizens of God’s kingdom on this earth, all believers should understand the Lord’s teachings on salt and light and how they should be applied to the Church and Mission. (Note: the following edited paragraphs on salt and light are from the author’s book, *This Gospel of the Kingdom* © 2011, 2014 Frederick Osborn).

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:13–16)

The world and everything in it are passing away. The pictures of decay and of a deep darkness covering the earth are descriptive of a fallen people, living in a fallen world. The good news of the kingdom is that God has not abandoned this world in

its fallen condition. Jesus uses the images of salt and light to communicate to His disciples the **mission of the church**; the choices of these images are rich with meaning to disciples who know how people lived in biblical times.

“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other.” Mark 9:49-50

“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear let him hear.” Luke 14:34-35

Salt (sodium chloride) conveys the perfect image of the church and mission. Salt was essential to preserve food from corruption. In a time and place where fresh food supplies were scarce and where refrigeration and other methods of food preservation were unavailable, salt was essential to maintain the life of a community. In biblical times salt was most commonly found in the form of the mineral halite, or rock salt – found in beds deposited by the dehydration of ancient bodies of salt water. Most commercial salt was produced by steam or direct-heat evaporation of rock-salt brine; once the salt was extracted the remaining minerals were worthless and thrown far away from productive areas of land.

Salt was once an important medium of exchange throughout the Mediterranean world; covenants between individuals or nations were often ratified with the exchange of salt. At one time, Roman soldiers received their pay in the form of salt cakes; the soldier's salt-money allowance, or *salarium*, is where we got our English term salary, for a worker's pay. Salt was also commonly used in the religious rites of the Greeks, Romans and Hebrews.

Salt is necessary for the life of the body. “On the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to make you clean, nor were you rubbed with salt or wrapped in cloths” (Ezekiel 16:4). The sodium and chloride of salt, along with potassium, help the kidneys regulate the body's fluid levels and balance of acids and bases. Industrially, salt is the source of chlorine, chloroform, bleaching powders, and baking soda; it is used in the manufacture of disparate products like soap and glass. However, by far, the greatest use of salt today is for seasoning, adding flavor to many of our foods.

“Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Take fragrant spices – gum resin, onycha and galbanum – and pure frankincense, all in equal amounts, and make a fragrant blend of incense, the work of a perfumer. It is to be salted and pure and sacred.’” Exodus 30:34-35

Salt was required in every grain offering presented to the Lord. “Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings” (Leviticus 2:13). The altar was the table of the Lord; and therefore, salt being eternally present at His table, represents the **preserving and cleansing** aspects of God's saving grace. The presence of salt also speaks of God's **covenant with mankind**. Men confirmed their covenants with each other by sharing a covenant meal together, at which salt was always present.

“Whatever is set aside from the holy offerings the Israelites present to the Lord I give to you and your sons and daughters as your regular share. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the Lord for both you and your offspring.” Numbers 18:19

“Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, ‘Jeroboam and all Israel, listen to me! Don't you know that the Lord, the God of Israel, has given the kingship of Israel to David and his descendants forever by a covenant of salt?’” 2 Chronicles 13:4-5

“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.” Colossians 4:6

To fulfill its mission, the church must be salted with Christ. Jesus invites those who are corrupted by sin to open their hearts and let Him come in that so they might dine with Him at a table prepared for everyone who believes – thus confirming His new covenant with the church (Psalm 23:5; Revelation 3:20). Among the ancients, salt was also a symbol of friendship. This new, everlasting “covenant of salt” (written on the hearts of all believers by the Holy Spirit) also speaks of God's desire to be in intimate friendship with His people, “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you” (John 15:15).

“The men of the city said to Elisha, ‘Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad and the land is unproductive.’ ‘Bring me a new bowl,’ he said, ‘and put salt in it.’ So they brought it to him. Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, ‘This is what the Lord says: “I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.”’ And

the water has remained wholesome to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.” 2 Kings 2:19-22

"He cast the salt into the spring of the waters, and so healed the streams and the ground they watered. Thus the way to reform men's lives is to renew their hearts; let those be seasoned with the salt of grace; for out of them are the issues of life." Matthew Henry

Salt has a **healing power** that can cleanse and purge out impurities from the body. The image of salt reminds us of the healing power of the blood of Christ that can “cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God” (Hebrews 9:14). The mission of the church is to pour out the cleansing presence of Christ that saves those who are perishing. The mission of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven is to create a thirst for God in those who are outside of His kingdom (Col. 1:25 – 29). **There is nothing more useless in this world than "Christ-less" Christians; they are no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.**

“‘Therefore, as surely as I live,’ declares the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, ‘surely Moab will become like Sodom, the Ammonites like Gomorrah – a place of weeds and salt pits, a wasteland forever. The remnant of my people will plunder them; the survivors of my nation will inherit their land.’” Zephaniah 2:9 (Note: Luke 14:34-35)

The Mission of the Church to be the Light of the World

The picture of light communicates a different quality of the church and mission. The primary purpose of light is to **make reality or truth visible**, thereby giving direction and guidance to those who are searching for the kingdom of God. There are over 200 references to light in the Scriptures, making light an important theme throughout the Bible. Genesis 1:3 records the first words spoken by God, "Let there be light." Exodus 13:21 describes how the children of Israel were led through the darkness of the wilderness by a pillar of light. Leviticus 24:2 contains God's instructions to the priests to keep the light of the tabernacle burning continually. The final chapter of the Bible describes the kingdom of heaven in the new heavens and the new earth to come, and includes these words: “There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22:5)

"As the first apartment in the tabernacle was illuminated by the sevenfold light of the candlestick, and as the church composed of all genuine believers on earth in every age, is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, so will the church triumphant in heaven, that great temple, not made with hands, be a place of glorious light; and the light will never go out, it will burn always..." William Brown

The Lord strategically positions His citizens that they might shine His light into this world of darkness: "You, O Lord, keep my lamp burning; my God turns my darkness into light." (Psalm 18:28). Orr and Strauss wrote, "The very life of the church should be a testimony to the glory of the kingdom before the observing world. The message of the church is an invitation to repent and enter that kingdom by receiving the gracious gift of God in Jesus Christ and experiencing a foretaste of the renewal of all things." (p.197).

Jesus used the image of light to communicate to His followers how they are intended to be the **"light of the world."** In the same way that a city on a hill guides the weary sojourners out of the darkness to a place where they might find safety and rest, the mission of the church is to shine the light of Christ into the darkness all around them and lead others to Christ. "But the church is only a sign of that kingdom. It does not and cannot fully realize the kingdom in this age; rather, it lives in the hope of the coming of the kingdom in fullness at Christ's return." (pp.196-197).

"The Lord is my light and my salvation – whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life – of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27:1

Citizens of the kingdom of heaven stand out against the darkness when they follow Jesus, the true Light of the world; they do not generate their own light, but the "Light of life" shines through them (John 8:12). For the Lord is "the fountain of life" and in His light we see the true light of God (Psalms 36:9). Without light, sight is impossible. God created the eye to be the "light of the body" (in this context, the word body is interpreted to mean the whole person) in the same way a candlestick or lamp – after being lit – illuminates a room. Upon being "born again" into the kingdom of heaven, the Holy Spirit takes up residence within the whole person, and floods the body, soul and spirit with God's light and life.

"Send forth your light and your truth, let them guide me; let them bring me to your holy mountain, to the place where you dwell." Psalms 43:3

"For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life." Psalms 56:13

The word of God is "lamp" and "light" that shines the light of the Holy Spirit within the soul; it illuminates our path in this dark world of sin (Psalms 119:105); it brings understanding, judgment, and the power to see the truth and expose falsehood (Psalms 119:105). Jesus said, "Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness" (Luke 11:34). Here, the Greek word haplous, "single" or "healthy" is used. He makes the point that whether or not a person sees the kingdom of God depends not on the light's brightness, but on the condition of the person receiving the light. When the church is fulfilling its mission to be salt and light, the gospel of the kingdom will come to those people whose hearts are open to receive it; and wherever the reign of God is established, it will purge out sinful hearts with the salt of righteousness and shine the light of truth into those who are walking in darkness. Jesus is indeed "the light of the world" (John 8:12 & 9:5) and when he came, the prophecy of Isaiah was fulfilled: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned" (Isaiah 9:2).

Isaiah 42:6-7 wonderfully communicates the idea of the church and mission: "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness."

The Missional Church

"...the church is to be understood not as an organization with a mission; rather, the church's very identity *is* mission. Mission and church are merged into one. The church is not primarily a sender; rather, the church itself is the sent one, and it is sent on a mission that is larger than itself. The mission of God becomes the mission of the church as a whole, and not the mission of particular ministries or emissaries of the church." *Encountering Theology of Missions* © 2010 by Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, pp. 197-198.

The idea that the church is not just called to participate in missions, but that its very identity and reason for existing is rooted in God's mission is not universally

shared by all ministry leaders. There are many who believe the church exists to serve its own members first, their community second, and the nations beyond receive only the leftovers (Mark 7:24-30). Pastor Ben Wright in his Online article “Pastor, Where Do Your Missions Dollars Go?” (July 13, 2023), cited data from the “Status of Global Christianity” study conducted by Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary that found, of all money given to Christian causes, 82 percent funds ministries in local congregations and 12 percent funds evangelism within the origin country. That leaves just 6 percent for overseas missions. Other data suggests that only 1.7 percent of overseas missions funds are used to reach unreached people groups around the world. That means, for every \$10 church members give to American churches, only \$.01 (one-tenth of one percent) funds missions that are designed to reach the unreached. In fact, most missions support sent overseas, goes to projects like disaster relief, economic development, or helping the poor. Certainly the needs of the poor should not be ignored (James 1:27), but easing poverty with shoeboxes, construction projects, and medical missions does little to advance the kingdom of God where it is most needed.

The recent trend in short-term missions from the West has created a situation where most church leaders are not sure exactly how and where the support of their church is being spent for missions. In his article, Pastor Wright said, “much of our ‘missions giving’ doesn’t fuel the engine of missions. It may fund worthwhile activities but not directly contribute to worldwide gospel-spreading, disciple-making, church-multiplying missions as much as we think.” George Verwer (1928-2023) the founder of Operation Mobilization, addressed this same issue: “...there are people groups among whom the church barely exists: the Uighers of western China, the Afghans, the Kurds, the Baluchs and hundreds of others. The argument that the Western church should husband its resources by giving support to local nationals, rather than sending missionaries, is at its weakest with regard to these groups. In many of these places there are no nationals to support. The size, strength and missionary heritage of the traditional sending countries are vital in generating the personnel to go and work in these challenging situations. Between these extremes are countries where there is a significant Christian presence, but were there is still a need for help from outside missionaries from the traditional sending countries, possibly in specialist and training roles.” (*Out of the Comfort Zone*, © 2000, 2012, p.85.)

The Western model of making “seeker friendly” churches to house well-fed and watered sheep avoids the **direct personal engagement** that is required to fulfill the LORD’s commandment to make disciples of every nation. Far more may be accomplished by training and sending fulltime missionaries and then praying for, caring for, and visiting those missionaries than sending short-term teams that build

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

a church building, houses for the poor, or give handouts to orphanages and then fly back home. Quoting Pastor Wright, “One evangelical organization reaches ‘hurting people in countries around the world with food, medicine, and other assistance in the Name of Jesus Christ.’ That’s fine work. Commendably, it aims to leverage that assistance to spread the gospel. But it doesn’t maintain a long-term, disciple-making, church-multiplying missionary presence.”

The weakness of the Western model of modern missions is that it creates a dependent relationship with the receiving nations. When indigenous church plants require foreign funds and volunteers to survive, if the funds dry up for any reason, the church plant will wither on the vine. Providing emergency funds for disaster relief or to rebuild a church or orphanage that was destroyed are often needed, but the long-term mission of the Western church to launch trained missionaries who can reach the unreached and plant healthy, self-supporting, and self-replicating churches must remain the central focus of the missional church.

“Pastor, you know what the Great Commission requires. Jesus commands us to make disciples of all the nations. Missions that ignores unreached nations is incomplete. And donations that don’t fund disciple-making aren’t truly missions giving. So do you know where your missions dollars go? Are you satisfied with the answer? If not, what’s your next move?” Pastor Ben Wright

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON SIX

1. How does image of the church as the “salt of the earth” relate its mission?
2. How does the image of the church as the “light of the world” relate to its mission?
3. Define the characteristics of a missional church? How do those characteristics contribute to the fulfillment of the Great Commission?
4. Why is disciple-making vital to teaching and training Western missionaries?
5. Why is it essential for indigenous churches to become independent, self-sufficient, and self-replicating as soon as possible? How does disciple-making contribute to achieving that goal?

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 103-7

“The Justification of Mission”

NOTE: The primary source for this lesson is *Encountering Theology of Missions* © 2010 by Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids. We recommend that, if possible, the students and teachers obtain a copy of this work for further study.

“*Missio Dei*”



“The very existence of Christian mission has throughout history been continually challenged. In the first century the challenge came from the Jewish community on one side and the imperial cult on the other. In the Middle Ages it was the challenge of Islam. In the seventeenth century it was the challenge of the Enlightenment, and in the twentieth century it was the challenge of secularism...” *Encountering Theology of Missions* (p.55)

It is not surprising that along with the unprecedented attacks upon the Christian faith in our time, that around the world there would also be unparalleled attacks upon the very concept of Christian missions. Religious pluralism, postmodern skepticism of transcendent truths, post-colonial resentment of Western interference in former colonies, the renewed interest in preserving traditional cultures, and the moral collapse in most traditionally Christian Western nations all add fuel to the fires of anti-Christian movements around the world. Growing numbers of believers in the majority Christian nations in Europe and America are convinced that there is no longer a need for foreign missions. To justify that conviction, they look around the world and point out that there are at least a few Christians in every country of the world.

Looking at the poor condition of Christianity in traditionally missions-sending, majority Christian nations in the West, Christians in the rest of the world are beginning to believe that the nations in Europe and America are more in need of evangelization than many of the nations in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Believers in Christian majority nations are being asked, what right do they have to call others to make a radical, personal commitment to Jesus Christ when they themselves have not made the same commitment?

In spite of the falling numbers of truly committed Christians in the majority Christian nations of Europe and the Americas, there remains a small, but dedicated group of disciples who believe that the mission of the church continues because God’s plan for the nations will not be fulfilled until the **Second Coming of Jesus Christ** at end of the age. “The justification of mission must start with the very person, plan, and character of God himself as revealed in the scriptures.” (p.56).

George Verwer (1928-2023), the founder of Operation Mobilization wrote about some of the objections to sending missionaries from the West. He wrote in his book *Out of the Comfort Zone*:

“Some are so burdened by the needs that surround them that they are unable to lift their eyes to the other parts of the world. Some, especially in the traditional missionary-sending countries, are positively ill-informed and they oversimplify a complex situation by saying that Western missionaries are no longer needed or are no longer ‘cost-effective’ and that support for indigenous workers should replace the sending of people. Some people and groups have become distracted by the idea that only narrowly defined, so-called ‘high quality’ people are needed on the mission field, when in fact people of all kinds are needed to fill a huge range of jobs. Many have been desensitized by powerful media images and words so that they are no longer able to grasp the needs of distant places when simply told about them. Only by being

there and feeling and smelling for themselves will they understand the need.” (pp. 20-21)

From the beginning, it has been God’s desire that His glory would be **proclaimed among the nations**. “The Bible also speaks of God having a universal will and plan for his creation. He reveals himself, seeks fellowship, and communicates with personal beings he has created... This offer of salvation and this message of the kingdom are to be extended to people of every nation and of every ethnic or linguistic group, to all ages, to men and to women, to rich and to poor. This is the universal plan of the universal God, and it is the ultimate justification of the universal scope of mission.” *Encountering Theology of Missions* (p.58). Apart from their Creator, mankind will be lost and drifting in a sea of meaningless confusion:

“Blessed is the man
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,
Nor stands in the path of sinners,
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;
But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
And in His law he meditates day and night.
He shall be like a tree
Planted by the rivers of water,
That brings forth its fruit in its season,
Whose leaf also shall not wither;
And whatever he does shall prosper.
The ungodly are not so,
But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.
Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment,
Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.
For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the ungodly shall perish.” Psalm 1:1–6

The church was created and empowered by God to take this universal message of the kingdom of God to the ends of the earth. Every generation of believers is commissioned to deliver the message of God’s unconditional love:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is

not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” John 3:16–18

Those who truly understand that the **church’s mission is God’s mission**, recognize that “Mission has its origin in the heart of God.” The love of God is not the exclusive possession of those who are secured in the grace of God but extends to all those who are in the world. The love of God for those who are lost and perishing without hope must be the motivating factor for anyone who is willing to endure the hardships, make the sacrifices, suffer the loss of worldly possessions, take up their cross, and follow Jesus to any one of the mission fields around the world:

“Jesus said to them, ‘My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, “There are still four months and then comes the harvest”?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: “One sows and another reaps.” I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.” John 4:34–38

Missio Dei and the Church

The recognition that the mission of God to build His kingdom is the church’s true mission, corrects the historical, European-based view that church planting is an extension of their institutional boundaries into unreached parts of the world. In other words, Mission is the originator of the church, and not the other way around. This makes our emphasis on mission, **God centered not church centered**. “Mission is God’s own undertaking, and the mission of the church is participation in God’s mission. God is a missionary God, and mission is rooted in the sending activity of the Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus’s statement to his disciples, ‘As the Father has sent me, I am sending you’ (John 20:21_b) is the most explicit basis for this understanding.” *Encountering Theology of Missions* (p.62).

This strong Trinitarian basis for the role of the Church in mission, indicates another important role for the church in mission: communication and community. The Trinitarian nature of God makes the call of being and making disciples a call to the unreached to become part of a community of believers – the church – where God is worshiped in spirit and truth. The church is the instrument through which God carries out His mission to build a kingdom community throughout the world, a

growing community of disciples making disciples. The mission of the church is a movement initiated by God to the world. In this view, the church exists to support the *missio Dei*, and church structures exist to serve the community of believers in that mission.

“Give to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
Give to the LORD glory and strength.
Give to the LORD the glory due His name;
Bring an offering, and come before Him.
Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness!
Tremble before Him, all the earth.
The world also is firmly established,
It shall not be moved.

Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
And let them say among the nations, ‘The LORD reigns.’”
1 Chronicles 16:28–31

Understanding missions in context of God’s overarching mission that He be glorified among all the nations of the earth, removes the human-centered motivations for missions. The church exists for God’s glory, and its mission is His mission. The primary lesson learned from centuries of Christian missions from the West to the unreached nations in the rest of the world is that “...mission could not be built on the shifting sands of human intentions, obedience, and efforts, but rather on the bedrock of divine will.” (p.63). There is no question what the will of God is:

- **The church is commissioned to preach the gospel to all nations until the day He returns (Matthew 24:14).** Therefore, it is essential that the church understands the message of God’s mission found in the Gospels and Scripture. The Gospels describe God who on a mission to save His creation with a redemptive love rooted in the person and work of his Son, Jesus Christ. The *Missio Dei* is not just one theme of the Bible. The Mission of God to save fallen mankind is His redemptive story – a story in which God has called all His people to join Him to finish.

In order for the church to fulfill their purpose to live as everyday missionaries, they must have an accurate and biblical view of God’s redemptive story, which includes the foundational beliefs that (1) **God is sovereign** over all creation; (2) **God is able to do what He pleases** and no purpose of His can

be thwarted; (3) it is our responsibility to **be obedient** to His commandments; (4) **God has specific plans** for our future and all He has promised to do He will accomplish; and (5) **God’s love for mankind** is fundamental to His redemptive story.

When Christians believe that God is sovereign, they will understand they are not given their parts in the Great Commission by chance. Pastors and other ministry leaders are called to help all believers to understand their mission field is wherever God has sovereignly placed them: locally in their schools, their neighborhoods, and their workplaces or globally to the unreached peoples around the world.

- **The church’s mission is to prove His kingdom promises until He returns to establish His kingdom in its fulness (Mark 16:15-18).** The church exists to equip God’s people to be missional; its mission is to reach the nations. From the beginning, Christians should be encouraged to reach others with the gospel message. Leaders in the church must build relationships with new believers and then lead by example with a heart to reach the lost. Disciples who are in Christ, should not be restricted to reach the lost because they are not able to travel overseas; wherever they are located, they should be motivated to prove His kingdom promises are for everyone who believes.

Short-term mission trips can be an exciting experience, and it may generate interest in missions, but it is better to prepare and mobilize every believer who has trusted in Christ to be a missionary both near and far. It may be true that Jesus sends all believers to be his witnesses to the nations, but because believers are rooted in the local church, everything ministry leaders do should be driven by the goal of equipping the members of their church to spread the gospel starting from the local, to the wider community, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

- **It is His will that the church demonstrates the love and compassion of God to those who are lost and hurting like sheep without a shepherd (Jude 21-22; 1 Peter 3:8-9).** John 3:16 is often cited as the gospel message in one verse. In His teachings, Jesus affirmed the supremacy of love as the motivation for all that believers do (Mark 12:29-31). John wrote that Jesus, “having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. (John 13:1b). In His final teachings before His arrest and crucifixion, in no less than 19 verses, John records Jesus’ instructions for His disciples to love one another because He loves them, and the Father loves them.

Paul and the other apostles were motivated to preach the gospel by the love of God that was “poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us” (Romans 5:5). In fact, every New Testament Epistle mentions the love of God or the command to love one another, making it impossible to ignore the church’s mission to demonstrate the love and compassion of God.

Apart from sharing love and compassion that the Father has for the lost and hurting people who are separated from the love of Christ, it is impossible for the missionary to endure the hardships of a life on the distant and most difficult mission fields in the world today.

The Trinity and *Missio Dei*

When the World Evangelical Fellowship, Missions Commission convened 1999 with 160 mission practitioners, missiologists and church leaders from 53 countries, in Foz de Iguassu, Brazil, they included in their final Declarations, “The Trinitarian Affirmation of Mission” which stated:

“We commit ourselves to a renewed emphasis on God-centered missiology. This invites a new study of the operation of the Trinity in the redemption of the human race and the whole of creation, as well as to understand the particular roles of father, Son, and Spirit in mission to this fallen world.”

Nowhere in Scripture do we find a better expression of the Trinity in the *Missio Dei* than in Luke chapter fifteen. In this chapter of Luke, Jesus tells in quick succession three parables of the lost: “The Lost Sheep” (verses 4 – 7), “The Lost Coin” (verses 8 – 10), and “The Lost Son” (verses 11 – 32). This three-in-one parable overflows with spiritual insights into the involvement of the Trinity in the salvation of the human race. Stated briefly:

- **Jesus Christ, the Son of God is the Good Shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine in search of the one lost sheep.** We see a beautiful image of the love and compassion of the Lord who laid down His life for the sheep when He finds the sheep and lovingly carries it on His shoulders back to safety. The mission of the Son of God to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), and to glorify His Father by redeeming mankind (John 17:1-5) converge in the image of Jesus as the Shepherd of sheep.

- **The Holy Spirit is seen in the symbolism of the lighted lamp, and the sweeping clean of the house so that the lost coin, bearing the image of the king, can be found, and restored to the one who lost it.** When the lost sinner responds to the conviction of the Holy Spirit and repents, “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God.”

“The ministry of the Spirit continues with the Spirit bearing witness to Jesus Christ through the disciples: ‘When the Counselor comes, who I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. And you also must testify, for you have been with me from the beginning’ (John 15:26-27). When the Spirit is sent, he will also have a ministry in the word, conviction the world regarding sin, righteousness, and judgment, which are related to the person of Christ (John 16:7-11).” *Encountering Theology of Missions* (p.72).

Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss note how the book of Acts demonstrates that the gospel is spread with new power and conviction wherever the Holy Spirit is sent, “nearly every time believers are filled with the Spirit, some form of proclamation occurs.” Acts reveals how the preaching of the gospel was not in word only, but in the power and conviction of the Holy Spirit: “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance, as you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake.” (1 Thessalonians 1:5)

- **Our Father in heaven is the obvious image being revealed in this third parable in Luke 15.** We know that God is not a passive observer in the salvation of His lost sons and daughters who have fallen by the wayside “in a far country” where the precious possessions of the Father’s kingdom are being wasted on the wasteful costs of sinful living.

“The Father’s sending activity is rooted in his character. He sends various messengers and events to bridge the gap, to reveal himself, to communicate his will, and to accomplish his purposes with humanity in history. These acts of sending are usually linked to the purposes of grace and the restoration of his relationship with his people, though he at times also sends in order to judge and demonstrate his holiness.” *Encountering Theology of Missions* (p.66)

It is God the Father who sent His Son into the world to be an atoning sacrifice for sins; it is God the Father who sent His Spirit-filled leaders, like Moses, Joshua, the Judges, and the prophets, to lead His people out of bondage and oppression. The Father sends His Spirit-filled leaders to convict His wayward people of rebellion until they come to their senses and return to Him. In this parable, Jesus is highlighting His Father's loving patience with His wasteful and rebellious children. "The Father's character of holiness demands justice and righteousness. But his character of love and compassion move him to provide a way of redemption and reconciliation that fallen people might reenter fellowship with him and receive the gifts of his kingdom." (p.66).

The Method of God's Mission: Disciples Making Disciples

Central to the *missio Dei* as expressed by the Lord in Matthew 28:18-20 is making disciples. It is important to note that nowhere in the New Testament is the command given to "go and make converts." Followers of Jesus are never called "converts", but are called "disciples" only. When Jesus gave His mission to His disciples, His instructions were for them to "go, and make disciples." Therefore, placing disciple-making at the heart of the *missio Dei*. Any attempt to start a church planting movement that does not make disciples-making-disciples of primary importance will collapse eventually because it cannot be sustained by a few leaders that create a top-down structure that depends upon their funds and labor to sustain it. Successful church planting movements are accomplished through multiplication, not addition. Therefore, in order for the *missio Dei* to be fulfilled, ministry leaders must empower new believers to be disciples who are able to go and make new disciples without depending upon others. When true disciples are being made, they will act upon the authority and power of God to advance His kingdom without waiting for outside funds, programs, and marching orders. Disciples will quickly learn that the *missio Dei* is a command to be obeyed, not an option to be considered.

This means church leaders should give attention to disciple-making as opposed to creating a comfortable place to house the sheep. Pastors are called to be leaders of leaders by equipping members to become disciple-makers, not greeters, ushers, or parking lot attendants. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Paul tells Timothy to entrust all that he taught him to faithful men, who would, in turn be able to teach others also. In this way the gospel has reached the nations: by investing in those who are willing and able to live as disciples of Jesus Christ and teaching them to do the same. When we follow Christ's example, we quickly understand that being a disciple and a

disciple-maker are inseparable. (See HANDOUT "Paul's List of Qualifications for Leadership from Timothy and Titus").

A full calendar of church activities does not always mean a healthy and thriving church. Social works can develop a sense of responsibility to those in need and can provide opportunities for Christians to minister in unreached communities. However, any outreach that is not aligned with the vision and mission of the church to preach the gospel, baptize new believers, and make disciples (all to the glory of God) will not result in the kingdom growth the LORD expects from His church.

Jesus permits no half-hearted followers, and he doesn't merely become an add-on in a Christian's life. When someone becomes a Christian, this person now joins the *missio Dei*, and receives the identity of a disciple-maker and missionary. If all believers immediately grasped an understanding of the mission of God and its implications on their lives, God is able use His church to change the world for his glory.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON SEVEN

1. Review the drawing at the beginning of this lesson. How do Missions, and Mission relate to the vision of the *Missio Dei*?
2. How does the condition of Christianity in traditionally missions-sending, majority Christian nations in the West affect the evangelization of the rest of the world?
3. Describe "the universal plan of the universal God, and it is the ultimate justification of the universal scope of mission." In what way should this be the church's motivation for missions?
4. How does being God centered not church centered affect the mission of the church?
5. Briefly describe God's redemptive story (include the five foundational beliefs from the bible).
6. Describe the importance of the love of God, the love for God, and the love from God to reach the nations with the gospel.
7. Briefly describe the work of the Trinity in the *Missio Dei*?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 103-8

The Holy Spirit in Ministry Life and Work

NOTE: Parts of this lesson were taken from *The Holy Spirit in You: Nourishing the Life of Holiness and Power in You*, Copyright © 2016 by Frederick Osborn. The material has been edited and formatted to fit with the SGM Professor Syllabus. Other parts of this lesson were taken from *Encountering Theology of Missions* © 2010 by Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids. We recommend that, if possible, the students and teachers obtain copies of these works for further study.

THE FRUIT-BEARING LIFE

¹“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ²Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

⁵“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. ⁶If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” (Jn 15:1–8)

Harriet Beecher Stowe is best remembered in literary circles as the author of the novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. That book is credited by numerous historians as a major influence on the movement to abolish slavery in the 19th century, which led to the formation of the Republican Party and Abraham Lincoln’s election in 1860 as the 16th President of the United States of America. But what is not known by most people was her deep abiding faith in Jesus Christ and her influence on one of the most important leaders of modern missions, J. Hudson Taylor. Taylor is known as the one who sparked into existence the “exchanged life” dynamic of transformation in Christ in contemporary Christianity. Stowe wrote a few pages for an introduction to a book written by Christopher Dean published in 1847. Hudson Taylor was greatly

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

inspired by what Stowe wrote and he shared those same pages in a booklet entitled “How To Live On Christ by Harriet Beecher Stowe.” Taylor sent the booklet to all the China Inland Missionaries in 1869. In her introduction, Stowe quoted the verses in John 15:1-8 and wrote:

“Now how does a branch bear fruit? Not by incessant effort for sunshine and air; not by vain struggles for those vivifying influences which give beauty to the blossom, and verdure to the leaf; —it simply abides in the vine, in silent and undisturbed union; and the fruit and blossoms appear as of spontaneous growth.

How, then, shall a Christian bear fruit? By efforts and struggles to obtain that which is freely given; by meditations on watchfulness, on prayer, on action, on temptation, and on dangers? No, there must be a full concentration of the thoughts and affections on Christ; a complete surrender of the whole being to him; a constant looking to him for grace. Christians, in whom these dispositions are once firmly fixed, go on calmly as the sleeping infant borne in the arms of its mother. Christ reminds them of every duty in its time and place—reproves them for every error—counsels them in every difficulty, excites them to every needful activity. In spiritual, as in temporal matters, they take no thought for the morrow—for they know that Christ will be as accessible tomorrow as to-day, and that time imposes no barrier on his love. Their hope and trust rest solely on what he is willing and able to do for them; on nothing that they suppose themselves able and willing to do for him. Their talisman for every temptation and sorrow, is their oft repeated, childlike surrender of their whole being to him; as the infant in every trouble, finds a safe asylum in the bosom of its mother. That such was the course of the subject of this narrative is shown by her great and uncommon activity in every good thing; for, we read, ‘He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.’

Some may say, ‘Truly this is a very delightful state of feeling, but how shall we obtain it? How shall we begin?’

We answer, just in the same way that a sinner begins the Christian life, by coming to the Saviour, and making a full, free, and hearty surrender of his body, soul, and spirit; fully resolved in future to resign the whole to the Redeemer’s direction. And having made this general surrender, make it also in particular, in reference to every circumstance of every day.”

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

In their chapter on the “Spiritual Dynamics and Mission”, Orr and Strauss confirm what Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote and what Hudson Taylor saw as the essential role of the Holy Spirit in missions: “The scriptures are clear that spiritual power is the foundational prerequisite for mission.” (p.238). Hudson Taylor was not unlike many pastors, evangelists, and missionaries today who feel the frustrations and fatigue of ministry apart from God’s power.

Taylor described for his sister the process the Lord had led him through to reach this point of discovery. For months he had been feeling the need of more “holiness, life, power in our souls” for himself, and for the Mission. But he was only feeling frustrated and saw the danger of not living closer to God. He confessed how he “prayed, agonized, fasted, strove, made resolutions, read the Word more diligently, sought more time for retirement and meditation,” and yet, none of it was doing any good – it was all without effect. “Every day, almost every hour, the consciousness of sin oppressed me. I knew that if I could only abide in Christ all would be well, but I could not. I began the day with prayer, determined not to take my eye from Him for a moment; but pressure of duties, sometimes very trying, constant interruptions apt to be so wearing, often caused me to forget Him.” His nerves were on edge, he found himself succumbing to the temptations of irritability, harsh thoughts, and unkind words – all were becoming more difficult to control. “Each day brought its register of sin and failure, of lack of power. To will was indeed present with me, but how to perform I found not.”

The questions plagued his mind: “Is there no rescue? Must it be thus to the end—constant conflict and, instead of victory, too often defeat?” How, too, could I preach with sincerity that to those who receive Jesus, ‘to them gave He power to become the sons of God’ (i.e. God-like) when it was not so in my own experience?”

The more he wrestled with God over these questions, the weaker and less power he was having against sin, “and no wonder, for faith and even hope were getting very low. I hated myself; I hated my sin; and yet I gained no strength against it.” He would cry out to his “Abba Father” for power as a child of God, but he still found himself utterly powerless to rise to the level of practical holiness he sought. “I thought that holiness, practical holiness, was to be gradually attained by a diligent use of the means of grace. I felt that there was nothing I so much desired in this world, nothing I so much needed. But so far from in any measure attaining it, the more I pursued and strove after it, the more it eluded my grasp; till hope itself almost died out...” Sin and failure had become a regular experience and he ended too many evenings confessing and mourning before God. “I would not give you the impression that this was the daily experience of all those long, weary months. It was a too-frequent state of soul; that toward which I was tending, and which almost ended in despair. And yet never did Christ seem more precious—a Savior who could and

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

would save such a sinner! ... And sometimes there were seasons not only of peace but of joy in the Lord. But they were transitory, and at best there was a sad lack of power.”

The answer to his prayer came in part in a letter from a friend who was wrestling with the same issues. His friend wrote that he found peace and faith not by striving after faith, “but by resting on the Faithful One.” This simple, yet profound, statement sparked a revival in Taylor’s soul as the Holy Spirit ignited a portion of 2 Timothy 2:13 in his consciousness: “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful...” Taylor, looked to Jesus and saw how he had striven in vain to rest in Him by his own strength and had not let go and trust God to keep His promise to abide with him by His Holy Spirit. “I’ll strive no more.” Taylor wrote.

At that moment Taylor saw that it is not our striving that attaches us to the vine, but it is the life of the vine in us that keeps us attached to Him. It is His life working His fullness in us. Hudson stated it this way: “As I thought of the Vine and the branches, what light the blessed Spirit poured direct into my soul! How great seemed my mistake in having wished to get the sap, the fullness out of Him. I saw not only that Jesus would never leave me, but that I was a member of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. The vine now I see, is not the root merely, but all—root, stem, branches, twigs, leaves, flowers, fruit: and Jesus is not only that: He is soil and sunshine, air, and showers, and ten thousand times more than we have ever dreamed, wished for, or needed. Oh, the joy of seeing this truth! I do pray that the eyes of your understanding may be enlightened, that you may know and enjoy the riches freely given us in Christ.”

In order to live a life on mission with God, the disciple must learn first this aspect of the spiritual dynamic: the inward empowerment of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Jesus instructed His disciples not to proceed in the great commission until they had received the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8). Paul and the other apostles testified that their courage, strength, and power to boldly preach the gospel of the kingdom came not from themselves but was the power of the Holy Spirit working in and through them.

An April 2023 article posted by the Western North Carolina Conference of the U.M.C. cited some “shocking” statistics about pastor burnout in ministries. It said, pastors’ overall well-being has dropped significantly. Their confidence in their calling is plummeting. Pastor burnout has reached a “Five-Alarm Fire” level. The article went on to say that young pastors are being hit the hardest, and only 22% of pastors said they had regular support. The article concluded that more pastors than ever needed to seek psychological counseling to overcome their burnout. (<https://www.wnccumc.org/resourcedetail/5-shocking-realities-about-the-real-state-of-pastor-burnout-17392915>). What pastors, evangelists, missionaries and ministry leaders need most is what men like Hudson Taylor discovered: the peace

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

and fulfillment that comes from abiding in the presence of Jesus Christ, the true Vine.

“Missionaries have always recognized the biblical truth that they are in a *spiritual* war and so have no hope of success unless they are *spiritually* empowered.” *Encountering Theology of Missions* (p.239). The dynamic of spiritual power begins in the heart of the “born again” disciple. Before they can have any hope of success in ministry and avoid the burnout that plagues far too many leaders in the church today, all must wait until they receive the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. If the minister attempts to engage in the spiritual battlefields of the world, no matter how strong they may begin and no matter how good their intentions are, they will not last. They may work for many years and send good reports to their supporters back home, but the joy of the Lord that is their strength (Ne 8:10; Is 58:11) will dry up and blow away like leaves after years of drought (Ps 69:3). If that happens, the missionary may be going through the motions of ministry, but the fruit of the Spirit will wither on the vine (Is 33:9).

The true spiritual fruit of ministry is not produced by human efforts of works; it is produced by abiding. As we live in Christ and Christ lives in us, the life of His Spirit flows into our spirit, producing the fruits of righteousness, love, joy, peace, goodness, mercy, forgiveness, and hope. Jesus said that a branch cannot produce fruit when it is severed from the vine, and neither can the Christian minister produce the fruit of the Spirit when they are apart from Christ. Therefore, the key to living a life pleasing to God – a life of meaningful service to God – is to “abide” (live) in Christ. “For apart from me,” Jesus said, “you can do nothing.” The work of abiding is the work of the Holy Spirit in us and has nothing to do with us beyond a childlike faith and trust in the LORD that He will accomplish all He planned and purposed for us from creation.

Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss mentioned several key factors that make spiritual dynamics important for an effective theology of mission. “First, the church has grown fastest and is now largest in **the global South**, where many cultures have a greater awareness of the spiritual dimension of life, and where issues of spiritual power are normal.” (p.239). This presents a complex set of issues for the Christian missionary. People steeped in cultures where superstitions are part of their everyday life are filled with questions related to spiritual matters.

“Second, **the worldview** of the West itself has changed. New Age, Eastern, and animistic thought have invaded the West, even as the presumptions of modernity have eroded, and postmodern assumptions have taken hold. Westerners themselves are more inclined to turn to their ‘spiritual side’ to look for answers than to trust rational objectivity.” (p.239). Missionaries from Western nations often discover that their **rational, naturalistic** worldview and training have not adequately prepared

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

them to minister in places where the spiritual dynamics of the people emphasize the existence of supernatural powers. If Christian missionaries are not able to provide biblical answers to questions relating to the spiritual gifts, seekers and new believers may return to traditional sources for supernatural experiences. **Charismatic** and **Pentecostal** ministries that emphasize the gifts of the Spirit are extremely attractive to those believers who are influenced by ancient animistic or spiritist cults. Therefore, it is extremely important for those who exercise the gifts of the Spirit to draw clear distinctions between the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the supernatural powers of the non-Christian cults.

“Third, some missiologists have expressed frustration at the **strategies and methods** of the past and have suggested that the key to completing the task of world evangelism includes fresh approaches to employing God’s power.” (p.239). (See HANDOUT “Deliver Us from Evil – Consultation Statement” from the Lausanne Movement)

Missions that involve only humanistic social works (building school, hospitals, digging wells for fresh water, food distribution, etc.) but do not incorporate elements of spiritual warfare to deliver the lost souls out of bondage, will fall short of the Great Commission also expressed in Luke’s Gospel:

“The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.” Luke 4:18–19

Orr and Strauss noted in their chapter on “Spiritual Dynamics and Mission” the concerns that many theologians and missiologists have voiced over unbiblical practices of spiritual warfare that are easily confused with the animistic beliefs of the spirit-realm. “Our approach to issues of spiritual dynamics must be rooted in **scripture** and must **respond carefully** to cultures oriented around spiritual power.” (p.240). The two extremes to avoid are accepting a non-biblical, non-Christian cultural perspective of spiritual conflict, or on the other extreme, downplaying or denying spiritual power from the perspective of materialistic, secular Western culture.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND MISSION

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

“Mission is impossible without the work of the Spirit, and the work of the Spirit will result in mission.” (p.240). The work of the Holy Spirit in missions can be understood clearly when we see what the Spirit’s role is in the life of the church.

1. **The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth** (John 14:7; 15:26; 16:13). Jesus sent the Holy Spirit in part to remind His apostles, evangelists, preachers, and teachers of all that Jesus taught them while He was with them in person. The Holy Spirit led the writers of the New Testament to write and how to express Jesus’ words faithfully and truthfully, which have become the core message for mission.
2. **The Holy Spirit convicts unbelievers of their sins and their unbelief**. (John 16:7-11). Apart from the Holy Spirit no one can understand the gospel message, “Without this convicting work of the Holy Spirit, individual will not respond to the missionary’s presentation of the gospel.” (p.241).
3. **The Holy Spirit regenerates unbelievers**. “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:4–7). Also John 3:5-8. Causing spiritually dead human beings to be born again to new life is the work of the Holy Spirit.
4. **The Holy Spirit created the church**. The New Testament church officially began on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit filled believers with His power (Acts 2:4). By the Holy Spirit, all believers have been baptized into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13). Throughout the book of Acts, Luke describes how the Holy Spirit led the apostles from Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the gates of Rome, preaching the gospel and planting churches along the way. “The church is God’s main source and vehicle for mission, and the establishing of new churches is central to the goal of mission.” (p. 241).
5. **The Holy Spirit empowers and emboldens the church for ministry**. The book of Acts tells the story of how the church, filled by and empowered by the Holy Spirit, grew and expanded in the face of great persecution (Acts 4:1-31; 5:12-32; 7:54-60; 8:1-3; 9:23-25; 14:19-21; 16:16-37; 17:5-9; 19:21-41; 21:30-40). The Holy Spirit enables fearless witnesses to spread the gospel around the world to this day.
6. **The Holy Spirit is the one who calls believers into specific missionary service. Once they on mission with God, His Holy Spirit guides those he has called**. “God specifically calls some to give a significant portion of their

lives working cross-culturally... As they go, the Holy Spirit opens and closes doors to guide them to specific areas of service.” (p.241).

7. **The Holy Spirit may confirm the gospel message through miraculous signs**. Not all Christians agree on whether miraculous signs are for the church today, or if proofs of spiritual realities are still necessary to verify the gospel. Some missionaries believe that active participation in the spiritual gifts for empowering ministry is essential for confirming the gospel message. Charismatic and Pentecostal churches are planted easily and grown swiftly in places where superstitions are strongest. Other Christians are not convinced that this way is a reliable method of confirming the gospel message for unbelievers. The danger of relying too much on supernatural experiences to spread the gospel is that it will create a reliance upon the spectacular to convince unbelievers and then to keep them in the church after they have made a confession of faith. However, at the same time, it cannot be denied that numerous stories of missionaries through the centuries have proven the work of the Holy Spirit in missions by confirming His message through the demonstration of miraculous signs and wonders.

Two extreme positions on the gifts of the Spirit have created a major split in the church over the theology of mission. The first extreme position is that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit ceased with the first Apostles. Known as **Cessationism**, those who accept this view argue that once the church was established, the dynamic demonstrations of the Holy Spirit’s power were no longer necessary, and therefore the LORD withdrew the gifts of signs, wonders, speaking in tongues, prophecy, etc. and the Holy Scriptures of the authorized canon would be sufficient for all believers for divine revelations. Although Cessationists make some valid points, the fact remains that nowhere does the Scripture state that the gifts of the Spirit were given to the church for a limited time:

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

The other extreme view of the gifts of the Spirit is what some have called “**Hyper-charismatic**” (also Third-wave or Neo-charismatic). Central to their beliefs is the method of evangelism that promotes “Signs and Wonders” as essential to the gospel message. These Charismatics believe that supernatural power can be exercised by any Christian who has confessed their belief in the Holy Spirit and has been anointed to do miracles. Healing, miraculous signs, and often strange manifestations of the supernatural are encouraged in their public meetings. The beliefs in the right to financial prosperity and dominion over the kingdoms of this earth are included in their teachings. However, many of the “power encounters,” or supernatural acts, that occur in this type of missions are not disguisable from the supernatural actions performed by the priests, shamans, or priests and priestesses of non-Christian religions. The extreme charismatics believe that “power evangelism” (evangelism with supernatural wonders sharing the Gospel message) is more effective than evangelism without signs. Therefore, they dismiss all cautions, leap over any Scriptural boundaries and chase after anyone who is able to perform special miracles at will in their gospel meetings.

Although the belief in power evangelism may be similar to the type of evangelism that first-century Christians used, the unrestrained ways the supernatural gifts are exercised by extreme Charismatics may have caused an over-reaction against any manifestations of the supernatural by non-charismatic believers.

What the proponents of the new Charismatic (or New Apostolic) movements ignore most often is the simple fact that although everything of the Holy Spirit is supernatural, not everything that is supernatural is of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the lack of discernment coupled with immature believers being encouraged to pursue mystical experiences have caused confusion and dissention in the ranks of the church.

The Apostle Paul faced a similar situation with the church at Corinth. New believers there were abusing some of the gifts of the Spirit – especially tongues and prophecy. In 1 Corinthians chapters 11 – 14, Paul addressed forcefully the chaos and confusion that was being caused by those who were engaging in disorderly worship in the church. He gave clear instructions on the conduct of public worship, including the conduct of the Lord’s Supper, the unity and diversity of spiritual gifts, the function of the gifts in the body of believers, and the proper uses of prophecy and tongues. Paul’s instructions on these gifts and the conduct of public worship could best be summed up by his words, “Let all things be done decently and in order.” (14:40).

The answers to both extreme positions are to turn to the Bible, and carefully study what Paul and the other Apostles wrote to the church about the gifts of the

Spirit; then follow closely what the inspired word of God says without compromising it or watering it down to fit one’s own theological point of view.

“Any discussion of spiritual dynamics and mission must address the spirit world that plays such a prominent role in the current age of conflict. The presence and power of these unseen forces is a real part of both biblical theology and the worldview of most of the peoples of the earth.” (*Encountering Theology of Missions*, p.252). Before embarking on any missionary journey, the disciple must carefully count the cost and consider the spiritual dynamics of the work they are entering. Fulfilling the great commission means advancing the kingdom of God and that will always involve spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:10-20). However, Christians boldly put on the full armor of God knowing that Satan is a defeated foe.

Prayer is another essential for successful ministry: “Failure to pray for people to come to Christ, for the gospel to advance, and for ‘God’s will to be done on earth, as it is in heaven’ is acceptance of Satan’s partial rule in this present age. It is passive support of the enemy. Sometimes the expression *warfare prayer* is limited to praying to cast out demons from individual, or to bind demons who have control over places or institutions. However, the concept of warfare prayer must be extended to include all prayer for the destruction of Satan’s kingdom and the advance of Christ’s rule through the gospel.” (pp. 248-249).

Like Hudson Taylor, countless other missionaries have discovered that they are engaged in spiritual warfare for the lost, and being on the frontlines of that warfare, the missionary, his family, and co-workers are going to be targets for Satan’s attacks.

To this day, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and ministry leaders on mission with God join the company of Paul and every saint that came after him who learned this truth from the Holy Spirit: “My grace is sufficient for you.” Hudson Taylor wrote, “I am no longer anxious about anything, as I realize this; for He, I know, is able to carry out His will, and His will is mine. It makes no matter where He places me, or how. That is rather for Him to consider than for me; for in the easiest positions He must give me His grace, and in the most difficult His grace is sufficient.” All ministry leaders must rest on the promises of God that no matter what the circumstances might be, God’s all-sufficient grace is there to carry them through because the life of the Vine is flowing through them. So, like Taylor, they discover the spiritual dynamics of mission hinges upon abiding in Christ the Vine: “So, if God place me in great perplexity, must He not give me much guidance; in positions of great difficulty, much grace; in circumstances of great pressure and trial, much strength? No fear that His resources will be unequal to the emergency! And His resources are mine, for He is mine, and is with me and dwells in me. All this springs from the believer's oneness with Christ. And since Christ has thus dwelt in my heart by faith, how happy I have been!”

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON EIGHT

1. Jesus' Apostles testified that their courage, strength, and power to boldly preach the gospel of the kingdom did not come from themselves. Where does it come from?
2. Review Hudson Taylor's spiritual struggle. What do pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and ministry leaders need most to avoid burnout?
3. How important to successful ministry is it that missionaries recognize they are in a spiritual war and need spiritual power?
4. Read Luke 4:18–19 again. How does the application of Jesus' Mission statement guide missionaries away from the two extremes of theology of missions: either accepting a non-biblical perspective of spiritual warfare or denying spiritual power in missions altogether?
5. What are the seven active roles of the Holy Spirit's work in the life of the church? Is a successful mission possible without the work of the Spirit?
6. Describe the importance of praying in the full armor of God for successful ministry.
7. What does the statement, "My grace is sufficient for you" mean to those who follow in the footsteps of Paul and all other pastors, teachers, evangelists, and missionaries who came after Paul?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS
DISCIPLESHIP 103-9**The Holy Spirit in Ministry Life and Work**

The material for this lesson was taken from *The Holy Spirit In You: Nourishing the Life of Holiness and Power in You*, Copyright © 2016 by Frederick Osborn. The material has been edited and formatted to fit with the SGM Professor Syllabus.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

"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." John 15:5

Fruit of the Spirit: A Christlike Character

"All real beauty of character, all real Christlikeness in us, is the Holy Spirit's work. He is to the Christian what the sap is to the tree – the source of productive life and power. The fruit spoken of is not service or soul winning, though this needs to be emphasized, but rather the fruit of Christian character. This fruit does not consist in some strenuous exercise. It is not a laborious performance to bring forth some excellence. It is a natural, normal result of a healthy condition. The healthy soul, filled by the Spirit, will be fruitful." Emery H. Bancroft, *Elemental Theology: An Introductory Survey of Conservative Christian Doctrine*, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, © 1960 and 1977 by Baptist Bible College, P.224

Before packing their bags and heading off to some foreign mission field, it is absolutely critical for the missionary to take some time to evaluate their motives and goals for the sacrifices they are about to make. It is easy to get so involved with the logistics of making a mission trip that we forget the only true motivation for all that we do for others in the name of Christ ought to be *agape*. God equips all believers for ministry with the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. The fruit and the gifts all come from the same source, but the fruit and the gifts come to the believer differently and have different functions in the lives and ministries of God's people.

If Jesus ever identified exactly what He meant by the fruit of the Spirit, the Gospel writers were not moved to include them in their narratives, but that does not mean Jesus had little to say about spiritual fruit. In fact, Jesus used the image of fruit and fruit-bearing many times in His sermons and private teachings. Jesus' sermons on repentance and fruit-bearing may seem harsh and judgmental at times, but He

made it clear that He expected His followers to produce the good fruits of repentance and salvation (Matthew 7:15-27; Luke 13:1-9).

It is not enough for the missionary/evangelist to convince non-believers to say a prayer asking God to forgive their sins and then to pronounce them “Christians”. A person cannot be a Christian in name only but must also demonstrate the genuineness of their conversion by bearing fruit in keeping with that conversion. Does that mean that salvation is not the free gift of God? No. Does it mean we must add works for salvation to what Jesus Christ did on our behalf? No. It means that salvation, if it is genuine, will naturally include repentance and turning away from sin in order to bear the fruit of a transformed life (James 1:12-27).

No matter who they are or where they come from, all Christians are required to produce the fruit of the Spirit in their life because it is the natural outpouring of the life of the Vine flowing into them, the branch. When abiding in the vine, the fruit of the Spirit-filled life comes naturally, but it is not produced by the branch. Apart from the vine the branch can do nothing – the fruit comes from the life of the vine flowing inside the branch. The branch only does the abiding and therefore can take no credit for any fruit it produces.

The fruit of the Spirit is not the result of living on mission with God; its presence makes fruitful ministry possible. The well-known author and Bible scholar, Tom Blackaby, said it clearly, “The cross in the Christian’s life does something radical. The more you know and understand what God was doing for you – and what the alternative was if He hadn’t – the more impossible it is to live your life unto yourself. It’s a spiritual impossibility. Once you understand the cross, a selfish, self-centered life is simply no longer an option.” Paul understood the same message and wrote in Romans 7:4 (NIV) “So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.”

From the beginning, Christians should be taught that they were not born again to sit in church and take up space on Sunday mornings. Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.” John 15:16 (NIV) Note that Christians today are very quick to quote the part of this verse that says the Father will give you whatever you ask for, but often skip over the precondition of living a fruitful life spiritually before receiving whatever is asked for.

We can summarize Jesus’ teachings on the fruit of the Spirit from Matthew 7:16-20; 12:33; Luke 6:43-44; 13:6-9; John 4:34-38; and 15:1-16 as follows:

- **Fruit comes from “abiding.”** To abide, means to endure, or remain steadfast in the presence of God. Abiding means far more than just believing in Jesus as the Son of God, but there is no need to over-mystify

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

the idea; abiding should not be confused with certain mystical practices like soaking worship or contemplative prayers. We learn to abide as we spend time reading, studying, and meditating upon God’s word, the Bible (cf. Ps. 19:14; 107:19-22; 119:10-12, 55-58).

- We abide when we remain steadfast in prayer with thanksgiving and intercession (cf. Eph. 1:15-17; 5:20; Col. 3:20).
- We abide when we endure in worship even when we are experiencing hard times or do not feel like worshipping (cf. Ps. 34:1; 62:8; Col. 3:16-17).
- We abide when we remain in fellowship with other believers. We remain in Him when we obey His commands – the most important being that we love one another (cf. Jn. 13:34, 35; 15:9-12; Ro. 12:9-14; Eph. 4:2-3; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Jn. 4:7-12).
- **The life of the vine flows into the branches.** By His Spirit, Christ indwells His disciples, the branches. We become His disciples by grace and faith and His life fills us so we have life abundantly. The life that Jesus imparts to His branches is eternal life (cf. Jn. 3:36; 5:21; 8:12; 10:28; 11:25; Ro. 8:11)
- **The purpose of the branch is to bear fruit.** The life Jesus gives has a purpose. Just as the branch serves a purpose: to bear fruit. We are the branches that bear the fruit of Christ’s life within (cf. Ro. 7:4; Heb. 13:15-16).
- **The life of the vine flows into the branch,** and the branch becomes fruitful. Fruit is the natural product of the branch. The branch does not make the fruit; life of the vine (Christ) that is in the branch (the disciple) is what produces the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Phil. 1:9-11).
- **If a branch does not produce fruit, it is cut off and burned in the fire.** The Father expects us to bear fruit. Fruit is not optional – without fruit a fruit tree is useless and will be chopped down and removed from God’s Garden. A disciple that will not surrender their self-will to God cannot abide in Christ. Abiding produces the good fruit of the Holy Spirit. If there is no fruit, the disciple will be cut off as a useless branch and will be burned – there are no exceptions. Without getting into the “once saved always saved” debate, it is clear that Jesus taught the whole purpose for our being saved is to be a conduit for His life (Holy Spirit) to flow into us. His life is what produces the fruit of the Spirit. If there is no fruit, the branch will be removed to make way for other fruit bearing branches to grow and produce even more fruit (cf. Matt. 13:40-42; Lk. 3:17; Rev. 21:8).

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

- **The Father prunes each branch to make it more productive.** Pruning is the process of sanctification, which is the cutting away of anything that inhibits the life of the vine from reaching the branch. One of the functions of the Holy Spirit is to convict the disciple of sin so that they will repent and remove from their soul anything that obstructs the flow of the life of the vine into them (cf. Ro. 13:12; 15:16; 1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 5:8-11; 1 Th. 4:3; 5:23; 2 Th. 2:13; Heb. 2:11; 12:7-11).
- **A Good tree produces good fruit;** a bad tree produces only bad fruit. Because a tree is known by its fruits, “You must be born again.” The Father expects those who are born again to bear good fruit. (cf. Ps. 52:8-9; Pr. 11:30; 15:3-4; Is. 61:1-3; Jas. 3:11-18).
- **Fruit of the Spirit is gathered for eternal life.** (cf. Jn. 4:34-38; Ro. 2:7-8; 1 Tim. 6:11-12; Jude 1:20-21).

The fruit of the Spirit is distinguished from the gifts of the Spirit in one very important way: the fruit of the Spirit is for the development of Christlike character in the believer, whereas the gifts of the Spirit are used to minister to the body of Christ, His church. All are important and none should be neglected, but each has its place and purpose in the life of every disciple of Jesus Christ. Preaching the gospel and planting churches are important to the fulfillment of the Great Commission. However, disciple-making (leading others to become like Christ) compliments the inward work transformation by the Holy Spirit.

The fruit of the Spirit is in fact a list of the attributes of **our Master, Jesus Christ**: love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These attributes are manifested in the character of a person who spends a lifetime abiding in Christ. A Christian is an adherent – one who sticks or holds fast to Christ through all the ups and downs, trials, and tribulations of this life while the Holy Spirit molds the character of the disciple. In other words, a Christian is one who abides (lives) in Christ; and through that process of abiding, the Holy Spirit produces a life that takes on the character of Christ.

If Christians are supposed to take on the character of Christ, then it is essential to know what Jesus Christ was like. We know what Christ was like by the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. When we study the story of Jesus in the Gospels as more than history, biography, or theology, but as our example to follow and be like, then we discover not only the teachings of our Master, but also who He is and what we are to emulate. It would be arrogant and boastful to attempt to be anything like Jesus except that we realize we are not doing it, but it is the life of the vine in us

that does it. Our part in this is only to submit to the process and let Him do the “making.” Jesus calls, we follow, and the Holy Spirit in us does the making.

Love “Agape”

“Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” (Mark 10:21)

“Agape” describes the unique kind of love that Jesus demonstrated all of His life and especially in His sacrificial death. “If we have this love, we give ourselves joyfully to the service of others and are willing to suffer for them.” John Hargreaves, *A Guide to St. Mark’s Gospel*, ISPCK, Delhi, India, Pub. 2006, p.164

The man in this passage was unwilling and unable to give up what was necessary for him to give if he were to abide with the Master. Jesus called, but because the rich young man’s love (Gr. *Eros*) for his wealth, he fell by the wayside. Jesus gave everything... everything for us, including His very life’s blood upon the cross so that we might have eternal life and dwell with Him now and forever.

“For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel.” John 5:20

Agape is the life-force that binds the **Persons of the Godhead** together in all eternity. It is that same life-force that flows through the Vine to the branches and brings forth the fruit of Christlikeness in the disciple – the branch that remains in the Vine. “Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.” (Colossians 3:1-4 NIV)

Near the end of His earthly ministry (John 14:19-24), Jesus gathered His disciples around him and told them, “A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.” Because the Vine lives, we have life. It does not depend upon us or our ability to generate life. The only thing a branch can produce in and of itself is an artificial life – something that “looks” real but is in fact dead.

Jesus continued, “At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and

manifest Myself to him.” Jesus is not content for His followers to be hearers only. There is an expectation that those who have ears to hear will respond in obedience (Note also the conclusion to Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:21-27). However, apart from the presence of agape flowing in and through the life of the branch, obedience becomes works righteousness that will cause the branch to become saturated with self-righteousness, which produces only bad fruit.

“Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, ‘Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.’” Love is intimately connected with God’s word. Keeping (obeying) God’s word is impossible without love. When asked, “What is the greatest commandment?” Jesus answered quickly, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” Matthew 22:37-39.

“Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” (John 13:1)

The love of Jesus for those He calls “His own” is unending. Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16) But Jesus also knew that there would be many who would refuse the life He had to give them because “...men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19b)

Those who walk in darkness cannot produce the **good fruit of the kingdom**. Because their deeds are evil, they can only produce evil. Jesus said, “...you shall know them by their fruits.” It is only when we are firmly abiding in the vine, allowing His love to flow in us and through us that we are able to produce the fruit of agape. “There is no mystery about it. We love others, we love everybody, and we love our enemies because He first loved us.” – Henry Drummond.

Agape is the only remedy for the self-referential love (*eros*) that the world offers. Apart from the vine, our love is always tainted by the flesh; we love when... we love if... All human love is tainted with hidden agendas, the taking of personal advantage of others, the desires to look and feel good. Apart from the life of the vine flowing in and through us we often use *eros* as a means to manipulate and control

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

others – we give love if they do what we ask and withhold it if they do not. Without agape, we are only capable of loving if it does not cost us more than we are willing to sacrifice to keep on loving others. But when the life of the vine is in us, we have agape – a self-sacrificing love that loves for the sake of the one being loved and not for whatever benefit we may get from it. “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.” (1 John 3:14; note also 4:7, 10-13, & 16-19).

Joy

“These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” John 15:11

Joy is defined as a feeling of great happiness or pleasure, especially of an elevated or spiritual kind. It is also defined as a source of happiness - that which causes us to take delight in something. As a fruit of the Spirit, joy is the product of the presence of the life of the Vine in us. Joy is not to be confused with the absence of or the denial of pain. Jesus could find joy in the simple things, like a child’s smile and sense of wonder; or he could find joy in doing His Father’s will, even when that meant going to the Cross. “You have heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away and coming back to you.’ If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, ‘I am going to the Father,’ for My Father is greater than I.” (John 14:28).

Just like love, joy is a choice. It is a fruit of the Spirit that stems from abiding over time. Spiritual Joy is more than an emotion; it is a **deep peace that abides in God**. It develops as the life of the Vine flows into the branch unobstructed by fear, doubt, and faithlessness. The joy of the Christian is discovered as they confidently abide (rest, remain) in God, knowing in their heart of hearts that no matter what their circumstances, God is in control and that God is with us no matter what happens.

Peace

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” John 14:27

The word “peace” appears in the New Testament almost one hundred times. With the exception of “love” no other word in the Bible better describes the ministry of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. In His introduction to His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (Matt. 5:9) To the kingdoms of this world, “peace” is simply “an interlude between wars”. But for those who abide in the Vine, “peace” has a greater significance in that it speaks of the **health and wholeness** that emanates from the innermost being of a

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

person who has been restored to a proper relationship with God. The peace this world has to offer is primarily external; it is enforced militarily or maintained politically. Because the peace of this world is based upon our immediate circumstances, it is temporary at best.

Abiding in the Vine is what sanctifies the branches. The writer of Hebrews said it this way: “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord.” (12:14) The peace that Jesus, the true Vine has to offer is spiritual – from the heart – and originates from Him and flows into the innermost being of the branches. Lasting peace between nations, between individuals, between man and nature, and between man and his Creator all flow from the hearts of individuals secure in the presence of the Supreme Peacemaker, Jesus Christ.

Longsuffering (Patience)

“Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.” Romans 12:12-13 (NIV)

To be longsuffering means to endure, to be persistent, to persevere, and to be tolerant – all of that adds up to being able to gracefully put up with harsh conditions, ill treatment, suffering, or persecution. Jesus Christ is our role model for patiently enduring with sinners; remember that He patiently endured with us in the same way (Rom. 9:20-24). The Lord has every right to destroy each and every one of us, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...” (Rom. 3:23). Apart from the fruit of longsuffering, we will find it impossible to bear with one another in love. Christians often become irritable and impatient with those who seem to be struggling too much and not making enough spiritual progress. Possessing the fruit of the Spirit is what allows us to be patient with everyone, encouraging the timid, helping the weak, and warning those who are sluggish in their faith not to take undue advantage of God's mercy towards them (Eph. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:14).

Kindness

Kindness, compassion, and sympathy are all related terms. Jesus demonstrated these attributes on numerous occasions (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 20:34; Mk. 1:41; 9:42; Lk. 7:13). The disciple that abides with the Lord will discover a greater capacity for lovingkindness. Showing simple kindness to others may not seem that important when compared to other charitable acts of mercy. We often think that the great philanthropists that give large endowments to the poor must be the greatest ones in heaven. But Jesus showed His disciples that the smallest act of kindness can be as great or greater in the kingdom as writing out the million-dollar check. For

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

God, it is not the size of the gift that matters, but it is the **size of the heart and the amount of faith** behind the gift that He measures (Mk. 12:42-43). There are many places in the world today where Christians live in poverty. They may have very little to share with others, but sometimes a simple act of kindness like giving a cup of cold water or offering a scoop of rice and a handful of vegetables to the hungry is greater than a lavish meal served to the well-fed at a king's table.

Goodness

Ephesians 5:8-14 reminds those who abide in the Vine that they should remember that they were once in darkness, but now the light and life of the Lord is flowing into them. Therefore, they possess “the fruit of light” which consists of all goodness, righteousness, and truth” in them. This fruit of the Spirit comes from finding out what pleases the Lord and from having “nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness.” The fruit-bearing branches expose those barren branches that shun the light of the Lord. “But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible.” 2 Peter 1:3-9 lists several Christlike qualities of Christians. A Christian can only possess these qualities when they let go of their old sinful life and cling to the Vine. For if we possess the life of the Vine then we will possess these qualities in increasing measure.

Faithfulness (Prayer)

A Christian is someone who is faithful: consistently **loyal and conscientious** in how they display their devotion to Jesus Christ. They will have a sense of responsibility to be truthful in the performance of their duties to the Lord and to others – especially to other believers. Jesus was well-pleased with those who exhibited faith in Him (Matt. 15:8; 17:20; Lk. 5:20; 7:9) and often rewarded them by answering their prayers.

Faithfulness means to be correct, authentic, real, close to or accurate in being like Christ. Faithfulness in the Christian is shown by how exactly their character matches that of their Master, Jesus Christ. Because Jesus Christ is faithful, He is the One who makes us faithful – as long as we remain in Him (1 Cor. 1:8-9; 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:24). Faithfulness comes from abiding; our faithfulness is exhibited when we remain unwavering in our loyalty to the Lord and steadfast in our belief in God to answer our prayers – even when the evidence is not immediately forthcoming (Rom. 12:9-13).

Gentleness

Gentleness is the attribute of the disciple who has found **peace with God**. This world is full of things that irritate our emotions and disturb our peace. The ability to

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

stay calm, easy-going, amiable (friendly and pleasant to be with), and totally non-violent is impossible to maintain with much success apart from abiding in Christ.

The fruit of the Spirit of gentleness is not easy for those who have learned how to deal with the issues of life only from the old sin nature of Adam. Adam's nature trains the flesh to lord over others and impose one's own will to get their way; they threaten, bully, manipulate, and intimidate others to maintain control over them. That is not the way of the Holy Spirit. Abiding in the Vine is where we learn how to submit to one another as is fitting in the Lord (1 Peter 5:5). The healthy branch is submitted to the vine and the life of the Vine flows into it. The flesh equates humility and being submissive to one another as weakness and humiliation, but the Holy Spirit in us teaches us to put on Christlike humility, knowing that "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

Self-Control

The purpose of self-control in the disciple is to develop the Christlike character of chastity. Chastity means much, much more than abstaining from unlawful sexual intercourse, it means "purity in conduct and intention; restraint or simplicity in design and expression; or having personal integrity" – all of which are developed by self-control. The inward quality of spiritual self-control in mind, emotions, and will power can express itself outwardly in a number of ways, including set times of fasting, prayer, regular times of fellowship, and meditation upon or study of God's Word. It can also express itself in modest and decent manner and dress in front of others. A sure sign of spiritual immaturity in believers is dressing in inappropriate clothing, jewelry, makeup, etc. or conforming to unsuitable, sinful behaviors or following cultural norms that do not line up with the words or actions of Jesus Christ or His church (Rom. 8:29; 12:1-2; 1 Pet. 1:13-15).

SUMMARY

Christians in general believe that **the character qualities**, which are the fruit of the Spirit, are the qualities that can and should be enhanced in those who have the Holy Spirit within them:

"The Spirit comes to indwell or take up His abode in the life of the believer at regeneration and abides there, no matter how imperfect or immature that life may be. The indwelling of the Spirit is an advance upon the work of regeneration. The new creation is thereby enabled to grow. We need to realize and recognize His abiding presence in the temple of our bodies. This recognition should make them hallowed and lead us to keep them undefiled and free from sin. Recognition of His

presence is also the secret of the realization of His power." Emery H. Bancroft, *Elemental Theology: An Introductory Survey of Conservative Christian Doctrine*, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, © 1960 and 1977 by Baptist Bible College, P.220

Producing the fruit of the Spirit requires three things:

1. **A heart that is truly abiding in Christ.** Apart from the blood of Jesus Christ flowing into our hearts and cleansing us of all impurities, there is no abiding. That is why Jesus said, "You must be born again." A branch without the life of God within is fruitless and incapable of providing nourishment and reproducing the life of the vine that is contained within the seed of the fruit.
2. **The branch must be properly prepared by pruning out the unproductive shoots.** Anything that inhibits the fruitful growth of the branch must be cut back and removed for all that is necessary for good, healthy fruit. Good, healthy fruit will provide nourishment for the disciple who produces it and for all those around them.
3. **Abiding in the Vine requires the disciple to die to anything that prevents the life of the Vine from fully abiding in them, the branch.** As Jesus pointed out in His parable of "The Mustard Seed" (Matthew 13:32, 33), the smallest seed in the garden can become a great tree, not because of the size of the seed, but because of the life-force contained within it. Good seed is necessary to produce a good crop; but the good fruit must be consumed, and the seed must "die" in the soil before the new life within can be released and a fruit-bearing plant after its kind can come forth. This is the place where the abiding life of the disciple intersects with growth and expansion of the kingdom of God (John 12:24-26).

Questions for Lesson Nine

1. Read John 13:34-35. True Christian community is only possible when we dwell (abide) in the same vine with the same life flowing into us and making us one. Describe the love Jesus had for Lazarus, Martha, and Mary and how it relates to Christian community.
2. Read John 15:11; Matthew 5:17-19; 22:37-40. Jesus taught that it is not only possible but is proper to experience the full blessings of His Father’s creation through all of our senses, our mind, and our emotions. In what way does agape set the proper boundaries for experiencing the blessings of creation?
3. Compare the peace the world offers with the peace that comes from abiding in the Vine. How do Christians act as ambassadors of peace in this world? (Note Matthew 5:9; Luke 10:5-6; and James 3:18).
4. *Vines Expository Dictionary* says, “Patience perfects Christian character... and fellowship in the patience of Christ is therefore the condition upon which believers are to be admitted to reign with Him...” Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 6:4-6; James 5:7, 8; and Revelation 3:10, 11. Describe the ways abiding in God nourishes the soul and enables the Christian to be patient in their tribulations.
5. Read Romans 2:4; Ephesians 2:7; and 2 Peter 1:5-11. How is kindness ranked with the other gifts of the Spirit?
6. Jesus was our role model for what a chaste lifestyle should be like. When we study His life in the Gospels, we see someone who was pure, modest, and decent in all His ways. Jesus lived free from any taint of what was lewd or salacious. Read 1 John 1:5-10. How is spiritual purity possible for believers?
7. Self-control and discipline are required of Christians. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; and 2 Timothy 2:3-7. Compare what is required of a champion athlete to Paul’s description of the kind of spiritual self-control and discipline the Holy Spirit requires.
8. Read Matthew 7:16-20; 12:33; 21:19; and Luke 13:6-7. (Note also Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:9). What can we conclude from Jesus’ teachings concerning the Lord’s expectations for His disciples?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 103-10

The Holy Spirit in Ministry Life and Work

The material for this lesson was taken from *The Holy Spirit In You: Nourishing the Life of Holiness and Power in You*, Copyright © 2016 by Frederick Osborn. The material has been edited and formatted to fit with the SGM Professor Syllabus.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” Luke 11:13

Although they are different, the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts are intricately interwoven into the life of the believer. In large part, the maturity of the fruit of the Spirit in their life will determine the degree to which they are able to effectively use the gifts given. It is important to remember the key distinctions between the fruit and the gifts. Fruit is the natural product of abiding in the Vine. Fruit-bearing is the expectation of the Father. It is not the same for the gifts. A gift is something that is given by the good pleasure of the giver. It is not earned by the person receiving the gift or it would no longer be a gift, but a reward for services rendered.

A gift of the Spirit is not like the fruit of the Spirit in that it is not required but is given only out of the goodness and generosity of the giver – the Holy Spirit. Once a gift is given it may or may not be used. Oftentimes a person is given something as a gift but some of those who received the gift will only put it up on the shelf and might not use it for a long, long time – if at all. But that is the risk of the giver, what is given may never be appreciated or used; the risk of the receiver is that if they do not appreciate or use what is given, they may not ever receive another gift from the same giver. So when the Holy Spirit gives a gift, although it is not absolutely commanded that it be used, the expectation is that it will be used and will be used for the purpose it was intended (cf. 1 Tim. 4:14).

When we combine lists of gifts given in the New Testament (See HANDOUT “The Lists of the Gifts and Diversities of Ministries”) we discover the following gifts: 1) Prophecy, 2) Ministry or service, 3) Teaching, 4) Exhortation, 5) Giving, 6) Leadership, 7) Mercy, 8) Word of wisdom, 9) Word of knowledge, 10) Faith, 11) Healing, 12) Miracles, 13) Discerning spirits, 14) Tongues, 15) Interpreting tongues, 16) Helps, 17) Administrations. The lists of supernatural gifts recognized by believers today will vary slightly because not every denomination recognizes all of these gifts. Included in the gifts are the five primary ministries of the church through which these gifts are used to minister to the body of believers: Apostles, Prophets,

Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers. In this lesson we will define the gifts individually and then discuss the application of these gifts in the ministries of the church in the next lesson.

THE GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

Prophecy – The ability to receive and proclaim a message from God is the basis for authority and inspiration of the Scriptures. 2 Peter 1:20-21 states that “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Although prophecy can involve the foretelling of future events, it is the exception and not the general rule. New Testament prophets functioned much the same as the Old Testament prophets in that their primary purpose was “forth-telling” – that is communicating to people the words of God revealed to the prophet to strengthen their resolve, to obey His commandments, to encourage them to persevere in faith during difficult times, and to console them with God’s word when they are in need of comforting: “But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.” (1 Cor. 14:3)

In 1 Thessalonians 5:19-21, Paul urged believers “Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good.” It is not possible to say with any certainty if Paul was referring only to those prophecies that were from the Old Testament prophets; or if he was referring instead to new and often spontaneous prophetic revelations that can be directed to an individual or to a larger group up to and including the entire church. Some modern-day prophets take Paul’s words to their furthest extreme; these new prophets consider their revelations to be equivalent to the normative Word of God for all believers given in the Canon of Scripture. However, there is great danger in taking this view. “If prophecy is viewed as revelatory in nature, or as in any way providing for new revelation, regardless of content, it is said to conflict with the role of Scripture as the canon by which all Christian life and thought is to be judged. Any hint of the possibility of new revelation is thought to make Scripture less authoritative than Protestants claimed in the Reformation cry of sola Scriptura, and makes possible the arguments or claims for subsequent ‘scriptures’ such as the Book of Mormon...” From the Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin Editors, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill, © 1993

Gifted by the Holy Spirit, preachers and teachers are able to expound upon the words of God revealed in the Scriptures and speak prophetically from the pulpit by:

- **Strengthening Christians’ resolve to obey the Lord’s commandments.**

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

- **Encouraging them to persevere in faith during difficult times.**
- **And consoling them with God’s word when they need comforting** (1 Cor. 14:3, 6).

Service (Rom. 12:7) – The English word “serve” comes from the Greek word (διακονέω – Transliteration: diakoneō); this is the same word used for “ministry” or “deacon” (but the gift of “service” should not be considered as the exclusive gift of the office of “deacon”). The duty of “elders” is described by the Greek verb ἐπισκοπέω – Transliteration: episkopeō) which means “to exercise the oversight, to visit, care for.” They were appointed on the basis of having given evidence of fulfilling the Divine qualifications for service. Peter urged those serving as elders or overseers to serve “not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:2-3).

Teaching (Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11) — There are about 65 references to Jesus teaching or being called “teacher” in the Gospels alone. Because teaching is an integral part of many spiritual gifts, it is an essential part of Christian ministry. Jesus’ earthly ministry as rabbi and discipler involved more of His time in teaching than any other activity. In the end, He clearly instructed His disciples to make disciples, teaching them to observe all He commanded them (Matt. 28:19-20).

When the Bible speaks of teaching (and learning) it is far more than a process of imparting and acquiring knowledge. The biblical model for teaching is that of the master/disciple method where the end results are not only for the student to know what the master knows, but also to become what the master is – to be like his master in word, thought, and deed (Matthew 10:24-25a). Biblically speaking, teaching means more than transmitting information, it also means transmitting the character of master to the student.

Exhortation (Romans 12:8) – A person does not have to be a preacher to exhort others to know and follow God’s commandments. An exhorter is anyone who has been given the gift from the Holy Spirit, “the Spirit of truth” to motivate others to respond to the truth by providing timely words of counsel, encouragement, and consolation. When this spiritual gift is exercised, believers are challenged to activate their faith by putting God’s truth to the test in their lives.

There are different styles of preaching, and each has its place depending upon the gifts and skills of the preacher, the level of importance given to the Sunday sermon, and the needs of the congregation. Exhortation is the type of preaching most people are familiar with. In churches where exhortation is central, the pastor will generally be referred to as “the preacher” and his sermon is the centerpiece of every

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

Sunday worship service. One technique of preaching is delivered by a highly animated preacher. His message engages the congregation by having them punctuate his main points with shouts of “hallelujah!”, “amen”, or “praise the Lord!” Another style of preaching presents the message in a clear, organized Scripture-based message. The purpose of this technique is to urge people to exhort people to live by the Word of God. No matter what the method of delivery, exhortation is intended to cause change the hearers ways. Exhortation may be followed by an altar call or some other response mechanism. Exhorters always “preach for a decision” and wants the congregation to act.

Giving (Romans 12:8) – The ability to contribute material resources with generosity and cheerfulness for the benefit of others and the glory of God is something all Christians should have in common. Christians with this spiritual gift do not have to be wealthy. Abiding in the Vine and taking on Christ’s character is what makes the Christian able to give freely, trusting in God to meet their needs no matter what financial circumstances they are in. Note in Acts 2:42-45 how the early church devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, to fellowship, to prayer, and had everything in common - even selling their possessions and goods, to make sure anyone who was in need was taken care of.

Abiding in the Vine enlightens the mind of the Christian with the knowledge that God, the source of all wealth, is the source of all wisdom including how to gain wealth. In 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, 11, Paul commended those believers who gave generously, even in their poverty because their giving was in faith that God’s provision would always be with them. Paul also noted that when we give, God will give us even more because He knows we can be trusted with wealth and will not use it for selfish, self-indulgent purposes; and when Christians give their gifts to people who are in great need, those who receive the gifts will burst out in thanksgiving to God and in the end, God will get the glory.

Leadership (Romans 12:8) – In his Introduction to his *Leadership Study Bible*, John Maxwell wrote, “A follower of God should be a leader of people. That’s more than just being ‘boss’ or having a leadership position. And it certainly doesn’t mean being pushy or in control. Jesus taught what it means serving others (see Matt. 20:25-28). While there is a gift of leadership (according to Romans 12:8), you need not possess that gift to exert your influence in a Christlike way. Leadership is influence – nothing more, nothing less. If you are being salt and light as Jesus commanded, then you have begun to obey God’s call to leadership.”

A leader may have the ability to discern God's purpose for a group, set and communicate appropriate goals, and motivate others to work together to fulfill their service to God. But in the end, their influence and effectiveness to influence others is directly related to the qualities of Christlike character he (or she) possesses. Jesus’ teaching on the Good Shepherd clearly defines the qualities of leadership in the kingdom. A godly leader is a shepherd who labors out of love first for God, then for others; he will have a heart for the sheep; he will lay down his life for the sheep in a multitude of ways; he will be a model of faithful service to his Master, Jesus Christ; he will feed the flock with the Word of God; he will tenderly and genuinely care for the sheep; and he will possess godly wisdom in the way he leads the sheep (1 Peter 5:2-4). Without these qualities, a leader will often resort to fear, intimidation, manipulation, or coercion to force those under him to do what he wants.

Mercy (Rom. 12:8) – compassion, forgiveness, understanding, kindness, etc. these are all necessary attributes of Christ. It takes a special gift to be able to deeply empathize and engage in genuine compassionate acts on behalf of other people who are suffering physical, mental, or emotional distress without becoming overwhelmed by the sheer weight of human suffering in this fallen world. However, Christian compassion goes beyond sympathy for the suffering of others and includes a desire to help (Rom. 12:9-13; James 2:14-17). Related to compassion is the ability to forgive. The forgiving quality of pardoning someone for a sin or wrongdoing comes out of the agape of abiding in Christ. Jesus was unequivocal and unwavering in His teachings that forgiveness is an essential quality for His disciples (Matt. 6:12, 14-15; 18:21-35).

Wisdom (1 Cor. 12:8) – with approximately 225 references to the word “wisdom” itself and hundreds more references to related words like “understanding” and “knowledge,” wisdom is clearly a major theme throughout the Bible. Wisdom was one of the hallmarks of Jesus’ earthly ministry (Mark 6:2). In the end when He was preparing His disciples for His departure, He promised them the Holy Spirit to be with them to teach and guide them (Mk. 13:11; Lk. 12:11-12; Jn. 14:26; 20:22). The Holy Spirit inspired wisdom literature of the Old Testament indicates the importance of wisdom in God’s people. Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs represent some of the most beautiful writings of the Old Testament.

The gift of wisdom gives Christians the ability to make sensible decisions that show up in our ways of thinking, judgments, and actions. Because they are based on knowledge of the words and ways of God (1 Jn. 1:7; 2:6; 2 Jn. 1:4, 6; 3 Jn. 1:3), the gift of wisdom enables the disciple to make smart decisions using good sense,

Knowledge (1 Cor. 12:8) – Knowledge is “the ability to discover, analyze, and systematize truth for the benefit of others.” With this gift, the disciple is able to speak

with understanding and perception. Some also associate supernatural discernment with this gift. Because wisdom and knowledge are so closely linked, just the possession of information can be thought of as wisdom by some. But the accumulation of facts, ideas, truths, or principles is no guarantee of spiritual wisdom. The Holy Spirit is the keeper and giver of wisdom; so any wisdom that comes from studying God’s word must be credited to Him. (Rom. 12:2; 1 Cor. 14:6; Col. 1:10)

Related to the gift of knowledge is the ability to accurately transmit what has been learned. Abiding in the Vine is essential for the effective use of the gift of knowledge. It takes a certain level of intimacy with the Holy Spirit for us to receive with confidence the knowledge He wants to impart, but spiritual knowledge is not for an elite few that have been specially chosen for that knowledge. Anyone with a heart for God and a love and passion for the truth of His word can receive this gift (Luke 10:21-24).

Faith (1 Cor. 12:9) – Of the 245 occurrences of the word “faith” in the Bible, 243 of them are found in the New Testament. To have trust, belief in, and devotion to God without demanding logical proof is central to what we are as Christians. The faith of Christians may be without logical proof, but that does not mean it is illogical or that it is irrational faith. The faith that Christians possess is a conviction, assurance, trust, confidence and reliance upon the promises of God. By far, the best definition of “faith” ever given is found in Hebrews chapter 11.

A true, biblical faith does not demand signs, miracle healings, or spiritual enlightenment to prop it up (Matt. 16:4; 1 Cor. 1:22-23). A true biblical faith stands on its own, waiting expectantly, discerning the times, and trusting in God regardless of the circumstances. The gift of faith is what allows the Christian to have belief in, devotion to, and trust in Jesus Christ and His promises without either logical proof or miraculous signs and wonders (Jn. 20:29).

For the Christian, the gift of faith means much more than having a loyalty to a system of religious belief, or belonging to a group of people who adhere to it. This gift of faith is how Christians anywhere can maintain their strongly held beliefs or principles without demanding that the Lord proves Himself to them. This gift of faith is what gives the Christian the strength and courage to persevere through every storm of life. However, the Christian’s allegiance or loyalty to the Lord must have a biblical foundation; we have faith that is rooted and grounded in our obedience to the Word of God (Matt. 7:24-25). “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:17).

Healing (1 Cor. 12:9, 28, 30) – The gift of healing is given to those who are willing and able to humbly serve as a human instrument through whom God will cure

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

sicknesses and restore the physical, emotional, or mental health of those who need the healing touch of God. It is absolutely essential to understand that the person who receives this gift does not suddenly become the source of power; they are merely a vessel that can only heal those that the Lord chooses to heal through them.

The gift of healing is not exclusively a supernatural gift, but extends to doctors, nurses, counselors, and all kinds of professionals who regularly treat and give comfort to those in pain. The contributions of godly men and women to the art and science of treating the sick is extensive. Moved by a Christlike compassion for those who are suffering, Christians have been in the frontlines of offering aid and comfort to those who need physical, emotional, or spiritual healing and we should not discount the contributions of Christian healers just because they do not make a show of spectacular, supernatural healings.

The Holy Spirit’s gift of healing is most effective for those who are abiding in the Vine – especially for those who are suffering from mental and emotional hurts. It is in abiding that the life of Christ flows into the souls of the distressed. The word of God has the power to heal those who are afflicted in mind; His agape has the power to heal those with damaged emotions. His promises in the Bible, which number in the thousands, give hope and the will to live a healthy and productive life to many a soul that has lost the will to carry on. This special gift of healing should never be cheapened by a circus atmosphere and with a sideshow magician’s tricks. When God heals it is a wonderful thing, indeed. To Him and to Him alone should go all the glory!

Miracles (1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 29) — the gift of miracles is closely related to gift of healing except for the fact that the nature of miracles make them all supernatural occurrences. To be supernatural, the event must be something that cannot be produced by natural causes that are in effect at the time and place the event takes place. The capacity to serve as an instrument through which God accomplishes unusual acts that manifest His supernatural power is rare. Miracles are like the healing gift because they bear witness to the presence of God, and the truth of His proclaimed Word. Like the gift of healing, the gift of miracles is primarily for non-believers, which is why accounts of miracles most often appear in association with evangelistic activity.

Christians whose faith is weak must be cautioned that if their faith requires constant reinforcement through signs and wonders, then miracles become expected. Once they become routine, miracles will lose their effectiveness, and the believer will want greater and greater signs and wonders to stimulate their faith or they will lose their faith altogether. That was exactly the experience of the children of Israel in the Wilderness all the great miracles they experienced on a daily basis were not enough to keep them from straying away from God.

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

Distinguishing Of Spirits (1 Cor. 12:10) – 1 John 4:6 says, “We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.” The ability to discern the spirit of truth and the spirit of error is no small matter for Christians. We live in a fallen world and there are principalities, powers, rulers of darkness, and spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places all around us. (Eph. 6:11-12).

Jesus warned His disciples that in these last days Satan’s strategy would be to deceive the world and the elect if possible (Matthew 24:4, 5, 11, 24). Paul warned the church that men would come into their ranks to cause dissention, disunity, divisions, and offenses by introducing doctrines that were contrary to what Christians had learned from the Apostles. Using “smooth words and flattering speech” their agenda is to deceive the hearts of the innocent with false doctrines (Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Timothy 4:1). But Paul was not alone in his warnings; James (1:16) and John (1 Jn. 2:26) each included strong warnings to believers not to be deceived. This leads us to ask, “How do we keep ourselves from being deceived?”

The answer is that God has equipped the church with the Spirit of truth and has specially gifted many with the ability to discern or distinguish spirits. Because of Satan’s non-stop attempts to infiltrate and subvert the church, Jesus knew that His disciples would need all the help they could get, so He sent the Holy Spirit to them (John 15:26). One of the most important functions of the Holy Spirit is to help believers to discern or distinguish between true and false spirits (1 John. 4:1). However, if a Christian chooses to believe what their itching ears want to hear over what the Word of God actually teaches, then they will quickly become overcome by deception (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

No one who is truly abiding in Christ will reject His word at the same time. “As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’” (Jn. 8:30-32)

Tongues (1 Cor. 12:10, 28, 30; 14:1-40) – Tongues is another controversial gift of the Spirit. Basically, the gift of tongues is the ability to receive and impart a spiritual message in a language the recipient never learned. Paul gave instructions to the Corinthian church on how this gift should be used in public settings. Pagan worship was often chaotic and lewd; so what was most important for the church was to keep their public meetings orderly and decent. The Scripture makes it clear that tongues is intended for the edification of members of the body of Christ when interpreted by another person with the special gift of interpretation of tongues (1 Cor. 14:1-24).

To keep things from looking and sounding confused, Paul instructed the church that two or at the most three could speak in a tongue, and when it was done,

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

each person must speak in turn; a person with the gift of interpretation must be present so that the body would be edified (1 Cor. 14:26-28). “The rest of the New Testament is silent about tongues, but rich with instruction on love. Admittedly, many issues find their focus in the debates about tongues, but there is no debate at all about the fact that we owe one another love. We do not owe each other agreement, but we are obligated to accept and love each other. Whatever our convictions about tongues, we remain the children of God together, through faith in Jesus Christ.” Lawrence O. Richards, *The Victor Bible Background Commentary*, Victor Books, © 1994, p 284

Interpretation of Tongues (1 Cor. 12:10, 30; 14:5, 13, 26-28) – Speaking in tongues should be combined with the gift of interpretation to translate it into the vernacular of those present and to make it known to all whenever it is publicly uttered (1 Cor. 14:13). It is important to note that Paul’s guidelines are not his personal opinion, but are nothing less than a “command of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37). The responsibility for the proper use of the gifts of speaking in tongues and properly interpreting what has been spoken by the Holy Spirit are placed squarely upon the shoulders of the one speaking. “The person who has the ability to speak in tongues also possesses the power to bring about confusion or to build up anyone who is present when he or she exercises that charism. Paul’s repeated exhortation to do that which builds up and to be ruled by love may be the key to the whole of 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 8:1). Just as the church is not to forbid speaking in tongues (1 Cor 14:40), so too the person who manifest this gift is to act only in a manner which benefits the whole church as well as the outsider who may be present (1 Cor 14:1, 5, 12, 26, 40).” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, © 1993, p 942

By now it should go without saying that like every other gift, this gift is effective and powerful when the one exercising the gift is abiding in the Vine. Abiding helps us to be tuned into the Holy Spirit so that we can clearly hear what He wants us to speak in any given moment. Interpreting a tongue is like prophecy in that it should be 100% accurate because what is being spoken in the tongue is from the Holy Spirit and what is being interpreted is the Holy Spirit’s message. Tolerating anything less than 100% accuracy will create an atmosphere of doubt and a unhealthy skepticism over the truth and accuracy of God’s words – either spoken or written.

Helps (1 Cor. 12:28) – sometimes called the gift of hospitality, this gift is given to those wanting to help others that have certain duties or responsibilities they are unable to fulfill on their own. This may include helping others with daily chores, volunteering to help with greeting and ushering people on Sunday mornings, helping

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

in the nursery, assisting in the administration of the affairs of the church, plus a whole host of other needs for the church or community.

The Greek word we translate into English, “helps” means “to relieve, succor, participate in, and/or support.” Those who have the gift of helps will aid or render assistance to others in the church with compassion and grace. They are usually the ones who are willing to “lend a hand” and do even the most mundane and disagreeable tasks without needing recognition and with a spirit of humility and grace. Others exercise this gift of helping by assisting the widows, the elderly, or families with special needs to accomplish daily tasks by coming alongside to render assistance in those areas where help is needed. Those who exercise this gift are often overlooked or unrecognized by the church, but not by the Lord. Helpers quietly render a gift of service in the broadest sense, assisting and supporting the body of Christ.

To be effective, the gift of helps must never ignore the greater spiritual need of someone and address only the physical need (Matt. 9:1-8). It takes the fruit of abiding in the Vine to produce the unique ability to speak scriptural truth in a convicting and loving fashion. While ministering to the physical needs of others, these Christians will have the ability to quell anxiety in the brokenhearted with a cheerful disposition and confidence knowing that their timely words spoken with biblical truth and joy will be medicine for the lost or hurting souls they minister to. The gift of helps is for those “good Samaritans” who have a desire to help others by sharing their burdens when they seem too much for them to bear. Through the abiding life, these disciples have taken up the yoke of Jesus Christ and discovered their own burdens have been lifted from them. This enables them to help others until they too discover this wonderful truth of the abiding life.

Administration (1 Cor. 12:28) – this particular Greek word, κυβέρνησις (Transliteration: kybernēsis) appears only once in the New Testament Scriptures. The word derives its meaning from the Greek “to guide” (or “govern”), which denotes “steering or pilotage.” Therefore, the gift of administration or governance in the church is that of a “helmsman” who steers a church or Christian organization to its destination. A person with the gift of administration is able to guide and manage the affairs of the church in such a way that it will fulfill its necessary obligations, reach its stated goals, and implement plans for the future. The gifts of administration, leadership, wisdom, and knowledge are related to one another; a person may have one or more without all, but they are mutually supportive.

It has been said many times that the church is not only an living organism, but it is also an organization. Although we are not “of the world” we are still in it and

that means on a certain level every church (congregation) or ministry must abide by the laws of the land and by the basic rules of economics and social order. For example: when the local leadership of a church launches a major building project, they should not just start breaking ground and leave it all to faith that everything will work out fine in the end. Realistic plans have to be drawn up and approved; permits have to be acquired; bank loans have to be obtained; pledges of support have to be secured from the congregation; and everyone has to be brought into alignment with the overall vision of the expansion. All of this takes men and women in the church with the gift of administration.

The fact that the Holy Spirit moved Paul to include the gift of administration in the spiritual gifts indicates that God is concerned that His church conducts itself in an orderly manner and that the members of His body be properly cared for and guided in every aspect of their faith. This fact is reflected in the entire created order: God intended for all things to conform to a specific design and to fulfill specific functions in an overall ecosystem designed to support life on earth.

The spiritual gifts are not given for us to use to compare one against the other and to measure our importance to the body. ALL the gifts are important, and they all come from the same Holy Spirit, which makes all of them necessary. It is a sign of spiritual immaturity and worldliness to compare your gift against another. The evangelist who fills a stadium is not more important to God than the evangelist who shares the gospel with a homeless person on the street. The pastor/teacher of some mega church is not more important in God’s eyes than the teacher who gathers a few people around his or her living room for a mid-week Bible study. All have their place, and all serve a particular need at a certain level. What matters most in the kingdom of God is whether or not we answered the call and used whatever gift or talent that was given to advance the Gospel (Note the Parables of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30, the Minas in Luke 19:12-27, the Workers in the Vineyard Matthew 20:1-16, and the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25:31-46). “The greatest danger in my opinion of the exceptionally gifted person is that they will let their gift go to their head. The greatest danger for those whose gifts seem insignificant is to despise the abilities that God has given them, and to fail to use their gifts thinking they will never be missed (Matt. 25:24-30). The success of the body is proportional to the effective working of each and every member (Ephesians 4:16).” Bob Deffinbaugh

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON TEN

1. Review Paul’s first letter to the church at Corinth. Spiritual gifts are supposed to be tools for ministry (service) to build one another up and edify the church. What happens when they are abused?

2. Consider the fruit of the Spirit discussed in the previous chapter. What happens to those individuals who are given exalted positions, titles, and power apart from having demonstrated the mature fruit of the Spirit that comes from a lifestyle of abiding in Christ?
3. The Gospel is a spiritual message and therefore must be spiritually discerned. Read 1 Corinthians 2:10-16. Why do apostles, prophets, evangelists, preachers, and teachers need God’s Spirit to enable them to teach?
4. Read Acts 14:21-22; Colossians 1:27; and Hebrews 12:1-6. How does exhortation differ from evangelistic preaching? Who are the intended audience for preaching the gospel and who are the intended audience for exhortation?
5. Read Numbers 27:15-17; 1 Chronicles 10:2; and John 10:1-16. Biblical leadership is far more than setting goals and motivating others to obtain those goals. What do these verses tell us should be the qualities of Christian leaders?
6. How does the Christian understanding of mercy differ from the world’s definition of “tolerance”? (Note Matthew 5:7; John 5:13-14; 8:1-12; Deuteronomy 5:32; and Jude 1:20-23)
7. Read Matthew 7:15; 24:24; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; 2 Peter 2:1; and Revelation 16:13-15; 19:20; 20:10. What are the warnings for Christians contained in these verses?
8. Compare Paul’s instructions on how the gift of tongues should be used in public settings in 1 Corinthians 14:1-28 with Acts 2:1-13. In what ways are they similar and in what ways are they different?
9. In Revelation 4:4; 7:11 and 11:16 we are given a glimpse of the divine order that exists in heaven – an order that is also intended for the church to follow (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 1:22, 5:23; Col. 2:5; and Titus 1:5). How do the gifts of the Spirit and abiding in Christ make order and harmony possible in the church?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 103-11

The Holy Spirit in Ministry Life and Work

The material for this lesson was taken from *The Holy Spirit In You: Nourishing the Life of Holiness and Power in You*, Copyright © 2016 by Frederick Osborn. The material has been edited and formatted to fit with the SGM Professor Syllabus.

THE MINISTRY GIFTS OF THE SPIRIT

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers...” Ephesians 4:11

Ephesians 4:11 is often quoted by those who subscribe to what is called the **Five-Fold Ministry** of the church. These ministries are considered to be essential for **equipping** the church to **instruct, edify, and develop** the body of Christ; to **unify** us in love; and to **grow us up** in Christ (4:12-16). Our Christian unity stems from having peace with God, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.” (Col. 3:15 NIV)

In 1 Corinthians 12:28, Paul includes apostles, prophets, and teachers into the mix of the spiritual gifts, which indicates the close relationship between the **gifts and the ministries** of the Holy Spirit for the church. However, the best designation for the ministries is neither five-fold nor four-fold but may best be characterized as **manifold**. Ephesians 4:12-13 indicates that it is the responsibility of all believers to equip God’s people to do his work and build up the church, which is the body of Christ.

Christian unity is not “unity at any price,” but comes only after Paul laid the groundwork for doctrinal unity in the first three chapters of Ephesians. As Warren W. Wiersbe pointed out in his commentary on Ephesians, “Many people today attempt to unite Christians in a way that is not biblical. For example, they will say: ‘We are not interested in doctrines, but in love. Now, let’s forget our doctrines and just love one another!’ But Paul did not discuss spiritual unity in the first three chapters; he waited until he had laid the doctrinal foundation. While not all Christians agree on some minor matters of Christian doctrine, they all do agree on the foundational truths of the faith. Unity built on anything other than Bible truth is standing on a very shaky foundation.” *Be Rich: Gaining the Things That Money Can’t Buy*, CCMi & OM Books, Secunderabad, © 1979, pp. 96-97

Pure Christian unity depends upon a church led by those who are abiding in Christ. Mature leaders (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers) will produce the fruit of the Spirit in their own lives first. The Holy Spirit nourishes the Christlike attributes of love, joy, peace, etc. in those who are gifted to minister to the

body of Christ and inspire others to follow them as they follow Christ (Philippians 3:16-17).

The fruits of the Spirit are essential for a believer to properly handle any of the spiritual gifts they are given. Apart from the character of Christ, which is obtained by abiding in the vine, the believer has a tendency to abuse those gifts. The gifts are given for ministry (service); it is impossible to truly minister to the body of Christ apart from the gifts of the Spirit. Those gifts are imparted to the minister so that they may serve the body as Christ intended (John 21:15-17). So the fruit of the Spirit ensures the proper use of the gifts, and the gifts empower the ministries of the Holy Spirit.

Apostles (1 Corinthians 12:28, 29; Ephesians 4:11) – Almost from the beginning of the church there has been a considerable debate over the criteria for apostleship. Once Paul staked his claim for apostolic authority over the Gentile churches (Acts 15:7; Gal. 1:16; 2:7-9; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11), others questioned or rejected it (2 Cor. 10:7-18). Most Bible commentaries cite the classical Greek origin of the word *ἀπόστολος* (Transliteration: *apostolos*) to derive the English definition: “a messenger, he that is sent.” In its broadest interpretation apostles are not limited to the Twelve, but included Paul, Barnabas, Andronicus, Junia, and others (Acts 14:14; Rom. 16:7; 1 Cor. 15:5, 7; 1 Thess. 2:6). But there seems to be a further requirement: that the person who fulfills the requirements for the office of Apostle must have seen the resurrected Jesus in the flesh (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1) and to have been personally commissioned by Him. If this is the case, then this office ceased to exist by the second century. However, we have those in the church today that believe that the gift of apostleship continues to be given. As a spiritual gift, apostleship can be interpreted as the ability to begin and/or oversee new churches and Christian ministries with an inherent authority recognized by the church.

It is important to note that when Paul used the term “apostle” he did not always use it to refer to the sanctioned office. In 2 Corinthians 8:16-24 and Philippians 2:25, Paul refers men who are either sent to him to minister to his needs or sent from him as “messengers of the churches” (2 Cor. 8:23) to take care of a specific task for him. “These two references support the notion that ‘messengers (*apostoloi*) of the churches’ were well established in the Pauline churches by the middle fifties of the first century. The most probable explanation for the origin of these apostles is that Paul borrowed the idea from Jewish practice and applied it to his churches.” (The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL, © 1993, p47).

The use of *apostoloi* in Paul’s letters referring to the office as reverent and solemn is used only of himself and others who were “apostles of (or ‘in’) Christ”

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

(Rom. 1:1; 16:7; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 2:6; 1 Tim. 1:1; Tit. 1:1; NOTE ALSO 1 Pet. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1; and Jude 1:17). Once more it is important to note that Paul clearly indicated that the first and foremost qualification for the office of apostle was that the person so designated had actually seen the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ in person (1 Cor. 9:1) and had been personally commissioned by Him. This qualification would have restricted the numbers of eligible candidates to only a few: The Twelve who were personally trained and commissioned by Jesus (Matt. 10:1ff; Mk. 3:14; 6:30; Lk. 6:13; 9:1ff), and Paul who was “born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8).

Romans 16:7 indicates a handful of others were named as apostles that were not among The Twelve but were evidently directly commissioned by Christ in some way – possibly during the 40-day period immediately after His Resurrection (Barnabas, Andronicus, Junia, and possibly James, the Lord’s brother). So we have the names of seventeen apostles in the early church, but the exegetical evidence indicates that there were probably more. However no one can say with any certainty how many more apostles there were.

The big questions of our day are: “Were there any apostles after The Twelve?” And “Are there apostles in the church today?” These questions go to the heart of the issue of Apostolic Succession. (See HANDOUT Assemblies Of God Official Position Paper: “Apostles and Prophets”).

The origin of a ministry for apostles in the New Testament church is discovered in Luke chapters nine and again in Luke ten when Jesus sends messengers ahead of him. First The Twelve were given “power and authority over all demons, to cure diseases” and were sent (*apostello*) by the Lord to “to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick... So they departed and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere.” (Lk. 9:1-6); eleven of these twelve eventually went on to become the very first Apostles of the church. A similar circumstance occurs in the next chapter, only this time Jesus sends out seventy of His disciples (Lk. 10:1). Once again the Greek term *apostello* is used to indicate that these disciples had been set apart and sent out on a specific mission with the Lord’s authority. But there is no indication anywhere that any of these disciples became apostles in the same sense as the ones specifically named as Apostles of the Lord (Luke 6:13) that were sent in the previous chapter.

In only one sense it can be said of someone today that they are an “apostle”: an apostle is anyone who is chosen and “sent” by the Holy Spirit to participate in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20, and Mark 16:15-18). Therefore, there have been and remain countless numbers of apostles (missionaries) in the church that have been sent by God to diverse places near and far – even to the ends of the earth – to be His witness, to preach salvation, to make disciples, baptize those who believe, teach them, heal them, and deliver them. Today, the preferred term for *apostle* is

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

“missionary.” All have followed in the footsteps of the original Apostles in that they were sent with one or more of the gifts of the Holy Spirit to demonstrate in word and deed the Gospel of the kingdom that Jesus, “the Apostle and the High Priest of our confession” (Hebrews 3:1) preached.

Jesus personally chose twelve to follow Him as Apostles (the eleven remaining disciples after Judas Iscariot died, plus Paul on the road to Damascus). We know that the eleven chose Matthias by lot to be an Apostle to replace Judas. And a few others were called “apostles” along with The Twelve plus Paul without any indication that any of them were personally chosen by Jesus. After the first apostles passed, the office of apostle as established by Jesus, seems to have closed and will remain closed until the new heaven and new earth is revealed at the end of the age (Matthew 19:28; Luke 22:30; Revelation 21:14).

Prophets and prophecy (Romans 12:6; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28-29; 14:1-40; Ephesians 4:11). We encounter many of the same difficulties for discovering the place for the office of the prophet in the church today as we do for understanding the place for the office of the Apostle. Simply stated, prophecy is the ability to perfectly receive a message from God and then to accurately transmit that message to the people for whom it was intended. The message could involve the foretelling of future events; however when we study the biblical role for prophets and prophecy it is not difficult to conclude that the primary purpose for prophecy is forthtelling: speaking to the people the word of God for their strengthening, encouragement, and consolation.

In the New Testament, the gift of prophecy provides a word from God to a specific person or group. With the exception of Jesus’ prophecies concerning His Second Coming, and the Apostle John’s book of Revelation, prophecy in the New Testament is generally different from Old Testament prophecy. After John the Baptist’s death and Jesus’ Ascension, prophets in the church do not speak or write the normative Word of God to all believers. Some Christians maintain that the Holy Spirit gift of prophecy has ceased and that the closest thing we have to prophecy in the church today is Spirit-empowered preaching from the pulpits of churches on Sundays or at revivals. (NOTE Peter’s Pentecost sermon in Acts 2, and Steven’s sermon in Acts 7). However, there is no indication anywhere in the New Testament that the gift of prophecy (or any of the other gifts of the Spirit) would pass away completely with the original Apostles of Jesus Christ.

Clear examples of the role of prophecy in the New Testament are seen throughout the book of Acts. After Saul’s blinding encounter with the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus, the Lord spoke to Ananias in a vision (note that he is only called a disciple and not a prophet). The Lord gave Ananias specific

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

instructions to go to Paul and give him a certain message. On several occasions in Acts, a divine word of instruction is received by one of God’s servants by means of a dream or vision and the message is conveyed to the person or persons indicated, which is clearly consistent with Old Testament precedent.

“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.” (1 Corinthians 14:37) Here, Paul clearly states that prophecies are to be tested by apostolic doctrines. Before making this statement, Paul had already warned that no other foundation was acceptable for the church but Jesus Christ. The doctrines of the apostles were based on nothing other than His teachings, and therefore no prophecy will ever be in conflict with Jesus’ teachings and the teachings of the apostles that are preserved for us in the Scriptures. The men and women prophets mentioned in the book of Acts, and implied in a few other verses of some of the Epistles, were instructed to be tested not only by the apostles’ teachings, but also by the Scriptures (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul stated his understanding that along with the apostles, the prophets were foundational to the church, but Christ Jesus alone is its chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). This means that the church is built upon the spiritual heritage given to us by the early apostles and prophets of the Christian church, but Christ is the head of all and holds all together. Like the apostles, the greatness of the prophets is not based upon the size, popularity, and influence of their ministries, but by their humility, love, and sacrifice for the least of those in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever is given the gift of prophecy is given much; but “to whom much is given, from him much will be required and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.” (Luke 12:48).

A careful and objective study of the approximately 160 verses of the New Testament concerning prophets makes it clear that:

- There were recognized individuals or groups of prophets (both men and women) in the early churches often closely linked with the apostles.
- Some of those named as “apostles” (Barnabas, Silas, Paul, and John) also functioned as prophets (Acts 13:1; 15:32; Revelation 1:3).
- The integrity and authenticity of the prophet was confirmed by 100% accuracy with inspired utterances that were true to the Scriptures and apostolic doctrine.
- Although some of those who were named overseers/elders may have possessed a gift of prophecy, there is no indication anywhere in the New Testament that the possession of that gift alone made someone an overseer/elder.
- There is no indication that prophets exercised the same or more spiritual influence as the Apostles of the Lord in setting the belief and practice of the

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

Early Church.

- Prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, and appointed elders held different, but equal ministries in the early church.
- The integrity and authenticity of the prophet was confirmed by 100% accuracy with inspired utterances that were true to the Scriptures and apostolic doctrine.
- No provision is made for qualifying or appointing prophets in an office for church leadership for succeeding generations.

Because prophecy is by definition speaking the word of God into the lives of others; and because it is intended to be obeyed by those who hear it, the content of any prophecy should be tested by others in authority in the church. Prophecy should not be “above” the examination of those responsible for the other co-equal ministries of the Holy Spirit in the church: apostles, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. If there is no consensus of those present, then the prophecy must be rejected and the person speaking it should be silent. Every prophecy should always be tested by and be held accountable by the higher authority of Scripture.

Evangelists, and evangelism (Ephesians 4:11) – The gift of evangelism gives certain individuals a special ability to be unusually effective instruments for leading unbelievers to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 4:5). Some with this gift are most effective in personal evangelism, while others may be used by God in large group settings. The gift of evangelism is not necessarily used close to home but is often used in cross-cultural evangelism. The Greek word “evangelist” arises out of the Greek word *euangelion*, “good news,” or “gospel.” It has its root in the word *euangelizō*, which means to preach, preaching, to bring good news or glad tidings, or to “preach the Gospel.” A person with the gift of evangelism is able to effectively announce the gospel to others. Their heart’s desire is to bring or announce the gospel (good news) of salvation to others.

Evangelism takes a much more prominent role in The New Testament than in the Hebrew Scriptures. Galatians 3:8 declares that God Himself was an evangelist because He “preached the gospel beforehand” to Abraham. The Gospels also portray Jesus Christ as an evangelist, for He “preached the Gospel” wherever He went (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Mk. 1:14-15; Lk. 20:1). Peter declared that the apostles were commanded by Jesus to preach the gospel to the people (Acts 10:43). Paul was known as an evangelist as well as an apostle (Acts 16:10; Rom. 1:15; 1 Cor. 1:17; 9:16). Philip the deacon was an evangelist (Acts 21:8). Paul commanded Timothy, the pastor to do the work of an evangelist and to preach the gospel (2 Tim. 4:2, 5). The early disciples saw it as their duty to fulfill the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

20; Lk. 24:47-48) and started doing so after being driven out of Jerusalem (Acts 8:4). (see HANDOUT “The Kerygma”).

Once a person believes and becomes a disciple of Jesus Christ, they should immediately be encouraged go out and start sharing the Good news. It does not take a doctorate in theology to share a personal testimony and the life-changing power of the gospel with someone else. Personal evangelism or evangelism to large groups using testimonies of the life-changing power of the gospel, are even more effective when accompanied by supernatural signs. The book of Acts is filled with examples of prophetic words, exorcisms, healings, and other acts of spiritual warfare that made evangelistic messages the most effective means to spread the gospel.

No matter how well-intended, any evangelistic program of the church that depends solely upon human strategies and organization rather than a powerful move of the Spirit is doomed to failure. To be long-lasting and effective, evangelism must flow out of a life of abiding in the Vine. At the same time it is very important to remember that a testimony, a healing, an exorcism, or miracle is designed to move someone’s heart to listen to the gospel, but they are not the gospel itself. The purpose of the gift is simply to help the evangelist to bridge this present reality with the gospel message that has been preached from the very beginning.

Shepherd or **Pastor** (Ephesians 4:11) – This spiritual gift provides a person with the ability to personally lead, nourish, protect, and care for the needs of a flock of believers. Volumes have been written about the office of pastor (shepherd, or overseer) in the church; seminaries feature courses that prepare students to become pastors; there is a wealth of teaching and training materials, and seminars to guide those who want to pursue this office. However, unlike any other profession in the world, choosing to be a pastor should be a spiritual calling and therefore requires the gift of the Holy Spirit to fulfill.

In the New Testament, Paul’s three pastoral letters to Timothy and Titus provide the best spiritual insights for the pastoral calling. “Paul’s letters are a clear testimony to his pastoral heart. Indeed his letters are a product of his pastoral care, for through them Paul exercised a pastoral role in regard to the churches which he or his converts had founded.” *The Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, p. 654. In John 21:16 Peter was personally commissioned by Christ to shepherd His sheep, and like Paul, Peter also exhorted the elders in the churches of Asia Minor to do the same (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28).

The Holy Spirit reveals His role in Paul’s pastoral letters as the One who develops His ministry leaders (pastors, elders, bishops, overseers) who in turn develop other leaders. Jesus Christ, our Master, chief Shepherd, and Bishop (1 Pet. 2:25) raised up Paul and the other apostles to equip leaders like Timothy and Titus to nurture His church – especially those new believers that are almost always in need

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

of the most care and spiritual guidance. The Holy Spirit reveals to His pastors (and other leaders) the fundamental principles and guidelines for church leadership in these pastoral letters. The qualifications for overseers and their code of conduct are fulfilled by those who are truly abiding in the Vine. It is in the process of abiding that mature, fruit-bearing pastors are made. Proper teaching in the fundamentals of the Christian faith and solid training in leadership skills are very important and should not be ignored, but in the end, it is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that makes spiritual leaders in His church.

It takes the life of abiding to make gifted shepherds of God's sheep because God's leaders must live by a higher standard than those they lead; leaders cannot be mass-produced by Seminaries, but can only be carefully disciplined, mentored, and developed by other mature leaders that are producing the fruit of the Spirit. The spiritual principle involved here is "reproduction after kind" (only those who are truly abiding in Christ can reproduce those who are truly abiding in Christ). It must be the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of each leader that others see because a leader can only influence up-and-coming leaders by their example – there is no other way. Apart from the life of abiding, a leader's integrity will be constantly and severely tested, and their self-control will eventually succumb to one temptation or another.

It takes the true holiness of an abiding life in the Spirit that will equip leaders of the church to confront moral deviancy in their congregations and to contend for the uncompromised truth of the Gospel. Confronting sin and false doctrines is never easy and must be handled with love and firmness that the life of abiding enables. There are times when leaders must act with bold authority and drive out of the ranks of the church those who are corrupting God's house of worship (Mk. 11:15); and there are times when confrontation can be handled in a quieter and more subtle way (Mt. 18:15-17). But either way, Paul and the other Apostles set the example for God's overseers by constantly confronting false teachers and unrepentant sinners in the church; they treated it as their duty to deal with any threat to the souls of those that God placed under their care.

It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit to call leaders who will shepherd His sheep (Jn. 21:16); to raise up through the administration of the church, apostolic leaders who will affirm the Holy Spirit's call to make some of them bishops and shepherds of the flock of God among them (Acts 20:28); to instruct His people to support and provide through their tithes and offerings for those leaders who tend His flock (1 Cor. 9:7); to give to the church all the necessary good and godly leaders for their growth and edification (Eph. 4:11); and to encourage His leaders to fulfill their calling to "shepherd the flock of God among you" (1 Pet. 5:1-2).

TEACHERS, teaching (Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28-29; Ephesians 4:11). The teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit is used to explain clearly and effectively the truths of God's Word so that others will understand and obey God's holy word. Teachers are listed along with apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors as essential to the growth and strengthening of the church. To be effective, godly teachers must possess the capacity to accurately interpret Scripture, have a willingness to engage in hours of necessary study, and completely understand what the Scriptures mean. Gifted teachers possess wisdom to organize their lessons in a way that systematically communicates the word of God to their audience.

Jesus specifically commands His followers to "go" and seek and save the lost, baptize them, and teach them everything He taught them (Matt. 28:19-20). The command to "teach" is not surprising since teaching played such an important part in Jesus' own earthly ministry: "The Gospels present the ministry of Jesus under the three aspects of preaching, teaching, and healing. 'Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people' (Matt. 4:23). The oral ministry is described by the terms teaching and preaching, there being twenty-four references to the former task, and fourteen to the latter, in the Gospels. Friend and foe alike gave Jesus the title of teacher, or rabbi, while the true insight of the four evangelists did not overlook the elements that made him a preacher who 'was not without honor, save in his own country.'" Herbert Lockyer, *All the Teachings of Jesus*, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, Mass., © 1991, p. viii

As with all the other gifts, the fruit of the Spirit is intended to empower the teacher of God's word to fulfill their calling. And as is also true with the other ministries of the Holy Spirit, teachers of God's word will fall short apart from a life of abiding in the Vine. The Bible is a spiritual book, it is of, by, and from the Holy Spirit; it is the mind of God revealed to men. Therefore, it takes a life of abiding in the Holy Spirit to minister to the body, teaching His Word: "Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us – eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him." (1 John 2:24-27)

Teachers of God's word will be held to a higher standard of behavior and to a higher level of holiness and godliness in their personal life. "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body." (James 3:1-2) Teachers are on the frontline

with other ministers exhorting and contending earnestly for the faith. Teaching without compromise the foundational truths upon which the church is built is essential because since the beginning, men and women have crept into the ranks of the church to draw away unsuspecting believers who have little or no depth of understanding of God’s word. “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Jude 1:3-4).

False teachers and false prophets will be known by the way they tell people only what they want to hear. However, godly ministers are charged by the Lord to teach and preach the word of truth no matter how uncomfortable to the hearers or what the personal cost to the teacher. “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.” (2 Tim. 4:2-5)

Jesus called those that do and teach His commandments “great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19). Those who minister as teachers of God’s word are following in the footsteps of Jesus, our Master Teacher. Jesus’ reputation as a teacher of God’s word was so well established that even His enemies had to admit that His teachings were true, and that He taught “the way of God in truth” (Matthew 22:15-16).

Seminary level teaching and training is certainly helpful and if possible, to receive it, no one should avoid it; but it should never be a substitute for the Holy Spirit. Having a doctorate in theology is no guarantee of having the life of the Spirit within. On the other hand, there are those who are sincere in their faith, but their lack of biblical knowledge, poor interpretive skills, and deficit of theological training will weaken their ability to teach and may even cause them to jump the rails of sound doctrines and into error without realizing it.

SUMMARY

The five ministries of the Holy Spirit listed in Ephesians 4:11 must be understood in context of the five verses immediately following. All of these

ministries along with the variety of gifts are given to **equip “the saints for the work of ministry.”** Ministers are given to the church by the Holy Spirit to build up or edify – enlighten, inform, educate, instruct, improve, teach – the body of Christ “till we all come to the **unity of the faith** and of the **knowledge of the Son of God**, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” When these gifts and ministries are absent from the church, false prophets and teachers will easily slip into the ranks, and disguised as sheep, will lead many to be “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.” But when the Holy Spirit’s appointed ministers are “speaking the truth in love,” believers will “grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ.” from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.” (Ephesians 4:11-16).

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON ELEVEN

1. Read Ephesians 4:1-6. What is the overall context in which the ministries of the Holy Spirit are given?
2. Read Galatians 5:22-23 and compare with Ephesians 4:1-6. What is the relationship between the fruit of the Spirit and the ministry gifts? How important to ministry is the fruit of the Spirit?
3. Read Acts 9:1-19, paying close attention to Ananias. Read Acts 10:1-48; 11:27-28; 12:25; 13:1-3; 16:9-10; 18:9-11; 20:22-23; 21:10-11; 27:21-26. What is the role of prophecy in the New Testament church?
4. Read Jeremiah 31:31-33. In what way did the unique ministry of the Old Testament prophet change with the coming of the Holy Spirit for all born again believers? Read Hebrews 1:1-2; Matthew 3:11; John 20:22. When and to whom was this passage from Jeremiah fulfilled?
5. Read 2 Thessalonians 2:15; and 1 Timothy 4:6-11. Paul warned us that in the later times the church will be plagued with false teachers (see Matthew 24:4-5). Why are gifted teachers who know God’s word and live what they teach so important to the church?

SGM EVANGELISM AND CHURCH PLANTING MOVEMENTS DISCIPLESHIP 103-12

The Holy Spirit in Ministry Life and Work

The material for this lesson was taken from *This Gospel of the Kingdom*, Copyright © 2011, 2014 by Frederick Osborn. The material has been edited and formatted to fit with the SGM Professor Syllabus.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND MISSIONS

“THE KINGDOM OF GOD: A SIGN OF GOD’S TOMORROW. The New Testament deals with many important mission matters such as insight into the validity of mobile mission teams as well as fixed church structures; the essentiality, diversity, and exercise of gifts of the Spirit; the issue of the powers in relation to spiritual conflict; the phenomena of ethnic religion and spiritual conversion; the eternal separation between the saved and the lost; and the end of the age, God’s ultimate triumph.

But what should concern us particularly is to see the full significance of making God’s kingdom the dominant hub about which all mission activities are related. Ours is an age in which people all over the world are losing all sense of hope touching the future. But the reality of the kingdom means that God has a glorious future for Israel and all the nations. There is going to be God’s tomorrow. And every Christian is called to be a ‘sign’ of God’s tomorrow in in the world today.” Arthur F. Glasser

Declaring the Mysteries of the Kingdom

From the beginning, Missionaries have faced the same challenges of how to communicate the message of the kingdom of God to those who do not have ears to hear or eyes to see the gospel truth. Jesus began his public ministry by preaching, “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*” Mark 1:15 (KJV). But He saw that many of the Jews were unable to comprehend the gospel He was telling them to believe in. In His preaching ministry, Jesus had to overcome the same presuppositions, expectations, and hard-heartedness that are blinding minds of today’s audiences to receive the gospel.

Jesus perfected the language of the parable to draw in those who were truly hungry for the truth while sifting-out those whose hearts were not ready or willing

to receive the truth. The key parable of “The Sower and the Soils” is a clear demonstration of how Jesus could reveal truth to those who were ready, while hiding the reality of the presence and power of the kingdom from those who were not ready to receive it. (see HANDOUT “The Parables of the Kingdom”).

The modern application of this key parable for preachers, teachers, and evangelists of our day is this: make sure the audience understands the foundational truths of our salvation in Christ before trying to tell them all about the mysterious workings of God’s kingdom. Jesus made it clear that the mysteries of the kingdom will come only to those whose hearts are fully surrendered to Him as Savior and Lord (Matthew 13:10-17).

All too often, Christians are too quick to promise unsaved people that all of their prayers will be answered, all their problems will be solved, and that they will have unconditional health and prosperity if only they will say a sinner’s prayer and declare themselves “Christian”. Who wouldn’t come to God that way: “With every eye closed, and every head bowed... now repeat after me”? Matthew 13:11-17; Mark 4:11-12; and Luke 8:10 mean that Jesus would not accept half-hearted followers who did not truly know Him (Matthew 7:21-23), or followers who would melt away at the first signs of trials and temptations that must come to every believer.

The Key Parable of “The Sower and The Soils”

“The die was cast. The nation of Israel would not submit to their King. They had seen His miracles and had listened to His sermons, but still they would not believe. So Jesus started down the road that would lead Him to Calvary; the first step was to narrow His message to only those who were willing to listen and obey His teaching on the kingdom of God: “...many people saw the miraculous signs he was doing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men. He did not need man's testimony about man, for he knew what was in a man”(John 2:23b – 25). Jesus from this time forward would only address His true family: “whoever does God’s will, is My brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:35). Jesus commanded His disciples after His resurrection to go into the entire world and preach the Good News, but the mysteries of the kingdom are reserved only for those who have committed themselves fully to the King of kings.” *This Gospel of the Kingdom*, p.149, © 2011, 2014, 2018

In this opening parable of the sower, Jesus reveals to His disciples and to all spiritual “sowers” who would come after them (the teachers, preachers,

missionaries, and evangelists) why not everyone who hears this gospel of the kingdom will respond to it. Matthew 13:3-9, & 18-23; Mark 4:3-9, & 13-20; Luke 8:5-8, & 11-15 each record a slight variation of this key parable. It is a great help to study these together.

MATTHEW (NKJV)	MARK (NKJV)	LUKE (NKJV)
Behold, a sower went out to sow.	Listen! Behold, a sower went out to sow.	A sower went out to sow his seed.
And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them.	And it happened, as he sowed, that some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds of the air came and devoured it.	And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it.
Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth.	Some fell on stony ground, where it did not have much earth; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of earth.	Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up,
But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.	But when the sun was up it was scorched, and because it had no root it withered away.	it withered away because it lacked moisture.
And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them.	And some seed fell among thorns; and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no crop.	And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it.

But some fell on good ground and yielded a crop; some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.	But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, and increased and produced; some thirty fold, some sixty, and some a hundred.	But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.
He who has ears to hear, let him hear!	He who has ears to hear, let him hear!	He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

Jesus finished this parable, saying, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” But His disciples had to ask Jesus what the meaning of this parable was. Before explaining the meaning, Jesus asked His disciples, “Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?” (Mark 4:13).

Evangelists, preachers, teachers, and missionaries are often amazed that so few people respond to the invitation to be saved. Hidden in this parable are the reasons why not everyone who hears the gospel will respond to it. Those who go out into the harvest fields around them to sow the good seed of the kingdom should carefully study and understand the meaning of this parable.

First, note that there are three key elements in this parable: the sower, the seed, and the soils. Also note Jesus’ explanation for the meaning of each one:

MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
Therefore, hear the parable of the sower.	Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?	Now the parable is this:
When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who	The sower sows the word. And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes	The seed is the word of God. Those by the wayside are the ones who hear; then the devil comes and takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they

<p>received seed by the wayside.</p> <p>But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy;</p> <p>Yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.</p> <p>Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.</p> <p>But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces; some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.</p>	<p>away the word that was sown in their hearts.</p> <p>These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness;</p> <p>and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble.</p> <p>Now these are the ones sown among thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.</p> <p>But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit; some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred.</p>	<p>should believe and be saved.</p> <p>But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy;</p> <p>and these have no root, who believe for a while and in time of temptation fall away.</p> <p>Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.</p> <p>But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.</p>
--	---	---

The Sower

“Both in the natural and the spiritual realms, God works majestically alone, and as the Sower, is untiring in His task. He knows full well that although much seed falls by the wayside, ultimately, a great harvest will be His when ‘the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and Christ.’” Herbert Lockyer

Jesus was speaking to an audience that was very well acquainted with the images of the Jewish Scriptures. The prophets of old used the images of sowing and seeds to convey the idea of the Lord as a “sower”:

“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” **Isaiah 55:10-11**

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man and the seed of beast. And it shall come to pass, that as I have watched over them to pluck up, to break down, to throw down, to destroy, and to afflict, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the Lord.” **Jeremiah 31:27-28**

“Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; Then I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!'” **Hosea 2:23**

So when Jesus revealed to His disciples the hidden meaning, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man” (Matthew 13:37), it was not hard for them to understand. The Scriptures speak of the Father and the Son as kingdom sowers. The implication of the Scriptures is that the Holy Spirit works with the divine Sower to accomplish His task. The Holy Spirit is the “Divine Wind” that lifts and scatters the sons of the kingdom throughout the world.

When Jesus described those who are born again, saying, “The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3:8), Nicodemus would have been familiar with Zechariah 10:9, “I will sow them among the peoples,

and they shall remember Me in far countries; They shall live, together with their children, and they shall return.” As the “Spirit of truth,” He sows the seed of the word into the hearts of men and then scatters them among the nations to bring forth a spiritual harvest for the Lord.

The Seed

“For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.” **Isaiah 55:10, 11**

Mark identifies the seed as the “Word”; but Luke tells us that the Word is not just any word, but it is the “Word of God”. When we examine Matthew 13:19, we learn that it is not just any Word of God, but it is a specific Word: the word of the kingdom. Later, Peter would write, “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God... And this is the word that was preached to you.” (1 Peter 1:23, 25b).

The sower, casting his seed into the field, is increasing, and not wasting it; for he sows his field with good seed, knowing it will produce a rich harvest in time. “All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth” (Colossians 1:6b).

Sowers of the kingdom must shamelessly and liberally cast the imperishable Word of the kingdom into the hearts of men. As Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes...” (Romans 1:16a). Knowing that this good seed will not always penetrate the hearts of everyone, the sower presses on notwithstanding the disappointments, because he or she understands that once the word of truth – the gospel – is received into a ready heart, it will bring forth out of the fields of this world a rich harvest for the kingdom of heaven.

The Soils

Matthew 13:3-9; Mark 4:3-8; and Luke 8:5-8 all identify the same four soils that Jesus described in this parable. When we combine all three accounts, we get a richer and fuller understanding of the mystery Jesus wanted to reveal.

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

The Wayside Soil: These are the ones who receive the word where it is sown on the path. They hear the word of the kingdom, but do not understand it. Then the wicked one (Satan, the devil) comes and immediately takes (snatches away) out of their hearts, the word that was sown, lest they should believe and be saved.

This part of the parable can be linked to the spiritual warfare that is taking place today in the invisible realm over the souls of men. Once the word of the kingdom is heard and understood, it penetrates the hearts of men and brings the conviction of the Holy Spirit, which leads to godly sorrow and true repentance. Satan does all that he can to prevent this word from taking effect, because he knows that once the word of God is taken into the heart of a man, it is much more difficult to root out.

The hard soil by the wayside (path) is the heart that has been trampled down by the feet of men. This world is full of sorrows; people get hurt and hurt each other. The heart that is wounded becomes hard and calloused. Once a trusting heart is betrayed, it is much harder to trust again; and a heart that is broken is less likely to truly love again. People who live too close to the world will become “trampled down” and hardened. These are the “pragmatists” and “realists”, they live by the “survival of the fittest” mentality. They are materialists at heart – self-sufficient, and self-satisfied. They are self-centered people who scorn the gentle seeds of reconciliation, forgiveness, grace, mercy, and salvation. The kingdom of heaven remains hidden to them because they refuse to believe. If you hand them a gospel tract, they will most likely toss it away unopened and unread, but even if they read it, they will not believe.

The Rocky Soil: These are the ones who received the seed sown on the stony or rocky ground: when they hear the word, they immediately receive it with joy and gladness – yet they have no root in themselves, so endure or believe only for a while. For whenever a time of tribulation, persecution, or temptation arises because of the word, immediately they stumble or fall away.

The rocky soil represents a heart that is not fully surrendered to God. Everything looks fine on the surface, but just below the surface are the hard places hidden from view. These are the spiritually shallow people who follow God seeking only the promises of blessing, but who are unwilling to commit whole-heartedly to Him. Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.” When they hear the “good news” of the blessings of the kingdom, they enthusiastically embrace it, but the words that speak of commitment, self-sacrifice, hardship, and holiness for the sake of the kingdom fall on deaf ears – like seeds on the rock.

The Holy Spirit resists the proud heart and will disappear like the morning dew, leaving the seed of the word to scorch in the heat of the day of trial or

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

tribulation. Because of the rock, the roots are shallow and cannot go deep into the good soil where water is stored for the season of drought, thus causing the branches to wither and die before any fruit is produced. The unsundered places of the heart resist the Holy Spirit. The seed of the word is deprived of moisture in the day of trouble because its roots are too shallow to reach the innermost depth of heart where the living water that Christ offers is found. As Jesus said, “the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”

The prophet Jeremiah spoke of the man who surrenders his whole heart to the Lord this way: “He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit” (Jeremiah 17:8).

Only those whose hearts are completely surrendered Christ shall endure when the inevitable dry seasons of trials and temptations come to test them. Jesus endured His time of testing in the Wilderness not because He was able to quote Scripture, but because the word of God was planted deeply in His heart and dwelt richly in Him.

The Thorny Soil: Now these are the ones who received the seed that fell among the thorns; they are the ones who hear the word, and go out but the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, the desires for other things, and the pleasures of life entering in choke the word and it becomes unfruitful, they bring no fruit to maturity, and therefore become unfruitful. Those who came to Jesus expecting to find someone with ways and means able to support Himself and His growing number of followers would be surprised and shocked when Jesus would reveal to them the fact that, “Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20).

Those who use promises of prosperity in this world to convince nonbelievers to follow Jesus must ignore Jesus’ teachings on wealth and possessions. Jesus constantly reminded those who followed Him to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” and trust God to provide the necessities of this life. Many of the hardest sayings of Jesus involved the necessity of forsaking family ties (Luke 9:59 – 62; 14:26, 27) as well as the material comforts this world has to offer. The offer to enter into the kingdom is free, but living out of the kingdom of God and becoming a disciple may come at the expense of everything you have.

If new believers are not taught Jesus’ lessons on “the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches” they will become entangled in worldly pursuits and will not be able to reach spiritual maturity. The seed of the word of the kingdom will become choked by the distractions of making money, running a business, building a house, establishing a career, etc. “No one can serve two masters,” Jesus said, “for either He will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). Christians who live “among the thorns” are those who seek the comforts of the flesh.

Kingdom sowers of the word will see the progression beginning to unfold: the seed sown by the wayside (in the calloused, unbelieving heart) never has a chance to penetrate the soil, it remains on the surface, has no chance to spout, and then the birds of the air snatch it away. The seed sown in the rocky soil (the heart with unsundered strongholds that resist the Holy Spirit) barely penetrates the soil and sprouts, but for lack of moisture it quickly withers away and dies before any fruit has a chance to begin to appear. The seed sown among the thorns (the heart obsessed with worldly pursuits) sprouts in good soil and begins to grow, but thorns quickly grow up around it, choke its roots, and block out the sun, preventing the fruit from reaching maturity – so the end result is that the seed is unfruitful. The seed that falls on good soil sends its roots deep underground and produces an abundant harvest.

The Good Soil: But these are the ones who received seed on the good ground, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, they understand it, accept it, and keep (obey) it; and they produce (bear fruit) with patience; some thirty-fold, some sixty, some a hundred. The heart that is surrendered and yielded to God is a “noble and good heart.” Such a heart will freely receive the seed of the word. Roots will be able to go deep into the soil of a heart prepared by the work of the Holy Spirit.

As we meditate upon the meaning of the Parable of the Sower and the Soils, we should be moved and strive not only to be fruitful, but also to sow generously the seed of the word of the kingdom if we are to expect an abundant harvest to the glory of God. The parable reminds us to pay close attention to the conditions and attitudes of the hearts of our hearers. Evangelists, pastors, teachers, and missionaries are not to be discouraged when anyone does not understand God’s word plainly spoken to them, since their heart may have become too hard to receive the good seed sown upon it.

This parable warns kingdom sowers not to take for granted those who immediately receive the “good news” with joy and gladness, since underneath the surface of the heart there may be stony places of rebellion or resistance to the fullness of God’s truth which may cause them to quickly fall away. This parable also warns us to watch out for those worldly entanglements that tend to choke out the word of the kingdom before the new believer reaches maturity and their spiritual life becomes fruitless.

Finally, through this parable Jesus gives us a vision of encouragement and strength to persevere in our sowing, knowing that the good seed of this gospel of the kingdom sown into a good heart, well-prepared by the work of the Holy Spirit will

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

produce an abundant harvest for the Lord, some thirty, some sixty and some one hundred-fold.

In His “Parable of the Sower” Jesus encouraged us to sow the “good seed” of the Gospel to all men, understanding that the conditions and attitudes of the hearts of the hearers will determine the fruitfulness of the harvest “While we may get discouraged that our evangelistic efforts are not producing the fruit we would like, we can be encouraged that God is working in the harvest and that it will be a rich harvest. The emphasis in the parable is not on the soils but on the harvest. In spite of failures, setbacks, and even persecution, there will be an abundant harvest for those who remain faithful to God.” Rodney L. Cooper

In this lesson, we cannot examine every Parable of Jesus and study the deep messages they reveal about the kingdom of God. In His parables, Jesus revealed that the “sons of the kingdom” must co-exist with the “sons of the wicked one” until the end of the age. He taught us how the fruitfulness of the harvest is not dependent upon human effort, but upon the indestructible life and power of the Word itself. Jesus taught us not to be discouraged by small beginnings because in its proper time, even the tiniest seed of the kingdom becomes a great tree that provides shelter and rest for people of every nation. Jesus revealed the process of inner spiritual transformation that happens in the life of a person who receives His kingdom. Jesus used parables to teach that only those who recognize the true value and worth of the kingdom of heaven would freely surrender all they have to purchase it.

Jesus had more to reveal concerning the End the Age and the coming of the Messianic Kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures. He turned to parables to reveal much of what was to come. In “The Parable of the Dragnet” Jesus described to His disciples, the depths of the reach of the Gospel that draws men and women from every nation into the kingdom; and then at the end of the age, how the angels will separate the good from the bad. Jesus other parables to illustrate the sad reality that there are those who have been offered the grace of the kingdom but are unable to receive it. Jesus showed us that the in kingdom of heaven, the unmerited favor of God and not human effort will determine our rewards. He taught us how the divine mercy of God seeks out anyone who will respond to its call.

Near the end of His earthly ministry, Jesus used the parables of “The Wise and Foolish Virgins” and of “The Talents” teach us to remain watchful and faithful until His Second Coming. Jesus revealed to His disciples that the separation of the good from the wicked ones would come at the end of the age. Jesus taught that genuine faith in God will reveal itself in how each citizen of the kingdom of heaven cares for those Jesus most identified with (the poor, the defenseless, the hungry the lonely, and the outcasts). Eventually this age of grace will come to an end and judgment will begin, “For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God;

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17)

The Gospel of the kingdom that Jesus inaugurated, should inspire us to go out and proclaim the good news of salvation because in the end, there will be no excuses and no second chances.

Citizens of the kingdom must be especially prepared for the end of this age of grace because “to whom much is given, much is required.” The wicked and unprofitable servants who take advantage of the Master’s absence to indulge in selfish and self-centered ambitions must beware, for “even what he has will be taken away.” But the good and faithful servants who understand the unfathomable riches of the kingdom will be rewarded. Those who have received the grace and mercy of God with a full heart of thanksgiving and praise to God will be blessed. And those who willingly give all that they have to draw all men to Christ before the doors are shut and the Marriage Feast begins, shall hear the words from their Master that their hearts long to hear: “Well done, good and faithful servant... enter into the joy of your Lord.”

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON TWELVE

1. Read Matthew 13:10-17. When speaking in parables, was Jesus hiding truth from sincere seekers? Why was Jesus hiding truth from some, but not to others?
2. How does Jesus’ answer to the disciples question about parables (Matthew 13:10) affect your presentation of the gospel?
3. Review the Parable of the Sower and the Soils. Is the responsibility to sow the Word just for the clergy and other fulltime ministers of the Word? How do the gifts of the Spirit enable us to fulfill our solemn responsibility to be sowers of the kingdom “to the ends of the earth”?
4. Read Romans 10:14-15. What does it say to Christians about their responsibility to sow the seed of the gospel wherever they go?
5. Review the verses from the Parable of the Sower that describe the wayside soil. What causes a Christian’s heart to become like the wayside soil? What happens to the Christian whose heart becomes too hard for God’s word to penetrate it?

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

6. Review the verses from the Parable of the Sower that describe the rocky soil. What causes a Christian’s heart to become “rocky”? What happens to the Christian with unsundered areas of the heart?
7. Read Mark 10:17-31; Luke 9:59–62; 12:13-21 14:26, 27, 33). How do these verses help us to understand Matthew 13:22?
8. Read Colossians 1:9-10; John 16:8-14; Romans 8:35; and 2 Corinthians 9:10. What is the expectation from those who have the word of the kingdom sown into a good heart, prepared to receive it?



Rev. Dr. Frederick Osborn traveled the world teaching and preaching the Word of God. His first trip to South Asia was in 2001, and since 2005 he has been fully involved in ministry. Currently he volunteers his time on the mission fields of South Asia and around the world as a speaker and lecturer, distributing Bibles and biblical resources to pastors, evangelists, and ministry leaders. His books and study guides have been used in classrooms by hundreds of students.

In 2013 he earned his M.Div. from Andhra Christian Theological College in Hyderabad, India and in that same year was officially ordained into the ministry in a holy convocation administered by Indian pastors representing AG, CSA, and other independent ministries. In 2017 he completed his D.Min. from Covenant Bible College & Seminary, Florida, USA. He and his wife, Deena, now live near Atlanta, GA where he continues to preach, teach, write, and publish his books and study guides.

Books Written by Frederick Osborn

1. *Church Planting Movements – India*
2. *Daniel: Kingdoms in Conflict*
3. *Deceived! Overcoming the Age of Mass Deception*
4. *Disciple-to-Disciple: Making Disciples Like Jesus*
5. *Disciple- to-Disciple: Making Disciples Like Jesus, Study Guide*
6. *Exploring the New Testament*
7. *Exploring the Old Testament: Vol. One – The Pentateuch*
8. *Following Christ on the Indian Road: A Missionary’s Story of Discipleship*
9. *From Genesis to Revelation: Interpreting the Book of Revelation Through the Old Testament Scriptures*
10. *Healing Miracles of the Bible*
11. *Jesus Over India: A 52 Week Spiritual Journey Through the Heart of India*
12. *Judges: A 21st Century Prophetic Commentary*
13. *Keys to Effective Faith: Living by a Faith that Can Move Mountains*
14. *Kingdom Discipleship: Becoming Like Jesus*
15. *Kingdom Discipleship: Becoming a Disciple Like Jesus, Study Guide*
16. *Kingdom Economics*
17. *Living in Dystopia: A Christian Guide Victory in an Orwellian World*

18. *One Holy Passion: A Daily Devotional Guide for 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting for the 1040 Nations*
19. *Our Jehovah Rapha: A Christ Centered Holistic Approach to Wellness*
20. *Reviving A Nation*
21. *Seven Laws of Dying to Self*
22. *Spiritual Lessons for the Grafted-In*
23. *The Apocalyptic Vision: Understanding the Apocalyptic Writings of the Bible*
24. *The Blood*
25. *The Book of Acts: The Holy Spirit's Handbook for Church Planting Movements*
26. *The Book of Acts: The Holy Spirit's Handbook for Church Planting Movements- Study Guide*
27. *The Gospel of John: Speaking Truth to Power*
28. *The Gospel of Salvation*
29. *The Gospel of Salvation: Study Guide*
30. *The Healthy Heart*
31. *The Holy Spirit in You: Nourishing the Life of Holiness and power in You*
32. *The Keys to Effective Prayer*
33. *The LGBTQI Community and the Church*
34. *The Legacy of Women in the Bible – Study Guide*
35. *The New Reformation: An Assessment of the New Apostolic Reformation from Toronto to Redding*
36. *The Physics of Heaven: The Theology of the New Apostolic Reformation*
37. *The Revelation of Jesus Christ: John the Apostle's Heavenly Vision of Christ the King*
38. *The Spirit of Religion*
39. *The Way, the Truth, and the Life: the Teachings and Ministry of Jesus the Messiah*
40. *This Gospel of the Kingdom*
41. *This Gospel of the Kingdom – Study Guide*
42. *To the Heart of the Nations – Prayer Journal*
43. *Twelve Woes*

Supplemental Handout Materials

HANDOUT
DISCIPLESHIP 103-1

ORACLE IN THE BIBLE

The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery

The occurrence of oracles and their many and varied associations often pass unrecognized in translation. The Hebrew phrase *šā'al b'* and the verb *dāraš* both translated “to inquire of,” function as technical terms for consulting the deity. Both expressions can have either pagan deity or monotheistic God as object, that is, as the power behind the spirit that provides answers and predictions. In addition to narratives about obtaining oracles, these phrases are extremely common, pointing to the importance of this activity and implying a large repertoire of methods and rituals.

Oracle as Answers from God. The Scriptures allude to many methods of ancient divination. Although relatively little is known about their actual practice, among them we find the following: *Astrology* (Deut 4:19; 2 Kings 17:16; 21:3–5; 23:4–5, 11–12; Jer 7:17–18; 8:2; 19:13; 44:16–19; Ezek 8:16). The sun and moon (Josh 10:12–13) or stars act as Israel’s allies in battle (Judges 5:20), the worship of the star god Kaiwan is condemned (Amos 5:26), and Isaiah speaks of those who “study the heavens ... gaze at the stars, and at each new moon predict what shall befall you” (Is 47:13 NRSV).

Heptoscopy, the reading of the livers of sacrificial sheep (Ezek 21:21), is neither endorsed nor prohibited in Leviticus as a form of divination (Lev 3:4; 9:10).

Hydromancy. Wells and springs were regarded as oracular sites in the ancient world. Springs that bubbled up were quite naturally regarded as places to consult chthonic spirits. Some place names testify to such traditions. *'Ēn mišpāt* (Gen 14:7) and the investiture ceremony at Serpent’s Rock near *'ēn rōgēl* (“diviner’s spring,” 1 Kings 1:9; cf. the ancient association of oracles with snakes, an example being the “Pythonic spirit,” translated “spirit of divination,” in Acts 16:16). Joseph used his cup for divining (Gen 44:5, 15). Rivers too have long been viewed as mythological judges. *Fleece reading* appears with Gideon, but it has parallels outside Israel (Judg 6:37–40, cf. Aeneas sleeping on a fleece in the cave of divination).

Rhabdomancy, the divining by trees, wooden rods and arrows, receives mention as “inquiring of wood” (Hos 4:12; cf. Jer 2:27). Similar ideas inform the story of Aaron’s magical budding rod (Num 17:7) and the magical effects of Jacob’s sticks on breeding animals (Gen 30:31–39; revealed in a dream, Gen 31:10). Neb-uchadnezzar calls upon his diviner to perform an arrow ritual (Ezek 21:21); Elisha communicates future events to Joash by interpreting the actions of arrows (2 Kings 13:15). Arrows carry a coded message for David from Jonathan (1 Sam 20:20–38). Many trees hold associations with judging and giving oracles (oak of the teacher, Gen 12:6–8; diviner’s oak, Judg 9:37; Deborah’s palm, Judg 4:5); the angel of the Lord sat under the oak at Ophrah and prophetically motivated Gideon (Judg 6:11).

Teraphim, sometimes translated “idols” and sometimes “sculpted stones,” were thought to answer questions put to them (Ezek 21:21; Zech 10:2); and the Asherah, representing the tree, was probably also used for divination (1 Kings 14:23). Teraphim are sometimes condemned (1 Sam 15:23; 2 Kings 23:24), but at other times are legitimated or tolerated (in David’s house, 1 Sam 19:17–22; in Jacob’s possession, Gen 31; in Micah, Judg 17:5) or are ambiguous (Hos 3:4).

Dreams were an especially common medium of divine communication. All around the Mediterranean, Assyrian kings, Egyptian pharaohs, Greek heroes and presumably everyday citizens sought out guidance from dreams. In the NT Matthew records use of dreams as warnings to Joseph, the Magi and Pilate’s wife (Mt 1:20; 2:12; 2:13, 19, 22; 27:19). Acts tells of visions to Paul (Acts 16:9), Peter (Acts 10:10) and Ananias (Acts 9:10). Scripture records many dreams as messages from God. When this expected channel is shut down, Saul complains that God no longer answers him by dreams (1 Sam 28:15). Even a pagan’s dream is a message from God (Judg 7:13). *Incubation dreams*. In most ancient societies people sought out divine oracles as dreams by sleeping in sanctuaries. Pagan deities communicated in this way (Is 65:4) but so too did God. Because of a dream, Jacob gives the name Beth El, “sanctuary,” to the dream spot (Gen 28). Samuel, when the word of the Lord and visions becomes infrequent, sleeps in the sanctuary instead of his own quarters (1 Sam 3:1–3). Solomon sleeps at the great high place in Gibeon for his dream from God (1 Kings 3:4, 5).

Necromancy, the consulting of the spirits of the departed, was strictly prohibited as an abomination (Lev 19:31; 20:6; Deut 18:11), yet the lure of predictions from the dead kept the practice alive. Passages in Isaiah (Is 8:19–20; 28:15–22; 65:4) refer to incubation dreams in tombs to obtain revelations from netherworld deities and spirits. Isaiah 14:9 describes the wispy voice from dead spirits in the pit. In spite of the ban, a desperate Saul resorts to a medium, getting one more answer from Samuel (1 Sam 28).

The ark of the covenant was a symbol of God’s presence with Israel, and in some instances it is associated with “inquiring of the Lord” (Judg 20:27; 1 Sam 14:18; 1 Chron 21:30).

Urim and Thumim are associated with the high priest and the giving of guidance (Deut 33:8, 10; 1 Sam 14:41; called “oracle” in Sirach 45:10), but their actual nature and use are difficult to determine. It has been speculated that the urim and thummim were flat objects with a “yes” and “no” side. As in a coin toss, the side(s) that landed “up” determined the answer to a query (1 Sam 14:18; cf. Prov 16:33).

The ephod eludes our firm determination. It is sometimes a divinely sanctioned garment worn by priests (Ex 28; cf. 1 Sam 2:18, 28; 22:18) and in other cases it appears as an idol consulted (Judg 8:27; 17:5; 18:14–20; 1 Sam 23:9 [cf. 14:18]; 30:7; Hos 3:4).

Oracles as Pagan or Proper Methods of Divination? The modern reader may recoil from the idea that worshipers of the God of Israel performed rituals that differed little from their pagan neighbors. Yet many of the methods used in common with neighboring cultures were acceptable. Oracular inquiry allowed for divine guidance and input: “The lot is cast into the lap, but the outcome thereof is the LORD’s” (Prov 16:33). When condemnation of divination occurs in the OT, it usually takes issue with the god or spirit reached by the method, not with the method itself. Dreams from God are approved; dreams from tomb spirits are not. The oracle of the God of Israel is legitimate; that of Baal-zeboul is not (2 Kings 1:1–16). Wearing phylacteries into battle is not wrong, but they must not contain the names of pagan gods (2 Mac 12:40). So too “the sin of divination” probably means consulting other gods (1 Sam 15:23; 2 Kings 17:17).

Divination as Power. The ability to envision or manipulate the future gave the oracle great influence. Joseph manipulated his brothers’ fears about the reputation of Egyptian diviners (Gen 44:15). Ahithophel’s fame for wise counsel was “as if one consulted the oracle of God” (2 Sam 16:23). Daniel’s promotion to political power stemmed from his ability to interpret dreams about the future. Diviners receive mention as leaders of the people (Is 3:2, 3). The dying words of

patriarchs, far seeing, laden with wisdom and couched in poetic verse, functioned as oracles (2 Sam 23:1; Deut 31:1; 33:1; Gen 49:1).

Oracles as politics and lies. The Israelites did not consider it strange that Balaam, a pagan oracle, should attempt to meddle in their future. The Lord's ability to usurp Balaam's mouth and thwart Balak's intentions served as evidence of the Lord's supreme power (Num 23:5). Israelite prophets also rendered oracles regarding foreign nations that altered the course of their neighbors' history and consequently their own. At home in the royal court, Ahithophel's good counsel to Absalom needed to be countered with bad advice (2 Sam 17:14). Bad oracles could be the result of a lying spirit sent by the Lord (1 Kings 22:22–23). Fake oracles were also a possibility (Jer 23:16).

Oracles as self-fulfilling prophecy. Elijah's revelation that Hazael will replace Ben-hadad as ruler of Syria appears to function both as prophecy and as a planted suggestion (1 Kings 19:15; 2 Kings 8:12–15). Other prophecies were brought to pass by people consciously fulfilling prophetic utterances as a form of obedience to God, as when Jehu commands his men to do "in accordance with the word [oracle] of the LORD" (2 Kings 9:25 NIV).

Oracles as self-interpreting parables. While the bulk of oracles are rendered in poetry, Balaam's oracles are labeled parables, proverbs or figures (Num 23:7). Nathan elicits self-condemnation from David with a parable (2 Sam 12:1–6). Jotham vividly portrays the political folly of Shechem with a parable about the trees choosing a king (Judges 9:8–15). Many other prophets participated as actors in dramatizations of future events (e.g., 1 Kings 20:35–37; Ezek 5:1–4).

Oracles as God's Word. Finally, God's word as the Law (Acts 7:38; Rom 5:2; Heb 5:12; Wisdom 16:11), or as (written) prophecy (2 Macc 2:4), or even the utterances of the early Christian prophet, are called oracles (1 Pet 4:11).

See also CHEAT THE ORACLE; DREAMS, VISIONS; MAGIC; PROPHET, PROPHETESS.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. A. Jeffers, *Magic and Divination in Ancient Palestine* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996).

Ryken, L., Wilhoit, J., Longman, T., Duriez, C., Penney, D., & Reid, D. G. (2000). In *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (electronic ed., pp. 608–610). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 103-2

14 Verses on God's Intention for Spiritual Growth

January 25, 2022

<https://www.logos.com/grow/spiritual-formation-14-verses-on-gods-intention-for-spiritual-growth/>

Spiritual Formation Verses

God calls all Christians to become more like Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 3:18), and this transformation happens in the innermost part of a person: their heart. This progression is called spiritual formation, which involves learning to hear God in his Word, growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus, and bearing lasting fruit. One way we experience this transforming power of God's grace is through spiritual disciplines like reading and meditating on God's Word, prayer, and journaling. **Here are 14 verses that speak of God's intention for the progression of spiritual formation.**

On the importance of God's Word

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. (Col 3:16)

Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God. (1 Pet 1:22–23)

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it. (Isa 55:10–11)

On The Importance of Prayer

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6–7)

Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known. (Jer 33:3)

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. (Jas 1:5)

Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us. Selah. (Ps 62:8)

On Growth

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Php 1:6)

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2 Pet 3:18)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us. (Heb 12:1)

And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience. (Luke 8:14–15)

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. (1 Cor 13:10–12)
On our responsibility

My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you. (Prov 4:20–24)

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing. (Jas 1:22–25)

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 103-2

How to Begin, Conduct, and Break Your Fast

From “RELEASING GOD’S POWER THROUGH FASTING” by Bill Bright

NOTE: William R. "Bill" Bright (October 19, 1921 – July 19, 2003) was an American evangelist. The founder of *Campus Crusade for Christ*, he wrote “The Four Spiritual Laws” in 1952 and produced the “Jesus Film” in 1979. In 1994 Bill Bright did his first 40-day fast and issued a call for prayer and fasting for revival in America. More than 600 Christian leaders met for the first Fasting & Prayer meeting. Dr. Bright completed a 40 day fast each year through 2000. His Annual Fasting & Prayer meetings continued and beginning in 1998 incorporated satellite broadcasting to include thousands in America and around the world. In this article, Bill Bright offers spiritual insight and practical advice for Christians on prayer and fasting.

HOW TO BEGIN AND CONDUCT YOUR FAST

How you begin and conduct your fast will largely determine your success. Permit me to suggest steps to take that will help make your time with the Lord more meaningful and spiritually rewarding, while at the same time enhancing your physical health.

1. Set an Objective

The first step is to set a specific objective. Why are you fasting? Is it for spiritual renewal, guidance, for healing, for the resolution of problems, for special grace to handle a difficult situation? Keeping your goal in focus will help you sustain your fast when physical desire and life’s pressures tempt you to abandon it.

I personally believe the Holy Spirit has given all believers an urgent call to humble ourselves through fasting and prayer so that He may stir our souls, awaken our church, and heal our land according to 2 Chronicles 7:14. *I urge you to make personal, local, national, and world revival and the fulfillment of the Great Commission your primary purpose for fasting.*

2. Lay a Spiritual Foundation

The second step is to prepare yourself spiritually. The very foundation of fasting and prayer is repentance. Unconfessed sin will hinder your prayers. In Scripture, God always requires His people to repent of their sins before He will hear their prayers.

As you begin your fast, I encourage you to confess every sin that the Holy Spirit calls to your remembrance. Include obvious sins and those that are not so apparent, such as leaving your first love for the Lord, worldly-mindedness, self-centeredness, and spiritual indifference – being unwilling to share your faith in Christ with others, unwilling to help at church, unwilling to spend time in God’s Word and prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal anything in your heart that is

not pleasing to God and claim the promise of 1 John 1:9, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (NKJV).

3. Make Physical Preparations

The third step is to prepare yourself physically. Do not rush into a fast. If you plan to go without food for several days, you will find it helpful to begin by eating smaller meals before you abstain altogether. This sends your mind to signal that you have entered the time of the fast, and it helps to “shrink” your stomach and appetite. Some health professionals suggest eating only raw foods for two days before starting a fast.

Preparing yourself physically makes the drastic change in your eating routine a little easier. Then you can turn your full attention to the Lord in prayer.

4. Ask God for Guidance

The fourth step is to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the kind of fast God wants you to undertake. Does He want you to go completely without food, consuming only water? Or only water and juices? Is He asking you to fast one meal a day, one day a week, or several days or weeks at a time? Is God leading you to undertake a forty-day fast? Inviting the Holy Spirit’s guidance in this matter will make your time with God more meaningful.

Token fasting, such as giving up chocolates or lemon pie or some other favorite food, may be commendable, but it does not allow the Holy Spirit to do the inner work necessary to bring about real changes in your spiritual life. Nor does it persuade God that you are serious about revival for America and the world and the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

As I pointed out earlier, the biblical fast usually calls for water. I have conducted many strictly water fasts for a day or several days at a time with special blessing. However, I strongly suggest adding vegetable and fruit juices to your intake, although some advise against orange or tomato juice because of acid content.

Once you know how to fast, sort fasts of one to three days require no more than water. Christians who fast regularly often go ten days or longer on water – even up to forty days – with beneficial effects, both spiritually and physically, under the daily supervision of one who is knowledgeable about water fasting. You have food reserves stored in body fat than you realize, and most of us would be more than happy to give up the fat.

However, until you build up your “fasting muscles,” or if you are undertaking a long fast, you may want to add vegetable or fruit juices (preferably without sugar or sweeteners) to your intake.

5. Limit Activity

The fifth step is to limit your activity level. Exercise moderately. Rest as much as your schedule will permit. Short naps are very helpful. “Resting is not a sin,” Dr. Ruibal explains. “Fasting in the strictest sense is physiological rest. Your body rests from the processes involved in digest and the assimilation of food to concentrate on excretion.”

That is why during the fast you may experience side effects. “Some people experience headaches, stomach aches, nausea, foul tastes in their mouth, or a pasty tongue,” Dr. Ruibal says. “Their urine may become darker, and even their perspiration smell worse than usual. Vomiting may occur. This is not normal but should not be cause for alarm. In a prolonged fast, it is not unusual to experience a slight fever. Basically, the body is taking advantage of the fast to clean and heal itself.”

6. Consider Your Medications

The sixth step is to consider your medication. It is particularly important that you consult with your doctor before going on a fast if you are on any prescribed medication.

7. Plan Your Prayer Time

The seventh step is to set aside ample time to be alone with the Lord during our fast. The more you spend with Him in fellowship, worship, and adoration and the more you read and meditate on His Word during your fast, the greater your effectiveness will be in prayer and the more meaningful your fast will be.

Seek God in prayer and as you meditate on His Word each morning before you leave home or go about your daily routine. Return to prayer at lunch, and come before Him again in the evening for unhurried times of seeking His face. Of course, you should practice His presence and continue to have fellowship with Him constantly as you pray without ceasing throughout the day.

There is no set formula for how to pray when you fast. You may wish to pray aloud or silently, asking the Lord to grant specific requests. I suggest you make a list and add to it daily as needs come to mind. Pray earnestly for you family, your pastor, your church, your community, and our nation. Pray for revival in our land and a great worldwide spiritual harvest. Pray for the fulfillment of the Great Commission.

You may wait before God in quiet meditation as you invite the Holy Spirit to minister to you and bring to mind those things He wants you to pray about.

You should go about your daily activities mindful that you are still fasting and seeking the Lord. Some of my deepest spiritual insights have come as I continued my ministry responsibilities while seeking His face and practicing His presence.

If you do not know what to pray for, or you feel “prayed out,” wait quietly before Him. Turn to the psalms or other favorite passages of Scripture and pray the Word of God back to Him. For example, pray each verse of Psalm 23 aloud, thanking Him for performing each of those

promises in your life. Worship and praise the Lord. Tell God how much you love Him and want to serve Him. Invite His presence into your life in a fresh way.

You may wish to approach God with the Lord's Prayer recorded in Matthew 6:9-13. Generally, this prayer covers everything we could possibly ask or say to God. AS an introduction to this prayer, Jesus reminded His disciples that "your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him (Matt. 6:8 NKJV).

Now that you have an idea of how to go about fasting, it is time to fix your gaze upon the One who sees you and knows you – the One who delights in you and is waiting for you to come before Him.

HOW TO BREAK YOUR FAST

When your designated time of fasting is finished, you will begin to eat again. But how you break your fast is extremely important – both for you physical and spiritual well-being.

If you end your fast gradually, as you should, the beneficial physical and spiritual effects will linger for days. But if you rush into eating solid foods – and the prospect of food can tempt you to do that – you may experience diarrhea, sickness, fainting, and even death due to shock. This is especially true of an extended fast. Nutritionist Paul Bragg explains in *The Miracle of Fasting*:

When you have been on a... fast, your stomach and the thirty feet of intestinal tract have contracted, and when you are ready to break the fast, it should be done (with special care).

Suddenly reintroducing solid food to your stomach and digestive tract always creates defeating effects. You can lose much of your deep sense of peace and well-being in the space of a single meal. Even a three-day fast requires reasonable precautions. It is wise to start with a little soup – something thin and nourishing such as vegetable broth made from onion, celery, potatoes, and carrots – and fresh fruits such as watermelon and cantaloupe.

As your body accepts these foods, advance to a few tablespoons of solid foods such as raw fruits and vegetables or a raw salad and baked potato. (I do not recommend milk or milk products and meat because some individuals may suffer adverse reactions to these after a fast). Then, several hours later, try another small snack. The idea is to ease back into regular eating with several small snacks during the first few days. This requires discipline, but you will avoid the severe pain and other serious physical reactions that come from eating too much too soon.

I terminated my forty-day fast with a cup of soup, followed by small amounts of watermelon and other fruits every few hours for a couple of days until I was comfortable to resume my normal routine of eating. As you can imagine, that cup of soup and the first few bites of solid food were ecstasy. Never had ordinary food tasted so good.

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 103-2

THE DOCTRINE OF PRECEDENT

"I had many doubts about the Bible. Now I see Scripture as a flame that melts away unbelief." Rev. Billy Graham

The doctrine of Precedent goes to the heart of the Christian belief in the authority of the Scriptures as the absolute Word of God.

The legal principle of Precedent or *stare decisis* means that a rule established in a previous legal case binds the court when deciding succeeding cases with similar issues. The words originate from the wording of the principal in the Latin maxim: "*Stare decisis et non quieta movere*," or, "To stand by decisions and not disturb the undisturbed." So, in the legal context this means that the court should abide by precedent and not disturb settled matters.

In Christian theology, the idea that what was said or done before may serve as an example or rule to authorize or justify a subsequent act of the same kind, acts as a double-edged sword. The doctrine of Precedent is used often by Pentecostals and Charismatics to justify the expression of the supernatural gifts of prophecy, healing, speaking in tongues, signs, and wonders. Whatever the Holy Spirit did in the past may be done today. But this is a sword that cuts both ways because on the other side, everything that Pentecostals and Charismatics do and say in their meetings must be bound by what the Word of God has already established. Unfortunately, it seems that those who seek supernatural experiences in their revivals and church services want it both ways: they want to exercise the supernatural gifts of the Spirit described in the book of Acts based upon Precedent but at the same time they want to throw Precedent out the window and take an "anything goes" attitude in their public exercise of these gifts.

To argue that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit today are supported by the precedent of the Old and New Testaments then the prior circumstances for where, when, and how those gifts were used must have similar factual situations today. If the precedent is from the same or a superior jurisdiction (the Word of God), then the ways and means of exercising those gifts are binding upon believers today and must be followed as written. If the precedents found in Scripture may be ignored or overruled by Charismatics today, then the Holy Spirit who initiated the gifts and set the boundaries for the exercise of those gifts becomes irrelevant to where, when, and how those gifts are used – regardless of how many times His name is invoked in their meetings (Note: Matthew 7:21-23).

Aaron McCarter is representative of those who want to cut loose from the Precedent of God's Word in the supernatural gifts, while saying, "Lord, Lord..." Using the typical "pretzel logic" of charismatic theology, McCarter disavows Biblical Precedent and declares "God Isn't Bound By Precedent" therefore, neither is anyone else. In his online article, McCarter characterizes Biblical Precedent as an inadequate security blanket: "I've found that warm blanket of certainty never quite covers me. There's always a rogue limb exposed." He cites several examples from the Scriptures to demonstrate that "the Biblical precedent is that God does things that are unprecedented." He parrots the leaders of the charismatic movement and falls back on experiential-based justification for supernaturalism over a Biblical *stare decisis*. Just because someone believes

they have experienced or witnessed “God doing things” does not make it so. The whole purpose of a counterfeit is to deceive the novice into accepting the fake as real. Without the genuine article to compare it to, there is nothing to base the value of what is being presented as real. Supernatural encounters, by their very nature, often appear to be new and have a way of affecting the lives of people who experience them.

But here is where McCarter and the other charismatics get lost in their own convoluted logic. He freely admits that the supernatural experiences he has seen and been a part of are not “replicas” of how God moved in the Bible. After all, he says, “God is God. He doesn’t need precedents, he sets them.” True. But what he fails to see is that he himself is NOT God. Because believers are not God, or even little gods, we need precedents to keep from being deceived. We need the genuine article placed in front of us to compare with that which is being offered as the genuine coin of the Kingdom of God.

There is a very good reason why believers should be very uncomfortable, disturbed, or even fearful when unprecedented supernatural occurrences break out in a church. In spite of what new apostolic prophets and charismatic pastors and teachers assure us, human beings are very poor judges over what does or does not undermine Scripture. Christians are not the final judge over how God chooses to move in the lives of His people. This is why the church is called “To stand by decisions and not disturb the undisturbed” instead of trying to figure out if God is moving in the lives of His people in some new and strange way. If we are to follow God’s lead, then when it comes to supernatural movements, they should not be driven by those who desire to experience something new and exciting.

Staying the course of biblical precedent is not very exciting. Calling all believers to a life lived in holiness, purity, and righteousness in the presence of God will not fill churches these days. Christians in the 21st century Western churches have been taught to expect their needs, wants, and desires to be met by God as their birthright. After a charismatic revival, many believers arrive on the doorstep of their local church proclaiming that they have rights to health and prosperity, and claiming their authority over demons, sickness, and disease while calling for the fire from heaven to illuminate them. Encouraging them to stay the course of the tried-and-true disciplines of spiritual formation over an experiential faith is often met with accusations that any resistance to opening the floodgates to the supernatural in the church is “quenching the Spirit” and behaving like the Pharisees’ who put Jesus Christ on trial for blasphemy.

Although a few select verses of Scripture describe the supernatural movements of the Holy Spirit, the overwhelming weight of the New Testament’s verses show that the LORD’s primary concern for His people is for them to live in true righteousness. “Christlikeness” almost always refers to being like Christ in character, compassion, and love. Jesus commands believers to abide in Him so that they might bear the fruit of the Spirit. Fruit-bearing (love, joy, peace, goodness, kindness, self-control, and longsuffering) is mandatory, but the gifts of the Spirit are presented as optional (not every believer has every gift). The gifts of the Holy Spirit are never taught as mandatory for every believer. The LORD decides who gets His gifts, how many, or for how long. It is of absolute importance for every believer to understand that while the charismatics are vocally declaring their rights and authority to manifest the power of God in their meetings, our only truly God-given right is to submit to the authority of the Word of God in everything. Following the Word of God as the valid precedent of truth is God’s way to give His believers the confidence that they are on the right path.

Learning and living God’s Word in a way that pleases God is only possible with a humble heart that the disciplines of spiritual formation produce (prayer, Bible study, fasting, meditation upon the Scriptures, and holy living). But we are living in a time when large numbers of Christians around the world are being motivated by unbiblical supernatural experiences to claim authority that they have not been given, over things they have not been given control of. (This fact is demonstrated by the countless prophetic words that turned out to be wrong; by the countless words of healing spoken in the name of Jesus that never happened supernaturally; by the countless Christians living in poverty and want around the world; and by the countless signs and wonders that turned out to be counterfeit).

An honest reading of the Word of God, and a consistent application of the principle of *stare decisis* leads me to the conclusion that the hard theological stance that the supernatural gifts of the Spirit demonstrated in the book of Acts and spoken of in the Epistles of Paul and the other Apostles are no more, cannot be supported by the same principle of biblical Precedent. There are no indications anywhere in the Scripture that some of the gifts (preaching, teaching, evangelism) continued while only the supernatural gifts (prophecy, tongues, interpretation of tongues) ceased with the passing of the original Apostles.

On the other side of the fence, the principle of *stare decisis* causes me to dismiss almost everything that the charismatics claim is of the Holy Spirit. Supernatural miracles are, by their very nature, rare. There is no indication from the Scriptures that miracles of healing, signs, wonders, prophecy, etc. are supposed to be normative for all believers. If miracles can be commanded to happen at will, then they cease to be of God and become the products of the miracle-worker, which moves the experiences from the realm of the Holy Spirit to the human realm where Satan’s twisted agenda to deceive, diminishes God’s Word.

I understand that I do not have all the answers to this controversy. I do not claim to know everything related to this topic. I also understand that because I have argued against the extreme stands of both the Cessationists’ and the charismatics’ views on supernatural gifts, I will be criticized by both and may not be welcomed by them. But I believe the only stand I can take is upon the precedents established by the unchanging Word of God.

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 103-2

5 Truths You Need to Know About Psalm 119

Debbie McDaniel/ 2016 23 May

<https://www.crosswalk.com/slideshows/5-truths-you-need-to-know-about-psalm-119.html>

1. Psalm 119 is an Acrostic Poem

Psalm 119 is actually written as an acrostic poem. The verses of each stanza begin with the same letter of each of the Hebrew alphabet, such as “Aleph,” “Beth,” “Gimel,” and so on. This is only noticeable in looking back at the original text.

There are 22 stanzas or sections, equal to 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet, with 8 verses each, and a total of 176 verses.

2. The Author of Psalm 119 is Unknown

The author of this chapter is unknown, but some have suggested it may have been Ezra the priest, written at the time that the temple had been rebuilt. Though the life of Ezra may not be the most well known in the Bible, he was extremely important and greatly used by God at a time in history when the Israelites desperately needed a faithful, strong leader.

Ezra lived his days out of a deep, personal commitment to God, not simply seeking his own personal gain. He was given much responsibility to lead, sent by the King Artaxerxes, to set up a program of religious education for the people. His life proved faithful to study, follow, and teach God’s Word, and his godly example is still very relevant for our lives today.

Others have suggested that Psalm 119 may have been written by David, or possibly Daniel. The author is certainly one who experienced great affliction in life, since persecution of those who hold fast to the Word of God is a theme carried throughout.

3. Psalm 119 Emphasizes God's Word

Almost every verse mentions God’s Word in some way – it may be written as His “word,” “ways,” “statutes,” “decrees,” “law,” “precepts,” “commands,” or “promise” – but it’s in some way mentioned through most all of the verses.

4. Psalm 119 is the Longest Chapter of the Bible

Just as Psalm 119 is the longest chapter of the Bible, two Psalms just before, Psalm 117, is the shortest chapter of all.

There has been much discussion through history of whether Psalm 117 or 118 is the center chapter of the entire Bible. Some have said it’s divided as such: 594 chapters up to Psalm 117 and 594 chapters from Psalm 119 on, with chapter 118 being the center, and a total of 1189 chapters in the entire Bible. Those that hold to this also believe that Psalm 118:8 is the center verse of the Bible, “It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.” Others have said that Psalm 117 seems to be the center point, with these 2 verses, “Praise the LORD, all nations; Laud Him, all peoples! For His lovingkindness is great toward us, And the truth of the LORD is everlasting. Praise the LORD!”

Either way, it’s interesting to note that, depending on translation, $594 + 594 = 1188$. It all points to the truth that God is a God of order and precision. This entire section of God’s Word is Sovereignly placed at a significant and pivotal point in the Bible and we would be wise to study it carefully.

5. Psalm 119 Focus on the Truth of God's Word

The overall message of Psalm 119 focuses on the truth of God’s Word. It encourages us through every generation to stay close and focused on His Word no matter what swirls around us in this world. Living in the freedom and knowledge of God’s ways, obeying His law above all else, and keeping in step with His commandments is the only way to truly live wise, strong lives.

Psalm 119 reminds us that God's very character is reflected through His Word, He is Righteous, He is Faithful, He is Unchanging, He is True. The opening 2 verses remind us, that we are "blessed" as we walk in His Truth, and seek him with our whole heart.

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 103-2

Essentials The Holy Temple Readings & Insights

The Levite Choir and Orchestra: What, Who and How?

By Yehuda Shurpin



Art by Sefira Lightstone

During the time of year that we mourn the destruction of the Holy Temple, it is customary to learn the laws of the Holy Temple as a means to hasten its rebuilding during the final redemption.

A highlight of the Temple service was the Levites' song and music, which would accompany some of the services. In fact, the Book of Psalms is replete with songs that were traditionally sung in the Holy Temple by the Levites.

Even as we refrain from listening to music during this time of year due to our mourning, let's explore the songs sung in the Holy Temple, with prayers that we will once again hear the "joyous sounds of music in Jerusalem."¹

Who Sang?

King David divided the Levites into 24 groups, each of which served a different week in the Holy Temple, similar to how the Kohanim were divided into 24 groups.²

They had two primary duties: guarding the Temple and singing during the services. Each one of these was further split into two. "Guarding" consisted of standing guard and opening and closing

the gates. "Singing" consisted of vocalists and musicians. A Levite who was assigned to one task was not allowed to change to another.

Following a debate, the Talmud concludes that the singing was the primary service; the music simply accompanied the vocalists.³ In fact, although only the Levites could sing, an Israelite was permitted to be a musician.⁴

When Did They Sing?

The Levites would sing when wine libations were poured on the altar to accompany the communal burnt offerings (i.e., the daily offerings and the special offerings brought on Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and holidays), and the peace offerings brought on Shavuot.⁵

They would also sing Hallel during the offering of the Paschal lamb,⁶ during Simchat Beit Hashoeva (the drawing of the water ceremony) on Sukkot,⁷ and when the *bikkurim* (first fruits) were brought.⁸

Most are of the opinion that the Levites would only sing during communal offerings. Some⁹ are of the opinion (based on the Zohar¹⁰) that the Levites had the option to sometimes sing (although not necessarily play any instruments) when an individual offering was brought.

Furthermore, some Kabbalists explain that if the Levites observed that the pillar of smoke didn't rise up in a straight pillar, indicating that the person bringing the offering wasn't sincere in his repentance, they would stop singing.¹¹

What Instruments Did They Play?

The following is a breakdown of the number of instruments the Levites used:¹²

1. At least two lyres, but no more than six
2. At least two flutes, but more than twelve
3. At least two trumpets, but no more than 120
4. At least nine harps, with no upper limit
5. There was only one cymbal used

The Levites used to keep the instruments in the chambers underneath the Ezrat Yisrael ("Court of Israel"), which opened into the Ezrat Nashim ("Court of Women").¹³

Platform or Steps: Where Did They Sing?

In some sources, the Levites are described as singing upon a *duchan* ("platform") in the Temple courtyard near the altar.¹⁴ Elsewhere we read that the Levites sang on the 15 steps—corresponding to the 15 Songs of Ascent in Psalms¹⁵—that led from the Ezrat Nashim ("Court of Women") to the Ezrat Yisrael ("Court of Israelites").¹⁶

Commentaries explain that the Levites would sing on the platform near the altar year-round.

However, on Sukkot during Simchat Beit Hashoevah, the Levites would sing on the 15 steps.¹⁷

The Children in the Choir

The Mishnah¹⁸ states that there were never less than 12 Levites standing on the *duchan*, but their number could be increased indefinitely.

While ordinarily no minor was permitted to enter the Azarah (“Courtyard”) to take part in the service, the young Levites were permitted to join in the singing when the adult Levites stood up to sing. However, they were not permitted to play any instruments, they didn’t count toward the minimum requirement of 12 Levites, and they didn’t stand on the platform. Rather, they would stand on the ground so that their heads were between the feet of the Levites.

When Did They Start Singing?

During the era of the Mishkan, the Levites would start training for service in the Tabernacle at the age of 25 and would only begin service at age 30 (retiring at 50).¹⁹ This age restriction was lifted during the Temple period, but the Levites still needed to train for five years prior to their service.²⁰

What Did They Sing?

Almost all of the Levites’ songs are recorded in the Book of Psalms. As mentioned above, during the Passover offering, they sang Hallel (Psalms 113-118).

Throughout the year, a different Psalm was sung each day of the week during the morning and afternoon daily offerings:²¹

Sunday: “The earth is the L-rd’s and all it contains . . .” (Psalms 24)

Monday: “Great is the L-rd and highly to be praised in the city of G-d . . .” (Psalms 48)

Tuesday: “G-d stands in the divine assembly . . .” (Psalms 82)

Wednesday: “O L-rd G-d, to Whom vengeance belongs . . .” (Psalms 94)

Thursday: “Sing for joy to G-d, our strength . . .” (Psalms 81)

Friday: “The L-rd reigns: He is robed in majesty . . .” (Psalms 93).

Shabbat (only during the morning offering): “A psalm, a song for Shabbat day . . .” (Psalms 92)

During the *musaf* offering of Shabbat, the Levites would sing one of six parts of the song of Haazinu (Deuteronomy 32), completing the song every six weeks.²²

During the afternoon *tamid* offering on Shabbat, they would sing the “Song of the Sea” from Exodus. They would sing from the beginning until “Who is like You” (Exodus 15:1-11) on one Sabbath, and from that verse until the end the next week. (There is a discussion if the third week they sang the “Song of the Well” or they would begin anew.²³)²⁴

When they would bring the *bikkurim* (first fruits), they would sing, “I will extol You, O L-rd, for You have raised me up . . .” (Psalm 30).²⁵

According to some, on holidays when the complete Hallel is recited during prayer services, the Levites would sing the Hallel during the *musaf* offering of that day,²⁶ in addition to the special holiday songs enumerated in Masechet Sofrim.²⁷

Singing in the World to Come

The daily psalms selected for each day of the week praise G-d for creating the world in six days. The exception is the song sung on Shabbat, Psalms 92, which begins, “A psalm, a song for Shabbat day.” The Mishnah says it is “a song for the future, for the day that will be entirely Shabbat and rest for everlasting life”²⁸ —for Shabbat is a glimmer of the World to Come. May we merit this time with the coming of Moshiach and the rebuilding of the Temple speedily in our days!

Footnotes

1. See Jeremiah 33:10-11.

2. See, for example, Rashi on I Chronicles 25:1.

3. Talmud, Arachin 11a.

4. *Mishneh Torah, Klei Hamikdash* 3:3.

5. *Mishneh Torah, Klei Hamikdash* 3:2.

6. *Mishnah, Pesachim* 5:7 and commentaries *ad loc.* According to some, everyone sang the Hallel.

Alternatively, the congregation only sang parts of it.

7. *Mishnah, Sukkah* 5:1-4.

8. *Mishnah, Bikkurim* 3:4.

9. See *Hadar Yaakov* 4:37; *Hashem Ozeri - Bedinei Shirah*, p. 35.

10. See Zohar 3:32,71.

11. Rabbi Avraham Bar Yitzchak of Granada (c.1340-1440) in *Brit Menuchah, nikud* 5.

12. *Mishneh Torah, Klei Hamikdash* 3:4.

13. *Mishnah, Middot* 2:6.

14. See *Mishnah, Arachin* 2:6.

15. *Mishnah, Middot* 2:5.

16. *Mishnah, Middot* 2:5; *Mishnah, Sukkah* 5:4.

17. See Rashi on Talmud 51b; see also *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Beit Habechirah* 6:6.

18. *Mishnah, Arachin* 2:6.

19. See Numbers 8:24, 4:3, and commentaries *ad loc.*

20. See *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Klei Hamikdash* 3:7-8 and Radbaz and Rabbi Yosef Korkos *ad loc.*

21. *Mishnah, Tamid* 7:4.

22. *Mishneh Torah, Temidin Umusafin* 6:9; an acronym for the words that begin the verses of these six segments is *haziv lech: Ha'azinu* (32:1), *Z'chor* (32:7), *Yarkiveihu* (32:13), *Vayar* (32:19), *Lu* (32:29), *Ki* (32:40). See also Why Sing Sad Songs?

23. See Rosh Hashanah 31a, which includes this third segment. However, the *Mishneh Torah, Temidin Umusafin* 6:9 omits it, possibly due to a variant text.

24. *Mishneh Torah, Temidin Umusafin* 6:9.

25. *Mishnah, Bikkurim* 3:4.

26. See *Chikrei Lev, Orach Chaim* 32 (on *Hilchot Tefillah* 133).

27. *Masechet Sofrim* 18:2.

28. *Mishnah, Tamid* 7:4.

By Yehuda Shurpin

A noted scholar and researcher, Rabbi Yehuda Shurpin serves as content editor at Chabad.org, and writes the popular weekly Ask Rabbi Y column. Rabbi Shurpin is the rabbi of the Chabad Shul in St. Louis Park, Minn., where he resides with his wife, Ester, and their children.

More from Yehuda Shurpin | RSS

© Copyright, all rights reserved. If you enjoyed this article, we encourage you to distribute it further, provided that you comply with Chabad.org's copyright policy.

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 103-2

The intimacy of small groups is essential to Spiritual Formation, especially as it relates to corporate confession of sins. People will not (and probably should not) confess their sins to people who are not born again, baptized believers or to Christians they are not in intimate fellowship with. Practicing these “one anothers” found in the Bible will build the kind of congregations where members can trust each other enough to open up to them.

The 59 One Anothers of the Bible

By: Andrew Mason

There are 59 “one another” statements in the New Testament. That’s right, 59. That’s just under 60 exhortations in scripture to actually “do” something towards another person. These are behaviors we may do out of an overflow of our relationship with Jesus, but they are not things that we do solely unto Jesus. Other people must be involved in order to fulfill them. Many of them have been taught by the church in the Sunday pulpit but few of them have the opportunity to be lived out by believers within the context of most church programming.

Mark Howell posted a blog article about two quotes he heard from Andy Stanley at a conference he attended. The first was, “The primary activity of the church was one-anothering one another.” Take a moment and run that through your filter of Biblical knowledge. Consider the veracity of that statement and then consider how intentional we can be at strategies that don’t include this primary activity. We can be intentional about getting people stationed at posts, plugged into programs and delivering curriculum but where are we intentional about one-anothering?

The second quote Mark shared was, “When everyone is sitting in rows...you can’t do any one anothers.” If the majority of the church’s focus is herding people into rows we will not have an abundance of opportunities to “be the church.” When we’re intentional about guiding the church towards Biblical community we create more space for the one anothers. It’s so much easier to do one-anothering in circles than rows.

Below is a list of the 59 one anothers of the New Testament. Read each one and visualize how they can be walked out in your small group:

The 59 “One Anothers” of the New Testament*

1. “...Be at peace with each other.” (Mark 9:50)
2. “...Wash one another’s feet.” (John 13:14)
3. “...Love one another...” (John 13:34)
4. “...Love one another...” (John 13:34)
5. “...Love one another...” (John 13:35)
6. “...Love one another...” (John 15:12)
7. “...Love one another” (John 15:17)

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

8. “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love...” (Romans 12:10)
9. “...Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
10. “Live in harmony with one another...” (Romans 12:16)
11. “...Love one another...” (Romans 13:8)
12. “...Stop passing judgment on one another.” (Romans 14:13)
13. “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you...” (Romans 15:7)
14. “...Instruct one another.” (Romans 15:14)
15. “Greet one another with a holy kiss...” (Romans 16:16)
16. “...When you come together to eat, wait for each other.” (I Cor. 11:33)
17. “...Have equal concern for each other.” (I Corinthians 12:25)
18. “...Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (I Corinthians 16:20)
19. “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (II Corinthians 13:12)
20. “...Serve one another in love.” (Galatians 5:13)
21. “If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you will be destroyed by each other.” (Galatians 5:15)
22. “Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.” (Galatians 5:26)
23. “Carry each other’s burdens...” (Galatians 6:2)
24. “...Be patient, bearing with one another in love.” (Ephesians 4:2)
25. “Be kind and compassionate to one another...” (Ephesians 4:32)
26. “...Forgiving each other...” (Ephesians 4:32)
27. “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” (Ephesians 5:19)
28. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Ephesians 5:21)
29. “...In humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3)
30. “Do not lie to each other...” (Colossians 3:9)
31. “Bear with each other...” (Colossians 3:13)
32. “...Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.” (Colossians 3:13)
33. “Teach...[one another]” (Colossians 3:16)
34. “...Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)
35. “...Make your love increase and overflow for each other.” (I Thessalonians 3:12)
36. “...Love each other.” (I Thessalonians 4:9)
37. “...Encourage each other...” (I Thessalonians 4:18)
38. “...Encourage each other...” (I Thessalonians 5:11)
39. “...Build each other up...” (I Thessalonians 5:11)
40. “Encourage one another daily...” (Hebrews 3:13)
41. “...Spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” (Hebrews 10:24)
42. “...Encourage one another.” (Hebrews 10:25)
43. “...Do not slander one another.” (James 4:11)
44. “Don’t grumble against each other...” (James 5:9)
45. “Confess your sins to each other...” (James 5:16)
46. “...Pray for each other.” (James 5:16)
47. “...Love one another deeply, from the heart.” (I Peter 3:8)
48. “...Live in harmony with one another...” (I Peter 3:8)
49. “...Love each other deeply...” (I Peter 4:8)
50. “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling.” (I Peter 4:9)
51. “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others...” (I Peter 4:10)
52. “...Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another...” (I Peter 5:5)

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

- 53. “Greet one another with a kiss of love.” (I Peter 5:14)
- 54. “...Love one another.” (I John 3:11)
- 55. “...Love one another.” (I John 3:23)
- 56. “...Love one another.” (I John 4:7)
- 57. “...Love one another.” (I John 4:11)
- 58. “...Love one another.” (I John 4:12)
- 59. “...Love one another.” (II John 5)

As a small group leader, is there one of these that you can be more intentional about applying with group members? Is there one that you’d like to see your group practice more?

*From Carl F. George, *Prepare Your Church for the Future* (Tarrytown: Revell, 1991), 129-131.

Andrew Mason

Andrew Mason is the Lead Pastor of the International Church of Las Vegas. He is Founder of SmallGroupChurches.com, an influential small group community, linking pastors and leaders to like-minded resources, events and organizations. He has also co-authored and published 7 different video-driven groups series and participant guides. Andrew resides in Las Vegas, Nevada with his wife Camille and their three sons.

**HANDOUT
DISCIPLESHIP 103-3**

THE EVANGELISTIC PROCLAMATION OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

<p>SIDEBAR 5.1 THE EVANGELISTIC PROCLAMATION OF THE APOSTLE PAUL</p> <p>Though Paul adapted his message to the audience, consistent themes can be discerned by examining his evangelistic preaching in the book of Acts and writing in 1 Thessalonians...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is only one true and living God. Creator of heaven and earth (Acts 14:15-17; 17:24-28). 2. God is holy and righteous and will judge all evil (Acts 17:30-31; 1 Thess. 4:6b). 3. Men and women are accountable before God and must turn from serving idols and false gods to serve the one true God (Acts 14:15; 17:29-31; 1 Thess. 1:9). 4. Jesus Christ is the promised messianic Redeemer, the Son of God, who through his life, death, and resurrection delivers us from sin and God’s wrath (Acts 13:26-38; 17:2 – 3:1; 1 Thess. 1:10). 5. Repentance and faith in Christ are necessary to receive forgiveness and eternal life (Acts 13:39-41, 48; 16:30-31; 17:30; 20:21; 26:20; 1 Thess. 2:13). 6. Encouraging hearers to live worthy of God, who calls us into his kingdom (Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31; 1 Thess. 2:12; 4:1-7). <p>REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What elements of Paul’s evangelistic message are emphasized in evangelism today? What elements are missing or underemphasized? 2. Are all the above points equally essential for an unbeliever to rightly understand the gospel? 3. Are there aspects of the gospel that need to be more emphasized or more carefully explained for contemporary audiences? Explain your answer.

Encountering Theology of Missions © 2010 by Craig Orr and Stephen J. Strauss, Published by Baker Academic, Grand Rapids (p. 111).

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 103-5

The Motives for Mission Work
By Ronald Van Overloop

<https://www.christianstudylibrary.org/article/motives-mission-work>

In this article we will consider the motives for the performance of mission work. Is it necessary to deal with motives? What should motivate us in the performance of this work? Are there improper motives for doing mission work?

The necessity of dealing with motives arises because of the need for constant motivation to do the work. The earth-dwelling church and believer are not tireless and depressionless. Indeed, they are prone to weariness even in well-doing. Hence there arises a constant need for stimulation. For example, some churches do missions only because they see the great need of hell-bound souls, and the miseries which accompany the sinner in every phase of his life. However, the mere knowledge of this need will not keep one in the mission field, because the people will soon rebuke and repel you. Once it is apparent that the people who are in the greatest need, blindly and stubbornly decline the missionary's every effort, then what is left to motivate him to stay and labor? There are others who do missions being motivated solely by God's command to "Go." After some experiences of rejection and other difficulties, they continue because they are under orders. You might hear them say, "If not for the command, I would not be here." They may have lost some or all of their idealism, but they have not lost the ideal.

But a command by itself is not enough. Not only are commands frequently and easily disobeyed but, also, true obedience involves much more than mere external compliance. It is sad but very true that we are capable of rendering outward obedience without willing inward compliance. Our feet can be right, but our heart so wrong. How stubborn is remaining sin! Think of the example of Jonah. Whereas at first he was unwilling to give even outward obedience, later he went to Nineveh in obedience to God's commission; but his heart was not right. By the stormy sea and by the great fish God had brought Jonah's feet to obedience; and by the dead gourd God sought to bring his heart to the same point. Even after the chastening storm and lifesaving fish, Jonah only went to Nineveh with reluctance. He would go, but it would be to damn them. He would gladly preach judgment and hell-fire. He anticipated a mighty manifestation of God's wrath, and he stayed near Nineveh just to watch the great spectacle of God's quick and sure judgment. Jonah obeyed God's command, but his motive was far from being right.

By means of the gourd, God used a strange and much milder means than the storm and great fish to set Jonah's heart right. Jonah had pity for the plant. God asks of Jonah whether He, God, may have the same for Nineveh. Jonah did not labor for the gourd; he did not make it; it was so transient, yet Jonah wanted it and loved it. The Almighty God made Nineveh, and He sustained it, filling it with souls. One gourd over against a great city with its multitudes! Is the value of Nineveh less than that of the gourd?

Jonah is an example of complying outwardly with God's command, but being improperly motivated. Nineveh's conversion is a testimony, not of God's blessing on the obedience of His servant, but of the great grace of God that He would use Jonah even when he was of an improper

frame of mind and heart. (Every child of God, and especially every officebearer, thanks God daily that man's usefulness in preaching has little or no relationship to his heart's condition.)

We learn to be aware of improper motives!

Many there are who are busy in missions and evangelism for the sake of pride and prestige. This pride is a danger for any Christian not yet in heaven. The power of the old man is very great. It is so easy when speaking of God's blessings to refer only to that which is nice from the perspective of our flesh.

"Church growth" is the "in thing." In fact, there is a "church growth movement." If you were to walk into your local Christian bookstore with the intention of buying something on the subject of church growth, I would dare say that you would need to use both of your arms to carry the books when walking out. You will find books extolling the virtues of the megachurches already in existence. There will be other books describing how you can get your church to grow. Many seminaries now include this subject in their curriculum, describing how churches can have "dynamic ministries," jazz up their services, and have friendly members.

It is truth that the growth of the church is a matter of concern to the Reformed believer. But we react against a carnal fascination with size and success. Size is not one of the marks of the true church. In fact, Scripture and history show that usually, though not necessarily, the true church is small. In addition, the Bible warns against this fascination with large numbers when it details for us the history of David's sin of numbering the people.

Having said this, the Reformed believer must not dismiss or despise the growth of the church altogether, mystically believing that the church will grow of its own accord. Rather, the Scriptures advocate the attitude of looking for and working towards a healthy church growth. Acts 2:42-47 teaches that the growth of the church is not something carnal, but highly spiritual. If I love the Lord and the salvation of His people, then I value church growth, then I pray for it, delight in it, and look forward to it.

The proper balance is achieved when we realize that the Scriptures show that the growth of the church is not an end in itself. If it is made to be of such exclusive or primary importance, then it will be a cancer which will ultimately destroy that congregation.

What are legitimate incentives or motivations in the performance of the work of missions? What motivations does the Bible give?

The supreme motive is to glorify God (Matthew 5:16; 1 Corinthians 10:31). First, this is the impelling conviction that God is worthy to be known and praised for who and what He is. Notice that the motive for the performance of missions is the same as that for worship. The need to proclaim God's glory is met through increasing our knowledge of God. If we have discovered the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, then we cannot hold back. And it can be said that to the degree that we have learned God, to that extent we are responsible and best equipped to make Him known. "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon the earth, thy saving health among the nations." The result of this knowledge is: "Let all the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee" (Psalms 67:1-3).

With the motivation to glorify God, we renounce the "God-who-serves-me," and seek to increase the knowledge of how God is worthy to be known. Much evangelism in today's church-world is

zeal for men, not for the privilege of making God known. The Bible does know man's needs, but the Great Commission says nothing of what men need. Not that man's needs are unimportant. But they are not number one. (It is important to remember that it is impossible to be God-centered, and at the same time to ignore the needs of men) God's glory is to be revealed. Hearers are not to be trained to ask, "What is in this for me?" But they have to know that Jesus is Lord, and that they must act accordingly.

This motivation saves us from peevishness toward God when we face disappointments in our mission work. Then we do our work prayerfully, because we know that the outcome is solely up to our sovereign God. Find your inspiration, not in successes, but in God's character! The absence of the motivation to glorify God by making Him known as the driving force behind our work of missions puts us out of harmony with God's plan of salvation. Fill your mind and heart with thoughts of God. The love of God constraineth us!

A second motivation, which is closely related to the former, is gratitude for so great a Savior and for the salvation of so worthless a person and people. This gratitude is exhibited in an enthusiastic joy for one's salvation. It is total commitment to Christ, "for me to live is Christ?" (Philippians 1:21). It is a genuine enthusiasm about one's relationship to God in Christ. This gratitude is a constant impetus to be obedient to all of God's commands, including that of missions. Then my gratitude for all that God has done for me gives me the desire to tell others of my Savior and salvation.

Another motivation is the conviction of and zeal for the truth. The truth of the sovereignty of God, the truth of the vicarious atonement of Christ, the truth of God's covenant, the truth of God's love and grace, the truth of Calvinism all are stimuli. The truths themselves, as truths about God, are worthy to be proclaimed far and wide. We are to be motivated by the desire to see the truth published as well and as broadly as possible.

When sowing precious seed with tears (Psalms 126), and filled with the consciousness of one's own weakness and sinfulness, then we must of absolute necessity be consumed with the motive of confidence and trust in the irresistible work of the Holy Spirit and in the power of the preaching. This confidence delivers from the fear of failing if there is little or no response. It saves us from begging and demeaning the Gospel and its Christ. It delivers us from the fear of speaking or of not being sufficiently eloquent (1 Corinthians 2:1). It assures us that no one is beyond God's power to save. It saves us from pride, for no credit goes to man if there is fruit.

A final motive for the performance of missions is love for the neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40). The second, great commandment is chiefly manifested in a concern for the eternal state and spiritual wellbeing of my neighbor. This responsibility toward the neighbor is determined, not by God's decrees and providence, but by His commands.

There is God's command. And there is also God's glory and His truth.

Remember Jonah! May our heart and our feet be together. May God grant us to be well motivated in the performance of our every work.

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 103-5

Why YOU Should Go to the Mission Field Keith Green's Final Message

PART I: THE CALL OF THE LORD

A Biblical Look At The Missions Call

I recently returned from visiting some overseas missionary bases, and I must say that since returning, my life has not been quite the same. The vision and goals of our ministry have suddenly changed. The Lord definitely did something to my heart on that trip. Besides showing me how small my vision had been, He began to give me a great burden to see the ranks of His army in the field swell!

One of the greatest things God opened my eyes to was how tremendously evangelized my own country was, while the rest of the world was barely being reached. As I traveled from country to country, I thought of the millions of people I was passing through who needed to have the Gospel of Jesus shown to them in a real way - and yet there was hardly anyone there to reach them.

As I visited each mission base, I spoke with different missionaries, and picked up various pieces of literature that told the story of what was being done in different parts of the world to expand the Kingdom of God. As I read the statistics, I was shocked - I really had never known how little the need was being met!

When I returned home, I got hold of some of the leaders of different missionary organizations and set up some meetings to find out more about what was being done to fill the need. After these meetings, I decided to do a study of God's Word (to see what He had to say about reaching the lost in other countries), and I also read through some more of the missions literature I had been given.

This article is the result of that study, and also a burning desire in my heart to see 100,000 young people released to the mission field over the next five years!

So...why should you go to the mission field?

1) Because Jesus has told you to go.

"Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation." (Mark 16:15)

With these words, Jesus made it clear exactly what His disciples were to do - they were to spread His teachings in His name, preaching salvation unto the ends of the earth. (Rom. 10:18) If you consider yourself a "believer", then you must consider yourself a "disciple" of Jesus - no less called and chosen than the very first 12 apostles. There are no such things as "1st class" Christians and "2nd class" Christians - every believer is called to spread the Good News about Jesus to those who have not yet heard. Jesus' command is definite and clear - it is His great mandate, His "Great Commission" to the soldiers in His holy army. We must go, because our great General has commanded us to go.

2) You should go because the need is so great.

"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest." (Matt. 9:37-38)

Ever since Jesus first spoke these compassionate words, the supply of workers in the fields of soul-harvest has always been horribly low. But today the need is the greatest it has ever been in the history of mankind. Remember, Hell is not just for the weekend! More people are alive today, and more souls are at stake, than the total number of people who have ever lived on the face of the earth in all of human history! This simply means that we can populate either Heaven or Hell by our obedience or our laziness. There are over 2,700,000,000 people who have never heard the Gospel at all, and there are only 5,000 to 7,000 missionaries worldwide, working directly with these totally unreached groups of people.¹ That means there is approximately one missionary for every 450,000 of these people! There are over 16,000 different and distinct cultures and people-groups - even whole countries, where not one single church is in existence.² There are 7,010 distinct living languages, and 5,199 of them still have no Bible or Scripture translations available in their own language!³ Do these figures move you at all? Does it matter to you that an estimated 80,000 unsaved people die every day (approximately 3,333 every hour...55 people every single minute!) to face the judgment seat of Christ?⁴

3) You should go because so few Christians are obeying the call, making the need even greater!

"Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ...how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:17,14)

Right now worldwide there are only 85,000 workers on the mission field - working mainly among those who have heard the gospel before.⁵ This figure includes missionaries from all over the world of every nationality. When you compare this number with the amount of Americans selling Avon or Amway products, it is staggering. Just in America alone there are 435,000 Avon sales-people⁶ (with 1,280,000 worldwide), and over 750,000 Amway products distributors,⁷ (with over a million worldwide)! Do you realize that these two companies combined have 14 times more representatives in the United States alone than the Church of Jesus Christ has in the whole world outside of America?

And what about the Christian representatives we do have in the world? Only 9% of the world's population speaks English, and yet 94% of all ordained preachers in the whole world minister to the 9% who speak English. And 96% of all Christian finances are spent in the United States on 6% of the world's population. Only 4% of all Christian money is spent on missionary efforts to reach the other 94% of the world's population! There are over 1,000,000 full-time Christian workers in the United States; while one half of the world's population (3 major groups - Moslem, Hindu, and Chinese), 2,200,000,000 people, have only 2,417 full-time Christian workers.⁸ As you can see by these figures, something is definitely wrong. While we in America have approximately one worker for every 230 people - those who have never heard the Gospel even once have one worker for every 450,000 souls! Please forgive us, Jesus, for being too timid to obey You and reach out into all the world like You have commanded us to!

4) You should go because God gives special anointing and grace to those who leave their own land, people, and culture to do God's will and spread the Gospel.

"And the Lord said to Abram, 'Go forth from your country and from your relatives, and from your father's house...and I will bless you and make your name great; and so you shall also be a blessing; and I will bless those that bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" (Genesis 12:1-3)

Abram (later to be renamed Abraham by God) is only one of the many people in the Bible who God used mightily only after he left his own people, his own land, and his own culture. Look at the travels and ministries of people like Jacob and Moses - both of whom had to go into other lands to learn from God and be used by Him.

No matter where you look in the Bible, God always gave a great anointing and blessing to those who served Him in a foreign land. Look at Joseph and Daniel. They were the only two men in the Bible who God raised up as successful, secular officials in foreign and heathen cultures - and they remained faithful witnesses and servants of God to the very end, and often at the risk of their very lives!

What about Jonah? He was a good example of someone who didn't want to go to the mission field and preach to heathens! Stubborn, rebellious, and selfish - and yet God "made him an offer he couldn't refuse." (I pray that God would freely move like that in all our lives, "helping" us to make the right decisions about going.)

And then there's the apostle Paul - who had such a burden for his own people and country, Israel. Oh , how he would have loved a ministry among the Jews! But what did God say? "Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles." (Acts 22:21) That's what God commanded, and "go" he did. Never was there a missionary like Paul. Take a look at II Corinthians 11 if you'd like to see a list of his qualifications: beatings, imprisonment's, stonings, mobs, shipwrecks, the list goes on and on - and so did Paul, obeying his Master who bought him.

From Noah to Abraham, from Moses to Jonah, from Daniel to Paul, God has always given special blessing to those who, leaving the comforts of home and relatives, cross the boundaries of their little worlds to bring God's message and blessing to the nations.

Remember Jesus' words about this subject, "A prophet is not without honor except in his home town," (Matt. 13:57)

5) You should go because America (and some other western nations) is literally drenched with the Gospel, while most other countries and cultures of the world do not have any continual, relevant witness at all.

"And thus I aspired to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation; but as it is written, 'They that had no news of Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand.'" (Rom. 15:20-21)

It is so true that we here in America are continually bombarded with Christian witness and ministry. Almost at every turn there's a billboard or a bumper sticker proclaiming something about Jesus.

Turn the dial on your radio at any time of the day or night, and you've got non-stop preaching. There are several Christian satellite and cable networks. And there are over 250 different Christian magazines and publications. In most cities there's a church on almost every corner. I am not trying to say that this is all bad - a lot of it is good, winning many souls to Jesus - but as I've traveled overseas, it is hard for me to believe that it is God's will for there to be so much Gospel preaching and literature available here, while there is comparatively little or even none in many places outside of this country.

The world is going to Hell on every continent! Is it God's fault that so few are hearing the gospel - or is it the Church's? Aren't we who love Jesus accountable to reach our generation with the gospel? A friend of mine has written, "this generation of Christians is responsible for this generation of sinners." If this is true, then each of us must take a good, long look at our lives and priorities - finding out where God would have us begin to get ready to go!

6) You should go because, as Oswald J. Smith said, "No one has the right to hear the Gospel twice, while there remains someone who has not heard it once."

"But if our Gospel be hidden, it is hidden to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, that they might not see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." (II Cor. 4:3-4)

Has it occurred to you that Jesus wants every creature to hear the Gospel? If you had 20 children to feed and plenty of food to feed them all with, do you think it would be right to give 3 of the children 10 meals, 7 children only 1 meal, and the remaining nothing - causing them to die of starvation? That's exactly what we're doing with the Gospel in the world today!

Because we believers are so deaf to God's call to go into all nations, we keep most of God's resources to ourselves! We keep feeding and reaching the same people over and over again. I am not saying there should be no Gospel preached in America, I am saying that there needs to be a spreading out of the soldiers of God, to fight the enemy where his greatest strongholds are - "where Christ is not already named"!

7) You should go because the time is short. More and more countries are closing their doors to missionaries and the Gospel, and we must go now.

"We must work the works of Him who sent me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work." (John 9:4)

I constantly hear of country after country where missionaries used to be welcome, but now the doors are closed to them entering. Though it is true that many Christians can still go to be subtle witnesses as doctors, teachers, engineers, etc., the Gospel can no longer be openly preached in many lands.

Although there are still vast areas of the world wide open for foreign evangelism, such as western Europe, parts of Asia, and most of the Pacific (Japan, South Korea, Singapore, etc.) there are many other countries where it is illegal to hold a street meeting or pass out Gospel literature. We need to

sense the urgency of this hour, and obey God by reaching out to those lost in the darkness "while it is still day."

8) You should go because the Holy Spirit is speaking to Christian leadership all over the world that it is God's desire for there to be a great final missionary thrust with the Gospel before the end of the age. It is His desire that every people should have the Gospel preached to them, and that the Gospel should be published in every nation and in every language. And unless YOU get involved personally, there is no hope of that ever happening in our generation!

"...And you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." (Acts 1:8) "And this gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come." (Matt. 24:14) "The Lord is...patient toward you, not wishing for you to perish but for all to come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9)

Is there any doubt in your mind that God wants everyone to be saved? If you believe this, and you really love Jesus, then WHY are you so timid about getting involved in this great thrust to bring the Gospel to all the nations? Do you think that while you're reading this, God isn't grieved that His Church is being so lazy and disobedient about fulfilling his commission? He knows that you agree with the Scriptures, and He's listening to every excuse you're turning over in your mind like, "Yes, I know that more people need to go...but He just couldn't mean ME! I'm...just not the 'missionary-type'..."

HANDOUT
DISCIPLESHIP 103-5

The Millennium Controversy in Revelation

In many ways the Book of Revelation is considered the most controversial book in the entire Bible. From the earliest times to the present day, scholars and theologians have debated the content and meaning of the Book. In modern times the debate over Revelation has become even more intense as popular theories, bold predictions, and wild speculations abound in the church about the 2nd Coming and the end of the Age. Theologians of every generation have theorized on the identity of the 144,000 (chapter 7), the two witnesses (chapter 11), the beasts and the number 666 (chapter 13), and the timing of the Rapture in relation to the Great Tribulation. Practically every generation has had its candidate for the “anti-Christ” and every historical upheaval was considered the “end of the world” for the believers who were living through it.

The one controversy that has remained a crucial dividing factor for Bible commentators throughout church history is what John meant by the “thousand years” in Revelation 20. The term “Millennium” (from Latin: mille = thousand, and annus = years) has been generally adopted to refer to the thousand-year reign of the saints with Christ described near the end of the Book of Revelation. Some theologians have gone so far as to call this the most controversial chapter in the whole Bible. The questions surrounding the Millennium, its timing, and its relation to Christ’s Second Coming have never been answered with unanimity by the church. To this day, Christians from different denominational backgrounds have had to “agree to disagree” on which of the three Christian views on the Millennium is the correct one.

The following definitions are from Revelation Four Views: A Parallel Commentary, Pub. Thomas Nelson, Edited by Steve Gregg:

1. Premillennialism – is the belief that the second coming of Christ will precede the millennial kingdom. Taking a mostly literal approach, premillennialists expect a period of one thousand years’ duration, during which Christ will reign with his saints here on earth prior to the establishment of the eternal new heavens and new earth. The millennial reign will be characterized by international peace and justice resulting from the universal enforced rule of Christ over saved and unsaved alike. At the end of this time, Satan’s brief period of freedom will put humanity to one final test just before the final judgment.

2. Postmillennialism – teaches that Christ returns after the millennial period. According to this camp, the millennial kingdom will be established through the evangelistic mission of the church. This enterprise will be so successful that all or most people will become Christians, resulting in a thousand years of peace on earth before Christ’s second coming.

3. Amillennialism – understands the thousand years of Revelation 20 to symbolize an indefinitely long period of time, which happens to correspond to the entire span of time from the first coming of Christ until his second coming. Most aspects of chapter 20 (like most of the rest of Revelation) are believed to be symbolic. The binding of Satan happened spiritually at the Cross; the reign of the saints is the present age; the loosing of Satan is a final period of deception coming on the world in the end of the age; the fire from heaven that devours the wicked is the second coming of Christ. It should be noted that the various approaches to interpreting Revelation are not absolutely linked to any particular millennial view; therefore, one’s theology about the end times and the return of Christ does not necessarily dictate which approach to Revelation one has to follow.

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

HANDOUT
DISCIPLESHIP 103-7

Paul’s List of Qualifications for Leadership from Timothy and Titus

Scripture	Qualification	Explanation
1 Timothy 3:1-7	Temperate	Calm and collected in spirit; sober.
	Gentle	Fair, equitable, not insisting on his own rights; not harsh in his treatment of others.
	Able to manage Household	A good leader in his own family. Children are not incorrigible or unruly.
	Not a new Christian	Demonstrates spiritual maturity.
	Well thought of	A good representative of Christ.
Titus 1:5-9	Above reproach	Not open to censure; having unimpeachable integrity.
	Husband of one wife	A one-wife man, not a polygamist or philanderer (does not rule out widowers or divorced men.)
	Children are believers	Children are not following other religions or do not believe in Jesus
	Not self-willed	Not arrogantly self-satisfied.
	Not quick-tempered	Not prone to anger or short-tempered.
	Not addicted to wine	No affection for alcoholic beverages
	Not argumentative	Not contentious or quarrelsome
	Not greedy for money.	Not motivated by money; not a money-lover
	Hospitable	A stranger-lover, generous to Guests
	Lover of good.	Loving goodness.
	Sensible	Self-controlled, sane, temperate.
Just	Righteous, upright, aligned with right.	

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

	Devout	Responsible in fulfilling moral obligations to God and man.
	Self-controlled.	Restrained, under control
	Holding fast the Word	Committed to God's Word as authoritative.
	Able to teach sound doctrine	Calling others to wholeness through teaching God's Word.
	Able to refute objections	Convincing those who speak against the truth.

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 103-8

Deliver Us from Evil – Consultation Statement

<https://lausanne.org/content/statement/deliver-us-from-evil-consultation-statement>

Introduction

Spiritual conflict is an emerging yet uneasy frontier in taking the whole gospel to the whole world. Enthusiasm and concern rest side by side. Trying to come to grips with the many complex issues, thirty practitioners, missiologists, pastors, and theologians gathered in Nairobi, Kenya, from 16 to 22 August 2000. Together we discussed issues of spiritual conflict in a consultation, 'Deliver Us From Evil', convened by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization and the Association of Evangelicals in Africa. The consultation objective was to seek a biblical and comprehensive understanding of 1) who the enemy is; 2) how he is working; and 3) how we can fight him in order to be most effective in the evangelization of all peoples.

Our group included practitioners of deliverance and prayer ministries from Latin America, Africa, Asia, Europe, Australia, and the United States; pastors and evangelical leaders from Africa and North America; an executive of a relief and development agency; an African psychologist working in North America; theologians from Asia, Europe, and North America; missionaries working in Africa and Latin America; mission executives from Europe and North America; and missiological educators from North America and Europe. Among us were Presbyterians, Pentecostals, Methodists, Anglicans, Lutherans, Baptists, and members of the Evangelical Church of West Africa, Church of South India, Berachah Prophetic Church, Evangelical Covenant Church, Brethren Church, Christian and Missionary Alliance, and Bible Church (United States).

We noted with interest that most of the consultation participants from Western societies had come to recognize the realities of the unseen or spiritual realm as a result of their cross-cultural experience. Those from the Two Thirds World frequently reported their experiences with Western missionaries, who were unaware of these spiritual realities, and were thus unable to minister to the spiritual realities that Two Thirds World people experience on a day-to-day basis.

As we have met in Nairobi, we have learned from the insights of sisters and brothers from East Africa and the East African revival. We particularly affirm how our East African sisters and brothers lift up Jesus, and him crucified, in the face of spiritual conflict. We realize afresh that the only way to break the power of Satan in everyday life, in society, and in culture is by walking in the light so that Satan may not bind us in the darkness.

As we pray the prayer, 'Deliver us from evil', we pray to be delivered from personal sin, natural evils, evil spirits and powers, and evil in society.

Origins

Our point of departure includes The Lausanne Covenant, The Manila Manifesto, and the 1993 LCWE Statement on Spiritual Warfare, all of which state the reality of our engagement in spiritual conflict:

We believe that we are engaged in constant spiritual warfare with the principalities and powers of evil, who are seeking to overthrow the Church and frustrate its task of world evangelization. (Covenant, 1974)

We affirm that spiritual warfare demands spiritual weapons, and that we must both preach the word in the power of the Spirit, and pray constantly that we may enter into Christ's victory over the principalities and powers of evil. (Manifesto, 1989)

We agreed that evangelization is to bring people from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:17). This involves an inescapable element of spiritual warfare. (Lausanne Statement on Spiritual Warfare, 1993)

The consultation and participants recognize the relevance of spiritual conflict to world evangelization. We are not trying to side with any particular view but to expand evangelical thinking in an emerging area that has controversy. This statement indicates areas of common agreement, areas of unresolved tensions, warnings, and areas needing further study and exploration. Our intention is to encourage churches of all traditions to use this statement to stimulate forthright discussion, serious reflection, and practical ministry on spiritual conflict to the glory of God.

Common Ground

Theological Affirmations

We affirm the biblical witness that humans were created in the image of God to live in communion with him, in fellowship with other humans, and as stewards of God's creation. The relationship between God and humankind was broken through the mysterious entry of evil into God's creation. Since the Fall, evil has influenced all aspects of the created world and human existence. It is God's plan to redeem and restore his fallen creation. God's redemptive purpose is being revealed and realized in the history of salvation, and fully in the gospel of the incarnation, death, resurrection, ascension, and return of his son, Jesus Christ. We are called to participate in God's mission of fighting evil and the evil one in order to restore what was destroyed as a result of the Fall. We live in a world with tension between the kingdom that has already come in Christ and the continuing realities of evil. God's mission will be completed when Christ returns, the kingdom of God comes in power, and evil is destroyed and eliminated forever.

1. Calling people to faith in Christ, inviting them to be delivered from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of God, is the missionary mandate for all Christians. We affirm a holistic understanding of evangelization that finds its source in our relationship with Christ and his call to us to become intimate with him in the fellowship of believers. The Holy Spirit empowers us for world evangelization through the interrelated ministries of word

(proclamation), deed (social service and action), and sign (miracles, power encounters) all of which take place in the context of spiritual conflict.

2. Satan is a real, personal, spiritual and created being. Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, sought to destroy him, and yet in light of the resurrection morning, found himself defeated. Satan continues to oppose actively God's mission and the work of God's church. (1)
3. The powers and principalities are ontologically real beings. They cannot be reduced to mere social or psychological structures. (2)
4. Satan works by taking what God has created for human well-being and perverting it toward his purposes, which are to destroy and devalue life by enslaving individuals, families, local communities, and whole societies. Satan contextualizes his efforts differently in various societies and cultures.
5. Satan uses deception in an attempt to redirect human allegiances to anyone or anything other than God. In addition to the personal level, Satan does this with regard to all institutionalized forms of religious or ideological allegiance, including the church.
6. Satan and 'the rulers, authorities, the powers of this dark world, the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms' are at work through: (3)
 - Deceiving and distorting
 - Tempting to sin
 - Afflicting the body, emotions, mind, and will
 - Taking control of a person
 - Disordering of nature
 - Distorting the roles of social, economic, and political structures
 - Scapegoating as a means of legitimizing violence
 - Promoting self-interest, injustice, oppression, and abuse
 - The realm of the occult
 - False religions
 - All forms of opposition to God's work of salvation and the mission of the church.
7. A primary purpose of the life and ministry of Jesus was to expose, confront, and defeat Satan and destroy his works.
 - Christ has decisively defeated Satan at the cross and through the resurrection.
 - Jesus confronted Satan through prayer, righteousness, obedience, and setting the captives free.
 - In the way he ministered to people, he mounted an enormous challenge to the institutions and structures of the world.
 - Christians share in Christ's victory and are given the authority of Christ to stand against the attacks of Satan in the victory we have in Christ. (4) The model for spiritual authority is Jesus and his obedience and submission to God on the cross.
8. While we acknowledge that God is sovereignly in control of his creation, the biblical evidence indicates a variety of causes of illness and calamity: God, Satan, human choices or trauma, and a disordered universe are all cited. We understand that we may not know with certainty the exact cause of any particular illness or calamity.
9. The elements of a worldview that is Christian within our respective cultural contexts must include:
 - God is the creator and sustainer of all that exists, both seen and unseen. This creation includes humans and spiritual beings as moral creatures.

- People were made in the image of God, in which the aspects of the human person are inseparably connected.
 - Body, soul, emotions, and mind cannot be separated.
 - God remains sovereign over all his creation in history, and nothing happens outside God's ultimate control. Thus, the world cannot be conceived of as a closed universe governed merely by naturalistic scientific laws. Neither can it be considered a dualistic system in which Satan is understood to be equal to God.
 - Because we reject a dualistic world view, the blessings of God and the ministrations of the angelic host, the consequences of sin, and the assaults of Satan and demons cannot be isolated solely to a spiritual realm.
 - Any teaching on spiritual conflict that leads us to fear the Devil to such an extent that we lose our confidence in Christ's victory over him and in God's sovereign power to protect us must be rejected.
 - All matters concerning spiritual conflict must be viewed first and foremost in terms of our relationship with and faith in God, and not simply in terms of techniques that we must master.
 - The return of Christ and the ultimate consummation of his victory over Satan gives us confidence today in dealing with spiritual struggles and a lens through which we are to interpret the events in the world today.
10. The person and work of the Holy Spirit are central in spiritual conflict: (5)
- The empowering of the Holy Spirit, the exercise of spiritual gifts, and prayer are prerequisites for engaging in spiritual conflict.
 - The exercise of spiritual gifts must be accompanied by the fruit of the Spirit.
 - The work of the Spirit and the Word must be held together.

Spiritual Conflict in Practice

1. We listened to reports on the history of the church's dealing with Satan and the demonic and noted:
 - There are striking similarities between what happened in the history of the ancient church to what is happening in demonic encounters and deliverance today.
 - Deliverance from Satanic and demonic powers and influence in the ancient church was used as proof of the resurrection and the truth of the claims of Christ by the church fathers.
 - Preparation for baptism included the renunciation of the Devil, the demonic, and prior religious allegiances from the life of the convert as well as repentance. This practice continues in some churches to this day.
 - The unwillingness/inability of the contemporary Western church to believe in the reality of spiritual beliefs and to engage in spiritual conflict arose out of a defective Enlightenment-influenced worldview, is not representative of the total history of the church in relation to spiritual conflict, and has not been characteristic of Christianity in the Two Thirds World in contemporary history.
 - Every Christian has access to the authority of Christ, and demons recognize Christ's power when exercised by Christians.

- The history of evangelism is replete with examples in which the response to the gospel was accompanied by power encounters, but power encounters in and of themselves are never a guarantee of a positive response.
 - Church history also points to a link between idolatry and the demonic.
2. Working for positive strongholds for God through a 'gentle invasion' that overcomes evil with good and wins people by love is as important as breaking down Satanic strongholds. We thus affirm the importance and primacy of the local church and its life of faith.
 3. Worship is spiritual conflict. It is not aggressive, spectacular, spiritual conflict; not a strategy nor a means to an end; but involves mind, body, and spirit responding with all that we are to all that God is.
 4. Spiritual conflict is risky and often costly. While there are victories, there is often a backlash from the Evil One in various forms of attack such as illness and persecution. Nonetheless we do not shrink from spiritual conflict, since to avoid it is costly to the kingdom of God.
 5. The ministry of spiritual conflict is grounded in the transformative power of relationships, not techniques or methods.
 6. The point of departure for spiritual conflict is our relationship with Jesus and listening to the Holy Spirit.
 7. We affirm the complexity of the human person. We need to distinguish the psychological from the spiritual when it comes to ministry and counselling. Deliverance ministries and psychological counselors often fail to recognize this distinction. Failure to do so can do harm.
 8. Holiness is central to the Christian response to evil:
 - In the exercise of spiritual authority those who do not give adequate attention to character and holiness truncate the whole biblical picture of spiritual growth and sanctification.
 - To practice spiritual conflict without adequate attention to personal holiness is to invite disaster.
 - The pursuit of holiness applies not only to the individual, but to the family, the local church, and the larger community of faith.
 - While holiness includes personal piety, it applies to social relationships as well.
 9. Engaging the Evil One is not the work for heroic individuals. Those engaged in this ministry must seek the support of a group of intercessors.
 10. Following up on individuals who have experienced freedom through spiritual conflict must be an inseparable part of the ministry. The local church must be encouraged to incorporate people into the Christian community and to disciple them. Not to arrange for this is sin.
 11. We were saddened by stories of people, emboldened by self-assured certainty and money, who come from outside and overwhelm local Christians by carrying out hit-and-run ministries of spiritual conflict that 1) presume superior knowledge of the local reality, 2) treat local Christians as inferior or unaware, 3) claim credit for things that local Christians have been praying and working toward for years, and 4) leave uneven results and sometimes pain, alienation, and even persecution of the local church, while claiming great victory.
 12. Spiritual conflict involves more than one enemy; it must engage the flesh, the Devil, and the world:
 - We view with alarm social evils such as injustice, poverty, ethnocentrism, racism, genocide, violence, environmental abuse, and wars, as well as violence, pornography, and the occult in the media.

- These social evils are encouraged or supported by human institutions in which the principalities and powers work against God and his intention for humankind.
- The task of the church in combating the principalities and powers in the socio-political context is to unmask their idolatrous pretensions, to identify their dehumanizing values and actions, and to work for the release of their victims. This work involves spiritual, political, and social actions.

13. We fail to find biblical warrant for constructing elaborate hierarchies of the spirit world.

Warnings

1. We urge caution and sensitivity in the use of language when it comes to spiritual conflict. While biblical, the term ‘spiritual warfare’ is offensive to non-Christians and carries connotations that seem contradictory coming from those who serve a Lord who died on a cross. Furthermore, there is a large range of meanings attached to various spiritual conflict terms such as healing, deliverance, power encounters, possession, demonization, powers, and so on. Additionally new terms are constantly being coined (eg Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare, deep-level healing).
2. We call for watchfulness to avoid any syncretism with non-Christian religious beliefs and practices, such as traditional religions or new religious movements. We also affirm that new believers are reasonable when they expect the gospel to meet their needs for spiritual power.
3. We call for discernment concerning magical uses of Christian terms and caution practitioners to avoid making spiritual conflict into Christian magic. Any suggestion that a particular technique or method in spiritual conflict ministry ensures success is a magical, sub-Christian understanding of God’s workings.
4. We encourage extreme care and the discernment of the community to ensure that the exercise of spiritual authority not become spiritual abuse. Any expression of spiritual power or authority must be done in compassion and love.
5. We cry out for a mantle of humility and gracefulness on the part of cross-cultural workers who having recently discovered the reality of the spirit realm, as they go to other parts of the world where people have known and lived with the local realities of the spirit realm and the struggle with the demonic for centuries.
6. Because spiritual conflict is expressed in different ways in different societies, we strongly caution against taking ideas, methods, or strategies developed in one society and using them uncritically in another.
7. Because we must resist the temptation to adopt the devil’s tactics as ours, we warn practitioners to take care that their methods in spiritual conflict are based on the work of Christ on the cross:
 - Submitting to God through his substitutionary death on the cross, Christ deprived Satan of his claim to power;
 - Christ’s willingness to sacrifice himself in contrast to fighting back is a model for spiritual conflict;
 - When we separate the cross from spiritual conflict, we create a climate of triumphalism.
8. We call for actions that ensure that our approaches and explanations of spiritual conflict do not tie new converts to the very fears from which Christ died to free them. Being free in Christ means being free from fear of the demonic.

9. We warn against an overemphasis on spirits that blames demons for the actions of people. Demons can only work through people—and people can actively choose to cooperate. Spirits are not the only source of resistance to the gospel.
10. We warn against confusing correlations or coincidence with causation in reporting apparent victories, as well as the uncritical use of undocumented accounts to establish the validity of cosmic warfare.
11. We warn against using eschatology as an excuse not to fight against all forms of evil in the present.

Areas of Tension

1. In the early church, demonic encounters were most often seen where the church encountered non-Christians. The history of evangelization frequently links power encounters with the evangelization of non-Christian people. The biblical text reveals that while it is possible that a believer may be afflicted physically by a demonic spirit, (6) there is no direct evidence that demons need to be cast out of believers. On the other hand, we also heard the testimony of brothers and sisters in every continent to the contrary. This raises the question of how we are to understand the effect of the demonic in the lives of Christians. We were unable to resolve this tension in our consultation, but believe the following are helpful to note:
 - We are aware that in many cases, new Christians today have not gone through processes of renunciation of pre-Christian allegiances, processes that have been normative in the pre-Enlightenment church. Some Christians may have lost their faith; there are others who call themselves Christians but are only Christians in a nominal sense. Some claim that these might be reasons that Christians might appear to be susceptible to the demonic.
 - While affirming that being in Christ means the Christian belongs to Christ and that our nature is transformed, just as with sin and our need to deal with sin in our body, mind, emotions, and will, we wonder if the demonic, while no longer able to claim ownership of Christians, may continue to afflict them in body, mind, and emotions, unless dealt with.
2. While it is possible that Satan manifests himself more strongly in certain places than in others, and that some spirits seem to be tied to certain locations, we agreed there seems to be little biblical warrant for a number of the teachings and practices associated with some forms of spiritual conflict which focus on territorial spirits. We experienced tension over whether there is biblical warrant for warfare prayer against territorial spirits as a valid tool for evangelization. We agreed, however, on the invalidity of the claim that warfare prayer against territorial spirits is the only key to effective evangelization.
3. Tension exists concerning the extent to which we can learn and verify things from the spiritual realm from experiences not immediately verifiable from Scripture, in contrast to limiting our understanding of the spiritual realm from Scripture alone. Some have maintained that experience is crucial to understanding spiritual conflict; this is a point to be explored in ongoing dialogue.
4. We are not agreed as to whether or how the truths about spiritual realities and spiritual conflict methodologies can be verified empirically. Some engage in active experimentation in spiritual conflict ministry as a means of developing generalities concerning spiritual conflict, while others are not convinced of the validity of this way of learning.

Frontiers That Need Ongoing Exploration

1. While affirming the Lausanne position on the Bible, there is an urgent need for a hermeneutic that:
 - Allows culture and experience to play a role in the formulation of our understanding and theology of spiritual conflict. The basis and test of such a theology is Scripture, faithfully interpreted by the Spirit-guided hermeneutical community of the global church.
 - Allows an examination of issues which arise in Christian experience not directly addressed in Scripture.
 - Accepts the fact that the Holy Spirit has surprised the church by acting in ways not explicitly taught in Scriptures (Acts 10 and 15) and may be doing so again.
2. There is an urgent need to incorporate the study of spiritual conflict into theological curricula in schools and training centers around the world.
3. There is an urgent need to develop criteria and methods that allow us to evaluate ministry experience in a verifiable way.
4. The emerging understanding of the complexity of the human person needs significant exploration and examination. Specifically we call for:
 - A sustained dialogue between those engaged in deliverance ministries and those in the medical and psychological professions.
 - Urgent sharing worldwide with deliverance practitioners of the current state of knowledge of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID), formerly called Multiple Personality Disorder.
 - A diagnostic approach that allows practitioners to discern the difference between DID personalities and spiritual entities.
 - A dialogue between theologians and the medical and psychological professions that develops a holistic understanding of the human person, inseparably relating body, mind, emotions, and spirit as they function individually and relationally.
5. We call for a more interdisciplinary approach to the description of spiritual conflict, drawing on the insights of relevant disciplines.
6. We call for churches to develop an understanding of sanctification that addresses all of the human person: our spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical selves. Such a holistic understanding of sanctification will include the development of spiritual disciplines, inner healing, and deliverance. All need to become tools supporting the sanctification of Christians through the Word by the Holy Spirit. (7)
7. There is a need to explore the role in spiritual conflict of the practices of baptism, holy communion, confession of sin and absolution, foot-washing, and anointing with oil.
8. We would like to see a serious examination of the deception and seductive power of advertising, in terms of its role in fostering envy, consumerism, and false gods.

We praise God, that, while we represented various theological, cultural, and church traditions and positions on spiritual conflict, we have been blessed and inspired by learning from each other. This encourages us to believe that it is possible to develop an understanding of spiritual conflict and its practice within the Christian community, so that in time it becomes part of the everyday life of the church. We invite the church to join us in continuing study and incorporation of appropriate ministries of spiritual conflict into the life of the church. We particularly call the churches in the

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

West to listen more carefully to the churches in the Two Thirds World and join them in a serious rediscovery of the reality of evil.

Notes:

1. Job 1-2; Zech. 3:1f; 1 Chron. 21:1; Matt. 4:1-11; Matt. 12:23; Luke 8:12; Luke 22:3; John 13:2; 12:31; 16:11; Col 2:15-22.
2. Mark 3:22; 1 Cor. 2:6-8; 15:24-26; Col. 2:15; Eph. 1:21; 3:10; 6:10-18.
3. 2 Cor. 2:11; 1 Thess 3:5; 1 Tim. 2:14; Rev. 12:10; Matt. 8:16; Matt. 9:32; Mark 5:1-20; Mark 9:17; Luke 8:30; Job 2:7; Matt. 9:32-33; 12:22-23; 15:22-28; Job 1:16-19.
4. John 12:31; 16:11, 33; Col 2:15; Heb 2:14; 1 John 3:8; Rev 5:5; Eph 6:10-18; Jas. 4:7; Luke 9:1; Matt. 28:18; cf. Matt. 12:28f; Eph 6:11,13.
5. Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; Eph. 6:17.
6. Luke 4:38-39; 13:10-13; 2 Cor. 12:7-9.
7. John 15:3; 17:17.

Copyright © 2023 School of Global Missions. This material is not to be copied for any purpose without written permission of Dr. Frederick Osborn and the School of Global Missions. All rights reserved, printed in the U.S.A.

HANDOUT
DISCIPLESHIP 103-10

THE LISTS OF THE GIFTS AND THE DIVERSITIES OF MINISTRIES		
Romans 12:6-8	1 Corinthians 12:7-11, 28-31	Ephesians 4:7-12
Prophecy Ministry (service) Teaching Exhortation Giving Leadership Mercy	Word of wisdom Word of knowledge Faith Healing* Miracles* Prophecy* Discerning spirits Tongues* Interpreting tongues	Apostles Prophets Evangelists Pastors Teachers
	Apostles Prophets* Teachers Miracles* Healing* Helps Administrations Tongues*	

*The lists of supernatural gifts recognized by believers today will vary slightly because not every denomination recognizes all of these gifts. Gifts in **bold** indicate the five primary ministries of the church through which these gifts are used to minister to the body of believers: Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers.

HANDOUT
DISCIPLESHIP 103-11

Assemblies Of God Official Position Paper: “Apostles and Prophets”

<https://ag.org/Beliefs/Position-Papers/Apostles-and-Prophets>

(Adopted by the General Presbytery in session August 6, 2001)

Modern church statisticians cite the phenomenal growth of the Pentecostal movement and report that Pentecostals and charismatics now make up the second largest Christian group in the world. Pentecostals stand in awe of what God has done and attribute such amazing expansion to their simple trust in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, which continues to be at work in the church today.

The rapid advance of the Pentecostal revival has also been accompanied by a new openness to the gifts of the Spirit. The evangelical world increasingly has turned from cessationism, the belief gifts of the Spirit ceased at the end of the New Testament era, to an understanding that New Testament gifts of the Holy Spirit are vital for ministry today.

With the restoration of the miraculous gifts to the Church has also come the question of whether God is restoring the five-fold ministry of Ephesians 4:11: “It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.”¹ Bible scholars differ on whether the gifts of pastor and teacher are separate in Ephesians 4 (yielding a total of five), or whether a better translation might be “... and some to be pastor-teachers” (yielding a total of four). Greek grammar would seem to dictate four, but the New Testament often discusses pastoral and teaching roles separately.

However, the best designation for ministry is neither fivefold nor fourfold but manifold. Ephesians 4:12 gives to all saints the work of ministry, while 1 Corinthians 12:28–30 and Romans 12:6–8 provide aspects of ministry beyond the designations in Ephesians 4:11,12.

Relatively few questions are raised about the validity of contemporary evangelists, pastors, and teachers. However, there are a number of voices in the church today calling for the restoration of apostles and prophets, thinking these offices are the key to continued growth and vitality. The issue is important, and this paper is an effort to seek scriptural guidance.

The Apostolic Church

Some advocate the recognition of contemporary apostles and use the term *apostolic*. They believe church bodies that do so have moved closer to the New Testament ideal of ministry.

Historically, the adjective *apostolic* has been used to signify (1) church bodies that attempt to trace a succession of their clergy back to the original 12 apostles, as do the Catholic and Episcopal churches; (2) Oneness, or Jesus-Only, Pentecostal churches, who since the early 20th century have used the description “Apostolic Faith” (previously used by Trinitarian Pentecostals such as Charles F. Parham and William J. Seymour) to designate their distinctive doctrines; (3) churches that claim God has raised up present-day apostles in their midst (“New Apostolic” and “Fivefold” churches); or (4) churches, including most Protestant groups, that claim to be apostolic because they teach what the apostles taught; that is, New Testament doctrine. Therefore, most Christian denominations think of themselves, in one sense or another, as apostolic.

Pentecostal churches believe they are apostolic because (1) they teach what the apostles taught, and (2) they share in the power of the apostles through the baptism in and fullness of the Holy Spirit, who empowers their lives and ministries. They believe what matters is not a contemporary apostolic office but apostolic doctrine and power.

The New Testament Apostles

The origin of the apostolic office is traced in the Gospels to Jesus. The Gospel of Mark reads, “[Jesus] appointed twelve—designating them apostles—that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mark 3:14,15). Matthew and Luke contain similar attributions (cf. Matthew 10:2; Luke 6:13). The number 12 seems to have had significance, so the

most common title for this group in the Gospels is “the Twelve” rather than “the Apostles” (cf. Matthew 26:14,20,47; Mark 4:10; 6:7; 9:35; Luke 8:1; 9:1; 18:31; John 6:67; 20:24). The designation “the Twelve” also continued in the life of the Early Church through the writings of Luke (Acts 6:2) and the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 15:5). In addition, Jesus himself is called by the writer to the Hebrews “the apostle and high priest whom we confess,” (Hebrews 3:1).

The word *apostle* comes from the Greek *apostolos*² and may be translated by such terms as *delegate*, *envoy*, *messenger*, or *agent*.³ Since Jesus probably spoke Hebrew or Aramaic rather than Greek, it is possible the Hebrew/Aramaic *shaliach* also means much the same as *apostolos*. This is the actual word used by Jesus and His earliest followers and provides much of the conceptual background. The rabbis of Jesus’ day regarded it as an important legal principle: “A man’s agent (*shaliach*) is like unto himself.”⁴ This meant if a man’s agent made a deal, it was the same as the man himself making the deal. The modern concept of power of attorney is very similar.

When it comes to apostles or other kinds of agents, it is of crucial importance whom the agent represents. The Gospels make it clear the apostles were appointed by Jesus to act on His behalf. Mark’s tersely stated record of their initial commission is “that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons” (Mark 3:14,15). It has to do with personal fellowship with Jesus, preaching the good news of the kingdom of God on Jesus’ behalf, and participation in the power of Jesus to cast out demons. Jesus apparently sent them out early in the Galilean ministry with instructions to preach and heal the sick (cf. Matthew 10:5–14; Mark 6:7–11; Luke 9:1–5). Like the Seventy dispatched later, their immediate scope of ministry was to “the lost sheep of Israel” (Matthew 10:6).

The Apostles and Pentecost

The commission of the Twelve was dramatically expanded following the death and resurrection of Jesus. In John’s Gospel, Jesus anticipated that those who had faith in Him would do “greater things” than He had done by asking in His name (John 14:12–14). The Counselor, identified as the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of truth, who was “with” them during the time of His earthly ministry, would soon be “in” them (14:16,17).

The Spirit would also teach them all things and remind them of everything He had said to them (14:26). John noted that Jesus appeared to the “disciples” after His resurrection and said, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.’ And with that he breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.’” (John 20:21–23). Luke makes it clear Jesus “opened” the minds of “the Eleven and those with them” (24:33) to “understand the Scriptures” to the end that “the Christ [would] suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins [would] be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:45–47). Jesus then reminded the disciples they were “to stay in the city [i.e., Jerusalem] until [they had] been clothed with power from on high” (24:49).

This promise was so important that Luke recorded it again in Acts 1:4 with an explanatory word from Jesus: “For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (1:5). The reason for the promise is couched in Jesus’ words, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The promise was fulfilled in the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:4) and identified in Peter’s prophetic message as the “last days” gift of God’s Spirit enabling all his “sons,” “daughters,” and “servants, both men and women” to “prophecy” (Acts 2:14–17).

Although earlier trained, called, and commissioned by the Lord Jesus, the apostles needed the baptism in the Holy Spirit as the final preparation for their mission. They were granted spiritual

giftings and empowerment required for the apostolic office. Previously anxious and insecure, they were transformed and energized by the Holy Spirit.⁵

The apostles began to speak as those who were “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 4:8) and were instrumental in others receiving the gift of the Spirit (8:14–17; 10:44–46; 19:6). When Paul was converted and called to apostolic ministry, he also received the gift of the Spirit and was similarly transformed (9:17). Barnabas was said to be “full of the Holy Spirit and faith” (11:24). The Holy Spirit guided the mission activities of the apostles, sovereignly selecting Paul and Barnabas (13:2) and sending them on their way (13:4). Later the Spirit prevented Paul and his companions from entering the province of Asia and Bythina but directed them toward Troas and Macedonia (16:6–10). Paul was the recipient of prophetic guidance by Spirit-directed prophets as to his fate upon his return to Jerusalem (20:22,23). Whatever the natural ability of these early apostles, the genius of their ministry is found in the power and wisdom of the Spirit given to them.

The Place of the Twelve

The opening chapter of Acts reflects a concern to maintain the number of the Twelve. Peter and the other members of the original Twelve, with the 120, looked to the Scriptures and determined that the vacancy created by the defection and death of Judas should be filled. It was important that the full complement of 12 be maintained for the effusion of the Spirit. Luke had previously recorded the promise of Jesus to the Twelve: “I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29,30). The importance of maintaining 12 apostles as a symbol of the 12 tribes of Israel is unmistakable. The apostolate was to be intact for the coming of the Spirit and the launching of a fully equipped church on its worldwide mission. The way the vacancy was filled is highly instructive. Jesus had personally appeared and given “instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen” (Acts 1:2). Two qualifying issues stand out: (1) personal commissioning by the Lord, and (2) thorough familiarity with the teachings of Jesus. Careful attention was given to both in Peter’s proposal. Any candidate had to have been with them for Jesus’ entire ministry, “beginning from John’s baptism” (Acts 1:22). Two qualified candidates, “Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias,” were presented and prayer was offered. “Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:26).⁶ After Pentecost, however, there was no effort to replace any of the original 12 apostles nor to perpetuate the number 12 (cf. Acts 12:2).

The Special Case of the Apostle Paul

Paul’s status as an apostle is unique. He was neither a member of the Twelve nor present for Christ’s post-Resurrection appearances; his calling as an apostle came in a later and separate vision of the risen Lord.

Recorded three times in Acts (9:1–19; 22:4–16; 26:9–18) and often intimated in his letters (Galatians 1:12), the account of Paul’s conversion demonstrates the authenticity and power of his call to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. Like the Twelve, he recognized the apostolic office was conferred in the personal call of Christ through post-Resurrection appearances (1 Corinthians 15:5–7). Paul acknowledged he was “as... one abnormally born [*ektroma*]⁷” (1 Corinthians 15:8). The word is usually used for miscarriages. But rather than Paul saying he was “born” unnaturally early, he is saying that as a witness to the Resurrection and as an apostle he was “born” unnaturally late. His apostolic calling was thus without parallel and made his credentials vulnerable to attack from enemies who sought to discredit him (1 Corinthians 9:1,2; 2 Corinthians 12:11,12).

Despite the unusual nature of his encounter with Christ, Paul did not consider his apostolic status to be less than that of the other apostles. They had seen the resurrected Lord; so had he. He regularly appealed to his having seen “Jesus our Lord” (1 Corinthians 9:1). While he referred to himself as “the least of the apostles,” apparently because of his earlier persecution of the Church, he “worked harder than all of them” (1 Corinthians 15:9,10). Though insisting on a continuity of the message (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:3), he nonetheless distinguished his apostolic authority from the other apostles, even to the point of a public rebuke to Peter (Galatians 1:11–2:21). To his critics at Corinth he pointed out, “I do not think I am in the least inferior to those ‘super-apostles’”⁸ (2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:11) and rehearsed his Jewish heritage (11:22), hardships (11:23–33), and his “surpassingly great revelations” (12:1–7). He reminded the Corinthians, “[T]he things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance” (2 Corinthians 12:12).

Apostles of Christ

Paul’s sense of his own calling is reflected in the introduction to most of his letters: “Paul... an apostle of Christ Jesus” (1 Corinthians 1:1; cf. 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1, et al.). The letters of Peter begin similarly: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:1; cf. 2 Peter 1:1). Paul used this designation in the text of 1 Thessalonians: “As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you...” (2:6). Jude 17 refers to what “the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.” These references make it appear that the title “apostle of Christ (Jesus Christ/Lord Jesus Christ/Christ Jesus)” was standard nomenclature for all the apostles Christ had personally appeared to and appointed. It is almost always this group to whom the title “apostle” is applied in the New Testament.

Apostles of the Churches

Scholars occasionally point out a distinction between the “Apostles of Christ” and the “Apostles of the Churches.”⁹ Paul spoke of unnamed “brothers” who are “representatives [*apostoloi*] of the churches and an honor to Christ” (2 Corinthians 8:23). He also wrote to the Philippians about “Epaphroditus... who is also your messenger [*apostolon*], whom you sent to take care of my needs” (2:25). These references provide ample evidence the early churches did use the word *apostle* from time to time for other than those who had witnessed the Resurrection. However, the term is used in these cases in its generic sense of dispatching representatives on an official mission on behalf of the senders. For that reason, English translations of the Bible normally render the word *apostolos* in the two instances above as “messenger” or “representative.”¹⁰

False Apostles

Not all persons in the New Testament era who called themselves apostles or were accorded that status by star-struck followers were, in fact, apostles. Just as the Old Testament had its false prophets, so the New Testament had its false apostles. Much of Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians reflects this very issue. Teachers, possibly itinerant Hellenistic Jews from the church at Jerusalem, had come to Corinth apparently with letters of commendation. They seem to have boasted of equality with, or even superiority to, Paul in an effort to wrest the leadership of the church away from him. Thus his references to such issues as “letters of recommendation” (2 Corinthians 3:1), his appearance and speech (10:10), “the one who commends himself” (10:18), his Jewish heritage (11:22), his extensive suffering on behalf of the church (11:23–33), and his visions and revelations (12:7)—all seem to have been an effort to deal with the threat.

Paul identified such people as “false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:13). Jesus himself commended the church in Ephesus because they

“tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them false” (Revelation 2:2). These references and others make it clear that many who either claimed for themselves the title of “apostle” or had the title wrongly conferred upon them by others were circulating among the early Christian churches. Discernment was necessary. Paul called for careful evaluation of spiritual phenomena: “Do not put out the Spirit’s fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good” (1 Thessalonians 5:19–21).

Apostolic Succession

A crucial issue is whether the apostolic office is to be passed on as an institutionalized office of the church. It is clear from both Acts and the letters of the New Testament that certain offices were instituted and maintained. For example, the apostles led the church in the selection of seven men, often called “deacons” though that noun is not in the text, to administer the charitable ministries of the church (Acts 6:3). Early in the Acts record the Church, probably operating with familiar Jewish models, is observed to have elders who are functioning in leadership roles along with the apostles (Acts 11:30; 15:2; 16:4). As Paul and Silas established missionary churches, they were careful to appoint “elders” (*presbyteros*) for the leadership of those churches (Acts 14:23). Paul also summoned “elders” (*presbyteros*) of the church at Ephesus and then addressed them as “overseers” (*episkopos*) who were also to be “shepherds” (*poimaino*), or “pastors,” of the church of God (Acts 20:17,28).

The letter to the church at Philippi indicates the presence of “overseers” (*episkopos*) and “deacons” (*diakonos*) among them. The pastoral letters, usually assumed to have been written somewhat later, reveal great concern for the appointment of carefully qualified elders/overseers and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1–12; Titus 1:3–9). As can be seen, the names for the office are somewhat flexible and interchangeable. Nevertheless, it is certainly accurate to say the New Testament provides—by such names, qualifications, and selection—for the careful appointment and continuation in office of such leaders as overseers, elders, and deacons.

It is also clear that while the apostles (with the elders) were established leaders in the Early Church, there was no provision for their replacement or continuation. To be sure, with the defection of Judas from his apostolic office, the Eleven sought divine guidance to fill the gap. Other apostles also emerged, including Paul who in his first letter to the Corinthians gave insight into their selection. After Christ’s resurrection He appeared to the Twelve and later appeared to more than “five hundred of the brothers at the same time.... Then he appeared to James, then to *all the apostles*, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born” (1 Corinthians 15:6–8, emphasis added). Thus Paul seems to limit the office of apostle to those who had actually seen the risen Lord in the 40 days after His resurrection and to himself as having seen Him in a dramatic vision on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–9). There is some uncertainty about the exact number and identity of the apostles. However, besides the Twelve, the New Testament text appears to clearly designate such persons as Paul, James the brother of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:7; Galatians 1:19), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Andronicus and Junias (probably a woman) who were “outstanding among the apostles” (Romans 16:7).

It is instructive, however, that nowhere in the New Testament after the replacement of Judas is any attention given to a so-called apostolic succession. No attempt was made to replace James son of Zebedee (John’s brother), executed by Herod (Acts 12:2). Other than the original appointments by Christ himself, there is nothing concerning the appointment of apostles. And apart from the criteria set for the selection of Matthias (Acts 1:21–26) and the criteria implied in the actions of Jesus and the account of Paul (1 Corinthians 15:3–11), there are no directions for making such an appointment. By contrast, there are clear qualifications and instructions for the

appointment of elders/overseers and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9). It seems strange that apostles of Jesus Christ, concerned about faithful preservation of their message (cf. 2 Timothy 2:2), would provide for the appointment of overseers/elders while ignoring their own succession if such were indeed to be maintained.

In fact, there are certain exegetical hints the apostles of Jesus Christ are not to have successors. In 1 Corinthians 15:8, Paul listed all the Resurrection and post-Resurrection appearances of Christ and noted “last of all he appeared to me.” While some disagree, the statement is most commonly understood to mean Paul looked upon himself as the last apostle to whom Christ appeared.¹¹ If this is the correct understanding, only the Twelve whom Jesus personally called and those He commissioned in His post-Resurrection appearances made up His original apostles. Apostles are named first among the offices of the church (1 Corinthians 12:28) and the ministry gifts of Ephesians 4:11 because they are foundational, not necessarily because they are continuous leaders in the church. The Ephesians 4:11 passage must be interpreted in the context of the Ephesians letter itself, wherein Paul had already described the church as “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20), and the form of leadership instituted by Paul in the Ephesian church itself and the other churches he founded (Acts 14:23). Writing to Timothy at Ephesus, Paul entrusts the oversight of the church to “*elders*” (synonymous with *bishop* or *pastor* or *overseer*) and deacons, not apostles and prophets. When he bids an emotional farewell to the leaders of the Ephesian church, which he himself had established, his meeting is with the elders (not apostles or prophets), to whom he entrusts the responsibility of bishop (or overseer) and pastor (or shepherd) (Acts 20:28).

It is difficult to escape the conclusion of Dietrich Müller: “One thing is certain. The N[ew] T[estament] never betrays any understanding of the apostolate as an institutionalized church office, capable of being passed on.”¹²

The Authority of the Apostles

The authority of the apostles was modeled by the chief Apostle, the Lord Jesus Christ, who taught them that “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,” (Mark 10:45). Jesus, on occasion, acted sharply and decisively against certain sins, such as the desecration of His Father’s house (Mark 11:15–17; John 2:13–16) and the exploitative hypocrisy of the teachers of the Law and Pharisees (Matthew 23).

However, He carefully avoided the trappings of political and institutional power and modeled extraordinary humility and patience for His apostles. His divine attributes were cloaked in human flesh and He was the exposition and example of His Father’s word and work.

Even a cursory reading of the New Testament demonstrates the apostles of Christ possessed authority. The Early Church was formed around their teaching, which was in turn confirmed by the “wonders and miraculous signs” they did (Acts 2:42,43). They were the recognized spokesmen before the rulers (Acts 4:8ff.), and their authority was demonstrated in such events as the death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11). In writing to the Corinthians, a church he founded, Paul threatened to come to them “with a whip” (1 Corinthians 4:21) and did not hesitate to give stern directions for discipline in a case of incest (1 Corinthians 5:1–5). Writing to the church in Rome, which he did not found, he stated his apostolic credentials (Romans 1:1), assumed the prerogative of imparting to them spiritual gifts (1:11), and planned to “come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ” (15:29). He laid out for their belief and practice the most systematic exposition of doctrinal and ethical truth in all of Scripture. He did not hesitate to give

directions for their local ethical dilemmas such as relations between the weak and the strong (chapters 14,15). Peter also, claiming apostolic standing, wrote authoritatively to apparently Gentile churches that he did not pioneer (1 Peter 1:1).

Some modern interpreters insist apostolic authority was merely local, not universal, and exercised only in churches the apostles founded.¹³ To be sure, apostles seem to have been aware of certain protocol in churches they did not pioneer (Romans 15:20; 1 Corinthians 3:10). However, they did cross geographical boundaries. The pattern of evidence throughout the New Testament indicates their authority was universal in doctrinal and ethical matters, binding in some sense upon all the churches. However, that authority must not be construed in political or bureaucratic terms. There is little evidence of their involvement in local administrative matters. When they worked together, one of the apostles usually took the lead, as in Peter’s early activity in Jerusalem and Paul’s direction of his missionary teams. However, in dealing with the practical and doctrinal problems of the churches, the apostles often exercised a shared leadership among themselves and with the elders, a group that appears to have been added quickly to the leadership rolls. For example, the Twelve called upon the church of Jerusalem to select the Seven (Acts 6). When the Jerusalem Council resolved the schismatic debate over whether the Gentiles should keep the Jewish law, the issue was decided by “the apostles and elders” (Acts 15:4,6,22). On this or some similar issue, even the two apostles Paul and Peter initially came to conflicting opinions (Galatians 2:11–14). James Dunn aptly observes, “Apostolic authority is exercised not over the Christian community, but within it; and the authority is exercised... ‘to equip the saints for the work of their ministry, for the building up of Christ’s body’” (Ephesians 4:12).¹⁴ Since apostles were frequently mobile, local rule in the maturing churches seems to have been exercised largely by elders. In the Jerusalem church, the apostles were the sole authority figures early on (Acts 2:42; 4:37); but perhaps because of persecution and travel, they appear to have been less prominent over time. Peter reported the conversion of Cornelius and his household to the “apostles and the brothers” (11:1). The “apostles and elders” made up the Jerusalem council (15:6). When Paul returned to Jerusalem after his third journey, he called on “James, and all the elders” (21:18). Elders were certainly key authority figures in Jerusalem, as seen in Acts, and elsewhere as seen in New Testament letters. The absence of apostles on Paul’s last visit to Jerusalem (Acts 21:18) is further evidence that as the Twelve dispersed, the Jerusalem church did not provide for further apostolic replacement as they had at the defection of Judas (Acts 1:12–26).

None of the New Testament letters are addressed to an apostle, as would be expected if each city had its own ruling apostle. One of the few letters that includes church officers in the title, Philippians, is addressed to “overseers [*episkopos*] and deacons [*diakonos*]” (1:1)—not to a local or city apostle. There seems to be no concern to place recognized apostles in residence in the various churches or regions.

The Marks of an Apostle

Striving to protect the Corinthians from the seduction of “false apostles,” Paul pointed out characteristics (*semeion*, “sign,” 2 Corinthians 12:12) that identified a genuine apostle. From that context and the larger New Testament background, the following are apparent:

1. >The first and most important mark of true apostles of Christ was that they had seen the risen Lord and been personally commissioned by Him as witnesses to His resurrection (Acts 1:21,22; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:7,8). They were thus appropriately called “apostles of Christ.”

2. The personal call and commission of the risen Christ had to be consummated in the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1–4 [for Paul, see Acts 9:1–17]), at which time the spiritual gift, or *charisma*, of apostleship was granted. This understanding is reflected, for example, in Paul’s statements: “It was he who gave some to be apostles...” (Ephesians 4:11) and “I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God’s grace given me through the working of his power” (Ephesians 3:7). The Spirit with His power and anointing set apostles first among the leaders of the church (1 Corinthians 12:28).
3. Apostles were supernaturally equipped for prophetic preaching and teaching. To illustrate, when the Spirit fell at Pentecost, the disciples spoke “in other tongues as the Spirit enabled [*apophthengomai*] them” (Acts 2:4). Confronted with the confused and contradictory opinions of the watching crowd, Peter “stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed” (*apophthengomai*) them (2:14) in a masterful explanation resulting in 3,000 conversions. The Greek verb *apophthengomai* is used to denote prophetic inspiration, which in this context is the immediate result of the Spirit’s enablement.¹⁵ Paul reflected much of the same awareness: “My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power” (1 Corinthians 2:4).
4. With the apostolic gift came miraculous spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:8–10). “The things that mark [*semeia*, “signs”] an apostle^[16]—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance” (2 Corinthians 12:12). The Book of Acts attributes numerous miracles to Peter, Paul, and the other apostles (Acts 5:12; 9:32–43; 13:6–12; 14:3; 16:16–18; 19:11; 28:7–9). Paul evidently regarded such miraculous ministry as an essential mark of a true apostle. He also taught and preached among them “with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power” so their “faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power” (1 Corinthians 2:4,5).
5. The apostles were the authoritative teachers of the Early Church in both belief and practice. They were charged above all with the accuracy and purity of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As Paul wrote, “For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3,4; cf. Acts 2:42; Romans 16:17; Galatians 1:8; Titus 1:9). The intent of their preaching and teaching is expressed in Ephesians 4:12,13: “so that the body of Christ may be built up... and become mature.” The apostolic doctrine became the content of the New Testament canon. The apostles were understood either to have written the canonical books or to have been the primary sources and guarantors of their inspired character.
6. Apostles were commissioned as missionaries and church builders. Those the New Testament speaks about did this successfully. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:16–20) was given specifically to the Eleven, perhaps in the company of the “more than five hundred” (1 Corinthians 15:6). The missionary impulse breathes through the accounts of apostolic commissioning (cf. Luke 24:47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 9:15; 22:15; 26:17,18; Galatians 1:15–17; et al.).
7. Suffering for Christ’s sake seems to have been a major mark of the apostolic office. Paul validated his ministry and armed the Corinthian church against the seduction of false apostles with a lengthy personal history of sufferings on behalf of the gospel. “That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in

- difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10). “Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body which is the church” (Colossians 1:24).
8. Apostles were pastoral and relational. Paul’s love for his parishioners and his ministry associates flows through his letters. The warm and extended greetings at the conclusion of Romans are striking (16:1–16). He repeatedly uses parenting language (cf. 1 Corinthians 4:15; 2 Corinthians 12:14,15). On behalf of the Corinthians, he is “jealous... with a godly jealousy” (2 Corinthians 11:2). To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote that he loved and cared for them gently as “a mother caring for her little children” (1 Thessalonians 2:7). The language in the letters of Peter (1 Peter 4:12; 2 Peter 3:1, NRSV) and John (1 John 2:7, NRSV, et al.) emphasizes the same pastoral instincts.

The New Testament Prophets

“Prophets” are found immediately after “apostles” in one list of ministry gifts (Ephesians 4:11) and their activity is closely linked to that of apostles throughout the New Testament. Paul had a high view of their role: “And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets...” (1 Corinthians 12:28). Further, the church is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20). Along with the apostles, prophets were complementary gifts to the foundational era of the church. The historical accounts in the New Testament affirm these complementary roles. New Testament prophets first appeared by name in Acts when a group, apparently residing in Jerusalem, went to Antioch and one of their number, Agabus, accurately predicted the coming great famine (Acts 11:27–30). Antioch soon had its own group of resident prophets—Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen, and Saul (Paul) (Acts 13:1). Two other Jerusalem leaders and prophets were chosen to bear the council letter to Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, and along the way “said much to encourage and strengthen the brothers” (Acts 15:22,32). On Paul’s return to Jerusalem after the third missionary journey, he stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, who “had four unmarried daughters who prophesied,” and we learn women were active and recognized as prophets. At that time Agabus made his way down from Jerusalem to Caesarea and prophesied that the Jews of Jerusalem would bind Paul and hand him over to the Gentiles (Acts 21:10,11). Paul’s letters, written earlier than the Book of Acts, indicate the presence of prophets in the churches he had established as well as those he did not (e.g., the church at Rome). For example, he provided instruction on their activities in Corinth (1 Corinthians 14:29–32), saying their prophecies were to be tested by apostolic doctrine (1 Corinthians 14:37). Women prophets were active in the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:5,6). The Romans were to exercise the gift of prophecy “in proportion” to their faith (Romans 12:6). The Thessalonians were cautioned not to “treat prophecies with contempt” (1 Thessalonians 5:20). The Ephesians letter stated Paul’s understanding that, with the apostles, the prophets were foundational to the church (Ephesians 2:20). In that capacity they were, with the apostles, recipients of divinely given revelation (Ephesians 3:5) and a ministry gift to the church (Ephesians 4:11). To Timothy, Paul noted a prophetic message had accompanied the laying on of hands by the elders (1 Timothy 4:14). The Book of Revelation is apparently to be understood as a prophecy, thus according John prophetic status (Revelation 1:3). Revelation also says the church was to be on guard against false prophets, in this case “Jezebel,” who by their teaching and conduct perverted the apostolic gospel (Revelation 2:20).

These accounts make clear that (1) there were recognized groups of prophets in the early churches often closely associated with the apostles; (2) the apostles themselves (as Barnabas,

Silas [both of whom on occasion appear to be recognized as apostles], Saul [Paul], and John) also functioned as prophets (Acts 13:1; 15:32; Revelation 1:3); (3) these prophets did travel on occasion from church to church; (4) both men and women were recognized as prophets; (5) prophets, while never appointed to ruling functions in their capacity as prophets like overseers/elders did exercise spiritual influence with the apostles and elders in the belief and practice of the Early Church; (6) the integrity of the prophet was maintained by authentic inspired utterance that was true to the Scriptures and apostolic doctrine; and (7) there is no provision for qualifying or appointing prophets as a part of a church leadership hierarchy for succeeding generations.

The Gift of Prophecy

While there were recognized prophets in the New Testament era, even more pervasive was the gift of prophecy that energized the apostolic church. The Old Testament prophet Joel, moved by God, prophesied, “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28,29). Significantly, Peter, when explaining the Pentecost event and its evidential tongues, identified them with Joel’s prediction of the outpouring of the Spirit and twice repeated that both sons and daughters, men and women, would prophesy (Acts 2:17,18). Peter’s sermon was clearly a prophecy immediately inspired by the Spirit, as the verb “addressed [*apophthengomai*]” (Acts 2:14), which means “to speak as a prophet,”¹⁷ denotes. When one examines closely the witness to Christ given by the early Christian leaders in Acts, the prophetic impulse is apparent—and doubtlessly intended by Luke. Peter’s words to the crippled beggar (Acts 3:6), the temple crowds (Acts 3:12ff.), the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8), and Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11), to list a few, are filled with prophetic import. Stephen’s eloquence and power are prophetic (Acts 7). The impact of the preaching of Philip (Acts 8:4–8) and other unnamed believers (Acts 11:19–21) was likewise Spirit-enabled. And so it is throughout the Acts account.

While it is too much to say every utterance of a believer is a prophecy, nonetheless, the theme of Acts is that every believer receives the power of the Holy Spirit to be a prophetic witness to the risen Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). Interestingly, John noted, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10). All believers are inducted into a universal “prophethood”¹⁸ and are endowed with one or more spiritual gifts, many of which have directly to do with wise, instructive, and edifying utterances (Romans 12:6–8; 1 Corinthians 12:8–10; Ephesians 4:7–13; 1 Peter 4:10).

Paul makes it clear not every believer will be a prophet in terms of filling a recognized “office,” or, perhaps, even being regularly used by the Spirit in that way (1 Corinthians 12:28,29). The very identification of a separate gift of prophecy implies that. However, at the same time, he encourages all believers to “desire... especially the gift of prophecy” (1 Corinthians 14:1), for the person who prophesies does so for the “strengthening, encouragement and comfort” (1 Corinthians 14:3) of others. There is no statute of limitations on the Spirit of prophecy. In the words of Peter’s prophetic sermon, “The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:39).

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper has been to study the roles of apostles and prophets within the Ephesians 4:11,12 ministry context and present findings both consistent with Scripture and relevant for this strategic time in the growth of the Pentecostal movement. The intent is not to be

argumentative or polemical but to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). With these considerations in mind, the following conclusions are offered:

1. The apostolic nature of the church is to be found in adherence to the Word of God, which has been faithfully transmitted by the apostles of Jesus Christ in their foundational role, and in vita participation in the life and ministry of the Holy Spirit, who baptized, gifted, and led the first apostles.
2. Since the New Testament does not provide guidance for the appointment of future apostles, such contemporary offices are not essential to the health and growth of the church, nor its apostolic nature.
3. While we do not understand it to be necessary, some church bodies may in good faith and careful biblical definition choose to name certain leaders apostles. The word “apostle” (apostolos) is used in different ways in the New Testament: (1) for the Twelve disciples originally appointed by Jesus (and later Matthias); (2) for the Twelve plus Paul and a larger group (1 Corinthians 15:3–8) whose exact numbers are somewhat uncertain; and (3) for others such as Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25) and the unnamed “brothers” Paul wrote about (2 Corinthians 8:23). Groups one and two, personally called and commissioned by the risen Lord, are often referred to in Scripture as “apostles of Jesus Christ” and are foundational apostles (Ephesians 2:20) with unique revelatory and authoritative roles in establishing the church and producing the New Testament. The third group, the “apostles of the churches,” were assigned specific roles and responsibilities as needed by the early churches.

Contemporary apostles, of course, will not have seen or been commissioned by the risen Lord in the manner of the “apostles of Jesus Christ,” nor will they be adding their teachings to the canon of Scripture. Presumably they will demonstrate the other marks of an apostle taught in the New Testament.

4. The title of apostle should not be lightly granted or assumed. Historically, apostles have been persons of recognized spiritual stature, stalwart character, and great effectiveness in the work of the church. Paul’s warnings about “those who want an opportunity to be considered equal with us in the things they boast about,” his assertion that “such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ,” and his further association of them with “Satan [who] himself masquerades as an angel of light,” (2 Corinthians 11:12–14) are sobering—reminders that unfettered human pride in seeking church leadership can blind one to the machinations of the devil. Persons lacking character may attach the title of apostle to themselves in order to assert dominance and control over other believers, while leaving themselves unaccountable to the members in their care or the spiritual eldership of their own fellowship.
5. The function of apostle occurs whenever the church of Jesus Christ is being established among the unevangelized. As Pentecostals, we fervently desire a generation of men and women who will function apostolically: to take the gospel with signs following to people at home and abroad who have not yet heard or understood that “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).
6. Prophecy is an ongoing gift of the Holy Spirit that will always be broadly distributed throughout a holy and responsive church until Jesus comes. The Spirit sovereignly

chooses and directs persons who are open and sensitive to His gifts and promptings and endows them variously with an array of verbal gifts. Paul admonished, “Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy” (1 Corinthians 14:1). Many persons of both sexes may be expected to exercise the gift of prophecy in various ways, as seen in the New Testament.

The New Testament does not make provisions for establishing the prophet in a hierarchical governing structure of the church; in fact, the content of prophecy itself should always be tested by and responsible to the superior authority of Scripture. However, the church should long for authentic prophecy with a message, which is relevant to contemporary needs and subject to the authority of Scripture.

Finally, the Ephesians 4:11,12 gifts are both the historical and contemporary heritage of the Church. Some apostolic and prophetic functions flowing from persons directly commissioned by the risen Lord and acting in revelatory capacities seem clearly to belong to the foundational era of the Church. At the same time, some of those functions having to do with the revitalization, expansion, and nurture of the church ought to be present in every generation. We encourage all believers, led and filled by the Spirit, to allow themselves to be fully utilized as servants of the Lord, since all gifts are needed to edify and complete the body as well as to mobilize the body to reach the world. Then the purpose of all ministry gifts will be realized: “To prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12,13).

Practical Questions Regarding Apostles And Prophets

Does the Assemblies of God recognize present-day apostles and prophets?

The Assemblies of God recognizes ministers as certified, licensed, or ordained. The work of district councils and the General Council is overseen by presbyters and superintendents. Local churches appoint deacons. The Assemblies of God believes this practice is consistent with apostolic practice provided in the pastoral letters of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. The pastoral letters do not make provision for the appointment of apostles or prophets, nor does the Book of Acts indicate that provision for such was given in the churches established on the missionary journeys. The apostles appointed not apostles or prophets but elders (Acts 14:23). At the conclusion of the missionary journeys, Paul met with the elders of the Ephesian church (Acts 20:17–38). Clearly, elders are also given the functions of bishop (“overseer”) and shepherd (“pastor”) (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2).

Thus, within the Assemblies of God, persons are not recognized by the title of apostle or prophet. However, many within the church exercise the ministry function of apostles and prophets. Apostolic functions usually occur within the context of breaking new ground in unevangelized areas or among unreached people. The planting of over 225,000 churches worldwide since 1914 in the Assemblies of God could not have been accomplished unless apostolic functions had been present. In the Early Church, false apostles did not pioneer ministries; they preyed on ministries established by others. Prophetic functions occur when believers speak under the anointing of the Spirit to strengthen, encourage, or comfort (1 Corinthians 14:3). All prophecies are to be weighed carefully (1 Corinthians 14:29). A predictive prophecy may be true, but the prophet whose doctrine departs from biblical truth is false. A predictive prophecy that proves false leads to the conclusion that the person is a false prophet (Deuteronomy 18:19–22).

Finally, it must be noted that titles are not as important as ministry itself. Too often a title is worn in an attitude of carnal pride. The title does not make the person or the ministry. The person with ministry makes the title meaningful. Jesus explicitly warned His disciples against engaging in the quest for titles (Matthew 23:8–12). He tells us, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25–28).

What is the implication for the local church in the current emphasis on apostles and prophets?

The Pentecostal and charismatic movements have witnessed various excessive or misplaced theological emphases over the years. We look with grave concern on those who do not believe in congregational church government, who do not trust the maturity of local church bodies to govern themselves under Scripture and the Spirit. Such leaders prefer more authoritarian structures where their own word or decrees are unchallenged.

In the current emphasis on Ephesians 4:11, verse 12 is being neglected: “... to prepare God’s people for works of service [i.e. ministry], so that the body of Christ may be built up.” The stress of the New Testament lies with every-believer ministry. The Protestant Reformation recaptured the biblical truth of the priesthood of all believers. The Pentecostal movement has spread like a fast-moving fire through the world because of the Spirit-gifted ministry of the entire body. The church must always remember that leadership gifts are not given for the exaltation of a few but for the equipping of all God’s people for ministry.

Should Assemblies of God churches welcome the ministries of apostles and prophets?

We encourage our churches to give close heed to the following provision of the General Council Bylaws: Pastors and leaders of assemblies should make proper investigation of persons who seek to gain entrance to teach, minister, or pastor. Use of the platform should be denied until spiritual integrity and reliability have been determined. Since the use of non-Assemblies of God ministers may bring confusion and problems detrimental to the Fellowship, it is recommended that Assemblies of God churches use Assemblies of God ministers (Article VI, Section 3).

This bylaw provision is consistent with the oversight responsibility given to pastors (Acts 20:28–31) and leaders in the body of Christ (1 Timothy 5:22, 2 Timothy 4:3–5).

Notes

1. Biblical citations are from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.
2. For simplicity, when Greek nouns and verbs are included they will usually be in the nominative singular and first person singular indicative.
3. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd edition, rev. and ed., Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 122.
4. Tractate Berakoth 5.5 and several other places in the Mishnah, the oldest portion of the Talmud. While the earliest rabbinical references date from the second century, it seems likely that the institution was much earlier. However, some scholars trace the concept to the “to send” language both of the Old Testament itself and secular Greek. See Colin Brown, gen. ed., The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), “Apostle,” 1:126–136.
5. See the insightful study of C.G. Kruse in Ralph P. Martin and Peter H. Davids, eds., Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 76–82.
6. It is frequently suggested that the Eleven erred in their selection of Matthias because Judas’ place was reserved for Paul. Matthias, it is noted, immediately passes into oblivion. However, there is no hint of criticism in the text and few of the Twelve are mentioned after chapter 1. Paul’s apostolic credentials are established independently of the Twelve by both Luke and Paul himself (cf. Acts 9:1–30, especially vv. 26–28; Gal. 1:15–24).
7. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 311.

8. Some commentators identify the “super-apostles” with the Twelve; however, others suggest that the context more readily supports an identification with Jewish-Hellenistic teachers who came to Corinth with letters of introduction, perhaps from Jerusalem.
9. See the discussion in E. Earle Ellis, *Pauline Theology: Ministry and Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 38.
10. “[M]essengers without extraordinary status.” *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 122.
11. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 732.
12. Colin Brown, gen. ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), 1:135.
13. See, for example, James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 578–579.
14. *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, 574.
15. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd edition rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 1:44. See also Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 1:447.
16. New American Standard Version and New Revised Standard Version, “signs of a true apostle.”
17. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 125.
18. Roger Stronstad, *The Prophethood of All Believers* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 71–84.

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®; NIV®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved.

HANDOUT DISCIPLESHIP 103-11

THE KERYGMA

A God-centered theology will be a missionary theology; and a missionary theology will be rooted and grounded in the message that was been proclaimed from the beginning by Jesus’ own apostles.

The theological term for what was being preached by the apostles and evangelists noted in the New Testament Scriptures is from the Greek word, *kerygma*. *Kerygma* – is a transliteration of the Greek word that means “proclamation” or “preaching.” Depending on the context, it refers to either the content proclaimed or the act of proclaiming. The word is used once in Matthew (12:41), once in Luke (11:32), and six times in Paul's letters (Rom 16:25; 1 Col 1:21; 2:4; 15:14; 2 Tim 4:17; Titus 1:3). All of these New Testament occurrences appear to refer to what is being proclaimed.

David Garrison noted in his book, *Church Planting Movements* that “We have yet to see a Church Planting Movement emerge where evangelism is rare or absent.” (p. 33). This is confirmed by the book of Acts that tells the stories of Peter, John, Paul, and many others who evangelized the Roman world in the first century. Beginning in Jerusalem with Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36), until Paul’s “preaching on the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern Jesus Christ” in Rome (Acts 28: 30-31), the crucial assertions of all evangelists were that by His death, burial and resurrection Jesus Christ proved He is the Son of God; and that Jesus saves those who believe, are baptized, and follow Him.

The *kerygma* is the heart of the Christian message; it is our declaration that through His life, death, and resurrection, “Jesus is Lord and Christ”. It is the content of the gospel of salvation that Peter, John, Paul, and the other missionaries in Acts so courageously proclaimed throughout the world. The gift of evangelism empowers a person to preach the gospel without compromise. This is the message of the risen Savior that all disciples have carried with them from the beginning as they went about fulfilling the Great Commission from Jerusalem, to Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the world – even to this day.

(Excerpt from *The Holy Spirit in You*)

HANDOUT
DISCIPLESHIP 103-12

PARABLES OF THE KINGDOM		
PARABLE	THEME	SCRIPTURE
1. The Sower	A Key Parable (Mark 4:13); Individual responses to the Word	Matt. 13:3-8; 18-23 Mark 4:3-8; Luke 8:5-8
2. The Wheat & Tares	Sons of the Kingdom & Sons of the evil one	Matt. 13:24-30
3. The Mustard Seed	The Kingdom begins insignificantly but grows to greatness	Matt. 13:31, 32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18, 19
4. The Leaven	Inner transformation of citizens of the kingdom	Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:20, 21
5. The Hidden Treasure	Value/cost of the kingdom	Matt. 13:44
6. The Pearl	Value/cost of the kingdom	Matt. 13:45, 46
7. The Dragnet	Wicked separated from the righteous at the end of the age	Matt. 13:47-50
8. The Unforgiving Servant	Kingdom forgiveness	Matt. 18:23-35
9. The Landowner	Grace (Unmerited favor) of God Extended to citizens of the kingdom	Matt. 20:1-16
10. The Two sons	Kingdom obedience	Matt. 21:28-32

11. The Wicked Tenants	Kingdom rejected	Matt. 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19
12. The Marriage Feast	Invitation rejected & extended; God clothes those who respond	Matt. 22:1-14
13. The Wise and Foolish Virgins	Watch for the arrival of the Bridegroom	Matt. 25:1-13
14. The Talents	Kingdom stewardship	Matt. 25:14-30
15. The Growing Seed	God produces the growth	Mark 4:26-29
16. The Two Debtors	He who is forgiven little loves little	Luke 7:41-43
17. The Good Samaritan	True religion of the Kingdom	Luke 10:25-37
18. The Friend in Need	Persistence in the Kingdom	Luke 11:5-8
19. The Rich Fool	Inadequacy of earthly wealth	Luke 12:16-21 (Note: Luke 12:22-34)
20. The Fruitless Fig Tree	Period of Grace will come to an end	Luke 13:6-9
21. Kingdom Lessons	The way up is the way down; Invite those who cannot repay (Note: 16-24, Proverbs 19:17); those who refuse God's Invitation will be excluded	Luke 14:7-11; 12-14; 16 – 24

22. <i>The Lost Sheep</i>	<i>God's love for the lost</i>	<i>Matt. 18:12-14; Luke 15:4-7</i>
23. <i>The Lost Coin</i>	<i>God's love for the lost</i>	<i>Luke 15:8-10</i>
24. <i>The Lost (Prodigal) Son</i>	<i>God's love for the lost</i>	<i>Luke 15:11-32</i>
25. <i>The Shrewd Steward</i>	<i>God and Mammon</i>	<i>Luke 16:1-9</i>
26. <i>Rich Man & Lazarus</i>	<i>Our action in this life have eternal consequences</i>	<i>Luke 16:19-31</i>
27. <i>The Unworthy Slaves</i>	<i>Faith or Obedience</i>	<i>Luke 17:1-10</i>
28. <i>The Unrighteous Judge</i>	<i>Contrast with god's justice for His Elect</i>	<i>Luke 18:1-8</i>
29. <i>The Pharisee and The Tax Collector</i>	<i>Self-righteous are not justified</i>	<i>Luke 18:10-14</i>
30. <i>The Ten Minas</i>	<i>Use what God has given or lose it</i>	<i>Luke 19:12-27</i>
31. <i>The Sheep and Goats</i>	<i>The Last Judgment</i>	<i>Matt. 25:31-46</i>

Proof