

What
JESUS
Commanded

Twenty Study Lessons

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What JESUS Commanded

The teaching of Jesus Christ has shaped human history. Most of Western Society's Laws have drawn their inspiration from this set of teachings which we will refer to as *the commands of Christ*. These commands have become so ingrained in our society that they are now figures of speech: *Do unto others...Turn the other cheek...Go the extra mile...* are all citations from the commands that Christ gave.

Today the word "Christian" is loosely applied to buildings, businesses, certain ethnic races, a set of moral guidelines, and even a type of music. Yet this use of the word is often without any reference to what it's founder taught. It should be beneficial to discover exactly what

Jesus Christ taught and how this understanding can shape our lives.

This series is designed to take you through the New Testament. In this first module, we explore what Christ taught in the Beatitudes and His sermons and discover how these commands form the basis for Christian commitment and behaviour. These studies are designed to promote authentic Christ honouring lives. That is, by understanding and considering the application of Christ's commands to His followers, it is expected that you will be able to live lives that are more authentically "Christian".

Each study lesson is assessed through group discussion questions, multiple-choice questions, and written responses. This assessment should help you to live the kind of life Christ expects of His followers.

Dr. Andrew Corbett

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What JESUS Commanded

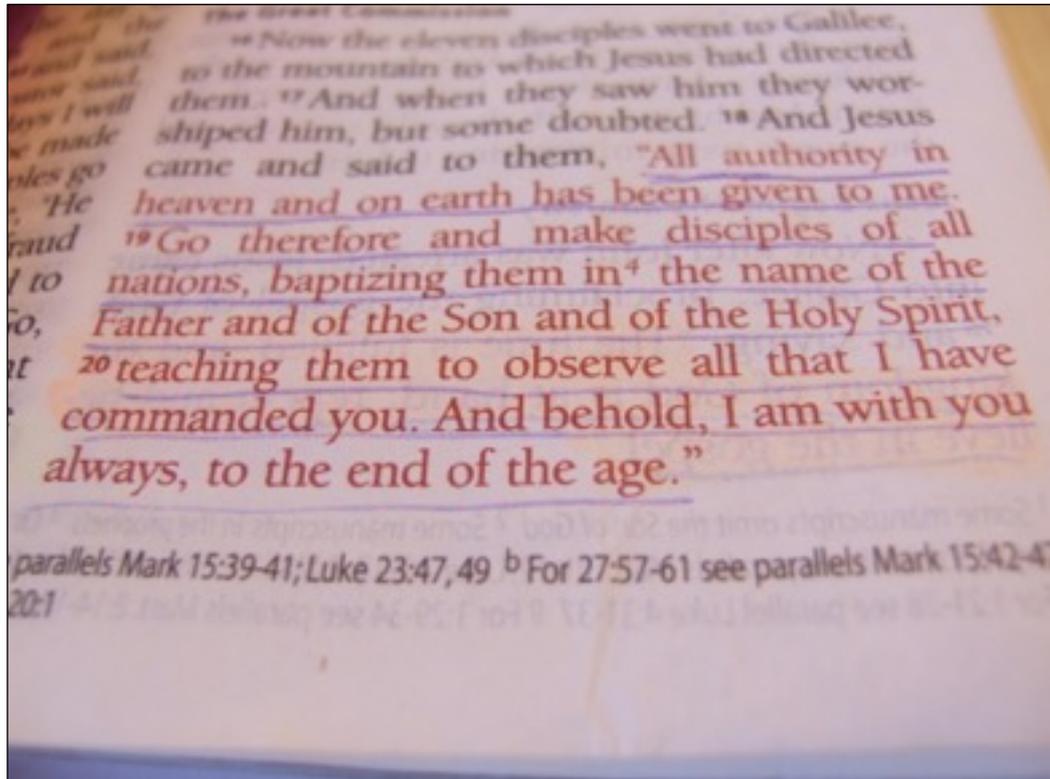
For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:17

After a while, most Christians figure out that the Old Testament is about *Law* and the New Testament is about *Grace*. Some Christians then go on to assume that *Grace* means “no commandments!” (since there is no “Law” in the New Testament). Under the Old Covenant there were 10 Commandments, but how many are there in the New? The number might surprise you! (A clue: *it’s more than 500!*) But even more shocking is the discovery that not only did Jesus Christ issue commandments for His followers – but how many commandments He gave us. And what He commanded he meant to be taught, studied and obeyed...

teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:20



“To drive the point home I often put this challenge: I do not 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 OMISSION, page 61

Study 1

What it means to follow JESUS' commands

And whoever does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

Matthew 10:38

You can't be born a Christian. You can't simply call yourself a Christian. You don't become a Christian because you attend a Church or wear a cross. A Christian is one who *follows* Jesus Christ.

1. What *does* it mean to follow Christ?

2. What did Jesus mean when He said that His followers must "*take up his cross*"? (Note Matthew 16:24)

One of the first things that a would-be follower of Christ must do is clearly taught in the New Testament and yet it was the one thing that Christ could not do!

3. In preparing people to be ready to follow Christ, what was the preliminary message of John Baptist? (Matthew 3:2)

4. How does this compare with Christ's first message to all those who would follow Him? (Matthew 4:17)

Some people feel they could never change or "clean up their act" enough in order to begin following Christ. These people haven't yet apprehended God's grace.

5. How does Acts 11:18 and 2Timothy 2:25 correct this idea that repentance is merely human effort?

Repentance is impossible without the grace of God. Grace from God enables a person to repent. To receive the grace of God begins with recognition of our need for it.

6. How do we begin to follow Christ? (Romans 10:13; Acts 2:21)

You may feel that you are *not* right with God, but want to be. You don't have to clean up your act or become a better person- you just have to acknowledge your need for God and His forgiveness. You are just one prayer away from beginning to have peace with God!

The Baptism JESUS commanded

Repentance leading to conversion as a follower of Christ is an utterly internal work. That is, when you become a follower of Christ you change on the inside- the way you think, the way you feel, your desires, your dreams, your goals, and hopes. But there is an *outward* sign of what has taken place on

the inside: *water baptism*.

7. Note Matthew 3:11. Why did John the Baptist say that he was baptising people?

8. Therefore, noting Matthew 3:13-14, why was John reluctant to baptise Jesus? Circle the correct answers-

- (a) Because he had already baptised Jesus
- (b) Because Jesus was so sinful he was beyond repentance
- (c) Because Jesus was born and lived without sin, He had no need of repenting or baptising
- (d) Because Jesus was his second cousin he felt it was a conflict of interest to baptise him.

9. What reason did Jesus give John for being baptised? (Matthew 3:15)

We are to live like Jesus. If you read a statement like that and think that it means we must all become tunic-wearing, wandering, preachers, then we miss the point. We must become like Jesus who was perfectly obedient to His Father. Jesus did His father's will. So must we.

Baptism involved the total immersion of the baptised into water. It is also somewhat symbolic, for example-



1.It is a picture of being *washed* from sin

2.It is an analogy of our *death* and burial

3.It is an enactment of our *resurrection*.

Washed. Death. Resurrection.

The Apostle, Paul, enlightens us about water baptism in Romans 6.

10. Note what Paul says in Romans 6:1-4 about the significance of water baptism. Why did he think water baptism was important based on this passage?

He makes the assumption that everyone in the church have been water baptised. It was reasonable to assume this because water baptism was the first public demonstration of a person's commitment to follow Christ- and it still is. If you are yet to be water baptised since following Christ, this is your next significant step of public obedience in your walk with Christ.

Following Christ's commands and water baptism...

1. Baptism speaks of repentance. 2. Christ was baptised as an example to His followers. 3. Christ commanded that His followers be baptised. 4. It was assumed that every believer in the early church was water baptised. 5. Water baptism is a picture of washing, death and resurrection. 6. Water baptism does not save the

Study 2

The Beatitudes
JESUS
commanded

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

Matthew 5:1-2

Read Matthew 5 –7. These three chapters of the New Testament form the basis for what we refer to as the “Beatitudes”. It is probably the most quoted section of the entire Bible and the most well-known section of all that Christ taught.

This study will help you to understand the basis for being a Christ-follower and how this demands an inner change in us.



The Beatitudes is regarded as the most profound sermon ever preached. The gracious words uttered by Christ have amazed and awed some of the greatest minds that have ever lived. The beauty of the simple, yet profound, statements uttered by Christ have been quoted more than any other words ever written or spoken. Even people unfamiliar with Scripture, yet living in the remnants of a culture that had its laws and values shaped by the Bible are familiar with “the Golden Rule”, “the meek shall inherit the earth” and so on.

But at the time when Christ uttered these words many, if not most, of His hearers would have been outraged by what He said! They may well have considered Christ’s words out of place, insensitive, and totally inappropriate. It’s difficult today for us to imagine the passion with which these words were spoken and the highly charged emotional response in which they were received. Perhaps if we can understand the context in which they were given we may derive an higher respect for Christ and His teaching.



Historians tell us that shortly before Christ preached this sermon, the Romans had just massacred many in the surrounding villages. Philip Yancey discusses this in his book- *“The Jesus I Never Knew!”* and says that this sermon was perhaps the most courageous

message ever given.

1. What do you think Yancey means?

(Knowing some of the context to this Sermon on the Mount, how does this change your understanding of what Christ said?)

The Blessings JESUS revealed

Christ introduced His sermon on the mount with a series of statements about the benefits of heeding His teaching. It’s worth noting that Christ spoke blessings over His hearers before He commenced preaching. This in itself is a powerful lesson for how *we* should preach to others.

2. In order to receive the full blessing of following Christ’s teaching, Jesus commences by stating the most necessary thing needed in order to begin to follow Him. What did Jesus say this was in Matthew 5:3?

3. What did Jesus say would be the benefit of such a humbling? (Matt. 5:3)

4. Each of the four Gospels are written to different audiences. Match the Gospel to its originally intended audience -

Matthew ___	___ Written to Romans who were impressed with power and action. This is why its opening chapter is crammed with many accounts of Christ's miracles and totally skips His genealogy since this didn't impress Romans. It also paints a very favourable picture of Roman centurions and their interaction with Christ
Mark ___	___ Written to Hebrews (Israelites) familiar with Old Testament language, especially the Prophecies about the coming Messiah. This is why it contains many phrases like, " <i>This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet</i> ". This Gospel's emphasis was Jesus as the Prophesied Messiah of the Jews.
Luke ___	___ Written to Greeks who were impressed with cleverness. This Gospel is organised around 7 miracles, 7 "I AM" statements, and 7 sermons of Christ. It emphasises the deity of Christ.
John ___	___ Written to Gentiles who were impressed with spirituality and mysticism. This is why this Gospel emphasises the prayerfulness of Christ and the mysticism surrounding Him such as fulfilled prophecies, miracles, supernatural wisdom, and prophetic insights.

One of the traits of Matthew's Gospel is his use of the word "heaven" instead of "God". While other Gospel writers refer to the *Kingdom of God*, Matthew refers to the same concept as the *Kingdom of Heaven*.

5. What type of “mourning” might Jesus have been referring to in Matthew 5:4?

6. Note Matthew 5:5. Select which words best define “meek”-

- (a) Weak and pathetic
- (b) Humble and gentle
- (c) Indecisive and uncertain

The promise of “*inherit the earth*” may better be rendered as “*inherit the Land*” (note Exodus 32:13). At the time Christ uttered these amazing words, there was a group of Hebrews know as *Zealots* who believed that Israel could only fully inherit the promise of possessing their Land once again by using bloodshed against their enemies.

7. How can we satisfy our hunger and thirst for righteousness? (Matt. 5:6)

8. Even though Matthew 5:7 is considered a global remedy for world-peace, how might it have originally angered many of its original audience?

9. ~~Spoken originally to people who were used to conforming to external rules,~~ how would what Christ said in Matthew 5:9 been so radical?

10. Is Jesus implying in Matthew 5:10 that His followers will probably be persecuted? Is it possible to follow Christ and never be persecuted?

11. What does Christ seem to imply will happen to all those who choose to follow Him based on Matthew 5:11-12?

Christ calls people to follow and obey Him. He commences this by talking about the blessings that result from doing so. We notice though, that He makes it clear that the purpose of following Him is not the blessings, but the desperate recognition of our true condition before God and our dire need to be made right with Him. But the blessings! Oh the wonder that God not only allows us to follow Him – but blesses us for doing so!

Amen.

Study 3

The Influence
JESUS
commanded

I once had a young man who had been attending church for a few weeks come to my home to see me. He said that he had enjoyed coming to church but had some questions he needed answered before he could commit his life to Christ. He had

felt some pressure from his girlfriend who was trying to stop him becoming “religious”. “If I become a Christian does anyone have to know?” “What do you mean?” I asked. “Would I have to witness if I became a Christian?” he added. I answered his question and he thanked me and left. I never saw him again.

1. Why did Jesus say that His followers were to be like “salt” in Matt. 5:13?

2. How does Matthew 5:16 reveal what Christ meant by “light” in Matthew 5:14-15 and how does this affect the way we follow Christ?

Followers of Christ are called to care. Throughout the past few hundred years Christians like John Newton, William Wilberforce, William Booth and Dietrich Bonhoeffer have become aware that Christ-followers have a lot to offer their societies by correcting injustices, helping the poor, providing health care and schooling. None of these men forsook the preaching of the Gospel and none of them thought that they could save anyone merely by their efforts.

3. According to Matthew 5:16, what will cause people to glorify God?

4. Although we are saved by grace through faith in Christ (Eph. 2:8-9), what does Ephesians 2:10 say we saved *for*?

5. What does Peter say will be the result when people see our “good deeds/works”? (1Peter 2:12)

The Law JESUS commanded

When the New Testament speaks of “Law” it usually refers to the Law that God gave through Moses to Israel. This is generally called “the Law of Moses” (eg. Luke 2:22; John 7:23). The Law of Moses had components: *Food Laws*, *Civil Laws*, *Ceremonial Laws* and *Moral Laws*.

6. Match the law with the type of Law it is-

(i) Food Law

— Ex. 22:9 For every breach of trust, whether it is for an ox, for a donkey, for a sheep, for a cloak, or for any kind of lost thing, of which one says, ‘This is it,’ the case of both parties shall come before God. The one whom God condemns shall pay double to his neighbour.

(ii) Civil Law

— Ex. 20:17 “You shall not covet your neighbour’s house; you shall not covet your neighbour’s wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that *is* your neighbour’s.”

(iii) Ceremonial Law ___ Lev. 11:5 And the rock badger, because it chews the cud but does not part the hoof, is unclean to you.

(iv) Moral Law ___ Ex. 29:18 and burn the whole ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the LORD. It is a pleasing aroma, a food offering* to the LORD.

7. How does Hebrews 10:1 describe the Food/Civil/Ceremonial laws?

The Moral law is best thought of as the Ten Commandments and those aspects of Moses which expand on them. For example, while the Ten Commandments state that murder is wrong, it goes to explain when a killing should be regarded as accidental (“manslaughter”) and when a killing should be regarded as a violation of the Moral law. Similarly, while the Ten Commandments state that adultery (sexual activity without marriage) is wrong, it expands this to detail what kinds of sexual activity are inappropriate (this includes homosexuality, incest, bestiality, and paedophilia).

8. Select the correct answer that shows us that the Moral law of the Law has been carried over into the New Testament -

- a) This was probably the aspect the Law of Moses that Jesus said He was *not* abolishing
- b) All of the Moral laws of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament (Do not murder. Do not lie. Do not steal. Do not commit idolatry. Do not Covet. Honour your Father and Mother. Do not commit sexual sin. All except the law of the Sabbath which was a type of the rest to be had in Christ [Hebrews 4])
- c) This is the law that Paul referred to in Romans 2 as being written on each of our consciences, therefore it is still applicable today
- d) All of the above.

9. What role does this law have in our salvation? (Note Romans 7)

10. Based on Matthew 5:19-20, how did Christ feel about the Moral law?

Following Christ means that we become keepers of the Moral law – not because we are trying to earn our salvation but - because our salvation has caused His Law to be written on our hearts (Jer. 31:33).

Amen.

The Love for Others

JESUS

commanded

“You have heard it said...” taught Jesus, *“But I say unto you...”* He added. After having just finished teaching that the Law was good and that He was not abolishing any aspect of it, but was rather going to fulfil it, He now establishes something that most Christians never realise.



The Love for brothers
JESUS
commanded

Love is the hallmark of the follower of Christ. But Christ raises the standards for how we are to love. In many religions there are laws about not doing harm to people as a way of being loving. For example, Confucius taught, “*What you do not wish upon yourself, extend not to others.*” But Christ took this from being a *passive* statement to being an *active* statement as we will see soon.

Having just taught that His standards are *higher* than the Old Covenant Law, Jesus now reveals the principle behind all of God’s Laws: *love*. It would be wrong to think that we either live by Law or by Love (note what Jesus said in Matthew 5:19-20).

1. In First Corinthians 9:21 what kind of Law does the Apostle Paul say that he is under?

2. According to Galatians 6:2 how does Paul say that believers can fulfil this Law? (Note Romans 13:10 and Galatians 5:14)

3. Read Matthew 5:21-22. The Law of Moses prohibited murder, without dismissing this, what did Jesus teach was His standard for how we *feel* toward those who aggravate us?

Consider the following excerpt from an article by Dan Kimball-

Six Perceptions of the Unchurched, by Dan Kimball

Every now and then, we experience an epiphany of some sort that drastically changes our life's course. For me, it's an extremely vivid memory of what happened when I took the time to step outside the busyness of ministry and listened to some college students from what was known to be one of the more anti-Christian campuses in California. It was these "pagan" students who gave me such incredible hope for the Church.

I was leading a young adults ministry we had recently started at the church I was on staff with at the time, and occasionally during worship gatherings, we showed man-on-the-street video interviews to set up the sermon. For an upcoming message series on evangelism, we decided to go to this college campus to interview students and hear firsthand their thoughts about Christianity. We asked two questions: "What do you think of when you hear the name 'Jesus'?" and "What do you think of when you hear the word 'Christian'?"

When they answered the first question, the students smiled and their eyes lit up. We heard comments of admiration such as, "Jesus is beautiful," "He is a wise man, like a shaman or a guru," "He came to liberate women." One girl even said, "He was enlightened. I'm on my way to becoming Christian."

What an incredible experience! These students on the very campus I kept hearing was so "pagan" talked about Jesus with great passion. However, when we asked the second question, the mood shifted. We heard things like, "Christians and the Church have messed things up," and "The Church took the teachings of Jesus and turned them into dogmatic rules." One guy said, "Christians don't apply the message of love that Jesus gave," then jokingly added, "They all should be taken out back and shot."

This seems to highlight the incredible damage done to the Name and Cause of Christ when His followers don't keep these teachings of Jesus.

4. How did Jesus say people would be able to identify His followers? (Jn. 13:35)

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5. According to John 13:34, how are Christ's followers to particularly love each other?
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The Love for marriage JESUS commanded

God invented passion, romance, and intimacy. He is not against these things. But He has ordained the boundaries for their appropriate expression: *marriage*. This is because such physical intimacy with another person is the highest expression of physical love between two people and therefore

demands the highest physical commitment between two people: *marriage*. Not only this, marriage is an picture of God. The union that a husband and wife experience is a type of the unity within the Trinity between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God takes His gift of marriage very seriously!

6. How does Hebrews 13:4 emphasise just how seriously God regards marriage and wants us to do the same?

Some might argue, *What would Jesus know about marriage? He was single!*

7. How does Ephesians 5:22-32 refer to Christ?



Christ teaches that marriage is not something to be entered into lightly. Under the Old Covenant, a man could divorce his wife for almost any reason. This readiness to divorce completely undermined God's intention for marriage. Marriage is meant to be a life-long union between a man and a woman who are prepared to work through difficulties and challenges under God.

8. How did Jesus reinforce this idea of marriage in Matthew

19:3-8?

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9. We sometimes think that it is only our actions that are the evidence of sin in our lives. But Jesus commanded that we not only guard our actions. Note Matthew 5:27-28 and discover what Christ also said was sin-
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Someone has said that if living with sins forgiven, but in miserable circumstances (sickness, hardship, poverty, adversity, calamity) for 85 years without relief, seemed hard, it should be compared to the 85 million ages in the life to come that will be enjoyed in total pleasure- knowing that God will never condemn us!

10. How did Jesus reinforce this concept in Matthew 5:28-29?
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Some people are now teaching that “Hell” is not real. They argue that a loving God could never send anyone to such a place of eternal torment. Instead, they argue, “Hell” is a metaphor (a word picture) for *no longer existing*.

11. How long did Jesus say the torment in Hell would last for in Matthew 25:41? (Note why God created Hell based on this same verse.)
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12. According to Matthew 5:31-32 what is one of the grounds for divorce, and what are the consequences of divorcing?

The Love for honesty
JESUS
commanded

Followers of Christ represent Him in the way they speak. We are to speak like Christ in respect to how we handle the truth, speak of others, and express our feelings.

13. How does James 3:2 describe the person who guards their mouth? (Note Eph. 4:29)

14. How does James 5:12 reiterate what Christ said in Matthew 5:33-37?

15. Which aspect of the way you speak requires the most attention to conform it to these commands of Christ?

*Father, help me to love, to speak, and to feel in ways that honour Christ and bless my family, friends, colleagues, church-family and community.
Amen.*

The Love for enemies JESUS commanded

But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

Matthew 5:44

We have seen that Christ taught a higher “law” than the Old Covenant Law. Christ’s Law is the *Law of Love*. Many religious teachers had taught that people should love, but the most outstanding characteristic of Christ’s teaching, which makes His teaching unique, is how He commanded enemies to be loved. Not only did Christ teach this, He lived it.

EYE FOR AN EYE

The Law of Moses (Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21) regarding an “*eye for an eye*” was intended to be a warning *not* to hurt someone else. It challenged the Israelites to be considerate of others and to know that if they carelessly hurt someone, they deserved to be hurt in a similar way. But over time, the Pharisees

had interpreted these passages as *a right to take revenge*. That's why Jesus said, "You have heard that it was *said*..."

1. How did Jesus interpret correctly the original Law of Moses in Matthew 5:38-39, and then lift it to a higher standard? Choose the correct answer-
 - a) By teaching that we are not to be door-mats for people to walk over us and we are therefore right to take revenge on those who hurt us.
 - b) By teaching that revenge could only be carried out in His Name after pronouncing the wrath of God upon our enemies.
 - c) By teaching that we should not seek to harm anyone, even if they have deliberately harmed us.

2. How would a reading of Leviticus 19:18 have showed the Pharisees that even the Law of Moses did not agree with their interpretation of "*an eye for an eye*"?

Perhaps the first and most natural response we feel when ever someone hurts us, is to hurt them. Very shortly after I became a Christian, in my high school years, I was confronted in the school yard with someone who had heard that I had become a Christian. This person had a reputation as the school bully. He had come to test my new found religion. He did this by mocking my commitment to Christianity, to the supporting jeers of those watching. He then pushed me and drew no response. Then with a clenched fist he punched my face, knocking me to the ground. As I lay on the asphalt looking around at the laughter of my 'friends', I looked up at the little bully who had just struck me. I felt no desire for revenge or even malice toward him. In fact, I was struck by a great sense of pity and sorrow for this lost soul. What struck me so hard was the thought that in all my

school days no one had ever dared to hit me (due to my size and physique I was never a target for bullies) and that if this had happened just days before I probably would have responded by thumping the living daylights out of this kid. But something had changed. I was different. My heart had changed.

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3. The Old Covenant seemed to depend upon the written law to make people good. It failed. But it looked forward to the day when the Christ would come. Based on Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:37-41; Ezekiel 36:26, what did the Bible say would happen to those who would accept Christ?

4. Consider what Christ said in Matthew 5:39 and note the list of humiliating acts that Paul lists in 2Corinthians 11:20. What is common to both verses?



For a right-handed person to strike a person on their right-cheek requires that they use the back of their hand. This was incredibly insulting. To publicly slap a person with the back of your hand was to grossly humiliate them. Thus, Christ is saying far more than just “don’t hit back”.

5. What could He have meant when He taught us to “turn the other cheek”?

- a) Even if someone humiliates us as they hurt us, we are not to do the same to them.
- b) Even though we could hurt someone and justify it with “Well they started it!”, we should not.
- c) We should relinquish our right to revenge, and demonstrate that we will not be vengeful.
- d) All of the above.

DO NOT RESIST THE ONE WHO IS EVIL

I was having a coffee with a minister some time ago when he opened up and shared about a deep hurt he had been carrying for nearly all of his life which led him into prolonged battles with depression and nagging thoughts of inferiority. As a teenage Christian in new High School he had been brought up in a home which stressed the need to obey the Bible and be a good witness. Mindful of Christ’s words in Matthew 5:38-39, this person had never retaliated to any aggravation that had come his way. But this was sorely taken advantage of when he began to be bullied and severely physically abused every day of his 7th grade year at High School. I asked him why he didn’t tell his parents or his teachers what had happened. He said that he felt that this would have been a violation of what Christ taught in Matthew 5:38-39. The result was that some forty years later he was still deeply traumatised and somewhat socially dysfunctional.

6. When Jesus said not to resist the one who does evil (Matthew 5:39) did He say that we should not *defend* either ourselves, or others, against injustice?
-

If an offence is a crime, or an act of injustice, the Scriptures do not apply the teaching of Christ to *turn the other cheek* to mean that injustice should be encouraged or not dealt with.

7. What does Romans 13:4 teach about God's expectation for those who promote injustice?
-

If you are being victimised by another, Scripture forbids us taking matters into our own hands to seek vengeance. Instead, we should cast all our cares onto the Lord (Psalm 43:1; 1Peter 5:7), report any illegal activity to the relevant authorities (Rom. 13:1-4), and work toward defending the oppressed (Psalm 72:4; Prov. 31:9; and perhaps, James 1:27).

Jesus modelled what He taught about not seeking revenge and enduring humiliation.

8. Read the prophecy about Christ in Isaiah 50:6 and record what it predicted about how Christ would respond to His enemies-
-

9. Have you ever applied the *principle* of Matthew 5:40? If so, describe-
-



In the days that Jesus spoke these words, Roman soldiers frequently forced civilians to carry their gear (their cloak and any other items). This generally would have produced hatred from the Jews towards the Romans. But Christ's teaching about loving your enemies rather than despising them really hit home when He told His Jewish audience to not only cooperate with their Roman oppressors, but to *willingly* cooperate - and then demonstrate that loving willingness by doing more than asked!

10. Select the option that best fits what Christ is saying in Matthew 5:41-
- a) if someone we don't like asks us for a favour we are allowed to refuse them.
 - b) if someone who has been unkind to us asks us to help them we can remind them in Jesus' Name that they were unkind to us and now they would reap what they've have sown and not help them.
 - c) if someone with some authority over us (employer, parent, teacher, police, government) demands something of us we comply with their request to the letter of the law and no more.
 - d) if someone we like asks us to help them we should do all we can to help as long as it doesn't inconvenience us.
 - e) none of the above.

11. Consider Matthew 5:42. Speculate how our society would regard Christians if we all applied that verse-

12. Read Matthew 5:43-47. If you were to apply these verses to your life, how would you have to change from the way you behave now?

It seems that Matthew 5:48 is a statement by Christ about good you have to be to be perfect: *as good as God!* Of course this is impossible for any person to be that perfect. But, at the very least Christ has given all who would follow Him an understanding of what the goal looks like: *to be like God.* May God grant us the heart, the will, and the ability to become all He wants us to be and to completely obey Him in the process.

Amen.

Study 6

The Love for the needy
JESUS
commanded

1. What is the similar message of Christ found in these verses: Matthew 5:12; 5:46; 6:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 18; 10:42?

Life matters, teaches Jesus, because one day we will all stand before God and account for how we have lived. Christ teaches that on this Day of Judgment God will reward or punish for all eternity based on what we do now in this life. We have already seen that the criteria God uses to judge a person is how they treat others, especially their enemies! Now we will see that Christ taught that how we

responded to the needs around us is a major part in how God will deal with us for eternity.

2. When Christ taught about being “rewarded in heaven”, could He have meant that we ‘earn’ our salvation from sin and adoption by God based on how we live?

It appears that God’s judgment is in two stages. The first stage is the identification of those who are His (Revelation 20:11-13). This is the revealing of all those who are in the “Book of Life”. The second stage seems to be degrees of rewards or punishment based on what we have done (also Revelation 20:11-13). In Christ’s beatitudes He seems to be using the concept of ‘rewards’ in the sense of the second phase of God’s Judgment.

3. What is being described in 2Corinthians 5:10?

4. Christ seems to make a really big issue about *Who* we are to impress. How is this reinforced in Matthew 6:1?

5. Does Matthew 6:2-4 contradict Matthew 5:16? Explain.

Prayer

Jesus addresses ‘public’ praying in Matthew 6:5. Praying in public is not about impressing those around you with how “spiritual” you are. It’s also not a competition- *he who prays the longest prayers wins!*

-
6. What kind of praying is the “best” kind of praying according to Jesus?
(Matthew 6:6)

Read Matthew 6:7. Notice what Jesus is commanding here-

- (i) **Do not use mindless phrases over and over again in your praying.**

(I was once in a prayer meeting where some very nervous young man used the expression “*Father Lord God*” in every sentence of his five minute prayer! This is mindless repetition.)

- (ii) **Do not pray like you don’t know God** (“*as the Gentiles do*”).

Christians are called to know the will of God and pray it! When we are uncertain about what God’s will we can be certain that His will is to pray for wisdom!

- (iii) **Do not pray long public prayers- one maybe two sentences is sufficient.** (“*for they think they will be heard for their many words*”)

Praying is not preaching.

The Disciples' Prayer

Perhaps the most famous prayer in the Bible is the one in Matthew 6:9-13.

7. Match the corresponding word with the concept of praying that Jesus taught in this passage-

Matthew 6: __	Protection :
Matthew 6: __	Forgiveness :
Matthew 6: __	Surrender and dedication :
Matthew 6: __	Provision :
Matthew 6: __	Direction :

8. According to Matthew 6:14-15, when will God forgive us?

9. Did Jesus teach that *fasting* would be an optional discipline for His followers based on Matthew 6:16-18? Explain. And, how would the type of fasting that Jesus described differ what the type of fasting that was going on in His day?

Amen.

Study 7

Handling Money The Way
JESUS
commanded

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.”

Matthew 6:19

Jesus had more to say about money and its use than He had to say about hell! Money is generally something that represents our life. We exchange money for parts of our life: *our time and effort*. What we do with it says an awful lot about us. As we look at this vital topic of what Jesus taught about money and the way it should be handled we will be looking at what might be one of the most important aspects of how we live. The way we handled money will either be a great source of blessing or pain for us.

It beckons and woos us. It tantalizes and seduces us. It sucks us into its grasp and wreaks havoc in our lives. And we still deny its sinister power.

Bill Hybels, *Honest To God*, page 153

A MATTER OF FOCUS

Money is power. It is a power that can seduce, blind, and deceive.

1. Note what the Scriptures say is the root of all kinds of evil based on 1Timothy 6:10- (select one)
 - (a) Money
 - (b) Pride
 - (c) The love of money



Christ warned against being seduced by love for money especially where it becomes our primary focus (the thing we live for). Where we are besotted with the pursuit of money, the Bible refers to it as “greed”.

2. What is the last of the Ten Commandments? (Exodus 20) Describe the connection between this commandment and greed.

3. What does Colossians 3:5 call “covetousness” or “greed”? What are we to do with it based on this verse?

While we live in a world that demands the use of money, and rewards fame and effort with it, we are not to make it our focus. Money must serve us rather than the other way around!

What’s fascinating is that as our financial needs are supplied, our appetite for money tends to increase rather than diminish.

Bill Hybels, page 154

A MATTER OF THE HEART

Christ taught that what we do with money reveals what is really in our hearts (Luke 12:34). The love of money has the power to grip a heart.

4. What did Christ teach was a way to ensure that money did not rule our hearts? (Mark 10:21 and note Luke 19:8)

5. What instructions did Paul ask Timothy to pass on to those who were rich? (Note 1 Timothy 6:18)

6. What does Psalm 62:10 warn us about?

While we all need money, it's vitally important that we are not driven by a lust for it. Generosity seems to be the antidote to covetousness and greed. Whenever we are reluctant to share or give it should perhaps sound an alarm that we need to check the condition of our hearts.



7. Note Ecclesiastes 5:10.

8. What did John the Baptist tell soldiers in Luke 3:14? How should we apply this to our lives?

9. Read Luke 16:14 and note why the Pharisees were so opposed to Christ's teaching about money (note verse 13 as well)-

10. What characteristic is necessary for anyone who desires to be a leader in the church according to 1Timothy 3:3?

MONEY AS A BLESSING

While money can result in great misery for those who are consumed by it, it can also be a great blessing. We need to be careful not to assume that those who are rich are the ones who are consumed by money. It could well be that those who become rich have done so because they are not ruled by it! And, on the other hand, those who are poor *may* idolise money. Levels of wealth are not necessarily the indicator of how much money is loved.

11. What does Ecclesiastes 10:19 claim money can do?

Many people have an attitude that says, "All I need is enough money"

to put food on my table.” Well, that is actually a selfish way to think. Imagine if you were in the position to put food on the tables of countless families.

Brian Houston, *You Need More Money*, page 17

Brian Houston notes in his book (*You Need More Money*) that money can be a blessing in the following ways-

- *It says to land, “I can own you.”*
- *Money says to vision, “I can fulfil you.”*
- *Money says to buildings, “I can build you”*
- *Money says to things, “I can buy you.”*
- *Money says to a missionary, “I can support you.”*
- *Money says to the poverty-stricken, “I can feed you.”*
- *Money says to opportunity, “I can accept you.”*



Money should work for us rather than us working for it. But if we get ourselves into unreasonable debt we position ourselves to be servants of money. A sad, but typical, story is of the young person who gets their first job and borrows to buy their first car, a 1978 Toyota. They are barely able to make the monthly repayments but as soon as they get a pay rise they trade-up their car for a 1984 Mitsubishi and even consequently even larger monthly repayments. After struggling for months then years to try and repay their car loan, they get another pay rise and trade-up again for a 1992 Holden. Rather than using their money wisely, debt has deceptively crept in to choke what could have been a huge blessing.

Contrast this with the refugee who arrived with little grasp of English. To support his small family, his wife and daughter, he set up a roadside fruit and vegetable stall. Soon he was making \$24,000 a year. With that money he saved \$16,000 and used the other \$8,000 to accommodate and feed his family in a one room apartment. After doing this for four years, he went to a Bank Manager with a business plan and a deposit of \$64,000 to borrow the money needed to buy a warehouse and establish a fruit and vegetable distribution process. Within just a few years he was making \$1,000,000 a year.

12. At what point in this story could this refugee be described as “rich”? Explain.

Earn as much as you can. Save as much as you can. Give as much as you can.

John Wesley

13. How did Christ say money could be used in Luke 16:9?

In Luke 16:10-12, Christ indicates that money is a symbol of responsibility. How we use it indicates how we would handle increased responsibility. We are told by Christ to use money wisely to both be a blessing to the poor and an influence to the ungodly.

14. Why was the wise character of Ecclesiastes 9:15 soon forgotten?

We should therefore avoid “bad” debt (money borrowed for expenses rather than for investments). We should save money.

14. What does Christ seem to be commending about how money should at least be handled in Matthew 25:27?

15. What did Christ say we should do in Matthew 23:23?

16. Christ-followers should be generous. What promise did Christ give His followers about the benefits of generosity? (Luke 6:38)

17. Why was the servant of Matthew 25:21 commended and what would he have had to have done in order to earn this commendation?

May God give us the wisdom to handle money wisely and use it for His glory, the benefit of others and dignity that we deserve. May we know when enough is enough and when to go for more.

Amen.

Study 8

The Golden Rule
JESUS
commanded

(Matthew 7:1-12)

Christianity is not only about following Jesus it's also about becoming *like* Jesus. This involves us changing and growing. As we each become like Christ we will reflect Him in different ways. Becoming like Christ doesn't mean we have to wander around in a seamless robe and talk with fishermen for the rest of our lives! It means that we pursue those things that Christ pursued and imitate His heart toward others.

1. According to John 5:30 what was Christ pursuing?

2. What are some of the things that hinder us from pursuing the same thing?

Christ now completes His Sermon on the Mount with some of the most practical instructions the follower of Christ will ever receive. Christian maturity cannot be measured without reference to *these* commands of Christ.

3. Compare Matthew 7:1 and Luke 6:37. In what way does Luke 6:37 bring balance to Matthew 7:1?

4. Based on Matthew 7:1-2 select the correct answer from the choices below-
- (a) No one should ever judge anyone, including those in courts of Law
 - (b) Only make a judgment when you have all the facts and would be prepared to be judged in the same way
 - (c) Even when people are committing sin which is injuring people and being covered up, they shouldn't be condemned



5. Based on Matthew 7:3-4, what kind of attitude would be necessary for us to have to be made aware of any logs in our eyes?

6. How might we best remove the “logs” from our own eyes?

The Jews had a word to describe someone committing what they considered to be the worst kind of sin: “a dog” (note Matthew 15:26; Philippians 3:2; Revelation 22:15). Jesus used this word in the same way. It seems to have described someone who had little regard for God’s Law and would much rather be ruled by their various appetites. The heart condition of these people is so hard toward the things of God that anything to with God or His Word is mocked.

7. What are we told *not* to do in Matthew 7:6?

Jesus taught something never understood before. While Israel had related to God as Lord, Creator, Law-Giver, Judge, they had not known Him as *Father*. Jesus, the eternal Son of God, wanted people to know that His Father could be their Father. He wanted people to come closer to God as their Heavenly Father. But Christ went further than merely describing God as Father, He described what kind of Father He was.

8. If we really believed Matthew 7:7-8, how different do you think we would live?

9. Based on Matthew 7:9-11 what do think Jesus wanted us to know about God? How does this knowledge change how you regard God?

THE GOLDEN RULE

Perhaps if it was possible to live a “minimal” Christian life then Matthew 7:12 would be a contender for that minimum standard.

10. In what way is Matthew 7:12 a positive command rather than a negative command?

11. Describe three ways you could implement this verse tomorrow-

(i) _____

(ii) _____

(iii) _____

Amen.

Study 9

The Obedience
JESUS
commanded

Keeping the commands of Christ without ever actually becoming born-again will not save anyone! That is, just because someone lives a “good” life doesn’t make them a Christian. Because, when someone becomes a Christian, God takes out their heart of stone and gives them a new heart (Ezek. 11:19; 36:26) where He writes His laws (Hebrews 8:10). One of the proofs that someone is a Christian is that they keep the Laws of God because they *want* to keep them.

1. Based on Hebrews 5:9, why is obedience to Christ necessary?

2. What are the consequences of not obeying Christ according to Romans 2:8?

When we share God's Word with others who have never turned to Christ, we are often confronted with resistance from people.

3. According to Matthew 7:13-14 did Jesus expect most people to turn to God?

4. If someone is prepared to accept Christ but not prepared to allow Christ to change their behaviour, should we water-down our Gospel to make it more "seeker-friendly"? Discuss.

4. Is Christianity easy? How do we reconcile Matthew 7:14 with Matthew 11:30?

FALSE PROPHETS

A prophet is someone who speaks on behalf of God. While James warns us not to presume to be teachers of God's Word, because there is greater accountability for teachers (James 3:1), the accountability for prophets is even greater.

5. Note Deuteronomy 13:5 (and 18:20). What does this tell us about how accountable people claiming to God's prophets should be held?

The ministry of the prophet is the only specifically stated as belong to both the Old and New Covenants. In the Old Covenant the prophet was also regarded as an “intercessor” (one who prayed for others and communed with God in prayer). In the New Covenant the prophet is described as someone who also *encourages* believers. Ephesians 2:20 says that Christ builds His Church upon the foundation of Prophets and Apostles. In one sense this refers to the foundation of Scripture given to us by the Old Testament Prophets and the New Testament Apostles, but there is also a sense of this being an ongoing building program where each generation is given its own apostles and prophets by Christ to the Church.

6. Why is it sometimes hard to quickly identify a false prophet according to Matthew 7:15?

There is a difference between someone who thinks they have heard from God and are wrong, and someone who simply falsely declares something as being from God. One of the gifts of the Spirit mentioned in First Corinthians 12 is prophecy. This gift will be done away with once “*that which is perfect has come*” (the Physical Resurrection at the culmination of time). Until then, the Bible says we *prophecy in part*. This means that we can sense what God is saying at times only in part (not fully). We may at times get this wrong. But it doesn’t mean that we are *false*.

7. How did Jesus say we could identify a “false” prophet? (Matthew 7:16-20)

DEPART FROM ME!

There is coming a day when we will stand before God and be judged. This first judgment is whether we will be with the Lord for eternity, or whether we will be separated away from Him eternally. It is this Judgment that Jesus now refers to. Christ links obedience to His commands with eternal consequences.

8. How does Jesus link obedience to Him with eternal judgment? (Matt. 7:21)
-

We can sometimes think that everyone who performs miracles in Jesus' name must be very holy. But this apparent gift has little to do with a person's holiness and everything to do with God's grace. Miracles and prophecies can come still flow out of someone's life who once walked with God but now no longer does.

9. How is this confirmed by Matthew 7:22?
-

It is possible to be doing things for Christ without ever knowing Him. But even worse still is to be doing things for Christ and not be known by Him! Just as in a healthy marriage, intimacy, or knowledge of a person, comes when feelings, hurts, fears, disappointments, triumphs, dreams, ideas and needs are shared with each other. When we share at that level with another person they get to *know* us.

10. How does this explain what Christ said in Matthew 7:23?
-

11. Based on what Christ said in Matthew 7:24-27 how should we follow Christ?
-

Amen.

The Faith JESUS commanded

And Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God.

Mark 11:22

The Jewish people did not have a concept of “faith” in God. In fact the word doesn’t appear in the Old Testament. What does appear is *faithfulness*. To the Hebrew, you *demonstrated* faith.

1. How does James reflect this Hebrew understanding of “faith” in James 2:17?

2. Is the faith mentioned in Romans 3:28 the same as the faith mentioned by James in James 2:17? (That is, do Paul and James have the same concept of faith?)

- (a) No. It was well known that James and Paul disagreed about faith and that this is one of the greatest contradictions in the Bible.
- (b) Yes. James and Paul have the same concept of faith. Paul emphasises the trust and rest that results from faith in God, while James emphasises the obedience that results from faith in God.
- (c) Yes and no. James and Paul were fairly vague about what faith was. Neither of them thought faith was very important though.

3. Why is it important for our relationship with God to have faith in God according to Romans 5:1?

4. Is Hebrews 11:6 just describing the faith that saved us? Discuss and explain.

Jesus Christ spoke of the necessity for faith in Him when He said, “*Believe in God. Believe also in Me.*” (John 14:1) To believe is not just to *agree that something is true*, it is also to have a change of convictions based on the *trust* being put in someone. Paul describes faith as a “mystery” (1Tim. 3:9). Perhaps this is because it is something God requires of us *and* gives to us. We are told to “have faith” (Mark 11:22) but that this faith is actually given to us as a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8).

5. What does 2Corinthians 13:5 encourage us to do?

-
6. What did Paul expect to result from believers' faith in Christ? (Romans 16:26)
-

FAITH & GRACE

The Bible connects faith to God's grace. It is by God's grace that miracles happen. Jesus nearly always associated the miracles He did with someone's faith. Perhaps you need a miracle? The question you must settle is not whether God *will* do it for you, but: *Can* God do it for you?

7. How does the response of the father in Mark 9:24 encourage us to depend upon God even more even if we do settle this question?
-
-

8. Conversely, how does Matthew 13:58 stress the importance of having faith in Christ?
-
-

9. Why do the words of Christ in Matthew 19:26 give us good reason to have faith in God?
-

Christ rebuked people who claimed to follow Him but didn't have faith in God to meet their needs (Matthew 6:30). He later rebuked His disciples for not having faith that He would honour His word and protect them (Matthew 8:26).

FAITH & ACTION

Faith is something that can be “seen” (Mat. 9:2).

10. How and why?

When someone has faith in Jesus they live differently.

11. What is the promise associated with faith in Matthew 17:20?
(Note Mat. 21:21-22)

12. How differently would you live if you had more faith in God?

Father, give me the strength to obey you and trust You. Help me to do the things You call me to do with the faith You give me to do it.

Amen.

The Preaching JESUS commanded

If you were God and you wanted to rescue the world, you probably wouldn't want a bunch of people like us carrying out your mission! But the mystery of how God has ordained people to be saved is that He has not only chosen *who* (us) to carry this out, but He has ordained *how* it is to be done. We shall see that in one sense while we are all called to be *witnesses* it is not witnessing that God has ordained as the way to deliver salvation.

1. Why did Jesus say that He came to earth based on Mark 1:38?
-

To preach means to *boldly declare, proclaim and teach the truth*. Preachers are to preach *the Gospel*. "Gospel" means *Good News*.

2. Why is the Gospel: *good news*?

Christ could have chosen to come to earth at a time when He had access to TV, Radio, Satellite broadcasting, the internet and mass publications- but He didn't. Curiously, Christ chose to not even use all of the available media of His day. He never wrote a tract. He never penned a book. He only occasionally spoke in a city, preferring instead to teach and preach publicly in the countryside.

3. Read Matthew 10:1-7. Tick which statements below are true based on this text-

- Christ told everyone and anyone to preach on His behalf
- Christ observed and then prayed about those He then called to preach
- Christ concluded every message with a recruitment appeal to be one of His preachers
- Christ modelled His preaching, called those who clearly sought to serve Him, instructed them, and 'ordained' or 'commissioned' them to preach about God's Kingdom
- Christ wasn't really clear about *why* or *what* He wanted His disciples to preach

With all the technology available to us today, the Bible's command for the Gospel to be *preached* still stands. I sometimes think of *preaching* the Gospel as the role of the infantry in advancing the Kingdom of Christ. The use of books, the internet, videos, TV, and radio for Gospel purposes, while sometimes involves preaching, is more often like 'artillery' or 'air cover' in the battle to take spiritual ground. Also, while witnessing to someone can lead to preaching, it is perhaps more like 'reconnaissance' than front-line engagement.



Charles Haddon Spurgeon was regarded as the “Prince of Preachers”. He established the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London as one of the most evangelistically successful churches of all time. In an era of general church decline, Spurgeon preached with such evangelistic zeal and consistency throughout his short career that his church grew to thousands. But he attributed the growth of his church to the combined evangelistic efforts of his congregation. He regarded everyone member of his church as a *type of evangelist*.

For Spurgeon, his church had “sniper evangelists”, “hunting dog evangelists”, “bait evangelists” who each played a role in leading people to Christ. One day Spurgeon was talking with one of his deacons when suddenly his deacon dashed off midway through their conversation. Later that day, Spurgeon asked the deacon why he had left so suddenly. The deacon replied that he spied a lady in anguish in the balcony. He had rushed to her side and posed the question: “*Is all well with your soul?*” This question led to the man leading this lady to Christ. Spurgeon preached, his congregation prayed. Spurgeon preached, his congregation led people to Christ.

4. According to 2Corinthians 4:5 what should the subject of our preaching be?

5. Preaching is to be accompanied by *teaching*. Some preach to entertain and call it *teaching*. What did Paul say was the goal of preaching and teaching in Colossians 1:28?

In Acts 8:4 it describes the early church going everywhere “preaching the word”. While this may have involved the public declaration of the Good News, the original Greek word is not the word generally used for preaching (*kerusso*) but the word *evangelizzo*. The early church had preachers but it had far more evangelisers!

6. Based on Romans 10:14, why is preaching so important?
-

In Romans 16:25, Paul says that it is the preaching of the Gospel that *strengthens* and *establishes* believers. That is one of the reasons why attending church where the Word is both preached and taught is so important to our walk with the Lord.

7. All Christians are called to be witnesses, but based on 1Corinthians 9:14, are all Christians commanded to be ‘preachers’?
-

Evangelising is a team effort. The role of the preacher is extremely important. But the role of the Body of Christ is just as important. Good preaching is made up of not just the efforts of the preacher (“preaching-evangelism”), but the intensity of the worship to prepare the hearts of listeners for the Word (“worship-evangelism”), the role of the congregation to invite people to church (“invitational evangelism”), the level of attendance to participate in the preaching event (“attendance-evangelism”), the level of prayer for souls to be saved, lives healed, disciples strengthened (“prayer-evangelism”), and the role of givers to resource the proclamation of the Gospel (“giving-evangelism”, see Rom. 12:8).

8. What was one of Christ’s last commands to His disciples? (Mark 16:15)
-

Father God, please help us to partner together to preach your Gospel so that You are glorified and Your Kingdom is extended.

Amen.

Study 12

The Kingdom Living
JESUS
commanded

The “Kingdom of God” was *the* subject of Christ’s preaching and the only topic that He commanded His disciples to preach. It constitutes the main topic of what the New Testament records as Christ’s teaching. Christ’s original audience had built up certain expectations of what they thought God was about to do that affected how they understood “the Kingdom of God”. These Jews expected their “messiah” (*‘promised saviour’*) to be a military ruler who would conquer the Romans and once again make Israel a world-power. The Old Testament *seemed* to support this idea.

1. What expectations of the Messiah might the prophecy of Isaiah 9:6-7 have given?

But Jesus presented a radically different concept about the Kingdom of God.

2. How does Christ's statement in Luke 17:21 give a different understanding about the Kingdom of God than what the Jews expected?

3. How did Jesus say a person must enter the Kingdom of God?
(Luke 18:17)

Entering the Kingdom of God is a matter of eternal life or death! The greatest thing you can do with your life is to enter the Kingdom of God! The greatest thing you can do with your life is to help others enter the Kingdom of God! The greatest thing you can do with your life is to represent the King of the Kingdom to those outside of the Kingdom of God.

4. How important did Jesus say entering the Kingdom was? (Mark 9:47)

5. What priority did Jesus give His followers about the Kingdom of God, and what benefits did He include in this? (Matthew 6:33)

6. Why did Jesus say it could be difficult for some to enter the Kingdom of God? (Matthew 19:24;)

The Kingdom of God, Jesus said, was the place of peace with God where those who enter it have been forgiven by God. This then demands that people realise their need for God's forgiveness in order to enter the Kingdom of God.

7. How does this explain Matthew 21:31 and Mark 12:34?

8. What did Jesus say was necessary before entering the Kingdom of God- that is, what was necessary to *see* the Kingdom of God let alone *enter* it? (John 3:3)

9. According to 1Corinthians 6:9, who will *not* be able to enter the Kingdom of God? (Note also Galatians 5:21)

We cannot enter the Kingdom of God because of what we eat or drink (for example, taking *Holy Communion*), or what we don't eat or drink (you are not saved by fasting or abstinence of alcohol) (Romans 14:17).

Jesus taught that the hallmark of the Kingdom of God was the miraculous. If God has not truly *done* miracles in the past then Christianity is false and pointless. If God cannot *do* miracles, then Christianity is just an idea and a moral code. If God *does* not do miracles then Christianity is powerless to change lives, restore the lost, heal the broken, deliver the oppressed.

10. How is the Kingdom of God described in 1Corinthians 4:20? (Note Luke 11:20)



The Kingdom of God is where God reigns. Does He reign in your life? When He rules our hearts we obey His Word *and* the promptings of His Spirit (note Romans 8:14). And when we enter His Kingdom we become His priests (Revelation 1:6; 5:10) who are led by His Spirit. We are then responsible to both represent God to people and intercede on behalf of people to God.

And the people of Israel said to Samuel, "Do not cease to cry out to the LORD our God for us, that he may save us..."

1Samuel 7:8

The Kingdom of God is represented by the church. It is the church's mission to extend the Kingdom of God on earth. We do this by leading people to Christ so that He reigns in their hearts. While the church can give itself to many worthy causes, our main cause is His Cause: *to extend the Kingdom of God on earth through the preaching of the Gospel and the establishment of Kingdom communities (called- churches)*. If someone gave me a billion dollars I would dedicate it to this Cause. In the meantime, please join with me to dedicate our existing time, talent and treasure to strive for the Kingdom of God to conquer lost souls with Christ's love.

Father, help me to enter Your Kingdom. Please conquer my heart with Your love so that I love to do Your will. Give me the ability to spread Your message of grace through Jesus so that Your Kingdom is extended in earth today. Amen.

The Religion JESUS commanded

Religion consists of rituals, ceremonies and observances. In one respect Jesus did not come to establish another religion, He came to reveal God and how we can know peace with God. Christ was very critical of the Pharisees who had invented many religious practices.

1. Christ called “religion” *traditions*. What did Christ have to say about this to the Pharisees in Matthew 15:3, 6?

2. Paul the apostle described “religion” as *works* (or “law”). What did Paul say that *works* could not do? (Romans 3:20)

3. How did the writer to the Hebrews describe religious works? (Hebrews 6:1; 9:14)

4. Jesus had some stern words for religious leaders in Matthew 23:3. Based on this verse what does Jesus expect of His followers?



The religion that Jesus condemned was hypocritical, oppressive, and guilt-ridden. In Matthew 23:4 Jesus rebukes the Jewish religious leaders for imposing religious burdens on people.

5. Based on this verse (Mat. 23:4) what did Jesus say religious leaders *should* have been doing for people? (What insights does this give us for what Christ might expect from His leaders?)

Religion that promotes the idea that someone is better than someone else because they are religious is obnoxious to Christ (Matthew 23:5). I once heard an American TV Preacher boast that he frequently experienced the blessing of God when travelling. Despite booking economy-class *because he was a man of God, he trusted God to upgrade him to First Class* every time he checked in for a flight.

6. How might Matthew 23:6 challenge this particular preacher's expectations about being upgraded in plane seating because he is a pastor?

Some, particularly the religious, think that God wants people to be religious. Others, who have similar ideas, regard *all* religions as good and acceptable God. They regard God as being at the top of a mountain and religions as being like the many paths that lead to the top of that mountain. But this is not what the Bible teaches.



7. What did Jesus assert in John 14:6 that counters the idea that all religions lead to God? (Note Acts 4:12)

8. Rather than religion being used to belittle people and boss them around, what did Christ command His followers to do in Matthew 23:11? (Note verse 12)

But the New



Testament

doesn't just condemn religion- it begins to redefine it!

9. Note what James describes as "bad" religion in James 1:26-

10. What does he define as "good" religion in James 1:27?

11. Some Christians regard all forms of religious ritual as bad. For example, some Christians claim that tithing is merely being "religious" and therefore has no place in the New Testament church. But what did Christ say specifically about tithing in Matthew 23:23 and its relative importance?

12. Christianity is not merely about behaving, being nice, or looking good. Based on Matthew 23:27-28 what did Christ say was about people who were only concerned about how they looked to others?

13. In Matthew 23:34 Christ revealed His "leadership remedy" to prevent people from being deceived by dead religion. What is this remedy and what price might they have to pay?

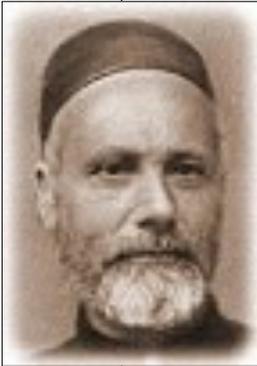
Amen.

The Endurance JESUS commanded

Following Christ takes the believer through seasons. There will be seasons of great joy and excitement associated with answered prayer, obvious blessing, clear direction from God, and great fruitfulness. But there will also be seasons where it seems like God has gone- prayers go unanswered, trials pile, doubts mount, nothing seems to work. God comes near for our good and He also “withdraws” for our good (2Chron. 32:31). Christ calls us to follow Him in a way that requires *endurance*.

1. What exciting promise did Jesus make to His followers in Matthew 10:22? (Note what He said was required for salvation because of this promise)

2. What is it in Matthew 13:21 that seems to disappoint Christ?
-



James Gilmour (1843-1891)

was a Scottish missionary to Mongolia who made lonely, heroic efforts to preach the gospel to a people steeped in Lamaist forms of Buddhism; spending summers with nomadic Mongols on the plains of Mongolia and winters with Mongols in Peking. After his wife died in 1885, he labored in eastern Mongolia until his death at age 47, after 21 years of missionary service. He knew great physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual hardship. Numerous times he wanted to quit because his calling was so difficult. But he couldn't escape the knowledge that it was the Lord's call for his life. Despite only seeing a handful of converts under his ministry throughout his years of labour and hardship he endured for Christ.

More information about the life James Gilmour can be found at-
<http://www.wholesomewords.org/missions/bgilmour.html>

3. What did Christ say was necessary for His followers to do in Luke 21:19?
-

Some Christians follow Christ according to their feelings. If they feel excited about God they read their Bible, pray, attend all church meetings. But if they lose their excitement and don't feel like serving Christ through Bible reading, praying, and worship, they backslide. But Christ wants us to *endure*.

4. According to Romans 5:3 why does God let us suffer? And according to Romans 5:4 why is this both important and good for us?
-
-



Emily Prankard Gilmour: Traveled from London, England, to Mongolia to marry James Gilmour on December 8, 1874. Learned to speak the Mongol language and willingly shared her husband's experiences and dangers. Twice she spent the summer travelling about the plains of Mongolia with him, sleeping in a tent, and enduring hardships. Physically unable to endure such a hard life, she worked among the Chinese girls in Peking, where her husband joined her in the winter to work among the Mongols who came there. They had three boys: James (Jimmie), William (Willie), and Alexander (Alec or Alick) who died as a toddler. Mrs. Gilmour died on September 19, 1885, not long after the birth of their third son.

5. Based on Romans 15:4, what produces hope in us?

6. How is God described in Romans 15:5?

7. How did Paul the apostle say that he responded to being persecuted? (1Cor. 4:12)

8. According to 1Corinthians 13:7 what is it that enables the believer to endure?

9. What qualities did apostles display to demonstrate that they were authentic servants of God based on 2Corinthians 6:4?

10. According to 2Timothy 2:12 what promise awaits those believers who endure for the Lord?

Paul wrote to Timothy to be clear-minded (sensible), to *endure suffering*, to do the work of an evangelist, and to fulfil his ministry (2Timothy 4:5).

11. According to Hebrews 12:1-3, how are we to “run with endurance” and what reason is given for doing so?
-

12. In 1Peter 2:20 we are warned that doing good to others might draw a surprising response. What might this response be and how does Peter say we should respond?
-

In the closing book of the Bible we read of Christ commending the Ephesian church for enduring against persecution, in the midst of evil, and the claims of false apostles (Rev. 2:2). But not only had the Ephesian church endured, they had endured without growing weary (Rev. 2:3). May God grant us endurance in following and serving Him so that we too do not grow weary in the things that we should be passionate about for Christ.

13. What things should we be more passionate about in serving and following Christ without growing weary?
-

The call to endure in the teachings of Christ reveals that following Christ can be tough. Temptation to sin, persecution, distraction, reluctance to sacrifice, hesitance to be discipled or disciplined, lack of encouragement, minimal ministry success, are all reasons to endure for Christ!

Amen.

The Fruitfulness JESUS commanded

Followers of Christ are commanded to be *fruitful*. There are eternal consequences for those who claim to follow Christ but never produce any *fruit* for Christ. Being “fruitful” is often thought of by some Christians to mean: *winning souls*.

1. According to Matthew 3:8, 10, what is the *immediate* fruit that we are to bear if we claim to have become followers of Christ?
-

Once we begin to follow Christ we are expected, to put it mildly, to bear fruit for Christ. This fruit is distinguished as “good fruit” in Matthew 7:17.

2. What are the consequences of bearing “bad fruit”? (Matthew 7:19)
-

3. Ponder Matthew 13:23. What is necessary for the follower of Christ to do in order to bear fruit?

4. What can cause the believer's fruit to fail to mature according to Luke 8:14?

5. What is necessary according to Luke 8:15 for a person to bear much fruit for Christ?

6. What did Christ say was necessary in order to bear *much fruit* based on John 12:24?

The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike!

John 4:36 New Living Translation

But what is the "fruit" being referred to by Christ? While it is possible to consider that the believer's fruit includes those won to Christ, it would be far too narrow to only think of *fruit* only as souls won to Christ.

7. If bearing fruit means more than winning souls to Christ, what might it also mean based on Colossians 1:10?

Consider the last parable of Matthew 25 as it relates to how Christ wants us to be fruitful.

And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

Titus 3:14

Good fruit equals good works. The believer who is *helpful* is therefore *fruitful*. This world would be a much darker place if it weren't for the tireless, thankless, unnoticed works of fruitful Christians! How many people appreciate that orphanages, hospitals, hospices, meals-on-wheels, schools, the RSPCA, Red Cross, were largely the initiatives of fruitful Christians?

F.W. Boreham, in his book, *The Heavenly Octave*, writing about the influence of Christ upon the world in an essay on *mercy*, says that even in a resistant society the radiance of Christian good works gradually effects an entire society for good. He notes that Christian good works may take five centuries to change the standards of behaviour for a society.

8. What did Christ say was necessary to be fruitful? (John 15:4-5)

9. What is the result of bearing fruit for God according to John 15:8?

10. What does Jesus promise in John 15:16 to those who bear fruit for Him?

11. When we walk in the Spirit, what should be the fruit of our lives based on Galatians 5:22-23?

12. In what way did Paul want the Philippians to be *fruitful*? (Phil 4:17)
-

How can we become more fruitful for God? Perhaps it begins with the *desire* to be fruitful for God. Do you want your life to count for God? Do you want to live your life so that God can be most glorified? Shortly after I was married to Kim I was working for Kmart. I was also totally frustrated. I knew God had called me to be a full-time minister of God's Word, yet I felt trapped in this job that demanded long hours and left little time for me to study. One day while upstairs in the storeroom fossicking for some stock being promoted in an upcoming catalogue sale, I cried out to God- "*Have Your way in my life. If You want me to stay in this job for the rest of my life, so be it. But please Lord have Your way in my life- even if it hurts me.*" I then loaded the stock onto the conveyer-belt and pushed the GO button. As I watched the stock going down the conveyer-belt I was struck by the scene. "*Father I want You to treat me like these boxes. Send me wherever You want me to go. Do to me whatever You want.*" God has answered my prayer.

13. What does God sometimes have to do to us in order for us to become fruitful? (Note John 15 and Hebrews 12:11)
-

14. Which of the qualities listed in 2Peter 1:5-8 does the person to your left demonstrate in their life? Which of these qualities do you especially need God to help you with?
-
-

Amen.

Study 16

The Communion JESUS commanded

After one of our morning church services a returning visitor asked me whether we had any rules for who could share in our Communion service. I replied that we didn't have any "rules" but that the Bible taught that Holy Communion is available to all born-again believers who have demonstrated their commitment to Christ (usually through water baptism).

"Oh, I see" they said.

"But why do we have a Communion anyway?" their teenage son asked.

So I asked, *"If you really liked a girl, and were old enough to marry her, what kind of relationship would you have with her?"*

"We'd be boyfriend-girlfriend" he said.

"And if she really liked you and you both realised you loved each other, what would you do?"

"I'd ask her to marry me" he replied.

"What do you call that relationship?" I asked.

"Being engaged".

"Is being engaged the same as being married?" I asked.

"No, of course not!"

I went on to tell him that when we give our lives to Christ it's like becoming engaged. There's commitment, but it's not the highest commitment: *marriage is*. In a marriage there is a ceremony, a declaration, an exchange of vows, witnesses, then a celebration feast. This is like the commitment that Christ asks of His followers (refer to our first study on Water Baptism). Being water baptised is a ceremony with: a *declaration* of commitment to Christ, where the believer *vows* to follow Christ, which is *witnessed*, and then it is *celebrated* with a Communion Meal.

1. Why did Christ say that His followers should celebrate their total commitment to Him? (1Cor. 11:24-25)
-

Christianity is not about religious rituals or ceremonies but it does celebrate certain rituals and ceremonies. These ceremonial rituals have historically been referred to as *sacraments*. Webster's defines sacrament as *a religious ceremony or act of the Christian Church that is regarded as an outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual divine grace* and goes on to say "from Old French 'sacrement', from Latin 'sacramentum' 'solemn oath' (from *sacrare* 'to hallow,' from *sacer* 'sacred'), used in Christian Latin as a translation of Greek 'mysterion' 'mystery.'" Holy Communion is indeed a mystery.

2. How does 1Corinthians 11:30 show us that Holy Communion is more than just a ritual?
-
-



The origins of Holy Communion trace back to the Old Covenant's Passover.

3. How is Christ described in 1Corinthians 5:7?

Christ transferred the elements of the Passover into what we now refer to as "Communion" (1Cor. 10:16) or the "Table of the Lord" (1Cor. 10:21). The Passover had three basic elements: unleavened bread, red wine, and the Passover ("Pascal") lamb. Each element was typical (that is, *symbolically prophetic*) of Christ. In each of the Gospel accounts of Christ's last supper there is no reference made of the Passover lamb.

4. What do these elements of Communion represent (not symbolise) – (Note Matthew 26:26-28)

The unleavened bread - _____

The cup - _____

Communion does not save us- it is a celebration of what has saved us. Communion does, however, impart God's grace and the Scriptures warn us not to partake of it lightly (1Cor. 11:27).

5. How should we approach the Lord's Table according to 1Corinthians 11:28?

The Table of the Lord is a remembrance, celebration, and a declaration of God's salvation for mankind. It spans the dimensions of time by remembering the past ("do this in remembrance of Me"), celebrating the present ("as often as you drink it") and declaring the future glory of Christ ("until I come").

COMMUNION IS FELLOWSHIP

While Communion is *vertical* in the sense that it is about us and God, it is also *horizontal* because it is about us.

6. What is it that Paul says best celebrates our unity as the Body of Christ according to 1Corinthians 10:17?
-

Holy Communion is not a private affair. It is about *us* and God. Communion is a beautiful picture of the unity that Christ has made between us: *Christ, the Bread from Heaven, is eaten by each of us and then becomes the one thing we have in common.* We sometimes fail to understand that our relationship with God is expressed by our relationship with each other. In speaking of Communion, Paul says that we must discern the Lord's Body (the Church) as we eat of the bread (1Cor. 10:16; 11:29).

7. How does 1John 3:10 make this clear? (Note 1John 4:20)
-

We also sometimes fail to appreciate that it is in our fellowship with each other that we receive the grace of God (1Peter 4:10). The grace of God through another believer to us might be provision, strength, comfort, acceptance or forgiveness. This grace from God is transferred as we have "heart" fellowship with each other.

8. What did Paul that he did with the Corinthians? (2Cor. 6:11)
-

9. What did he want in return from the Corinthians? (2Cor. 7:2)
-

May God help us to have open-hearted fellowship and enriching ministry one to another as we partake of Communion.

Amen.

Study 17

The Spiritual Power
JESUS
commanded

Christianity is not about merely being “religious” or even being “good”. One of the hallmarks of authentic Christianity is spiritual power. The Scriptures warn against only having an outward form of appearing to follow God while simultaneously denying the power of God *necessary* to follow God (2Tim. 3:5) Jesus Christ doesn’t merely command us to follow Him – He commands and *empowers*, those He calls, to follow Him. No one is a Christians until they are born of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3). When Christ was with His disciples He gave them power to minister, before He left them He commanded them not to begin ministering until they received the power of the Holy Spirit to do so.

1. How is the Gospel described in Romans 1:16?

2. When Christ began His ministry shortly after His baptism, how is His return described? (Luke 4:14)

Christ wasn't just an interesting person to listen to – He was far more than just a great teacher – He was a *powerful* teacher. Christ didn't just teach the Gospel, He *demonstrated* the Gospel.

3. As Christ began His ministry, what did His audience immediately notice? (Luke 4:36, note also Luke 5:17; 6:19)
-

4. What did Christ give His original disciples (Luke 9:1) and why did He give it (Luke 9:2)?
-
-



But what the original disciples experienced from Christ was only temporary – it lasted only for the time Christ was with them. But Christ made a *promise* to these disciples that this power would *abide* with them after He had returned to His Father in heaven (Luke 24:49).

5. According to Acts 2:39, who was this promise of spiritual power also promised to?

6. What did Jesus say this spiritual power was for? (Acts 1:8)

Sharing Christ with another person is not merely an intellectual exercise. We can not just “argue” someone into accepting Christ (1Cor. 2:4).

7. According to Acts 4:33, what made the apostles’ preaching so compelling?

8. What happened when Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit’s power? (Acts 6:8)

When the apostles demonstrated the power of the Holy Spirit in Samaria, the local sorcerer was envious of their great power.

9. What was wrong with his request to these apostles as recorded in Acts 8:19? (Note the context)

We tend to think of the Holy Spirit’s power being only for the spectacular.

10. Note how these Scriptures describe what the power of the Holy Spirit does-

a) Romans 15:13 _____

b) 2Timothy 1:8 _____

c) 1Peter 1:5 _____



You can't get the power of the Holy Spirit from a book. You can't get the power of the Holy Spirit from a 'magic' prayer. You can't get the power of the Holy Spirit from a seminar. The power of the Holy Spirit can only come from the Holy Spirit! Christ taught His disciples that this required "waiting and praying". While some churches are keen to be politically powerful, it is my prayer that we will be *spiritually* powerful. I pray that we will be led by the Holy Spirit; empowered by the Holy Spirit; filled with the Holy Spirit; and baptised in the Holy Spirit. May our power be truly spiritual. We have for too long underestimated what this kind of power could achieve for Christ in this generation and for generations to come!

Amen.

Study 18

The Unity
JESUS
commanded

I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

1Corinthians 1:10

I wonder what a perfectly united Church would look like? One of the most common laments of Church leaders is the lack of unity among the Church. Ironically, one of the greatest obstacles to Church unity is Church leaders!

1. What was the theme of Christ's last prayers before His crucifixion?
(John 17:11, 21-22)
-

Unity is different to *unison*. Unity involves purpose, direction, common goals, and cooperation. Genuine *unity* incorporates *diversity* (differences). That is, you only need *unity* when you have differences but are trying to achieve the same thing.

2. How did Paul describe unity the Church in Romans 12:5? How does this show us that unity involves differences?
-



Unison is sameness. It doesn't tolerate differences. While unity demands being of the "same mind" (1Peter 3:8) it doesn't mean we have to think the same way. We can be united in Christ because we are all committed to His Cause of seeing God glorified throughout the whole earth, *but* we can approach it in different ways from different perspectives and even with different interpretations of the Bible. One of the principle ingredients of unity, then, is a gracious attitude.

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

1Peter 3:8

3. Note what Peter said was necessary for believers to be united in First Peter 3:8-
-
-

We can therefore do things differently, and even disagree with each other- *but still be united!* One of the hallmarks of mature Christianity is being able to disagree with another Christian yet still warmly fellowship with them. Unity in Christ demands agreement on the main issues of our understanding of –

- God
- The human condition
- Salvation
- Godly living



There are secondary issues that, while being important, should not divide us. But this doesn't mean we can't discuss our differences. While unity involves agreement, it demands acceptance! We shouldn't confuse agreement with acceptance. In a truly united community of believers there is some agreement but a lot of acceptance.

DON'T CONFUSE ACCEPTANCE WITH AGREEMENT. When someone in the growth process opens up and becomes vulnerable, and another person gives her honest feedback, she commonly feels persecuted and wrongfully judged. She thinks, "That criticism proves he does not truly accept me." Many people will even leave relationships because they feel unaccepted. They will say, "That church/group/counsellor is so unaccepting of people. I need to find a place where there is grace." What they are asking for, in reality, is license, which God forbids (Romans 6:15; Galatians 5:13).

"HOW PEOPLE GROW", Dr Henry Cloud, Dr John Townsend, page 156-157

4. In Ephesians 4:13 we are told that God desires unity for the Church and Ephesians 4:15 describes how this can be made possible. How would our unity be challenged or strengthened if we applied Ephesians 4:15 to our fellowship?

Unity requires acceptance of others who have different ideas and even values yet are still brothers or sisters in Christ.

5. What does Romans 14:1 and 15:7 call for between Christians and how can we do this?
-

For there to be unity there must be the building of relationships between believers. This process will inevitably lead to disagreements, offence, and tension – but it doesn't have to lead to schism, bitterness or hostility.

ONE DAY, IN A group I was leading, a woman confronted another woman about something the other woman had done. When she spoke of the problem, speaking the truth in love, the other woman responded, owned the behaviour, and they reconciled.

As I was listening, I noticed something interesting. A new member of the group was staring at them with a dumbfounded look on her face. Finally I interrupted them and asked the new member what was going on.

"I was just watching them," she said. "I have never seen that before."

"Seen what?" I asked.

"Well, she was mad at her and told her. And then they didn't get into a big fight. They just talked about it and now it is okay. I have never seen that."

The new member explained that it was the first time she had ever seen anyone bring up a problem with someone else and not seen a nasty outcome. It had been different from both sides. The way the first woman had brought up the problem was different from anything she had ever seen, and the way the second woman responded nondefensively was just as different.

Cloud & Townsend, page 140

6. How can we as a church community become more united?
-

7. According to John 17:22-23, what is at stake for the Church to be united?
-

Amen.

Study 19

The Pastoring JESUS commanded



I think most Christians who have a concept of pastoring would be shocked if they compared their expectation with what the New Testament actually prescribes to the role of a pastor. I also wonder how long it would take for the average Christian to be offended by Christ if Jesus directly pastored them?

1. Consider the New Testament's description of how Jesus pastored His twelve disciples. Is there anything that surprises you about the way Jesus pastored?

How many would really want Jesus Christ Himself to pastor them? For people who have a problem with "control" I wonder how they would handle *Jesus* as their pastor?

The modern church has a strong emphasis on the ministry of the *pastor*. It is assumed that nearly every church should have a pastor to be Biblical. During the



1800s there arose a church experiment called *Brethrenism* where they taught against the concept of a local church being led by a pastor. Instead, they claimed, the Bible prescribed the church should be led by elders without any particular elder being the leader. They considered that each of these elders were “brothers” (hence their name “Brethren”). They based this concept of church on Matthew 23:8.

2. Consider Matthew 23:8 and note its context. Is Jesus giving a statement on how churches should be structured in this passage? If so, explain. If not, explain.

The Brethren experiment is largely coming to end with many formerly Brethren churches (not to be confused with the cult- *The Exclusive Brethren*) appointing pastors and joining networks of churches.

3. Reflect on the story revealed through the pages of the Old Testament. Discuss the type of leadership that God seemed to consistently work through in the Old Testament period. What do we notice about it?

The word “pastor” does not occur in the New Testament! Only Ephesians 4:11 mentions “pastors”. There is not one church described in the New Testament as being led by a pastor! At this point the founders of Brethrenism might shout

“Amen!” But they might be disappointed to realise that the New Testament *only describes churches being led by a leader.*

4. But what kind of quality should church leaders exhibit according to 1Peter 5:1-3?

5. How did Paul want elders to lead churches based on his instructions to the Ephesian church leaders in Acts 20:28-35?

It is believed that the Ephesian church had grown to around 6,000 members by the time of Paul addressing these elders. They clearly could not have met in one location. The various congregations may have had around 100 people in them and were led by an elder. It was these elders that Paul gathered together and later sent Timothy to them to be an overseeing coordinator. This was the occasion for the writing of First and Second Timothy.



6. In First Timothy 3:1-7 what qualifications does Paul list for those who would pastor a church?

The modern day role of “pastor” is referred to in the New Testament as an “overseer”, “elder”, “shepherd”, and even “bishop” (note Titus 1:7 in various translations). An overseer, or leader, of a congregation might be gifted with any

of the ministry gifts listed in Ephesians 4:11. Therefore, Paul the Apostle pastored (led) churches; Philip the Evangelist pastored churches; Titus the prophet pastored churches; and no doubt there were teachers who pastored churches.

7. According to Ephesians 4:12-16 how is the primary role of the pastor/shepherd of a church described?

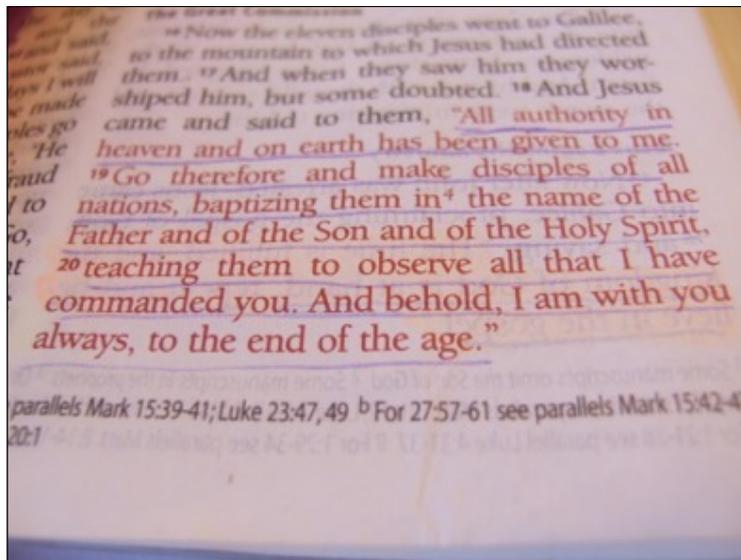
8. What characteristics does a Biblical “shepherd” have according to Jesus in John 10?

I have four children. When each of my children were around a year old they began to display their desire to grow by free-standing and taking steps. But this was a painful time for them! As they were learning to stand they fell many times and experienced pain. But as a caring parent I don't want my children to feel pain. I could have picked them up and carried them everywhere so that they would never feel the pain of falling down. But they would never have grown! Biblically, pastors are required not just to care, but *to help people grow*. And according to Ephesians 4:11-12 pastors are required to help their people to pastor. That is, the responsibility of caring within a church is not just borne by one person but by the entire church-family, and especially those in leadership. May God help us to be a pastoring church where people are both cared for and encouraged to grow.

Amen.

Study 20

The Commission JESUS commanded



What does Jesus want *us* to do? We end this series where we started: *The Great Commission*. Evangelism is the central *task* of the Great Commission but it is not *central* to the Great Commission. Christ is. The Great Commission is not just about reaching people for Christ, rather, it is about giving Christ the honour and glory that He deserves. Read Matthew 28:17-20.

1. How much of what we do according to 1Corinthians 10:31 should be about giving Christ glory? Does this mean being more or less “religious”?
-

THE GREAT COMMISSION STARTS WITH DISCIPLES

2. Can you be a Christian and not be a *disciple* of Christ? Explain.
-

A disciple is a learner. A disciple is a follower. A disciple is a servant. Being *discipled* involves being taught, being led, and being corrected.

3. How did Jesus disciple his disciples?
-

Would you have liked to have been discipled by Jesus? Explain.

The primary role for Christian discipleship rests with Christian parents (Eph. 6:4). The home of Christians is meant to be a discipleship-centre!

4. How does Hebrews 12:5-11 support this?
-

5. Note Matthew 28:18-20. Who are we commissioned to disciple?
-

Over the next few years consider how you can involve yourself with as many other Christians as possible in discipling people in Christ. Ultimately our discipling influence is commissioned to affect entire nations.

BAPTISING

While I don't think that "*making a decision for Christ*" is entirely irrelevant, it is curious that nowhere in the New Testament does it appeal to anyone to "make a decision". In fact, Scripture says that an unsaved person cannot *decide* to follow Christ because they are spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-4) and blind (2Cor. 4:4).

6. How then, according to Ephesians 2:5 are we converted to Christianity?
-

Because salvation is entirely the gift of God, there is nothing we can do to earn it or deserve it. This is why salvation is by God's grace (Ephesians 2:8-9).

7. Why then should Christians be baptised? (Note Rom. 6:4; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12; 1Peter 3:21)
-

TEACHING

The goal of Christian teaching is to make the Bible (1) known, (2) understood, and (3) applied.

8. According to 2Timothy 3:16-17, why is the Bible so special?
-

Paul wrote to Timothy that the reading of *Scripture* should be integral to the public worship service of the Church (1Tim. 4:13).

Our goal as teachers of God's Word is to make sure that we are doing 1, 2, 3. Only 2% of all Christians have ever read their Bibles through from cover to cover. At a recent youth pastors' conference a quick show of hands revealed that none of those present had read all four of the Gospels! It is my prayer that our church will be disciplined into daily readers of the Bible. It is also my prayer that the Bible teachers within our church will be able to give the supplementary backgrounds to God's Word that will enable us to understand it better. It is then my prayer that the pastors and leaders within our church will help us to *live* the teachings of the Bible.

9. What is the outstanding characteristic of the Christian who knows, understands and applies the Bible to their life? (Col. 3:14; 1John 2:5)
-

10. As our church grows in our knowledge, understanding and application of the Bible, how might we as a church change?
-

11. Similarly, what sort of impact upon our community could we likely expect if our church becomes more Biblically literate (1√, 2√, 3√)? (Note John 13:35)
-

The Great Commission should be the reason why we draw breath. We should acknowledge that we are alive for God's glory and that He was given, and will give, us everything we need to fulfil it. May God help us to become a Great Commission Community where we love, accept, affirm people and yet disciple.

Amen.

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