

WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS

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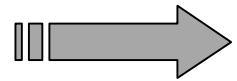
One of the things that popular modern Bible Colleges train preachers to do is to preach *inductively* (let the congregation figure it out for themselves). These young preachers are told to avoid moral-imperatives (the “*you should do this because God and the Bible says so*” sermons), and to never present their messages in black and white terms of *this is right and that is wrong*. Instead, preachers are encouraged to present the Bible as a mystical book of secrets that properly understood can lead to believers experiencing “purpose”, “fulfilment”, “victorious life”, “prosperity”, and “freedom”. God doesn’t command us to do anything, they imply. The “Commands” of the Bible are really just there to help us to position our lives for “success”. “Faith” is not trust, it is a force that God wants to share with the believer so that they too can be creative, they teach.

But this is not Biblical. God does command us to do things. In the Name of Jesus believers can pass on the commands of God. We are to obey the commands of God not merely to position ourselves for blessing – but simply because it’s the only right thing to do.

Christianity is not based on commands, but it does have its commands. Christ’s grace toward the believer empowers them to obey. The Word of God enables the believer to know God’s commands. And, the Holy Spirit illuminates those parts of our lives that need forgiveness, cleansing, and healing.

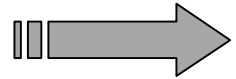
It is my prayer that we will yearn for God and thus long for His commands to be demonstrated in our lives to His glory.

Andrew Corbett



"To drive the point home I often put this challenge: I do not know of a denomination or local church in existence that has as its goal to teach its people to do everything Jesus said. I'm not talking about a whim or a wish, but a plan."

Dallas Willard, THE GREAT OMMISSION, page 61



Study I

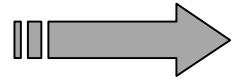
THE PRAYING JESUS COMMANDED

Christianity is a religion of prayer. It begins with prayer. It is maintained by prayer. It is advanced by prayer. To be a Christian is to be a pray-er. The New Testament commands prayer. It commands that we pray persistently, continually, with fasting, in the Spirit, individually and together.

Jesus did something to praying that had never been done before! He introduced the concept of actually *talking* to God as if God was our Father. He turned praying from being a religious duty to being a natural activity. He transformed the object of our prayers from vague, world-affecting issues to the mundane issues like: daily bread. For the followers of Jesus, prayer is a privilege, a blessing, a thermometer, and a command.



1. What didn't Jesus like about the way the Pharisees prayed? (Matthew 6:5, 7)

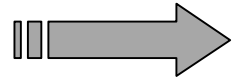


Jesus prayed. In fact, perhaps the most surprising and outstanding characteristic of Jesus Christ was His praying. He seemed to pray continually. He went out of His way to pray. He gave up sleep to pray. He went without food and company so that He could spend more time praying.

THE LORD’S PRAYER AS A MODEL

2. Match the aspect of daily praying with the relevant aspect of “The Lord’s Prayer”-

LORD’S PRAYER COMPONENT	PRAYER PRINCIPLE:
<i>Our Father in Heaven</i>	Please forgive me for the sins that I have wilfully committed against Your glory - those around me – and even myself. Help me to forgive those who have similarly injured me by the sins they have committed against me.
<i>Hallowed be Your Name</i>	God knows and cares about us.
<i>Your Kingdom come</i>	Give me an abhorrence for sin and for anything that robs You of due glory.
<i>Your will be done, in earth as it in Heaven</i>	God’s character is revealed in His various names, I want to know Who You really are.
<i>Give us this day our daily bread</i>	May You be King over my life – please give me a submissive heart.
<i>Forgive us our debts, as we forgive others</i>	Have Your will not only in my life but in every aspect of my world including those around me.
<i>Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil</i>	Please meet my every need especially those things that I need for today.

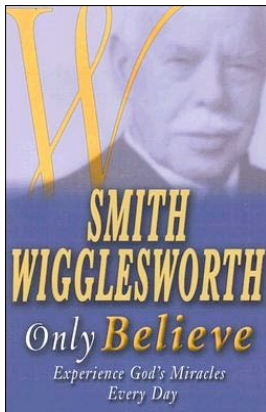


Do you notice that this model prayer is almost entirely about *us* surrendering to God *and* shunning not just sin but even the *temptation* to sin - and being totally dependent upon Him for even our daily “trivial” needs?



3. How do we know that Christ did not intend for this prayer to be repeated mindlessly? (consider Matthew 6:7)
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PERSISTENT PRAYING

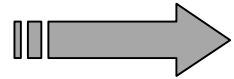


There is a teaching that promotes the idea that once a prayer has been prayed it should never be prayed again. Prominent Faith Teachers, such as Smith Wigglesworth, taught that praying more than once for something was a lack of faith. Several modern Faith teachers also teach this. While there are times when we should *stop* praying for something – but it generally proceeds a time of *persistent* praying.

4. What promise of Jesus to believers is contained in Matthew 21:22 and what is the condition to this promise?
-

5. Based partly on Colossians 1:9, was the New Testament practise to pray the way modern “Faith” Teachers propose? Explain.
-

6. How did Jesus want His Disciples pray based on Luke 18:1?
-



Praying and waiting for the answer used to be called “*tarrying*” (note Matthew 26:38, especially in the KJV). The early Pentecostals of the twentieth century considered that earnest praying was matter of *persistence* which they often referred to as *tarrying*. They regarded that this is what the original “Pentecostals” of Acts 1 did: *they prayed continually and waited for the answer*.

Jesus commanded His followers to pray. He has taught us *how* to pray, *what* to pray for and *why* we should pray. Prayer requires persistence. Jesus demonstrated persistent praying and *continual* praying.

7. How could a follower of Christ apply 1Thessalonians 5:17?

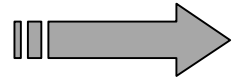
WHY WE PRAY

Believers pray to: (i) **Know** God (so that we can reflect Him), (ii) **Seek** God (to know His heart so that we can please Him), and (iii) **Appeal** to God (to see Him glorified in sometimes difficult circumstances).

Father, help us to be prayerful. Help us to pray and to keep on praying even when it's difficult. Please cause me to know Your heart so that I can reflect You. Help me to experience Your presence continually so that I can ever please You. And Father, I now commit to You all of my needs, responsibilities, wants, desires and dreams. I appeal to You on behalf of the following requests...
Amen.

May God make us a prayerful church of Biblical proportions.

Amen.



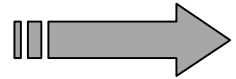
Study 2

PRAYER, FASTING SEEKING, TARRYING

In a society where we have become used to the instant and patience is now the rarest virtue, the concept of tarrying in prayer seems completely foreign. F.W. Boreham tells the story of a man long ago who loved nature. He would come back from a walk in the woods and tell the others in magnificent language of the wonderful creatures he had observed on these walks. Someone responded that they had just completed the same walk and saw none of the creatures that he had described. *“Oh you have to wait and be very still”*, he replied. *“I did stop and look around, but I still saw nothing”*, said the dubious. *“Then you didn’t wait long enough. This morning it took four hours of waiting behind a bush before I saw my first animal.”*

1. How long did the first believers have to wait from the time Christ ascended to the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit? (note Acts 1:6-8, 2:1-4)

2. What was John the Baptist and his followers renowned for according to Luke 5:33?



PRAYER

3. How would you respond to the person who says- “*I tried praying. Prayer doesn’t work!*”?



C.S. Lewis
(1898 - 1963)

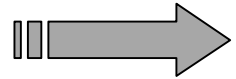
C.S. Lewis had written a very popular book on the subject of suffering. Then he met Joy Gresham. They fell in love. She contracted bone cancer and was given months to live. Lewis became angry with God. But his anger drove deeper into prayer. His pastor who frequently saw him praying alone in the chapel asked him whether he thought his prayers were changing God. “*Changing God?*” Lewis gasped. “*I’m not praying to change God –I’m praying for God to change me!*”

4. According to Matthew 6:33, what is one of the main goals of prayer?

5. Based on Hebrews 11:6 what is one way we can be rewarded by God?

6. How would you respond to the person who says that it is wrong to trouble God with our petty troubles and requests?

7. What encouragement does Philippians 4:6 give us? (Note also 1John 5:15)



8. In what way is prayer *conversational*?

FASTING

Prayer, and especially fasting, is not “magical”. That is, we don’t pray or fast so that God *must* do something. The idea that we can do *anything* and then *cause* God to comply with our wishes is more akin to superstition than Christianity! Any answer to an appealing prayer is an act of God’s grace. With this in mind we need to correctly understand the place of fasting in the New Covenant.

9. Some people teach that Christians should not fast. How would the following passages support this idea? Matthew 6:16-18; 9:15 -

Fasting was regularly practiced by the early Christians. While preaching in Europe some years ago I met a pastor who was proud that he never fasted. He was brashly declaring that he lived in the New Covenant not the Old. This rather large preacher boasted that he didn't need to pray and fast, in fact, he announced, he *prayed fast*!

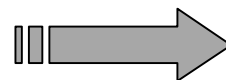
Just because a Christian does fast though, doesn't mean that they are a superior Christian (note Luke 18:12).

10. What role did fasting play in the early Church according to Acts 13:2?

Acts 13:3 -

Acts 14:23 -

The Early Church practised fasting. They fasted for clarity and wisdom. They fasted so that they could more fully devote their time and energy to seeking God and His will. Their fasting was never a spiritual hunger-strike.



SEEKING

11. How should we seek the Lord according to Deuteronomy 4:29?

12. Based on 1Chronicles 10:14, why did God take the Kingdom away from King Saul and give it to David?

First Chronicles 16:11 is found in the Old Testament but is clearly the sentiment of the New Covenant. As we apply this verse we are seeking to know God (note John 17:3), His ways, His will and His Word. This is why we should pray for illumination every time we read God's Word. As we seek God and commit our ways to Him we may not hear an audible voice but we will nevertheless sense His direction and guidance.

13. How does Matthew 7:7 assure us of this? (Note Psalm 34:10)

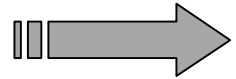
May we be a Psalm 24:6 church!

TARRYING

There will be some things that you and I will pray for (or about) that might take decades to be answered. There will be times when we have to *tarry*. This may mean that we have to turn off the TV and pray instead. It might mean that instead of having noise continually blaring, we wait on God in silence. It might mean that our prayer meetings go longer-much longer- than the scheduled time.

14. Have you ever tarried in prayer? How could we as a church learn to tarry in prayer?

Amen.



Study 3

PRAYING IN THE SPIRIT

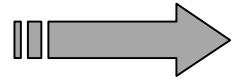
Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words.

Romans 8:26

Prayer is not merely an intellectual exercise. That is, it's not about praying the right words and sounding spiritual to impress either God or others. It is like everything else in the Christian walk- a Spirit-led activity (Rom. 8:14). To pray in the Spirit involves praying in a way that we co-operate with the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and we pray in a "spiritual" language.

1. Have you ever felt that you should pray for someone, or something, which was a matter of urgency? Describe those circumstances and whether you ever discovered why you had to pray-

I have heard many stories of uncanny coincidences where someone was prompted to pray urgently for someone else to later discover that just at that moment the person



who was being prayed for was in dire need. The most striking example of this is the story Ian McCormack.



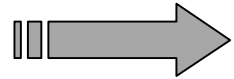
Ian was a young Kiwi who living a wild life of surfing and back-packing around the world. He was scuba diving off the Island of Mauritius when he was repeatedly stung by deadly box jelly fish. Just at that moment his Christian mother in New Zealand was woken by the Holy Spirit to immediately pray for her wayward son. But Ian died. His body was placed in the hospital mortuary. But while his mother prayed Ian was having a prolonged NDE (“Near Death Experience”). The result was that he was returned to his body and was commissioned to become a preacher! You can read his story at- <http://www.ianmccormack.org/>.

2. Have you ever had someone tell you that they *felt* specifically to pray for you? Describe.

3. According to 1Corinthians 14:4 what are two ways a believer can pray?

First Corinthians 14:15 seems to be suggesting that we can sing our prayers (praise) either in our own learned language, or in a “tongue”. Have you ever considered *praise as singing prayers*?

Praying in tongues is different to speaking in tongues. *Praying in tongues* is about us speaking prayerfully to God (note 1Corinthians 14:2). *Speaking in tongues* is one of the nine spiritual gifts (of 1Cor. 12) which is like prophesying and is therefore speaking *from* God to others (1Corinthians 14:3).



4. What benefit for the believer is there in praying in tongues according to 1Corinthians 14:4?

Frank Houston was a man who moved in an extraordinary gift of the Word of Knowledge. As a young man he was a disillusioned Salvation Army officer. But then he encountered the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and began praying in tongues. He found that after he prayed in tongues, often just prior to retiring for the evening, he would awake knowing something he hadn't previously known and feeling strangely stronger. He taught that 1Corinthians 14:4 was just as true today as it was when Paul wrote it to the Corinthians.

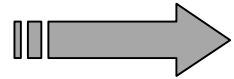
Prayer is a command of God, and is to be practiced both in public and in private; yes, such a command brings those that have the spirit of prayer, into great intimacy with God; and the prevailing prayer, will receive great things from God, both for the person that prayed, and for those that are prayed for. Prayer opens the heart of God, and is a means by which the empty soul is filled. By prayer the Christian can open his heart to God, as to a friend, and obtain fresh testimony of God's friendship to him.

John Bunyan, written 1662

5. How does James 4:3 contrast with praying in the Spirit?

6. According to Ephesians 6:18 are there times when we can pray without the leading of the Holy Spirit?

Even though we have the Holy Spirit, Ephesians 6:18 still charges us to persevere and endure in prayer. This should dispel the myth that when the believer is filled with the Holy Spirit (and led by Him in prayer) it is easy to remain focussed in prayer for a



long period. Even Spirit led believers who enjoy praying will find that prayer can be hard work. But for the believer, God's command is also God's empowering. That is, when the Bible commands us to pray with perseverance it is a command that the Holy Spirit can enable us to obey.

It's amazing how people who say they are undisciplined manage to find time to eat and sleep yet never time to pray.

John Piper

To pray with perseverance is to pray regularly, consistently, and habitually. This type of praying is distinct from randomly, on-the-run, or only-spontaneously. The Holy Spirit can help us to pray with perseverance.

Praying without ceasing means at least three things. First, it means that there is a spirit of dependence that should permeate all we do. This is the very spirit and essence of prayer. So, even when we are not speaking consciously to God, there is a deep, abiding dependence on him that is woven into the heart of faith. In that sense, we "pray" or have the spirit of prayer continuously.

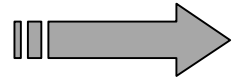
John Piper, *When I Don't Desire God*, page 157

7. What happens to the believer when they pray in the Holy Spirit according to Jude 20?

Some Christians refer to their regular time with God as their "quiet time", or "daily devotional". Over the years I have developed a number of habits for my quiet time which begins when I wake (usually before anyone else in our household). I take my Bible, a Prayer-Journal and a pen, and go to a room to be by myself to read and to pray. Do you have a regular, habitual time which you set aside to meet with God?

8. According to John 14:17, why are we (and not the world) able to know the Holy Spirit and His leading?

Amen.



Study 4

PRAYING TOGETHER

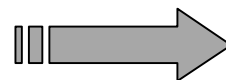
All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

Acts 1:14

For Christians, *praying together* is not only the core activity of worship, but it seems from the New Testament record that was *the* core activity for building their spiritual community. It was the one activity that the early Church did the most!

1. What was the result of the early Church praying together in Acts 4:31?

I wonder what would happen if we as a church prayed more together? The fact that the early church prayed together so often, and that the Bible records God answering their prayers, tells us that our praying can really change things. I wonder what God wants us to pray more for?



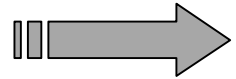
2. What appears to have been the result of the church praying in Acts 12:12 but actually not initially believed to be an answer to their praying together?

“Fatalism” is the belief that God has determined exactly what will happen. Those who believe in this unchanging fatalism are rarely motivated to pray. “What’s the point?” they ask. But for New Testament Christians, while we believe in the “sovereignty” of God (which means that God is ultimately in control of all things) we also believe that God has given us the privilege of praying *in order to change circumstances*. But it’s not only circumstances that our prayers can change. Perhaps you are battling with some untold issue? Perhaps there is some nagging question that dogs your mind? The answer is: *pray*. This is especially true when you share your burden with some other believers who pray together with you (note Matthew 18:20).

3. What did Paul particularly request that the church in Rome do according to Romans 15:30-32?

Paul, the great Preacher, regarded his ministry as a partnership between himself and those who could pray for his ministry. There is a little known saying that says- *If you want a better preacher pray for the one you’ve got!* As a preacher I can often tell when I have been prayed for. This is most notable when I travel away from my own church to minister somewhere else and the congregation is particularly mindful to pray for me.

4. If someone asked you what you would like prayer for, what would you say?



5. How did Paul want the Corinthians to “partner” with him and why did he want it? (2Cor. 1:11)

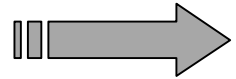
Do you pray for your church family? How often do you pray for your pastor? He needs it! Do you have a prayer-partner? Have you ever been a member of a prayer-triplet?

6. What did Paul tell the Philippians was the reason for his confidence that he would be released from prison? (Phil. 1:19)

Learning to pray, and to especially pray together, is a vital part of the believer’s discipleship. Your discipleship is what determines your spiritual depth, your love for God, and your fruitfulness for Christ.

7. How did Paul and ministry team pray for the Thessalonians according to 2 Thessalonians 1:11?

There are several ways to pray together. It can be structured (with such things as prearranged prayer requests known to the prayer partners), spontaneous (prayer partners gather to pray around a general theme but are free to pray however they want), or even simply by praying for each of those in the prayer meeting.



8. According to 2Thessalonians 3:1, in what way did Paul also want the Thessalonians to pray for his preaching team?

9. Based on some of the Scriptures that we have looked at, and what you know, how could you pray for the following-

(i) The other members of this Bible Study Group-

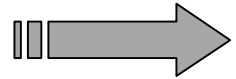
(ii) Your local church-

(iii) Your workplace or school-

(iv) Your neighbourhood-

May God help us as a local church family to pray together more. May we be united in our prayers to see everyone in our community turn to Christ and become a part of the Church that He is building.

Amen.



PART 2

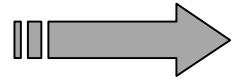
THE COMMUNITY COMMANDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

Acts 2:42

We all live in *a community* of sorts but not necessarily *in community*. This is sometimes true of church going Christians. The New Testament never describes believers “going to church”. Yet for some Christians this is their concept of “church” – it is a *place*. But the New Testament presents the church being a Christian community – something you are – not something you go to.

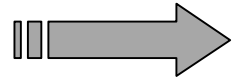
What does it mean to live in “community”? How do we experience the kind of church described and prescribed in the New Testament? It seems to involve certain New Testament words such as sharing, caring, carrying, giving, worshiping, fellowshiping, correcting, resolving, reconciling, and organisation. This is what we are about to explore...



Recommended Reading

“How People Grow”, Henry Cloud & John Townsend, *Zondervan*

“Life Together – The Classic Exploration of Faith In Community”, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Harper*, 1954



Study 5

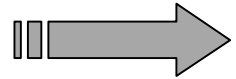
THE COMMUNITY JESUS COMMANDED

that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

John 17:21

Community sounds like *common* + *unity*. To be in community is to be united and have certain things in common. This is a great concept of the church. Being a follower of Jesus automatically grants us membership into His Church - which means that we become a member of a spiritual community.

1. Based on John 17:21-23, what imperatives (“*crucially important reasons*”) did Jesus place on His followers being in unity?



But unity among followers of Christ does not come naturally. In fact, our most natural tendencies are opposed to being submitted to a community.

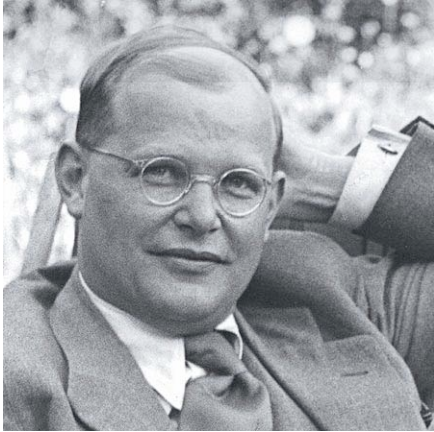
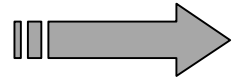
2. Why do you think some followers of Jesus find it so difficult to live as a community with other believers?

3. Building the community of the local church seems to be a constant battle in the epistles of the New Testament. What appeal did Paul the Apostle make to the Corinthians in 1Corinthians 1:10 and in what particular ways did he want them to do this?

The Corinthian Church was riddled with disunity and sin. Yet Paul believed they could change. There was hope that despite their seemingly “hopeless” position, they could become a godly community of Christ-followers.

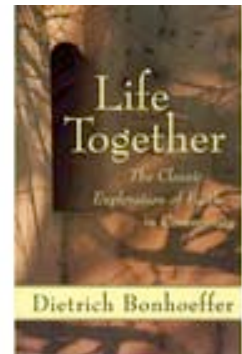
4. In fact, what remarkable statement did Paul make to them which may have given some Corinthians hope that they could change? (2Corinthians 7:16)

We might think that the idea of achieving a Biblical New Testament community of believers is not achievable. But consider Paul’s epistles to the Corinthians. The goal of these epistles was to produce the kind of community of believers that Christ commanded.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a German pastor who withstood Adolf Hitler during the 1930s and 40s. He fled Germany just prior to World War 2 breaking out – but then returned to his beloved Germany to help comfort the believers there who were struggling to endure the trials of being a *German* Christian. Faced with a rampaging, maniacal, dictator who was daily executing

Christians and Jews, Bonhoeffer changed his theology to accommodate a doctrine of *justified assassination*. He then became party to a plot to assassinate Hitler. This plot failed. Bonhoeffer was jailed. In prison Bonhoeffer wrote books and pastored a prison fellowship. He came to deeply appreciate what real Christian fellowship was. His book on this subject, *Life Together*, is now considered to be one of the greatest classics on true Christian community. If I could sum up one of his main points in that book it would be this: *Christians do not fellowship directly with each other* (to Bonhoeffer this should be more appropriately called *socialising*, not “fellowship”). Instead, true Christian fellowship is where *believers relate to another believer through Christ*.



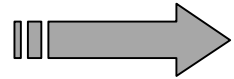
5. According to Ephesians 2:21-22 what is necessary for the believer to grow, and what will have to happen to demonstrate this growth in Christ? (Eph 4:16)

Resolving Conflicts In The Church Community

The test of a community, whether it be a church, a family, or a marriage, is not the absence of conflicts but the way in which these conflicts are dealt with.

6. Is the absence of conflict in a church a sign of the church's good health?

7. What does Philippians 4:3 tell you about conflict within a church?



8. In what way is Colossians 3:12-17 to be taken to indicate that conflict within a church is inevitable and that the Bible has a strategy to approach this?
-

9. Is the increasing number of conflicts in a church an indication of its ill-health?
-

Professional relationship counsellors tell us that there are 5 levels of communication intimacy- (i) **Level 1- Clichés** (“How are you?” “Good thanks.”); (ii) **Level 2 – Facts** (“How are you?” “I’ve got a sore back!”); (iii) **Level 3 - Opinions** (“What do you think about women drivers?” “I think women drivers are dangerous!”); (iv) **Level 4 – Feelings** (“How did you feel when that happened to you?” “I felt very let down and humiliated by that person!”); (v) **Level 5 - Needs** (“What do you need from me?” “Right now I need you to stop criticising me and my lack of faith, and to be patient with me as I probably fail to live up to your expectations of what a Christian should be- because I am really struggling at the moment with the loss of my legs.”)

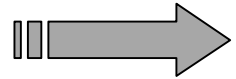
10. At which communication level might conflict be more likely to arise?
-

11. Can all conflicts within a church be resolved?
-

12. How might Romans 12:16 alleviate conflict within a church?
-

In building a church community we must learn to navigate the following Cs: *Conflict*, *Care*, *Correcting*, and *Cooperation*. This is what we will examine in the New Testament commands to garner as much help as we can so that we can build the type of Christian Community the New Testament describes.

Amen.



Study 6

THE

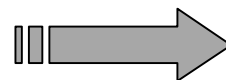
CARING

THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS

In the past month I have had a couple of single young adults tell me that our church is “*not very friendly*”. Whenever someone says this to a pastor they usually become very defensive about their church. These criticisms were based on what happened after the Sunday services. They said that although they had gone out of their way to try to get to know others it had felt like it was *all one-way traffic*. While they reached out to other church attendees, it *felt* like none had reached out to them. To them, our church was “*uncaring*”.

Another criticism was levelled at me about our church being “*uncaring*” when I had disciplined one of our worship team members by taking them off the music roster. “*If you do that, they’ll stop attending church!*” This critic wanted me to overlook this musician’s declining morals (and the pain it was causing their marriage and children) and “*show some compassion*” toward this muso.

1. According to 1Corinthians 12:25, what obligation do we have toward each other?



2. How should pastors and elders care for the church? (Acts 20:28)
-

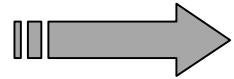
There is a story told of a doctor, whom we'll call Dr Bob, who was sent to a huge disaster where many people had been injured and taken ill. He was given ample medical supplies and equipment and flown into the disaster zone. Upon arriving there he was immediately overwhelmed with the scale of the calamity. No sooner had he unloaded the equipment and supplies that he was straightway confronted with a poor soul a few metres away screaming in agony for his attention. After two weeks of working around the clock, the relief agency had to pull Dr Bob out of the disaster zone and fly him home for rest and recuperation. The tragedy had, however, grown worse during Dr Bob's time there. The agency decided to send "Dr Jim". Dr Jim arrived with the same equipment and supplies. When his helicopter arrived he saw the same scene of tragedy that Dr Bob saw. As he walked past agonising scenes of human misery, people screamed out to him for help. He seemingly ignored their cries and went to the temporary clinic. He then called together the other agency workers who had been working in the midst of the tragedy, to give him their assessments. What he wanted to know from them was where the tragedy had hit hardest- who were the neediest people? And, how many of the locals had been directly unaffected by the tragedy? He then asked for these healthy people to be brought to the clinic to be trained to administer preliminary medical care to the suffering. He spent two weeks assessing and training without seeing to one patient. But within another 4 weeks the tragedy had been brought under control. Diseases had stopped spreading. Conditions had now become hygienic. The clinic had been sectioned off into a temporary hospital, a quarantined section, and an emergency room. Dr Jim returned home 8 weeks later, mission accomplished.

DISCUSSION POINT: Which doctor (Dr Bob or Dr Jim) cared the most?

3. What kind of care did Paul the apostle show the Thessalonians according to 1Thessalonians 2:7? What might this have looked like?
-

Care requires more than compassion. It also requires a certain amount of toughness. Church leaders must be caring! They must care about people. They must care about the whole congregation. They must have particular care for those they are immediately responsible for.

4. In fact, if someone is going to be a caring leader within the church, what is the minimum requirement according to 1Timothy 3:5?
-



This is really important. Leaders need to ensure that their care-priorities are well ordered. Too many pastors, elders and deacons have neglected their families while showing care for non-family members within the church. It is good for church leaders to care for church members – but not at the expense of their families! (Note 1Tim. 5:16)

5. What is necessary for Christians to care for one another according to 1Timothy 5:8?
-

The home is the starting place for care. When families are functioning well, family members are cared for. They have someone to share with, talk to, listen to, hug, and laugh with. Those who do not have this home environment are particularly vulnerable to emotional insecurity. That is, they are more likely to feel uncared for and abnormally crave care. Even though non-family members may genuinely care for them, they still feel that this level of care is not enough. Ironically, this almost insatiable hunger for care can actually drive away those who do care because they can never measure up to these expectations of needed care.

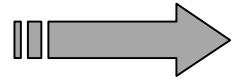
*A man who has friends must himself be friendly,
But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.*

Prov. 18:24 NKJV

6. Based on Proverbs 18:24 (NKJV), what are two things the emotionally insecure person would benefit from?
-

7. Based on 1Corinthians 13, what are some ways we should care for one another?
-

8. Someone has said that we show care by either: a *word*, a *touch*, or a *look*. Can you recall someone showing care for you using either of these? Why do you think you remember this?
-



9. Care requires dogged persistence. How did Paul say that his care for the Corinthians was self-evident based on 2Corinthians 6:4-6?
-

While caring involves a *word*, a *touch*, a *look*, it also involves *listening*, *giving*, *comforting*. The measure of Christian maturity is found in our ability to care for others when we are under stress and in difficult circumstances. Scripture says that there is a blessing for the person *who shows care* and kindness to others (Prov. 11:17).

10. Christian care should encourage a brother or sister to look to God for comfort (Psalm 94:19). Why would this have been such a comfort to the Psalmist considering Psalm 142:4?
-

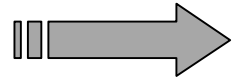
11. How can we obey Galatians 6:2? What needs to happen for this instruction to be carried out?
-

12. How does Hebrews 13:16 tell us to care for one another?
-

13. If someone corrects you, do they care about you? Discuss.
-

Caring for people needs to at least involve comforting them, but it must involve doing things that we might not have necessarily considering “caring”. This is what we will look at in our next study.

Amen.



Study 7

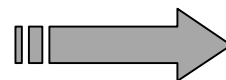
THE

CORRECTING

THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS

“I need to correct you!” How do you feel when you hear those words? If you feel joy and excitement with the possibility of having a person who loves and cares deeply for you gently guide you out of ignorant belief or behaviour into true knowledge and stronger character, I envy you! If, on the other hand, you hear those words with great trepidation and even fear, then I know how you feel! If I could over-generalise the church into two types of believers, I might call some Christians: “correctors”, and the others: “encouragers”. But this would be an unfair distinction because there are some Christians who have discovered how to *correct with encouragement*. These Christians have been seasoned with much loving correction themselves and have developed an unusual amount of wisdom in knowing how to help others by gently correcting them.

1. What did Paul hope that Timothy would do and what did he hope it might achieve? (2Tim. 2:25)



BEING CORRECTED

For us to grow we must be corrected.

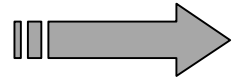
2. When God uses someone to correct us, what should our attitude be according to Proverbs 3:11? (Also, Proverbs 15:10) How does this contrast with Proverbs 6:23?
-

3. What is the warning to those of us who hate being corrected? (Proverbs 5:23)
-

4. Based on 2Timothy 3:16-17, what are some of the things that the ministry of God's Scriptures are designed to achieve in our lives? Have you ever experienced this?
-

The Bible uses various words to describe the different levels of correction: **encourage** > **admonish** > **reprove** > **rebuke** > **discipline**. The greater the need for correction, the greater the level of correction needed.





5. What kind of heart would someone need to only ever be corrected by encouragement? Do you have this kind of attitude?

It seems that if we are hungry for God and His Word, especially His Word (“*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly*”), we are more likely to be more open to being corrected (“*teaching and admonishing one another*”) without becoming defensive or hostile (“*with thankfulness in your hearts to God*”, note Colossians 3:16).

6. What kind of heart did Paul expect of the Corinthians when he wrote 1Corinthians 14:1?

CORRECTING

If we love and care for someone we will share our concerns with them about their life.

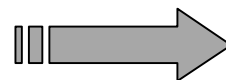
7. Drawing on the principle found in Hebrews 12:6, how *should* we feel about being corrected by someone?

8. What attitude does First Thessalonians 5:14 instruct correctors to have?

9. According to Proverbs 9:8, who should correctors be cautious of?

...reprove a man of understanding, and he will gain knowledge.

Proverbs 19:25b



Pastors and elders have a shepherd's duty to correct those in their charge. If you have never been corrected by your pastor or elder- you have never been shepherded!

10. What response do shepherded believers owe their shepherds and why? (Note 1Thessalonians 5:12)
-

Consider who you allow to correct you. What qualities do these people have? Why do you especially listen and take to heart *their* correction? What role does *trust* play in receiving correction from someone? What is necessary for *trust* to develop between you and those you allow to correct you?

WHEN YOU CAN'T CORRECT...

Allowing for the discussion based on the previous set of questions above, as much as you might want to, there are certain situations in which you must *not* correct someone.

1. ***Do not correct someone with whom you have no relational authority*** (that is, for example- if you are not a High Court Justice carrying out the process of justice, or a police-officer arresting someone, a principal of a school disciplining a student, or the parent of an unruly child. This especially applies to someone you have just met!).
2. ***Do not correct someone when they have shared their opinion, thoughts or feelings*** (that is, for example- when you're having a casual conversation with a group of friends and someone says, "*I think that I've been really battling within myself lately.*" This kind of comment invites *compassion* not correction.)
3. ***Do not correct someone when the only means you have to do so is SMS ("phone text messaging")***.

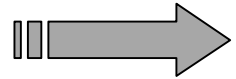
Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

2Thessalonians 3:15

11. What does Titus 3:10 instruct us to do with someone who causes divisions and will not be corrected?
-

May God give us the grace to be corrected when we needed it and the grace to correct a brother or sister in Christ with sincere love.

Amen.



Study 8

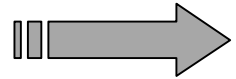
THE

COOPERATION

(ORGANISATION)

THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS

A church is different to any other group of people. It is meant to be a group of spiritually-related people who are co-operative and organised. Just like a football team, a church requires people who perform different functions simultaneously in order to achieve their common goal. In a football team there are those who initially get the ball moving. These are usually the big guys. They can't run, duck and weave, like the smaller guys, but they sure can jump high and get things moving! Then there's the smaller guys who get fed the ball by the big guys- boy! they can run! They get the ball to the mid-fielders who know how to jostle with their opponent and get around them to pass the ball to the forwards. It's the forwards who know how to kick goals. Then there's the defensive members of the team whose job is to get the ball off the other side and prevent them from kicking goals.



The church is made up of people who are gifted to get things moving. There are others who are able to *keep* things moving: servant-hearted people who know what “hard work” means. They serve as deacons, ushers, hosts, follow-up counsellors, visitation helpers, cleaners, gardeners, or door-greeters. Then there are those who are like “wingers”. They play near the side boundary with an aim to get the ball into the middle of the field toward their goal. In the church there are evangelists who are like *wingers*. They roam the boundaries looking for lost souls to bring into the centre of God’s Kingdom. They are bold. They gossip the Gospel. They scheme for the salvation of souls. They pray for sinners to be converted. They don’t care for the limelight but they long for the light of the Lord to shine in the darkness of people’s minds and souls. When the ball gets near the goal, the player with the ball is often “shepherded” by his team-mates. In the church, we each shepherd each other by protecting each other with prayer, encouragement, and practical provisions. The church that is functioning as a well-organised and co-operative team is more likely to be a growing, healthy church.

1. According to Ephesians 4:11-12, who has Christ placed *in* the church and why?

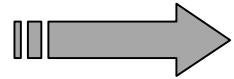
WHO LEADS THE CHURCH?

“Leadership” means different things to different people.

2. What did “leadership” mean to Jesus? (Note Luke 22:26)

3. What picture did Christ promote of the type of leaders He was training? (John 10:3)

Indeed, the picture most often used by Christ of Himself is that of a *shepherd*. Any leader within the church must serve with a shepherd’s heart.



In the early 1800s, an Anglican minister reacted badly to what he saw as unreasonable leadership within his denomination. This minister, John Nelson Darby (pictured right), left the Anglican church and helped to found what became known as *The Plymouth Brethren*. This group believed that the church should not be led a pastor but by a *group* of men (“brothers”, hence their name: *Brethren*). Darby taught that the New Testament prescribed “elders” as the leaders of local churches rather than “*an* elder” as “*the* leader”. That is, that every member of a church is equal in authority.



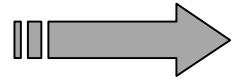
4. How does this Brethren idea differ from Hebrews 13:7, 17? (Note verse 24)

5. How does Christ’s leadership picture in Luke 15:4-7 reinforce the idea that “a” leader of a church is not unbiblical?

Churches, like any organization, need to be led. This requires diversity and cooperation. Just because people within a church carry differing levels of responsibility does not therefore mean that there is a hierarchy within a church. That is, no one within a church is superior to anyone else. But, there are differing ministries and levels of responsibilities.

6. How does 1Corinthians 12:18 explain why we are all needed within a church?

7. But which word in 1Corinthians 12:28 helps us to understand that there are differing levels of authority and responsibility within a church?



In some churches people select their own leaders. This is called *democracy*. It's always good when leaders enjoy the support of their people. But when unqualified people garner support through their popularity or charisma it can lead to extremely ungodly leadership.

8. List the qualities required for a leader as detailed in 1Timothy 3:1-7, 8-13 ~

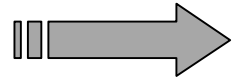
Leaders within a church are appointed by God. Paul stressed this aspect of his ministry in many of his epistles. He also stressed that those responsible for the local church could *appoint* their leadership team (Acts 14:23). But this is not what we see in some churches where leadership positions are filled by popular vote with a process called *democracy*.

9. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy who he appointed to lead the church at Ephesus. What leadership task did Paul want Timothy to carry out which also possibly reveals a broader leadership role according to 2Timothy 2:2?

Leaders must be trained and able to train. This requires that they know how to work with and empower people. It also means that there will be accountability. This means that good organization and cooperation will involve reviewing, getting feedback, and being open to how things could be done better. It also means that when someone fails or sins they are restored through discipleship (discipline).

10. Who do you allow to hold you accountable? That is, who do you allow to evaluate or even correct you?

Amen.



PART 3

THE DOCTRINE COMMANDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

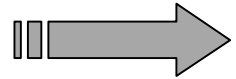
Mark 16:16

According to Jesus, what we believe determines our eternal destiny. Therefore, what we believe is really important. Beliefs derive from, and are shaped by, what we are taught. Christian beliefs, when taught, are called “doctrines”. Paul tells the Romans to be careful of those who bring different *doctrines*. In fact, he says that they should be avoided (Rom. 16:17). Our unity is based largely on holding common doctrine. This is what characterised the first church-

And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

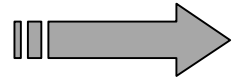
Acts 2:42

But today there seems to be so many doctrines that cause division rather than promote unity. Some people confuse *the goal* for *the cause* and argue that we should stop arguing about doctrines and learn to be united. But unity is not achieved by *ignoring* differences, but by *exploring* differences and celebrating what we hold in common. And most Christians might be surprised what we do actually hold in common agreement...



Further Reading

<http://www.legana.org/theology/doctrine/doc10.htm>



Study 9

THE

SALVATION

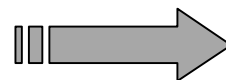
THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS

The doctrine of Salvation is not the first doctrine that deserves our common agreement. It is about third in the pecking order of importance. But it is the doctrine that will have the most *immediate* impact upon our lives. It is also the doctrine that determines how a church regards its purpose since God *commands* all to be saved.

WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN DOCTRINES?

The first doctrine is Christ. Who we think Jesus is will determine the shape, size and colour of every doctrine we hold. If Jesus was just a man then His life was just an example. But if Jesus was God, then His life and death was not just *an* but *the* atonement for the sins of mankind. If Christ has totally atoned for sin, then God's forgiveness cannot be earned but must be *received* by grace.

Salvation means *deliverance*. When you are held captive by an enemy in enemy territory who continually mistreats you, persistently lies about your father and family



convincing you that they are bad, relentlessly lures you into greater acts of betrayal, and withholds from you letters from home- *you need deliverance!* This picture of our plight without salvation has attempted to incorporate several of the core aspects of what salvation means. Salvation also means *made whole* (Matt. 9:21-22) and *healed* (Mark 5:34). Salvation also means to be *translated* (moved) from darkness to light (Eph. 5:8), resurrected from death to life (Eph. 2:5), given sight (Luke 4:18; 2Cor. 4:4), given a new heart (Ezek. 36:26).

SALVATION & THE REFORMATION

The message of salvation through Jesus Christ was largely ignored or distorted throughout the period known as the Middle Ages. The Medieval Church had largely become corrupt and was using their power to teach Christian Doctrine to exploit people for their own benefit. That is, rather than proclaiming that salvation was a free gift from God received by faith, they were presenting people with a long list of requirements to be completed in order to *earn* their salvation.

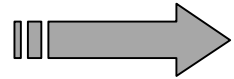
1. How does the last part of Romans 6:23 refute the idea that salvation can be earned?



Then around 1500 a German monk was reading the Book of Romans and found that its message about salvation was different to the one of the Medieval Church. Martin Luther asked 95 questions of Church authorities based largely on what he had come to understand from the Epistle to the Romans, where he challenged most of the corrupt teachings and practices that were going on. What he and others began became known as “the Reformation”. These “Reformers” summed up the teaching of the Bible about salvation with the acronym: *TULIP*.

T.U.L.I.P.

“T” stands for what the Reformers called *the Total depravity of man*. “Total Depravity” means that mankind is totally lost without God. When Adam and Eve sinned their sin affected us all (Romans 5:12). Everyone is now born into sin.



2. What does Romans 3:10, 23 tell us about the heart condition of every person?

3. From our perspective people can appear to be quite “good”. But how does God view the hearts of people who do not know Him? (Genesis 6:5)

4. How does Ephesians 2:12 describe the person who does not know God?

Being “totally depraved” doesn’t mean that we aren’t civil, nice, law-abiding citizens who are capable of acts of generous charity. It means that sin has totally corrupted every part of us and we all equally need a Saviour to cleanse us from our sins.

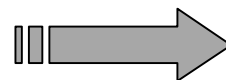
“U” stands for what the Reformers called *Unconditional election*. Salvation is God’s choice.

5. When did God decide that He was going to save you, according to Ephesians 1:4? (Note also Revelation 17:8)

Those God has predestined to save (note Romans 8:30, Ephesians 1:5, 11) are *the elect*. When we pray for others to be saved we are asking God to impact the will of that person toward Him. The fact that we pray this way says that we intuitively know that God can save even the most hardened sinner. Who God has elected for salvation is not our focus. It is a mystery. It is also a mystery *how* God chooses to save someone.

6. What does the Apostle Peter commend all believers to do in 2 Peter 1:10?

Our election by God to be saved is “unconditional” in the sense that there is nothing we can do to earn or merit it. There are no conditions to be met by the lost one. All the conditions have been met by Christ.



7. God's salvation is described as a "gift". How do these verses highlight that it is an *unconditional* gift? Romans 5:15, 16, 17; 6:23~
-

8. According to Ephesians 2:8-9, on what basis are we saved?
-

Some people teach that we must do some things in order to be saved (such as "clean up your act" or *have all the right doctrine*) but the ability to "clean up your act" is given to us by God's grace (note Acts 5:31; 11:18). *What God commands, only His grace can enable.*

9. Based on Acts 26:20, what can we expect from someone who has truly received the grace of God and repented?
-

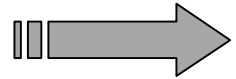
When Jesus Christ was born this marked the beginning of His humiliation and suffering. This suffering for your sins and mine was also suffering for our salvation. It culminated in Him dying the cruellest execution on a Roman Cross.

10. What does Romans 5:8 tell us about God's motive for saving us?
-

11. Based on Romans 10:9-13, how does a grace-touched person respond to God?
-

12. Read Philippians 2:12. Is it a light thing to claim to be saved by God?
-

"Father, please help us to walk with You. We know that salvation isn't so much about just going to Heaven, but being made right with You so that we can truly know and enjoy You both now and forever. Help us to care about the salvation of others around us and to do all we can to demonstrate to this world what it means to be Your child."
Amen.



Study 10

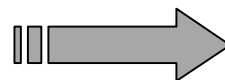
THE WORSHIP THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS

Everyone worships. It is one of the most curious things to anthropologists (people who study people) that in every culture on every part of the planet, people worship.

1. What does worship mean to you?

2. How do you worship?

3. What inspires your worship?



4. How does God feel about worship? Give some Scriptural support to your answer.
-



Worship is the highest act of surrender and devotion by a person. How we express our surrender and our devotion to God is; *worship*.

5. What was one of the most ancient forms of worship in the Bible? What does this tell us about worship?
-

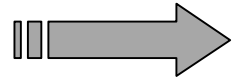
6. How important is *music* to worship? Give some Scriptural support to your answers.
-

7. How important is *ritual* to worship?
-

8. Notice Psalm 46:10. What further insight does this verse reveal about how we can worship God?
-

When Satan had the opportunity to attempt to tempt Jesus, the first offer he made to Christ was conditional upon Jesus worshiping him (Matthew 4:9). But Christ responded with an amazing statement about worship.

9. What do we learn about worship from Christ's statement in Matthew 4:10?
-



In some older wedding ceremonies the minister often led the couple to vow – “*with my body, I thee worship*”. The intention of the vow was to highlight the complete mutual surrender and devotion of a husband and wife to each other. Many pastors today are uncomfortable using that expression within marriage vows because worship is for God only.

Worship Is Doxology



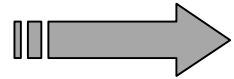
Doxology is *right glory*. Good worship is *doxological*. That is, worshiping God should result in Him being glorified. This might sound obvious but some people have equated church worship with a highly scripted stage show, performed by highly talented singers and musicians. This might result in glory for the performers. But doxological worship results in *God* being glorified. Note how Jude closes his epistle (verses 24-25) with a “doxology” (a worship statement for God’s glory). These two verses are often read in churches to close a worship service.

10. What connection does right doctrine (“orthodox” theology) have with right worship with God? (Note Matthew 15:9)

Good theology leads to good doxology which leads to good worship.



The Greek word for “worship” is *proskuneo*, which means *to bow down and move toward and kiss*. This is the word that God the Father uses when He commands all the angels of heaven to *proskuneo* the Son (Hebrews 1:6).



The means of worship is determined by God. While it might be valid (in one respect) to say that everything we do is “worship”, in a narrower sense we are charged by Scripture about the way God is to be worshiped.

11. How does Deuteronomy 12:4 counter the idea that we can worship God in any fashion we determine? (See also Deuteronomy 12:31)

12. How did Jesus worship with His disciples? (eg. Mark. 14:26)

The New Testament prescribes worship of God to consist of-

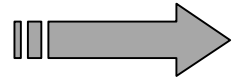
- Prayer
- Singing praises
- Reflection (meditation)
- Devotional reading of Scripture
- Spiritual disciplines



13. What ways of worshiping God are listed in Colossians 3:16?

Because prayer is an act of worship, we should only pray to God (not to deceased saints, for example). When the apostle John was caught up to heaven he was at one point rebuked by an “angel” for commencing to worship this angel (Revelation 19:10). Who we worship is paramount. How we worship is critical. May our worship not only start with Romans 12:1-3, but continually in Romans 12:9-21. May this passage in Romans become our goal for worshiping the Worthy One.

Amen.



Study II

THE

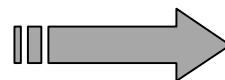
MORALITY

THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS

Morality is *right or wrong behaviour*. When God begins to work in someone's life the first thing they become aware of is their lack of moral purity. We describe this feeling as the "conviction of sin". While we intuitively know what constitutes "good morals" or *good behaviour* it is normal for our consciences to become dull and unable to feel healthy guilt unless the grace of God rescues us. Even those whose hearts have become hardened by sin and unable to realise when something is immoral can become more moral when they are made aware of the Moral Law.

1. Why is it that most people know intuitively what is right or wrong behaviour?
(Note Romans 1:19; 2:14-15)

But just because someone becomes more moral (from being aware of the Moral Law) and may even feel that they are "living as a Christian" their good morals will not save them from sin. But, there is an expectation that when someone is saved they will live a morally different life to the person who is not saved.



2. According to 1Peter 3:16, what role does a Christian's morality play in the their witness?

3. What reason does the Bible give for people refusing to order their lives according to the Moral Law? (John 3:19)

Morality is not just a Christian concept- it's a *human* concept. That is, it applies to everybody, not just Christians. Morality is designed by God to protect people and keep them safe. Morality is not designed to make people religious! God's Moral Law for mankind is best summed up in what we call *The Ten Commandments*.

4. Write down the Ten Commandments in their given order (Exodus 20) -

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

(iv) _____

(v) _____ vs 12

(vi) _____ vs 13

(vii) _____

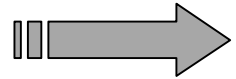
(viii) _____

(ix) _____

(x) _____ vs 17

Refer also to: Matthew 4:10; 1Corinthians 6:9-10; 10:7; Acts 15:20; Romans 13:9; 1Tim. 6:6; Matt. 19:19; Eph. 6:1-3; Ephesians 4:28; Romans 7:7.

5. How did Jesus sum up our obligation to the Moral Law? (Matthew 22:37-39)



C.S. Lewis said that there were three reasons for all people to keep the Moral Law:

- (1) to ensure fair play and harmony between individuals;
- (2) to help make us good people in order to have a good society; and
- (3) to keep us in a good relationship with the power that created us.

6. Morality is a Law like Gravity. If someone says that they don't want you to impose *your* morality on them, how might you respond?
-

When Christians try to influence morality of our society through lobbying for better legislation they are often faced with the protest that *you can't legislate morality*. But since morality is *right behaviour* and the laws of a society are supposed to reflect right behaviour, *you can **only** legislate morality*. The real question is: *Whose morality are our legislators legislating?* This is why Christians should be engaged in the political process so that at the very least, we can be salt and light for the good of our society's wellbeing.

7. Based on 1Corinthians 15:33, what can help people to live morally good lives?
-

Christian fellowship should encourage fellow believers to live morally well. God's moral standards are not a burden to the believer (1John 5:3). In fact, one of the differences between the regenerate and the unregenerate is that for the believer, God's commands are empowering (note John 6:63; 12:50; 2Cor. 3:6). When God's Moral Law tells us not to murder, lie, cheat, have sex before marriage, or to be greedy, we don't just keep these standards, we surpass them by living by a higher, royal, Law.

8. What does the New Testament call this "royal" Law? (Rom. 13:8, 10; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8)
-



9. Read Colossians 3. Can you identify any moral instructions for believers in this passage?

Some people claim that as long as what they do doesn't *hurt* anyone else, then there is nothing wrong with their behaviour.

10. How might you respond to this claim?

When the apostles were confronted with the first Gentile converts (who were not familiar with the Ten Commandments or the Laws of Moses) they had to give them a standard to live by (since the New Testament had not been written yet).

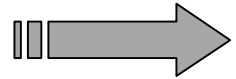
11. What is the essence of what the apostles instructed these first Gentile converts as recorded in Acts 15:28-29?

Morality is the starting point for godly behaviour. Jesus said that morality starts in the heart (Mat. 15:19) - which is why it's so important to guard our hearts (Prov. 4:23) and one more reason why pornography is so dangerous to our moral condition. Morality encompasses how we treat ourselves and others. This is why morality immediately addresses sexual behaviour.

12. How does 1Corinthians 6:18 describe sexual sin as different to all other sin?

May God enable us to live Christ-honouring, morally upright lives, that point people who are desperately looking for a way out of the maze of sin, to Jesus as Saviour.

Amen.



Study 12

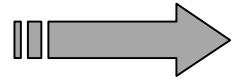
THE USE OF THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS THE NEW TESTAMENT COMMANDS

The Church is a spiritual community. We are to be people who are led, empowered and continually filled with the Holy Spirit. Living the Christian life is not merely about what we know – it's about an ongoing spiritual experience. If it is not a *spiritual* transformation, then it is not genuine. And when this spiritual transformation takes place, the Holy Spirit gives gifts to those He has transformed. In fact, Spirit-transformed believers are *commanded* to share their spiritual gifts with the rest of the body of believers. Let's see how and why...

1. Why did Paul *long* to go to Rome and meet with the believers there?
(Romans 1:11)

Spiritual gifts are given because of God's grace (note Eph. 4:7 and Romans 12:6, which we will discuss a bit later). This has some important implications.

2. How does Romans 11:29 respond to the idea that spiritual gifts are God's *reward* for the believer?



Sharing with others in the church the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit has given us is important both for others and us (note 1Peter 4:10).

3. What was Paul's wish for the Corinthians as stated in 1Corinthians 1:7?

4. Why has Christ given spiritual gifts to His church? (1Corinthians 14:12)

TYPES OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

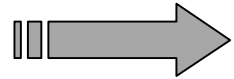
It might be over simplistic to conclude that the Scriptures contains an exhaustive list of all the spiritual gifts that God has available. We can surmise this because no two Biblical lists of spiritual gifts are identical. Thus, it might be reasonable to attribute some ability you have as having been given to you by the Holy Spirit. For example, you might have an ability to write poems. You have been gifted by the Holy Spirit to do this well. But you won't find *poem writing* in any of the Biblical gift lists. But what you will find are categories of gifts which *poem writing* might be associated with. Some scholars regard spiritual gifts as being categorised three ways: *Motivational Gifts*, *Ministry Gifts*, or *Manifestation Gifts*.

5. Can you recognise your own spiritual gift(s)? If so, what is it? If not, what has someone else told you is your spiritual gift(s)?

MOTIVATIONAL GIFTS

There are some things that we are more motivated to do. Perhaps this is because we are gifted by God in those areas. The thought of standing in front of hundreds of people to deliver a talk would terrify some! But for those who are gifted with an ability to talk to many people, there is no terror. The





thought of having to visit a sick person in hospital might not excite someone who is not motivated with mercy. When you are not gifted to do something, you are probably not motivated to do it either. In fact, what you probably are gifted at will also be prioritised over those things you have no motivation to do.

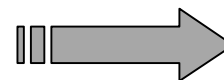
6. Romans 12:6-8 lists some of the motivational gifts. Match the particular gift with the possible definition of that gift.

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| (a) Prophecy | — Explaining God's Word so that His will and ways are made clearer to others |
| (b) Serving | — Encouraging others in the commitment to and serving Christ |
| (c) Teaching | — Declaring God's word, either as forth-telling, or fore-telling |
| (d) Exhorting | — Coordinating people and resources, for a task to achieve a goal either through directing or influencing |
| (e) Contributing | — Doing what needs to be done because it helps |
| (f) Leading | — Showing care for those who are hurting or in obvious need |
| (g) Mercy | — Supporting the goals and vision of the Church financially, materially, and with talent |

Can you recognise any motivational gifts you might have? Perhaps we think that our particular gift-ability is too insignificant to make any difference in our church. Sometimes we might hold back from contributing our gift-ability because we are waiting to be asked. But in most circumstances you don't need an official position or request to exercise these ability-gifts (note 1Cor. 12:18).

MINISTRY GIFTS

While *Motivational Gifts* appear to be God-given natural abilities, *Ministry Gifts* are *special* abilities that have *responsibility* for others. While Motivational Gifts have no particular order, *Ministry Gifts* have an order.



7. How do we know from 1Corinthians 12:28 that Ministry Gifts have an order?

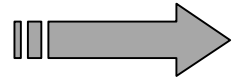
“Order” is not the same as “hierarchy”. Because someone is *first* does not mean that they are *superior* or *best*. Order speaks of *responsibility*. Within the church there must be an order of Ministry Gifts. This means that within a church, leaders must be gifted to lead (to make decisions, care for followers, organise resources and people, accept responsibility for results and failures, handle criticism and opposition, and train those helping them). And because the Scripture uses the expression “first”, “second”, “third” to describe the role and responsibility of various Ministry Gifts, it means that there is a hierarchy of leadership *responsibility* within the local church. This means that there is also a hierarchy of *accountability* for leaders within a church. So the next time you have a disagreement with your church leader remember that it is he who God will hold accountable for his decisions and leadership that has affected you.

8. Read Ephesians 4:11-12. What are the ministry gifts listed in this passage and what is their purpose?
-
-

MANIFESTATION GIFTS

When we are converted to Christ it is the miracle of regeneration (Titus 3:5). Jesus described this miracle as being *born-again* (John 3:3). This miracle is made possible by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, every born-again (regenerate) believer has the Holy Spirit within them (note- John 20:22). But after Jesus had breathed the Holy Spirit *into* the believers He told them to wait for the Holy Spirit to *come upon* them (Acts 1:8). When the Holy Spirit comes upon a regenerate believer the Scriptures call this being *baptised in the Holy Spirit*. When this happened in Acts 2, the believers spoke in tongues and prophesied and soon afterwards it became obvious that they could work miracles (Acts 3). The *Manifestation Gifts* are mentioned in 1Corinthians 12:7-10. These are gifts of the Holy Spirit that become available to those baptised in the Holy Spirit. It is possible to seek these gifts as they are needed (1Cor. 12:31). It is the proper exercise of *these* spiritual gifts within a church’s meetings that has led to the term “Pentecostal”. We should seek to be used by God with these gifts in our Bible Study groups and Sunday services.

Amen.



PART 4

THE OUTREACH COMMANDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

This will be your opportunity to bear witness.

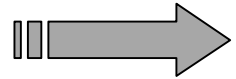
Luke 21:13

The term “soul-winner” has come to mean someone who leads others to Christ. We definitely need more *soul winners*. But technically speaking, *soul winner* is not the best term to describe the believer who lives out their responsibility to share the Gospel. The New Testament word, which more aptly describes this kind of believer, is: *witness*. Rather than the picture of a pushy, loud, brash, used-car salesman-type of soul-winner, the picture is of a quietly confident person who stands from the crowd by virtue of their life and message and is prepared to answer any questions and undergo any scrutiny they may have to. While some believers are specifically called to be preachers, all believers are called to be witnesses.

The local church is a community of witness to the Lord. We are responsible to evangelise our other-community as a church-community. This evangelism is not just preaching or the sharing the message, but training and teaching the message through a process called *discipleship*.



Further Reading



Study 13

THE WITNESS COMMANDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise.

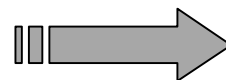
Proverbs 11:30

Personal evangelism is often called *soul winning*. Many preachers have encouraged their congregations to be soul-winners based on Proverbs 11:30 which commends those who *win* souls. But this Old Testament verse refers to *befriending* not *evangelism*. Perhaps more Christians should know how to apply to Proverbs 11:30 appropriately so that their circle of friends extends beyond their brothers and sisters. But I think we must be careful that we don't confuse our 'winning' of a soul with the Lord 'winning' of soul.

1. How does 1Corinthians 3:6 describe the various roles of evangelism?

Rather than the term "soul-winner", the Bible uses the word: "*witness*". Not everybody is an evangelist, but all believers are called to be a *witness*.

2. What New Testament application might we draw from Proverbs 14:25?



-
3. What title or description is given to Jesus in Revelation 1:5?
-

The English word “witness” is the word Greek word “*martus*”. This is where we get the word *martyr*. It reveals that the New Testament writers meant that a *witness* was someone who *gave their life for their message*.

Faithful witnesses soon discover that God has often been at work in the lives they are sharing with.

4. What did Paul and Barnabas discover after they had preached in Antioch, Pisidia? (Acts 13:48)
-

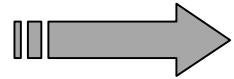
THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A WITNESS

(i) Questions

A witness is characterised by the role in answering *questions*. Witnesses for Christ stand out. Their very lives provoke questions.

5. How does a witness for Christ use the “permission principle”?
-

When not-yet-Christians ask a believer a question about their conversion they are giving the witness not just permission to share the Gospel, but also determining *how much* permission the witness has to share with them. For example, if a witness is asked *when* they became a Christian, they need to realise that this is a different question to *why* they became a Christian.



6. Has anyone ever asked you why you became a Christian? How did you respond? How would you respond differently in the future?

7. What does 1Peter 3:15 tell us to be always ready to do?

(ii) Testimony

A Christian witness's testimony is an example of the Gospel's power. It consists of a recognition of our life before Christ took our minds, the moment Christ captured us, and the transformation that has taken place in our lives to the glory of Christ. A good testimony is not merely a matter of using the right words (note 1Cor. 2:1).

8. What is your testimony? When is the last time you shared it?

In a court of law, a witness is called upon to share their testimony – what they have seen and heard (Acts 4:20; 22:15). You don't always have to have the right answers to everyone's questions, but you can always have the answer to a question about your own conversion.

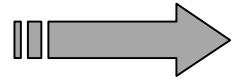
(iii) Credibility

Credibility is another way of saying *trustworthiness*.

9. What can help or hinder a witness's credibility?

10. What appeal is made in these verses: John 21:24; 2Cor. 1:12; 3Jn 12?

11. Who did Jesus say would also help us to bear witness about Him? (Jn 15:26)



Jesus told His disciples not to leave Jerusalem until they had received the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 4:33; Rom. 15:19)

GOD'S ORDAINED MEANS

12. Fill in these blanks. There appears to be three means ordained by God the spreading of the Gospel. Firstly, *p* _____ *g* (1Corinthians 1:21). Secondly, the *w* _____ *s* of the believer (Acts 1:8). Thirdly the *p* _____ *s* of believers (1Tim. 2:1-4).

13. Jesus was the ultimate witness. What can we learn from His life based on these verses that will add potency to our witness?
Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 9:29; 11:1; 22:32-

14. What instructions did Jesus give His disciples in Luke 18:1?

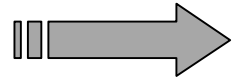
When we speak of God *ordaining* someone to come to Christ it not only includes the ordained *result*, but the ordained *circumstances* and the ordained *means*.

15. According to 2Corinthians 2:12, how are opportunities to share the Gospel created?

16. What role does Colossians 4:3 sat we have in developing opportunities for Gospel witness?

As we seek to witness we can expect opposition (1Cor. 16:9) but 1Peter 3 teaches us that our consistent, quiet, godly lives will silence our critics. As well as living well, Ephesians 3:10 says that living in Christian community (being a member of a local church) will also add great weight to our witness. Please pray that you and we will be better witnesses.

Amen.



Study 14

THE

EVANGELISM

COMMANDED IN

THE NEW TESTAMENT

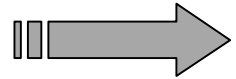
And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.

Acts 10:42

The Greek word for “Good News” is *evangel*. When we share the Good News, we are *evangelising*. Theologians debate what “successful” evangelism looks like. Is it when the Gospel has been adequately presented or is it when the Gospel has been received? If someone rejects the Gospel, have they been evangelised?

1. Note Ephesians 4:11. Why has God given “evangelists” to the Church? (Note Eph. 4:12)

When we think of modern evangelists, we might think of stadiums, crusades, rallies, soap-boxes, or white suits.



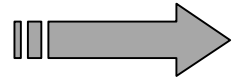
The first church was clearly very evangelistic. They were able to preach the Gospel throughout their whole world (Colossians 1:5-6) to every creature under heaven (Colossians 1:23). The early church achieved this without the aid of Television, Radio, Internet, or evangelistic stadium crusades.

2. Considering the huge evangelistic success of the first church, how many evangelists are named in the New Testament?

3. How would you classify someone as “evangelised”?

4. Is it important for believers to evangelise? Why?/
Why not?





5. What was Paul's prayer in Philemon 6 and what did he say would result?

Some theologians suggest that evangelism is only done when *the evangelised are now evangelising*. In this view, it means that evangelism involves *teaching*. The Gospel must be *understood* before it can be received (Matthew 13:19).

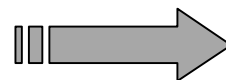
6. What did Jesus have to do to His disciples in order for them to understand? (Luke 24:35)

7. Why is this work of Christ in a person necessary according to 2Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:21? (Note also Romans 8:7; 1Cor. 2:12, 14)

8. Knowing the natural condition of people's hearts and minds, what role might prayer play in our evangelism? (1Tim 2:1-2)

9. How else can we increase our effectiveness in evangelism?

10. Read the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4:3-9. What do we learn about evangelism from this parable?



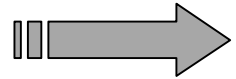
RESOURCES FOR EVANGELISM

Apart from the planting of new churches, one of the most effective methods of evangelism is Scripture distribution. This is why the Gideons are one of the most effective missionary agencies on the planet. Giving away Bibles or Bible portions is one of the chief resources of those doing evangelism. Unlike a few decades ago where Christian workers only had paper tracts to distribute, today we have CDs, DVDs, MP3s, the internet, bluetooth transfers, YouTube, FaceBook and many other forms of technology with which to communicate the Gospel. Even with all of these methods available to us, I still like to use serviettes to do some doodling.

11. How does 1Corinthians 3:6 encourage our evangelistic efforts?
-

May God help us to be an evangelistic church community.

Amen.



Study 15

THE

DISCIPLESHIP

THE NEW TESTAMENT

COMMANDS

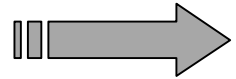
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

Matthew 28:19

To be a Christian is to be a *disciple*. A disciple is a *learner* and a *follower*. To be a disciple is to be continually following the Holy Spirit's leading and always learning new insights. A disciple is always growing.

THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Discipleship is impossible without the power of the Holy Spirit. In recent times this expression ('*the power of the Holy Spirit*') has come to mean something quite different to how it is used in the New Testament. Some Television evangelists and Hyper-Pentecostals have taught that *the power of the Holy Spirit* equates to people experiencing shaking, vibrating, rolling, hysterical laughing, or falling down. It is true that people can react in strange ways to the Holy Spirit coming upon them, but this is not the purpose or point of the power of the Holy Spirit.

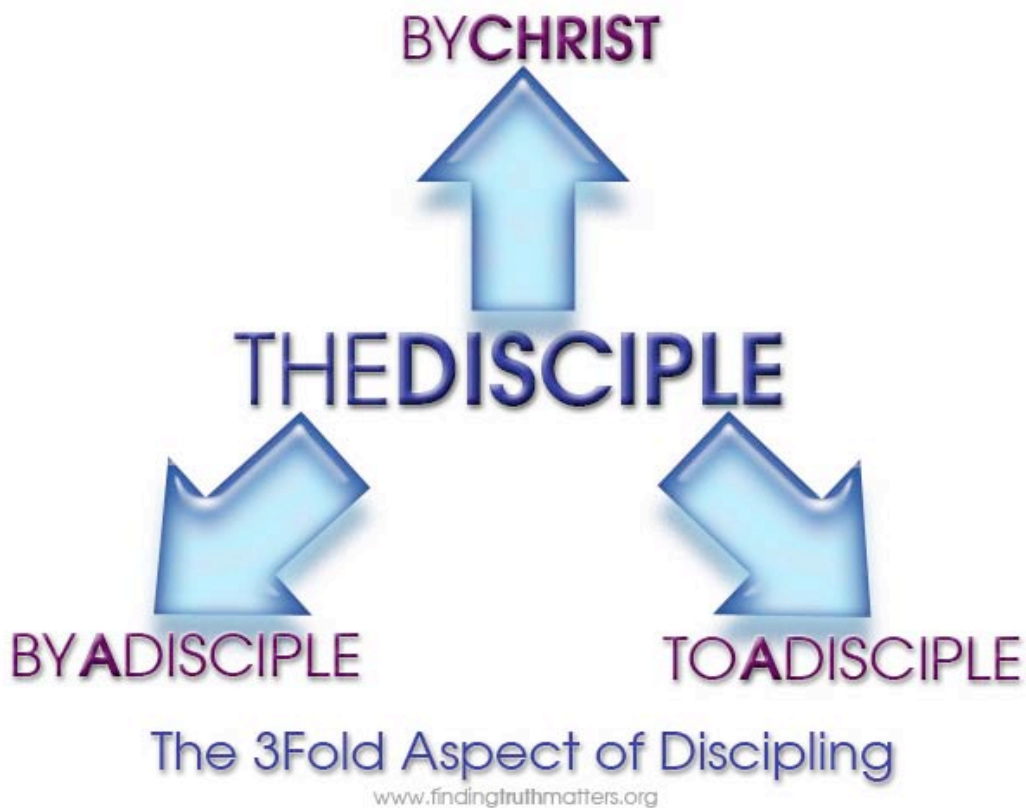


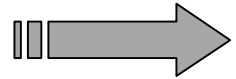
1. In what way does Romans 8:14 describe the role of the Holy Spirit in a believer's discipleship?

2. What did Jesus command His disciples not to do and why in Acts 1:8?

Disciple-making is at the heart of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20. We can see three aspects to Christian Discipleship:

- i. We are Disciples of Christ
- ii. We are Discipling for Christ
- iii. We are being Discipled for Christ





i. OUR DISCIPLESHIP BY CHRIST

3. Would you like to be pastored directly by Jesus Christ? If He was your pastor, what difference would it have on your spiritual growth?

4. How does Colossian 2:6 paint the goal of our discipleship journey?

Discipleship requires growth, change, adjustment, and stretching. It means learning, unlearning, habit-forming, and breaking habits.

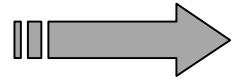
5. If this is what Discipleship involves, what can the believer expect their Discipleship journey to be like?

6. How does 2Corinthians 3:18 describe what Christ does to His followers?

Does your praying reflect your willingness to be discipled by Christ?

ii. OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO DISCIPLE

The Great Commission contains the command for believers to “*make disciples*”. We have the example of Christ with His disciples to see what disciple-making looks like. Jesus spent time in everyday circumstances with those He was discipling. *Discipleship is not merely a religious activity!* His disciples could observe Jesus in ordinary circumstances and see that Jesus was walking with God when He was preaching, praying, playing, eating, washing, sleeping, or reading. For us to disciple others we must let them see into our lives and recognise Christ in us in everything we do.



7. What was the Apostle Paul's discipleship goal as stated in Colossians 1:28?

8. What serious obligation does the disciple-maker bear according to Romans 2:21?

9. What is the link between the requirements for church leadership and discipleship-making? (1Timothy 3:2)

10. According to 2Timothy 2:2 what priority is disciple-making for church leaders?

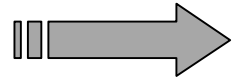
iii. BEING DISCIPLED BY A DISCIPLE-MAKER

11. How does God use other believers to make us into stronger disciples based on Ephesians 4:11-16?

12. What kind of attitude is required by someone in order to be discipled by another believer?

May God help us all to be growing disciples of Jesus Christ as we seek to make disciples for His glory.

Amen.



Study 16

THE

MULTIPLICATION

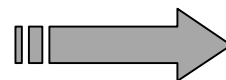
THE NEW TESTAMENT

COMMANDS

¶ *And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

Acts 6:7

The story is told of the king who challenged someone to develop a way to train his sons in the art of warfare. Eventually a man presented the king with what we now know as the game of chess. After explaining the game and its rules, the monarch was so impressed that he asked the man what his reward should be. The industrious sage almost dismissed the king's offer when he said, "*Rice*". "*Rice?*" questioned the king. "*Yes*" responded the sly inventor. "*How much?*" "*Just one grain on the first square of the chess board, then two on the second and then four on the third, eight on the fourth and so on until every square on the whole chessboard has its full equivalent.*" Just as the king was about to order his administrators to grant this inventor's request (thinking that the inventor was a simpleton for merely demanding a scoop of rice) one of his advisors said to him- "*It's too much your majesty! Don't do it!*" "*Too much?*" balked the king. Apparently if the king had granted the inventor's request it would have bankrupted the nation and required enough rice to cover India to the depth of a foot!



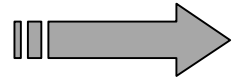
This story highlights the miracle of multiplication. All too often we want to *add* to the church, when it seems that God's intention is for the church to grow by *multiplication*. Note Leviticus 26:9; Deuteronomy 7:13.

1. What was it that led to the multiplication of the early church as described in Acts 9:31?

2. What is the possible relationship between the multiplication of the church and the way the Word of God is preached based on Acts 12:24?

If everyone in our church was able to fulfil a commitment to reach one person for Christ and connect them into our church each year, our church would double every year! But consider this possibility...

Year 1	1 person reaches one person for Christ	Total = 2 believers
Year 2	These 2 believers reach one each for Christ	Total = 4 believers
Year 3	These 4 believers reach one each for Christ	Total = 8 believers
Year 4	These 8 believers reach one each for Christ	Total = 16 believers
Year 5	These 16 believers reach one each for Christ	Total = 32 believers
Year 6	These 32 believers reach one each for Christ	Total = 64 believers
Year 7	These 64 believers reach one each for Christ	Total = 128 believers
Year 8	These 128 believers reach one each for Christ	Total = 256 believers
Year 9	These 256 believers reach one each for Christ	Total = 512 believers
Year 10	These 512 believers reach one each for Christ	Total = 1024 believers
Year 20	These believers reach one each for Christ...	Total = 1,048,576
Year 32	These believers reach one each for Christ...	Total = 4,294,967,296
Year 33	These believers reach one each for Christ...	Total = 8,589,934,592



3. Is “soul-winning” something all believers can learn to do?

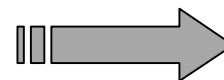
4. According to Revelation 7:9 which word indicates that God looks to the church to *multiply* exponentially?

5. Based on 1Timothy 2:4 who does God desire to be saved?

6. What challenges would confront people in our church if we began to experience multiplication?

7. In what way is 2Timothy 2:2 a multiplication verse?

Some believers might object to the “pressure” of being part of the multiplication of the church. They might claim that God isn’t interested in numbers or they might claim that evangelism isn’t their gift. But believers shouldn’t feel “pressure” to reach people for Christ as if God was asking us to do something unreasonable. We shouldn’t view the Great Commission through the eyes of the *‘Prodigal son’s older brother’*! Instead, we should feel the weight of this sober charge and ask God for His help. We should ask God to lead us to the right people and give us the right words to share with them in the right way at the right time. We should pray that God speaks to their hearts and prepares them to accept the Gospel. We should pray that God transforms and renews their minds by the power of the Holy Spirit. We should ask the God enables us to live lives that stand out from the crowd and provoke questions in the minds of observers.



8. What does 1Peter 3:15 say we should be prepared to do and why?
-

THERE'S POWER IN NUMBERS

Why did Jesus send his first disciples out 2 by 2 to preach the Gospel? It seems that when the Gospel is presented in numbers it carries more weight. It also seems that when the Gospel is presented within a Gospel community it carries greater weight. A large gathering of dedicated, sincere, passionate believers meeting together to adore Christ in worship and make Him known through preaching, creates a strong atmosphere of faith and a compelling argument for sinners to become believers.

9. How can the members of this Bible Study group help each other to multiply our individual and collective evangelistic impact?
-

10. Compare the Original Commission (Genesis 1:28) with the Great Commission. What spiritual application is in the Original Commission that is similar to the Great Commission?
-

11. What was the desire of God expressed in Genesis 28:3 that could only be fulfilled by the New Covenant?
-

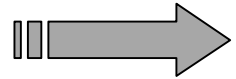
MULTIPLICATION & ADVERSITY

History reveals that the times of the Church's greatest periods of multiplication have been during the times of its greatest adversity.

12. How is this principle observed in Exodus 1:12? (Note Ex. 1:20)
-

We shouldn't be surprised to find that we face adversity when we make a commitment to be a part of God's Kingdom multiplication blessing.

Amen.



PART 5

THE READING COMMANDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

¶ *Jesus said, “Really? Didn’t you ever read...”*

Matthew 12:3a

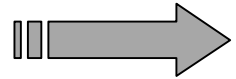
The ability to read text is one of the greatest gifts God has given mankind. When the Creator chose a means to communicate with mankind, He chose to do so with *text*. Even in a digital, special effects age, *text* still prevails. Reading and religion have always been connected. Every major religion has at least one “Holy Book”. But Christianity’s Holy Book is unique. Unlike other books, it is not merely a collection of man-made ideas about God and religion, but rather: *God’s special revelation about Himself, His plan, and His story*. Yet the Bible itself encourages reading other literature to expand our knowledge, hone our wisdom, improve our gifts, develop our vocabulary and explore the glory of God.

Some people scoff at reading. They claim that the best lessons cannot be learned from a book. But Christians should not talk this way. We, of all people, should have a deep appreciation for God’s gift to mankind of the ability to read.

“I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book.”

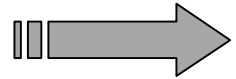
Groucho Marx

Let’s explore what the New Testament says about *reading, memorising, meditating on, and studying* God’s Word.



FURTHER READING

“How To Read The Bible For All It’s Worth”, Gordon Fee & Douglas Stuart, Zondervan.



Study 17

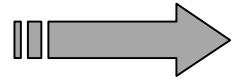
THE READING COMMANDED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

¶ *Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it..."*

Exodus 17:14a

Reading is one of the hallmarks of humanity. It is one of the abilities that make us unique among other creatures. There is a saying: "*A picture paints a thousand words.*" But this is not true. Sometimes only a thousand well-crafted words will do. Another well-worn expression is "*No words could comfort you at this time.*" But this is not true either. The right words can bring enormous comfort to the hurting. Written language is one of the most powerful means of communication we possess. Well written words can transform civilisations, change hearts, amuse the masses, enlighten the ignorant, and frustrate the opponents of freedom. And no other book has produced these responses more noticeably or better than the Bible.

1. Based on Colossians 4:16, how important was the ability to read in the early church?



2. What does Revelation 1:3 promise?

3. What Paul tell Timothy to do in 1Timothy 4:13?

4. What was John commanded to do in Revelation 14:13, and how does this reveal that God expected His people to be readers?

God expects that His people will read His Word. The Bible is comprised of 66 books written by around 40 different authors, from three different continents, over a period of about 1500 years, yet all telling the same story without any contradiction!

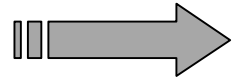
5. How does 2Timothy 3:16 claim that Scripture is different to any other book?

“When I get a little money I buy books; and if any is left I buy food and clothes.”

Desiderius Erasmus

The Bible should be read in books not bits. Reading the Word of God is an act of devotion to God. It should be done reverently, prayerfully, and regularly.

6. What does Psalm 119:11 suggest is the connection between taking the Word of God to heart and the way a person lives?



There is a very recent period in human history called “The Dark Ages”. One of the reasons this period was “dark” was because the light of Scripture was withheld from the public. It was an offence punishable by death for a layman (non-priest) to possess a copy of the Bible. As long as the Scriptures were unavailable to ordinary people, corrupt church leaders could claim God’s authority for their series of abuses and general oppression of the people. But one priest in the 1300s set in motion a chain of events that would change all this.



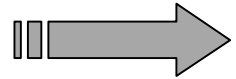
John Wyclif (variously spelt: Wycliff or Wycliffe), was the first man to produce an English Bible. He did this in 1382 from the Latin Vulgate. He also wrote many other books. He died in 1384. On May 4th 1415, the Council of Constance declared John Wyclif “a stiff-necked heretic”. They decreed that all his books be burned and that his bones be dug up and burned and for his ashes to be cast in the River Swift.

Wyclif was followed by William Tyndale who, in 1525, was the first man to translate the New Testament into English from the original Greek. He was charged with heresy in 1536 and sentenced death. He was tied to a stake, strangled, and his body burned. After Tyndale there were many, many more Christians who promoted the English Bible and its message who were burned at the stake. This is the price that has been paid to provide us with our English Bible! These martyrs shed their blood so that we could have a Bible freely available to us to read.

7. According to John 17:14, what did Jesus give the world?

8. Consider what Jesus said in Luke 24:44. What did Jesus say was the message of the Bible ?

May God help us to not only be *readers* of His Word, but also *heeders* of His Word.



9. Have you ever heard of someone receiving guidance from reading God's Word? Discuss.
-

10. In what way is taking time out to read the Bible a form of tithing our time?
-

The careful reading of other books can be a blessing to our walk with and understanding of God. But it is a wrong idea that any other book apart from the Bible is equal in its divine inspiration to the Bible. Some people claim that just as God used Paul to write inspired literature to the world in the first century, in exactly the same way He is using other authors today. Some authors even claim that "God told" them to write their book. They present their books as if God merely dictated them.

11. In what way can we apply the principle of 1Thessalonians 5:21 to such claims?
-

The great English preacher, John Wesley, encouraged his assistant preachers to read widely. He saw this as invaluable in their ability to stretch their minds, increase their vocabulary and develop an increased means by which they could converse with people from a variety of backgrounds. My literary hero, Frank William Boreham, was one of the greatest Christian writers of all time. The secret to his giftedness was the amount of reading he did. It is my pastoral goal that we all become familiar with the story of God's revelation to mankind by the daily reading of the Bible so that we have eventually read it from cover to cover.

Then Jesus said to them, "Have you never read the Scriptures?"

Matthew 21:42a

Amen.

