

**CHURCH OF NIGERIA
(ANGLICAN COMMUNION)
PROVINCE OF NIGER DELTA
DIOCESE OF EVO**

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL MANUAL FOR 2011

THEME: *FOLLOWING IN THE STEPS OF CHRIST* (1 PETER 2: 21)

DECEMBER 2010

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FOREWORD

We thank the Lord for bringing all of us into the year 2011. For in doing this, He has offered us yet another opportunity to continue in our school of discipleship as we await His return. Last year, we considered *Abounding in the work of the Lord* as our theme when we were just fresh from being created as a Diocese, and we saw the need for all of us to get involved in the *work*.

However, we are mindful of the fact that we are yet at the foundation laying stage in the life of our Diocese. We are determined to get things right. We must *follow truly in the steps of the Saviour and Master*. And as first step in this regard, we examined the theme, *following in the steps of Christ* in our maiden Discipleship conference at Woji. We are convinced that this is the path Christ wants us to thread. Therefore, we have chosen to continue in this path this 2011 as we examine the theme, *following in the steps of Christ* further. Our desire is to have Christ produce in us faithful disciples who are heaven-worthy.

The entire content and design have been thoroughly packaged by seasoned hands with a deliberate effort to improve on the first edition. We therefore have no doubt in our minds whatsoever as we commend this latest edition of our adult Sunday school manual for use in all our churches in the Diocese and beyond. And we like to use this medium to reiterate our earlier directive in our Presidential charge at our first Synod that *Adult Sunday school should be regarded as an integral part of every Sunday worship service. It should from now on take the place of the sermon at least on one Sunday in every month. On other Sundays, it could be incorporated into the service just after the day's lessons, or taken 40 minutes*

or 1 hour before the vestry prayers. Any clergy who is failing to comply with this directive should be prepared for appropriate sanctions should such come to our attention.

+Innocent, Evo

EDITORIAL

Welcome to this new edition of the adult Sunday school manual. Last year, we examined, *Abounding in the work of the Lord*. It was an attempt at taking a closer look at the day to day practical issues of life with a view to becoming more fruitful in the work of the Lord. This year, the focus is on *Following in the steps of Christ*.

That, you will recall was the theme for our maiden discipleship conference that was held at St. Nicholas, Woji last year. In these studies we are simply examining all the angles to this important theme. The aim is to make sure that no one is left behind in the church as we pursue the vision of His Lordship, the Rt. Rev. Innocent U. Ordu, Bishop of the Diocese of Evo to raise faithful disciples for the Lord in all the churches in the Diocese.

For proper sequence and ease of understanding, we have structured the outline into four different parts. The first part deals with *Fundamentals of discipleship* and it is made up of nine studies. The second part deals with *following the example of Christ in Discipleship*, with a total of twenty-five studies. The third part which is made up of four studies, focuses on some *selected studies for special events* that are suitable for use on such important days as Christmas day, children's day, Mothers' day and Fathers' day.

Part four deals with the family and has three special studies that are ideal for teaching during any special programme in the church for the family.

Finally, it is important to add that a lot of strenuous sacrifice went into these studies with fervent prayers. Great effort was also made to ensure that all meaningful suggestions and contributions were accommodated. Yet we welcome any fresh idea and constructive critique. You can reach us at ssdmevo@gmail.com.

Rev. Cephas Okarefe
Chaplain, SSDM

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

We can make no less than three distinct references to “Following Jesus Christ” from the scriptures. They, though having different purposes, require same level of response from Christians. Here are a few: “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Mt. 4:19); “...take up his cross daily, and follow Me” (Lk 9:23); “He that serves Me must follow Me” (Jon 12:26); and 1 Peter 2:21 says, “To this you were called... that you should follow in His steps”. The last reference talks about emulating Jesus’ lifestyle and attitude. It will form the basis of our studies this year. This series of studies will challenge us to aspire and strive to do what Jesus did and be what He was. We should not fall below God’s expectation. And may God bless our time together in Jesus’ name.

PART ONE – FUNDAMENTALS OF DISCIPLESHIP.

Discipleship is all about following Jesus Christ. While coming to Him in repentance is a great idea, it must not be the end. Jesus desires that all who believe in Him abide in Him on a continual basis. As great as special encounters with Him are, they are usually made solid through discipleship. This is what this segment of our studies this year is about. God shall bless our studies as we give diligence to practice what we learn.

STUDY ONE

TOPIC: *Concepts in Discipleship*, (The meaning of disciples and discipleship).

TEXT: Mt. 4:18-22; 9:9; 28:18-20

OBJECTIVES

- i) To clearly and correctly define 'disciple' and 'discipleship';
- ii) To explain the different types and classes of disciples;
- iii) To lead us to express a strong desire to disciple people or be discipled.

INTRODUCTION

Our texts show what Jesus practiced and wants us to do. It is to have sinners to repent, follow Him so He can fashion them into "instruments" to fish men and also to be with Him always. Generally, "a disciple is a person who learns to live the life his teacher lives. And gradually, he teaches others to live the life he lives". In Christendom, a disciple (of Christ) is a converted person who has chosen to believe in the teachings of Jesus and carefully patterns his life to that of Christ.

Discipleship on the other hand is the act of learning and becoming what a chosen teacher is. It is the process of creating a duplicate. It requires more than winning and instructing people in a way to follow. We need to live the life for them to see and imitate. It means learning with the purpose of obeying what is learned. It involves a deliberate choice, a definite denial and a determined obedience. It is forsaking everything to follow Christ.

STUDY GUIDE

1. From John 1:35; 9:28; Acts 20:30; John 2:2, which are the main types of disciples in scriptures?
2. "All disciples are disciplined followers," discuss. See also Jn. 8:31; 14:15; 15:8.
 - b) What attributes must serious disciples possess from above scriptures?
3. Who are disciples of Christ (Col 1:23) and how do they differ from disciples of men?
4. Is there any difference between "to have disciples" and "to make disciples"? Discuss any differences and their intricacies.
 - b) Is it necessary to first be disciples of men then unto Christ's? Then read 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; I Thes. 1:6; Heb 6:12; Eph 5:1. (What can you gain and use from: Paul and Silas, Timothy, Titus, etc; Barnabas and Paul, John Mark, etc; Moses and Joshua; Elijah and Elisha; etc?)
 - c) What challenge do we have from Judges 2:8 -12?

CONCLUSION

We are called to be God's instrument to make men leave sin and become slaves of righteousness; to leave the world and become disciples of Christ. But God's instruments are usually the first samples of God that young converts see and imitate as they grow on to directly relate with Christ as Lord.

MEMORY VERSE: Col. 1:23.

STUDY TWO

TOPIC: *Conditions for True Discipleship*

TEXT: John 12:26; Lk 14:25-33

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) To correctly explain true discipleship;
- 2) To list and explain conditions for true discipleship;
- 3) To express desire to meet conditions for true discipleship

INTRODUCTION

Discipleship is becoming a disciple. A true disciple is one who is not just a church member, warming pews and running round for his church denomination or even Jesus, but one who follows Christ daily. True discipleship may then be the act/art of helping people follow Jesus as He demands, that is, as is acceptable to Him. Our texts state Jesus' guidelines which must be followed closely to make true disciples, that is, Jesus-type disciples. In this study, try to distinguish between disciples of men, persons full of zeal but not really following Christ and those who meet His criteria for disciples. Distinguish between Mary-type and Martha-type followers (Lk. 10:38 – 42).

STUDY GUIDE

1. What is true discipleship? (John 12:26; Mt 9:9; Lk 10:38-42).
2. Read Lk 14:25-33 and discuss the following
 - a) "Large crowds were travelling with Jesus", v25 (NIV). Did Jesus take them as His disciples? Why?
 - b) "...cannot be my disciple" vs. 26, 27. Which are these criteria of true disciples that Jesus would not compromise?
 - c) Do we compromise them?
3. Discuss these three main conditions of true discipleship (Lk. 14:25 – 33) practically and apply them personally:
 - a) Unrivalled love for Christ (v26) - heart's affection;
 - b) Unceasing cross-bearing (v27) - life's conduct;
 - c) Unreserved surrender (v33) - personal possessions and our attitude toward them; cf Mt. 19:22f.**How do the above affect true discipleship?
4. Why must believers strive to become true disciples of Christ (John 15:6; Mat 7:21)?

CONCLUSION

Talking about true discipleship certainly shows that there is false discipleship. Jesus referred to this in Lk. 14:27. As we raise disciples, we need to ensure they follow Christ and do so not presumptuously or as led astray by men, but on Jesus' terms.

MEMORY VERSE: Luke 14:27

STUDY THREE

TOPIC: *Christ's Pattern for Discipleship*

TEXT: Mt 5:1, 2; Lk 11:1-4

OBJECTIVES

- i) To explain patterns of discipleship;
- ii) To explain Christ's pattern of discipleship;
- iii) To show eagerness/willingness to adopt a biblical pattern for discipleship today.

INTRODUCTION

The word pattern means—plan, model, a regular form or manner of performance; it is a good example expected to be followed by others. Christ had a pattern for discipleship which we are expected to follow. Let's compare it with ours today and change if there is a departure from His. Then we can say that we are His disciples and He is our Lord.

STUDY GUIDE

1. How did Jesus raise His disciples? See texts, Mk 3:14; 6:7
2. How did the early disciples raise their disciples? Acts 2:42-47.
3. What is Jesus' pattern for us to raise disciples today? Mt 28:18-20.
4. From the above, what practical means /patterns for biblical discipleship can we adopt profitably in our churches today? How well can the under listed fit?
 - i. Structured Sunday School and sermons based essentially on being than doing, giving than receiving,
 - ii. Small groups in and outside church,
 - iii. Team projects and structured spiritual development of church societies,
 - iv. Monitoring and stimulating personal and family devotions,
 - v. Sharing /interaction in its totality; etc.

CONCLUSION

Christ's pattern for discipleship is structured, purposeful, goal directed and sound. It consists of staying and interacting with them often, instruction, teaching, doing things for them to observe, rebuke, giving them assignment and observing them, small and large group instructions, etc. His was consistent, comprehensive and carefully done. Follow in His steps.

MEMORY VERSE: Mk 3:14.

STUDY FOUR

TOPIC: Products of *Discipleship*

TEXT: Mk 1:16 – 18; Mt 10:24, 25.

OBJECTIVES

- i) To correctly define and explain results of discipleship;
- ii) To distinguish between the different results of discipleship;
- iii) To explain different means of producing positive outcomes of discipleship;
- iv) To express willingness to adopt means.

INTRODUCTION

What our discipleship process produces is very important. What types/qualities of disciples have we been producing? In this study, we shall focus on what the disciples we are to produce should be and possess. This would challenge our desire, determination, diligence and means in the act of discipleship. It pays to give all that would produce disciples that can make heaven at last. Avoid “excess luggage” (little percentage of congregation making heaven) and wasted efforts.

STUDY GUIDE

1. What can you gather from our texts about disciples and discipleship?
2. Discuss the under-listed positive qualities implied in our texts that Jesus would love to see in all His disciples. How can each of them be produced in your congregation?
 - a) Obedience (Jn 8:31; Mt 28:19; Acts 5:29)
 - b) Repentance: deep-rooted, wholehearted, total turning away from the world and unto Jesus, with no love for the world or its things (I Jn 2:15-17; Lk 9:62)
 - c) Submission: Eph 5:21; Jn 12:24 - total yieldedness that no longer gives priority attention to self, comfort and pleasure.
 - d) Commitment: call to serve especially to win souls, Mt 10:16(10:1ff); Jn 4:34; 9:4.
 - e) Perseverance: in tribulation, prayer and service (Rom 12:11, 12; Eph 6:18).
3. What are the means we need to produce disciples with such qualities? Why?

CONCLUSION

Discipleship is a personal walk but there is corporate responsibility. We need to bear each other's burden and provide for growth. Hence, we should see the need to be our brothers' keepers. Accountability groups have helped in certain quarters. While we do corporate care, let's give diligence to individual practice under supervision. By these, our efforts would meet His expectation.

MEMORY VERSE: Mat 10:25.

(Note for teachers: Our Conclusion has answers to Question No 3a above.)

STUDIES FIVE (To be studied in two study sessions)

TOPIC: *Costs and Demands of Discipleship.*

TEXTS: Luke 9:57-62; 14:28-30.

OBJECTIVES

- i) To realize and recount the costs of following Christ and the demands it makes on believers;
- ii) To accept that costs and demands of discipleship are inevitable and essential;
- iii) To express personal readiness to bear costs and demands of discipleship.

INTRODUCTION

David's resolve is quite pertinent here (2 Sam 24:24)-"I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing". Jesus was plain and straight forward; He hid nothing about the costs and challenges on the Way to life (Mt 7:13, 14). Sadly, Jesus said, only few find it. How true it is today! Our texts tell of the reaction of certain people and the counsel of Jesus. Many have paid greatly for their faith (Heb 11:36-38); Jesus expects that we follow in His step (1 Pet 2:19-23).

(Costs refer to the price required to be paid for a thing; it is something to give up, sacrifice or suffer for what we believe in or have accepted. Demands refer to requirements; they may or may not be negative.)

STUDY GUIDE

1. What are some costs (Lk. 9:57-62) Jesus wants us to consider (Lk. 14:28-30) on deciding to follow Him? (E.g. social, financial, ego, physical, career, etc).
2. How would Jesus want our discipleship to affect our relationships? (2 Cor 6:14; texts; Eph 6:1 - 10; 5:22 - 28)
3. How would Jesus *NOT* want His disciples to respond to perceived opponents or enemies from Lk.9:51-56? "On the contrary, disciples should be positive in their attitude towards perceived enemies". Discuss (Mt.43-48; Rom.12:20-21).
4. Describe the path of obedience discipleship calls us to follow and its implications. Acts 5:29; 1 Sam 15:22.
5. What should be our attitude to the costs and demands of discipleship? Heb 11:25; 1 Pet 4:16, Rev 2:10; Phil 3:8.

CONCLUSION

In worldly terms, discipleship (Lk 9:57) is a life of constant uncertainty and insecurity. In biblical terms, it is a life of faith and total dependence on God. It produces unspeakable joy and peace within in spite of external challenges. Look unto Him at all times and in all situations.

MEMORY VERSE: Lk. 9:57.

STUDY SIX

TOPIC: Distractions *in Making Disciples*.

TEXT: 1 Kings 20:37 – 40.

OBJECTIVES

- i) To list and explain various challenges in disciple making;
- ii) To explain causes of challenges in disciple making;
- iii) To explain how to deal with the challenges.

INTRODUCTION

There are certain things that distract us from making disciples. Lack of knowledge, commitment and availability keep many a believer from discipling new converts. There are many others that militate against true and effective discipleship. We may blame them on persons or things that are even legitimate as our text tells us. Perhaps if we give diligence to reflect on the dangers of not raising true disciples, which are with us, we may have a change of attitude. Our prayer is that God would produce this needed change in the course of this study.

STUDY GUIDE

1. Why must we endeavour to disciple people? (Mat 28:20; Rom 6:5; Phil 3:10, 11; Jn 8:29, 31).
 - b) Confess what distractions you have had.
2. What are the general distractions to disciple making today? Consider them with examples under:
 - a) Time
 - b) Treasure
 - c) Teachings
 - d) Tastes
 - e) Our lifestyle
 - f) Spirit of the age
 - g) Attitudes
 - h) Other activities/programmes.

3. Why do the distractions discussed earlier successfully limit effective discipleship today? (Rom 6:16a; Mat 13:25; Col 2:20)
4. How can we tackle these distractions to ensure we have effective discipleship? (II Tim 3:16; Col 3:2; Lk 22:31, 32)

CONCLUSION

Not many born again persons would oppose the exhortation to disciple Christians. But sadly, many pay only lip service to it or are successfully distracted from doing so perhaps against their wish. We must note that God values souls of men more than every other thing. Jesus says, it's better to leave 99 that need no repentance in search of the missing one sheep. The man in our text was busy "here and there" with many other legitimate and scheduled duties when the soul in his care escaped. As terrible as his judgment was, so shall ours be on that Day if we trifle with discipleship today.

MEMORY VERSE: I Kings 20:40.

STUDY SEVEN

TOPIC: *Commitment to Discipleship*

TEXT: Ezek 34:1 – end.

OBJECTIVES

- i) To express concern for discipleship;
- ii) To realize the place of discipleship in building churches;
- iii) To confess the need to give priority attention to discipleship.

INTRODUCTION

Our text refers to shepherds who failed to care for the sheep under them. Though God was addressing them yet He was lamenting that there were no shepherds. Note God's accusations against them, that is, the problem with these shepherds and draw parallels to what obtains in your church today. It may be better if we see the sheep under us as placed in our care by God; He will judge how we treat them. Note the reasons for their failure and avoid them. Our perceptions matter much and determine our commitment. Our study also shows consequences of failure.

STUDY GUIDE

1. What are the differences between "fathers and orphanage directors"?
 - b) How do the above apply to discipleship? (John 10:11 – 13)
 - c) What are we to do? (John 21:15 -17)
2. What is a strong and sound church? (Eph 4:16; 1 Pet 2:5).
 - b) How is discipleship an inevitable means of building such a church?
3. "Crowds, believers and disciples" were associated with Jesus' ministry.
 - a) Which did He give more attention? (Luke 12:1).
 - b) Which do we give more attention in our churches? Why?
 - c) Need we differentiate the three groups in our congregations like Jesus did? Why?
 - d) What are their similarities and differences?
 - e) What implications have these for church leaders / growth? Mt 16:18; 13:24ff

CONCLUSION:

Like Jesus, do you have higher regard for the sheep in your care than your kinsmen (Lk 8:21)? Do the latter distract you from caring adequately for the sheep in your care? But a congregation is only as strong as our commitment to discipleship and perception of this divine task. What needs to change?

MEMORY VERSE: Ezek 34:10.

STUDY EIGHT

TOPIC: The proof of discipleship

TEXT: Luke 14: 25-35

INTRODUCTION

In the Greek world, a *disciple* was designated an apprentice, one who accompanied with a teacher in order to learn from him. Not apprenticeship in the sense of learning a trade and being free after 5 or 6 years to be on your own living the way you like, but adhering to the teachings of the master even when the master could have been removed in time and place. Their lives were moulded by the teachings of their master and they were ready to die for it. It was more of belonging to a school of thought and pouring out of the life of the master into his disciple, than just learning a trade. The disciple represents his master and takes over from him when he is no more.

In our Christian context, a disciple is one who follows the Lord Jesus Christ in His role as Teacher, Master and Lord. To follow means: “to be a companion with, to be in union with, to be like, and to go the same way.” This presents a picture of one having a personal relationship with Jesus so as to be able to pursue being like Him.

There is confusion today in the church because there are a lot of professing Christians who are not really following the teachings of Jesus. They are not going the same way with Jesus and do not adhere to His instructions or learn to be like Him. When one begins to follow Jesus with the intention to be like Him, does it affect his life? Are there proofs to show it? That is the focus of this study.

Study Questions

1. Who is a disciple? What is discipleship? Jn.8:31-32, 34-36; 10:27-28
2. Is there any difference between ‘born again’ experience and discipleship?
3. What are the conditions of discipleship? Discuss. Luke 14: 25-27, 33; Mat.8:19-22, 16:24-26; Phil.3:7-8.
4. Enumerate the evidence/proofs of discipleship. Mat.10:24-25a; Jn. 8:31; 13:34-35; Gal.5:22-25 (*Note: The moment the learner stops following, he ceases to be a disciple*)
5. Are there benefits when we follow the Lord Jesus as disciples? Matt. 11:28-30; Jn 12:26

Conclusion

From our discussion, we have seen that a disciple has Jesus as his Lord and Master, seeks to know Him better, is a person of love, has taken the position of a steward and has surrendered the ownership of his possessions to Jesus, continues in the Word of God no matter what happens and bears fruits. A teachable spirit is essential to true discipleship. No matter how comfortable we are with our current belief system and the revelation we are walking in, we must remain teachable. A true disciple is always seeking to know the Lord better and to know Him well. Following Jesus delivers us from struggles with the will of God and competition with the world and allows us to enjoy the rest that He gives.

STUDIES NINE (to be studied in two study sessions)

TOPIC: The Role of Leaders in Raising Faithful Disciples

OBJECTIVES: By the end of this study, we should be able to:

1. Identify some Master/disciple figures in both the OT & NT
2. Explain the roles played by the Master figures (and our roles as Ministers as well) in the lives of the disciple figures
3. Identify some instruments of discipleship in the discipleship process
4. Identify necessary steps, as well as requisite indices of faithfulness we should seek to inculcate in raising faithful disciples as leaders
5. Explain some of the shocking realities to expect as we seek to raise faithful disciples.

TEXTS: Matt.28:19-20; John 6:60-71

INTRODUCTION: Christian discipleship is a very important process in scripture that should not be ignored, especially by leaders in the church. We can see this when we examine the fact that variants of the word occurred quite frequently in scripture - more than 290 times in just the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles alone!

The word literally means a *learner* and it refers to someone who *follows* another person's teaching. The Rt. Rev. Innocent Ordu, described it as a relationship we share with Christ and which normally develops into *friendship*. One other frequently used term for it is *apprentice*. Being a disciple involves a personal attachment or *adherence* to the principles of the lead figure, and in our own case, Christ who in turn shapes the whole life (of the adherent).

In this study our chief concern is to examine the role of leaders in raising *faithful disciples* – disciples who remains even if others chose to go away as we have in our main text. Our broad aim is to challenge us to committed involvement in this vital area of Christian service, especially now that we have chosen to accord this priority attention in our Diocese in particular, and the Anglican Communion at large.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Identify the Master/Disciple figures in the following passages:
 - a. Ex.24:13; 33:11
 - b. 1 Kings19:19-21
 - c. Mk.3:13-15
 - d. 1 Tim. 1:1-2;
 - e. Tit.1:1, 4.
2. Explain the roles played by the master figures(and our roles as Ministers) in the lives of these faithful disciples(or our own disciples)
 - a. Ex. 17:9, 14; 32:17, 18; Nu.11:27-29; 13:1-2, 16-17; 27: 18-23; Deut.3: 21-22, 28; 31:7-8, 14, 23; 34:9.
 - b. 2 Kings 2:9-13

- c. Mk.9:31; Lk.11:1-2, Mt.5:1-2;10:1
 - d. Acts 16:3; 1 Tim. 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 1:1-2; 2 Tim.1:6
 - e. 2 Cor.12:17-18; Gal.2:1
 - f. What instruments of discipleship can we identify from the above? Cf. Matt. 28:19-20
3. Discuss the following necessary steps to raising faithful disciples from the cited texts of scripture:
- a. The 'finding' stage – Jn.1:43
 - b. 'Come and see' stage – Jn.1:35-39,46
 - c. 'Follow me stage' – Jn.1:43; Lk.5:27-28
 - d. The 'believing' stage – Jn. 2:11
 - e. 'Follow up' stage – Acts 15:36
 - f. Pilot stage – Matt. 10:1, 5-8; Lk.10:1, 17
 - g. Deployment stage (the do-it-yourself stage) – Matt.28:19-20; Tit.1:5
 - h. Keeping track – 2Tim.4:10

*Relationship/Friendship – Lk. 5:1-3; 29-30

*Identification of gifting/talents – 2Cor.12:18; Tit.1:5 (This is important for relevant deployment)

* These have no static position, but can be at any point in the discipleship process

*Note also that for some it is difficult to say with pin-point accuracy when stages a-d occurred, as in Timothy (Acts 16:1-4; 2Tim.1:5).

- 4. What are some of the marks of faithfulness we should look for and which we must endeavour to inculcate in those we seek to disciple? Ex.17:10, 13; 1Cor.4:2; Phil. 2:19-20; 1 Tim.4:16; 6:6, 12, 20; 2 Tim.1:13; 2:3-4; 3:14-17; Rev.2: 2-3, 13, 19; 3:10.
- 5. Can we find these marks in the disciples we identified earlier in Q1 above? Are these in the disciples we are raising today?
- 6. What shocking realities should we expect as we seek to raise faithful disciples?Mt.26:56; Jn6:66, 70; 2 Tim.4:10, 14, 16

CONCLUSION: Discipleship is a recurrent phenomenon in both the Old and New Testaments. Even though the settings and timings vary considerably, the principles are much the same. It is a major command in the NT to go and raise faithful disciples. Mission should be seen in this light. Indeed this should be the main preoccupation of the church. And if the main instruments of raising faithful disciples are **friendship**, **relationship** and **teaching**, then we need to reassess our overall strategy in the church with a view to redirecting our energies, resources and time. But are we truly willing to do this? Will the lip-service attitude ever end?

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: Platforms for participatory learning like the Sunday school; Bible studies and Home Cell fellowship meetings remains yet the best instruments for raising faithful disciples!

PART TWO
FOLLOWING THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST IN DISCIPLESHIP
STUDY TEN

TOPIC: Following Christ in His Humility.

TEXT: Phil 2:3-11

AIMS/OBJECTIVES

- i. To correctly define and explain the concept of humility;
- ii. To desire to live in all humility like Christ;
- iii. To tell how we can grow in humility.

INTRODUCTION

Humility is different from meekness; we need both. Clarke's concordance has these to say about humility: It is "lowliness of mind. It consists in a person's apprehension of his own nothingness, when compared with God; and his littleness, in comparison to some of his fellow-men;- of his depravity, Rom 12:3, frailty and inability; - and of his entire dependence on God for every good, 2 Cor. 3:5." Humility is, not lifting oneself beyond what we are while meekness is, not keeping back what belongs to us nor fighting for our rights. Then we need both to be light to a world full of arrogance and fights. Humiliation, on the other hand, is when people compel and bring us to our level or even below it. It usually follows when we fail to be humble.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What can you learn about humility from Mt. 11:29?
- b. How real then is false humility referred to in Col 2:18? Mention one danger of it from Rom 10:1 – 3.
2. In the light of Mt 11:29 and Phil 2:3, how can we grow this fruit of righteousness? (Use Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4).
3. What did humility entail for Jesus as in Phil 2:5-11; Zach 9:9?
4. How does lack of humility affect us in church, home, society and workplace? (Prov 13:10; 18:12)

CONCLUSION

We can identify what is readily confused with humility. Humility emanates from the heart when we have fully yielded to Jesus and are ready, like Jesus, to despise shame, not to count on or worry about what we are, which might be trampled upon. Absence of it is largely responsible for many conflicts even in our churches

MEMORY VERSE: Prov. 18:12.

STUDY ELEVEN

TOPIC: Following Jesus Christ in His Selfless Attitude

TEXT: Heb 12:2, 3; 2:5-15;

AIMS/OBJECTIVES

- i. To have a correct understanding of attitude as to define it correctly.
- ii. To develop a right Christian attitude
- iii. To accept to emulate Christ's selfless attitude.

INTRODUCTION

A dictionary defines attitude as a manner of feeling and behaving. John Maxwell has these to say about attitude: "I think of attitude as an inward feeling expressed by outward behaviour Your attitude colours every aspect of your life. It is like the mind's paintbrush. It is the vanguard of our true self.... There is not a single part of your current life that is not affected by your attitude. And your failure will definitely be influenced by the attitude you carry with you..." Phil 2:5 tells us to develop our attitude positively by exhorting us to have Christ's attitude, mindset.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Mention and discuss various attitudes to various things/aspects of life you have observed.
Lk 7:6 - 8; II Sam 7:2ff; 11:2 - 5; I Jn 3:17; II Sam 24:18 - 22.
- b. How would you therefore categorize attitude?
2. How do men grow their attitudes? (Prov 2:1 - 9; 3:5 - 8; 4:20 - 27)
- b. What factors influence and determine our attitude?
3. Discuss Jesus' attitude in our text, Heb 12:2; 2:10, 14, 15.
4. How then can we follow Jesus' selfless attitude at work, home, church and society? Also use Heb 12:3; Phil 2:5, 8;

CONCLUSION

Attitude may truly be everything. Actions are determined by attitude. Jesus' selfless attitude challenges ours in our various relationships. Since God can change our personalities and so our attitude, let's not give up but to continue seeking His face until we develop the right attitude.

MEMORY VERSE: I John 3:17.

STUDY TWELVE

TOPIC: Following Jesus Christ in His attitude to righteousness

TEXT: Ps 45:6, 7; 1 Peter 1:15, 16

AIMS/OBJECTIVES

- i. To clearly and correctly define righteousness
- ii. To earnestly hunger for righteousness
- iii. To develop a positive attitude to righteousness.

INTRODUCTION

“To be holy is to be set apart - set apart from sin and impurity, and set apart to God. The complete moral perfection of God, whose eyes are too pure to look on evil with favour (Hab 1:13), should move His people to strive for moral purity”.

Holiness differs from righteousness in concept but almost inseparable in experience hence, they are frequently interchanged in use. At salvation, we are made holy and are urged to grow in it daily to be righteous or keep being righteous.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. How would you describe Jesus from the following scriptures, Psa 45:6, 7; Jn 17:19; 1 Pet 2:21-23; Heb 4:15; 7:26?
2. Can saved human beings be as holy as God demands?
(John 17:19; 1 Pet 1:15, 16 with 1 John 5:3; Isa 1:24-26)
3. How then can believers become righteous as God demands? (2Tim 2:20 - 22; 1Jn 1:9; Eph 4:22-28; Rom 13:12-14)
4. Why must believers follow Christ in His attitude to righteousness? (1Pet2:21; Hab 1:13; Mt 5:6; Heb 12:14; Isa 59:17; Ezek 14:14).

CONCLUSION

Jesus sanctified Himself so that we can be sanctified also. His provision and victory at Calvary are to enable us be and live righteously. Though the pathway to righteous living may prove difficult, it is possible and therein lies our victory and blessedness.

MEMORY VERSE: 1 Pet 1: 15, 16.

STUDY THIRTEEN

TOPIC: Following Jesus Christ in His Hatred of Wickedness

TEXT: John 8:1-11; Matt. 21:12-13.

AIMS/OBJECTIVES

- i. To appreciate Jesus' hatred of wickedness
- ii. To be able to explain why He hates wickedness
- iii. To accept to hate wickedness as Christ does.

INTRODUCTION

Among even believers, it is sometimes difficult to convince erring ones that we love them when we have cause to rebuke them for wrong doings. At other times, some regard a mild rebuke as compromise or endorsing sin. Jesus certainly hates wickedness, but how He responds may differ with situations. In this study, wickedness and sin shall be used interchangeably essentially because they have the same end result.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. From the Bible's perspective, what is "wickedness"? (Read each of 1 John 5:19 and Matt 22:18 from KJV and NIV; compare them in order to arrive at a meaning.)
2. Compare and contrast Jesus' attitude to sin in John 8:1-11 and Matt 21:12-13.
3. Why should we hate wickedness according to Rom 6:23; Prov 10:16; 11:18, 19; Rev 21:8; 1Pet 3:13 with Ps 45:6,7; Jer 50:6, 7?
- b. What should we do if our hatred of wickedness is misconstrued for lack of love or compromise? (Ps 1:1, Lk 9:62; Jer 10:2; Prov 1:10; James 4:17)
4. How can believers avoid Jesus' rebuke for wickedness? (Isa 26:9, 10; Prov 16: 6; 1Tim 6:11)

CONCLUSION

Sin has a contagious and continuing nature. We have been called upon to expose evil, rebuke wrong and flee from them. Failure to heed these instructions might open us to them. Deal with wickedness so it does not have the chance of contaminating you.

MEMORY VERSE: Eph 5:11

STUDY FOURTEEN

TOPIC: Following Jesus Christ in His example of prayer - I

SUB TOPIC: Jesus' high priestly prayer --Interceding for others.

TEXT: John 17:6-26

AIMS/OBJECTIVES

1. To accept to pray for others
2. To be able to explain how we can effectively pray for others
3. To be motivated by Jesus' high priestly prayer.

INTRODUCTION

The Body is one and all the members are individually responsible one to the other. "If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it." When our hearts are knit together, we freely and accurately intercede for one another. This we do in our understanding as well as in the spirit. Interceding for each other provides support and helps to avert great danger. It should go beyond our local congregations.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Why do you think Jesus prayed for His disciples (vs 6-19)? (List and discuss the points of His intercession.)
2. Why must we pray for others? What will happen when we fail to pray for others? (1 Sam 12:23, Lk 22:31, 32; Col 1:9 - 11; Eph 6:18, 19)
- b. Compare and contrast your findings with the functions of priests.
3. What should constitute the major points/focus of our intercession? Ps 122:6; Jn 17:6, 9; II Thes 3:1; Lk 6:28; I Tim 2:1, 2.
- b. How can we engage in meaningful, consistent and powerful intercession? See also Ex 17:8-13; Acts 3:1.

CONCLUSION

We are in a highly individualistic era. Many care for themselves alone and very often pray for themselves and families alone. Jesus did not do so neither would He if living in our times. Learn to follow Him in interceding for others.

MEMORY VERSE: Gal 6:2.

STUDY FIFTEEN

TOPIC: Following Jesus Christ in his example of prayer - II

SUB-TOPIC: Our Lord's model prayer - teaching others to pray.

TEXT: Luke 11:1-4

AIMS/OBJECTIVES

- i. To be willing to teach others to pray
- ii. To discover why and how Jesus taught His disciples to pray
- iii. To express willingness to help others to pray.

INTRODUCTION

It has been said that the best way to learn to pray is by praying. Many prayer conferences have been held with very little praying. Consequently, participants got their minds filled with the means, keys, etc of prayer but can not agonize much in prayer. Teach other believers ACTS (as in this study) and CATS (as in the next study) of prayer. A major difference between them is: the former is more gentle while the latter is more aggressive. Situations generally determine the one we engage in.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What may have prompted the disciples to ask Jesus to teach them to pray? (11:1)
2. List the details of His model prayer.
- b. How do they fit the ACTS (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) practice of praying?
3. How vital are the contents of Jesus' model prayer? See also Ps 100:4; Isa 59:1, 2; Phil 4:6; Prov 28:13
4. How can you teach the following persons to pray: new believers, your children and spouse, and other church members?

CONCLUSION

The request of the disciples is towards a practical experience. It was not "how to pray" theory they requested. Prayer is the believer's life wire. It's like a coal of fire that can go out when not in use, and if not fanned to flame. Keep your prayer life aglow by praying always and with others.

MEMORY VERSE: Lk11:1.

SIX SIXTEEN

TOPIC: Following Jesus Christ in His example of prayer - III

SUB –TOPIC: Gethsemane prayer - when in the throes of life.

TEXT: Luke 22:39-46; Matt 26:36-46

AIMS/OBJECTIVES

- i. To appreciate agony in prayers
- ii. To pray with strong burden
- iii. To persevere in travailing prayers.

INTRODUCTION

If Jesus' model prayer is to come ahead of challenges of life, His Gethsemane prayer is when we are in great troubles. Except we have learnt to pray ordinarily, regularly and when not in trouble, we may not be able to pray in the face of great challenges as Jesus did. This prayer points to the CATS practice of praying. It entails Crying, Agonizing, Travailing and Sweating in prayers. It can be for yourself and some other person or your country.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What was the purpose of His travailing in prayer? Jn 12:17. Matt 26:42; Jn 6:38.
2. Why could the disciples not help Him much? Matt 26:43; Lk 22:42, 45.
3. How would you describe Jesus' prayer from Lk 22:42 - 44 and Matt 26:37 - 39; Heb 5:5-7?
4. What aided Jesus during His prayers? Lk 22:29, 39, 42, 43. (Consider venue, angelic assistance, etc).
- b. What is the believer's hope of praying through at such a time? (Rom 8:26; Zach 12:10a).

CONCLUSION

Do not despair when great burdens fall upon you. Seek a solitary place and pour out your heart in agony. Crying from bitterness of soul with holy anger can draw attention to our prayers. Fill your bottles with tears. God will weigh them and be compassionate.

MEMORY VERSE: Lk 22:44.

STUDY SEVENTEEN

TOPIC: Following Jesus Christ in His example of prayers - IV.

SUB-TOPIC: Authoritative Miracle Prayer – ministration to meet needs or solve problems.

TEXT: Lk 7:11-15; Jn 11:38-44.

AIMS/OBJECTIVES

- i. To ably tell the secret of miracle prayers
- ii. To be motivated to commence such prayers
- iii. To satisfactorily explain the basis of Jesus' success.

INTRODUCTION

Jesus was not teaching principles of prayer. He taught His disciples practically. His prayer was short but full of power. He actually commanded into existence His desires. Our texts were both hopeless situations. Jesus gives hope and has committed same authority to us. See Jn 14:12.

DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What prompted Jesus' prayers in both passages of our text? Lk 7:11 - 13; Jn 11:3, 33.
2. What was the secret of His success in such ministrations? Mk 1:35, Lk 4:1, 2; 9:28.
3. What lessons/challenges are there for believers today? Jn 14:12; Mk 16:15-17.
4. What would have happened if Jesus had not prayed such authoritative prayers?
 - b. What challenge does that pose to believers? Ezek 22:30, 31; Jer 5:1; Psa 106:23.

CONCLUSION

We were given dominion over all the powers of the enemy (in Mark 16:17) after we lost the dominion over all created things (in Gen 1:26). As we exercise ourselves in the matter of prayers, our spiritual muscles/grace will certainly grow to the level we studied. Do not relent and do not think it comes overnight or without an expensive investment. Launch out into the deep with Jesus today.

MEMORY VERSE: John 14:12.

STUDY EIGHTEEN

TOPIC: Following Jesus in the knowledge of the scripture

TEXT: Matthew 4:1-10

AIM:

- 1 To know if Jesus actually have good knowledge of the scriptures
- 2 To understand the importance o f the knowledge of the scriptures
- 3 To know how to fill our hearts with the scriptures
- 4 To actually fill our hearts with the word of God.

INTRODUCTION: Jesus is vast in His knowledge of the scriptures, which He used appropriately at different occasions. If we must follow in His steps, then good knowledge of the scriptures is very necessary for triumph and for the fact that there is no other way to know His steps better, but through the word of God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the evidences that Jesus actually knew the scripture? Read Luke 4: 18-22,(
Isaiah 61:1-3), Math. 13:13-15, (Isaiah 6: 9-10), Math. 15: 7-9, (Ezekiel 33: 31)
- 2 How can we know the scripture as much as He knew? Due. 6:6-9, Ezra 7:10,
Tim.2:15. Col. 3:16
- 3 What are the benefits of knowing the scriptures? Ps 119: 9-11, Joshua 1: 8 Ps. 1:1-3 John
15:3,7.
- 4 What are the consequences of not knowing the word of God? Judges 2: 10-15, Hosea 4:
6, 1 Samuel 3: 4-7, Eph. 4:14.

CONCLUSION: The only sure way of knowing the mind of God and experiencing daily. Victory over sin and Satan in our walk with God as Jesus did, is through in dept knowledge of the word of God.

STUDY NINETEEN

TOPIC: Following the steps of Christ through suffering

TEXT: Hebrew 2:9- 10, I Peter 2:18-24

AIM:

- 1 To know if suffering is part of Christian experience
- 2 To know if Jesus was immuned to suffering
- 3 To know what our attitude should be when in suffering
- 4 To actually react to suffering the way Jesus did

INTRODUCTION: We are in a generation where so many preachers have taught that

“Christians are free from sufferings whatsoever. Therefore, if a Christian suffer, then something is wrong”. By this many have been deceived to believe that God has abandoned them when suffering comes. In this study we want to know the position of the scripture on this topic

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is suffering in your own words?
 - a. How did the bible describe suffering? James 1:2-3, Job 14: 1 John 16:33
2. Why did Jesus suffer? Hebrew 2:10 Hebrew 5:8 Hebrew 12:2, 1 Peter 3:18
3. Must Christians suffer?, Why? Phi.1:29 2 Tim. 3:10-12 1 Thess. 3:2-4, 1 Peter 4:12-16,
4. What should be our attitude during suffering? Rom.8:18, James1:2, Job 1:21, James 5:113, 1 Peter 2:23
5. What are the expected benefits of Christian suffering? Hebrew 2:10, James 1: 2-4,

CONCLUSION: Suffering must come in one way or the other. For a Christian, it is a

preparation for higher glory and blessings. The suffering that brings God’s blessings is not the suffering for our evil act, but such that is for the sake of our relationship with Christ.

STUDY TWENTY

TOPIC: Following Christ in His Obedience

TEXT: Phi. 2:5-8

AIM:

1. To know what obedience to God means.
2. To find out Jesus position as regards obedience to God.
3. To know when we are expected to be obedient to God
4. To know the consequences of disobedience.

INTRODUCTION: A story was told of a child travelling with the mother. He stood up to have clear view of the environment. His mother, over and over again instructed him to sit down, he refused. When she forced him and sat him down, he said “ Mum, even though I am sitting down, I am still standing”. Obedience that is acceptable to God is that which comes from the heart. In this study, we shall have a closer look at this topic.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Did Jesus actually obey the father and if yes, how? Read John 17:4-8, John 14:31
2. What should we do when obedience could lead to great cost and suffering? Gen. 22:1-3, 2 Samuel 23:15-17
3. “Partial obedience, is total disobedience” How true is this? 1 Samuel 15:1-3, 19-21. 1 Kings 20:28, 31-34, 42.
4. “Every act of obedience or disobedience has its consequence”
 - a. What are the benefits of obedience to God? Phil 2: 8-11; Read Gen.22:10- 12,15-18; Deut 28: 1-14; John 15: 10; 1 John 3: 22
 - b. What are the consequences of disobedience to God? 1 Samuel 15:22-23, 26. 1 Kings 20: 42; Deut 28: 15-20

CONCLUSION. Obedience to God is nonnegotiable. We are under obligation to obey God’s words at any cost. The consequence of disobedience is very serious and regrettable. The blessings of obedience to God spread over generations. Obedience to God, brings peace of mind, but disobedience to God produces torment to our conscience

Memory Verse: “If you keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love” (John 15: 10)

STUDY TWENTY-ONE

TOPIC: Following Christ in His show of mercy

TEXT: Matt. 9:13, Matt5:7

AIM.

1. To know what mercy is
2. To Find out how Jesus showed mercy
3. To follow His example in showing mercy
4. To reap the benefits of showing mercy

INTRODUCTION: Mercy means forgiving, showing compassion, withholding punishment or Judgment our sins deserve, atonement etc. Being merciful is one of the virtues required of a TRUE child of God, but it seems that it is one of the things we lack most in the body of Christ, as most of us are only interested in that which has to do with us, our families and loved ones. In this study, we shall learn how to express it and actually bless people with this God kind of love.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Did Jesus ever show mercy to anyone and if yes how? John 8: 3-11, Matt. 9:35-36
2. Who are we to show mercy? Gen. 45:3-8. Math.18:15. Matt.36. 1 Peter 4:4
3. Why do some Christians find it difficult to show mercy? Gen.39:11-20, Deut. 8:11-14, 2 Timothy 3:2
4. Is there any person or sin or condition we cannot show mercy? Discuss. John 8: 1-11; I Tim 1: 15-16
5. What are the benefits of showing mercy both to the giver and the receiver? Job42:10 Matt.5:7 Matt.6:14-15.

CONCLUSION: Our salvation is evidence of God's mercy, for we were all sinners God forgave us free of charge in Christ. The act of showing mercy should be a natural life style for every child of God as we allow the Holy Spirit to have his way in our lives. For unbeliever, it may not be easy, for their nature, is against it. The solution is salvation through Christ.

Memory Verse: "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt 5:7)

STUDY TWENTY-TWO

TOPIC: Following Christ in His practical outworking of love

TEXT: 1 Jn.3:10-20

Objectives:

1. To know what love is and its characteristics
2. To understand the practical ways God demonstrates His love for us
3. To learn how we can love one another God's way

INTRODUCTION

Love, whether used of God or man, is an earnest and anxious desire for and an active and beneficent interest in the well-being of the one loved. Different degrees and manifestations of this affection are recognized in the Scriptures according to the circumstances and relations of life, e.g. the expression of love as between husband and wife, parent and child, brethren according to the flesh, and according to grace; between friend and enemy, and, finally, between God and man. The rich Greek language distinguishes between the different shades of love: *Eros* – sexual love, *Phileo* – friendship love and *Agape* – perfect and sacrificial love.

God's kind of love is agape which is His nature and leads Him to express Himself in terms of endearment toward His creatures, and actively to manifest that interest and affection in acts of loving care and self-sacrifice in behalf of us who are the objects of His unconditional love. This He ultimately manifested in Christ when He laid down his life on the cross to save us. This is the kind of love that Christians are commanded to emulate as they look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Study Questions

1. What is love?
2. How practical is the love of God? Jn.3:16; 8:11; 1 Jn.3:16-17; Acts 10:38
3. In what practical ways are we commanded to show love? Rom.12:9-21; 1 Jn.3: 17-18; 1 John 4: 20-21
4. What are the characteristics of God's kind of love? 1 Cor.13:1-8; 1 Jn.4:7-8, 19
5. Mention the dangers when we do not love God's way. 1 Jn.3:14-15;
6. How can love among God's people bring revival? Acts 2:44-47; Jn.13:35.

Memory Verse: *"This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 1 John 3:16-17 NIV*

Conclusion

God's love is practical. He actually said that *"if anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother"* 1 John 4:20-21 NIV. Every love gives but God's kind of love gives unconditionally. It is selfless and sacrificial and can only be manifested when you have Jesus in you. May God help us to look up to the Lord Jesus and be willing to love the way He has taught us.

STUDY TWENTY-THREE

TOPIC: Following Christ in His example of the pathway to greatness

TEXT: Phil. 2: 5-11

Objectives:

1. To know what it means to be great God's way
2. To discover the right path to greatness as followed by Christ
3. To apply the principles in order to become great like Christ

INTRODUCTION

To be great means to be remarkable, important, pre-eminent and distinguished. The first important thing to do in this study is to define the perspective from where we look at greatness. This is important because the world and the Kingdom of God have different perspectives on greatness and success. In the world, preeminence is defined by money, possessions, position and power while the kingdom of God defines greatness by humility, lowliness, strength of spirit and obedience to God's instructions. In the world, greatness is based on the things that are outside a person (environmental) but in the Kingdom of God, greatness is based on the person himself (his character). Unfortunately, many churches have been caught in this worldly mindset and instead of producing godly and really great men, we are producing worldly and godless men who do not have interest in eternal things.

Look at the life of Christ. What makes him so great? Jesus never wrote a book; not even one chapter of the Bible. He never ran for office or led his nation. Jesus never commanded an army or did acts of bravery on the battlefield. Yet he is the most quoted and followed leader in history. In other words, Jesus took a completely different path to greatness.

As we look at Him, we are going to study His example of the pathway to greatness.

Study Questions

1. Is it sinful to pursue greatness and excellence? Discuss
2. What and who makes a man great? Josh.1:5-9; 3:7; 1 Pet.2:21-23; Heb.12:2
3. What did Jesus do that made Him so great? Phil.2:6-8; Lk.22:27; 1 Jn.3:16a
4. What are we commanded to do if we desire greatness in the kingdom? Matt.18:1-4; 23:11-12; Mk.9:35; Lk.22:24-26; 1 Jn.3:16b;
5. What is the danger of achieving greatness through ways God abhors? Jud 15; Lk.16:22-23; Gal.6:7-8

Conclusion

The Lord Jesus did not criticize His disciples for desiring to be great instead He guided them to the pursuit of true greatness. This is because He created us to be great and to be significant—to come to the end of our lives and feel that they were well spent and well invested. The Lord Jesus taught that true greatness is not the craving to be first while others are second and third and fourth, but true greatness is the willingness to be last. And true greatness is not positioning yourself so that others praise and serve you, but true greatness is putting yourself in a position to serve everyone—to be a blessing to as many as you possibly can - just being your best for God.

So Jesus doesn't condemn the quest for greatness. He radically transforms it teaching clearly that the path is down, not up. Let all that so desire to be great follow in the footsteps of Christ.

Memory Verse: “If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all”
(Mark 9: 35)

STUDY TENTY-FOUR

TOPIC: Following Christ in His example of forgiveness

TEXTS: Matt 18:23-35; Gen.50:15-21

Objectives:

1. *To understand what it means to forgive*
2. *To learn how Christ showed forgiveness*
3. *To show how a follower of Christ ought to forgive in all circumstances.*

INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness is the act of excusing or pardoning another in spite of his slights, shortcomings, and errors. It is the inner resolution not to retaliate, revenge or punish someone who offends us no matter the gravity of the offence. We forgive when we cease to feel angry or resentful towards someone who has hurt us and we equally pardon and release him from the legal consequences of the offence and error.

Christ taught that forgiveness is a duty. No limit can be set to the extent of forgiveness (Luke 17:4), and it must be granted without reservations. Jesus will not admit that there is any wrong so gross nor so often repeated that it is beyond forgiveness. To Him, having an unforgiving spirit is one of the most heinous of sins. It is the 'Christian spirit' to release those who have wronged and hurt us without reservations.

Now there are difficult questions which beg for answers like: Does the offender deserve forgiveness when he has not asked for it? Are there conditions to be fulfilled before one forgives? Does every forgiveness bring relationships back to their original state? Is forgiveness the same thing as having the spirit of forgiveness?

Offences have degrees. There are those that leave us with recoverable loss and hurt but there are others that leave us with irreparable and irrevocable damage. In this kind of case, are you expected to forgive? This study will answer all these questions. It is advised that churches do it for two Sundays.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Explain in your own words what you understand by forgiveness?
2. Forgiveness is easier when you have received God's forgiveness. How has God forgiven us? Jer 31:34; Isa 38:17; Mic 7:19; Isa 43:25; Ps 103:12
3. God's forgiveness is conditional upon your forgiveness of the wrongs others have done to you. How true is this statement? Matt 5:23; 6:12; 18:35; Mark 11:25; Luke 6:37
4. Discuss these passages. Are there offences that you cannot forgive? Gen.45:4-8; 50:15-21; 1 Sam.24:10-12; 28:8-9,23; 1 Kgs.13:3-6; Jam.2:13
5. What does it mean to have a forgiving spirit? What do you do when the offender does not ask for forgiveness? Lk.23:34; Acts 7:60
6. How does forgiveness make us resemble Christ? Col 1:14; 3:12,13; Matt.5:43-45

CONCLUSION

It is not possible to carry grudges and bitterness and remain a child of God. The perspective that helps in forgiveness is that of absolute surrender to God whereby we believe that God is at work in our lives to cause everything to work together for our good. (Rom.8:28). For Joseph, the end turned out fine for him. However, even when the end does not turn out to be fine for us here on earth, we ought to forgive knowing that it will all turn out fine when we get to heaven.

Memory Verse:

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” Matt 6: 12

STUDY TWENTY-FIVE

TOPIC: Following Christ in His Concern for the Poor.

TEXT: Luke 14: 12-14

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this study, participants will be able to:

1. Show clear proof of how to identify the poor in our midst.
2. State at least three ways we can show clear concern for the poor.
3. Mention at least four advantages of showing practical concern for the poor.

INTRODUCTION

The poor usually has a feeling of inadequacy and insecurity. This naturally leads to the feeling that God is not fair to him and that he has been abandoned by God in favour of those who are 'rich or wealthy'. It therefore requires one that is willing to lend a helping hand and demonstrate a show of love to him from time to time in order to re-assure him of God's fairness. Jesus understood this very well and therefore decided and determined to show extra-ordinary love to the poor. In fact, He made it His top priority and a cardinal point of His ministry on earth when He came into the world. He announced, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor;" (Luke 4:18). He even pronounced the poor as being blessed (Luke 6:21). If then we are the followers of Christ, we should not do any less.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In your own understanding, who is a poor person?
2. In what ways can it be shown that Jesus truly cared for the poor? Matt. 19:21; 15:32; Luke 14: 13-14; 2nd Cor. 8: 9.
3. How can we identify the poor either in our midst (the Church), or our neighbourhood? Discuss.
4. Mention practical ways through which we can show clear concern for the poor as:
 - (i) individual Christians Luke 14:12-14; Exod. 22: 25-27; 23:6; Deut. 15: 7-11; (discuss Lev. 19:9-10).
 - (ii) a Church Rom. 15:26; Gal. 2: 9-10; (cf. James 2:2-4).
5. What will be the advantages of showing practical concern for the poor? 2nd Cor. 9:1-2, 6-9; Psalm 41: 1-3; (discuss Deut. 15:1,3-4,6).

CONCLUSION

God has categorically stated that, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will He pay him again". (Prov. 19:17). Again, "He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack; but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse". (Prov. 28:27). We observe then that giving to the poor is another way of attracting God's blessings. If we take God's words seriously, we may not need any body to preach to us to show concern for the poor. Do you want to be blessed? Then bless the poor. Your choice determines the amount of blessings you receive from the Lord!

MEMORY VERSE: Psalm 41: 1 "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble"

STUDY TWENTY- SIX

TOPIC: Following Christ in His Response to Criticism.

TEXT: John 10: 30-40; Matt. 12: 22-28

MEMORY VERSE: John 8:50 “... *I seek not mine own glory...*”

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this study, participants will be able to:

1. State the motives behind the criticisms of most people.
2. Describe in detail, the various ways of handling criticisms if and when they arise.
3. Advise what our attitude should be when we are criticized.

INTRODUCTION

Criticism results from the perception that the one being criticized is not walking worthy of what is generally expected from one. Some criticisms also come out of envy. Criticisms can only be right when the information fueling it is right, and there are no selfish motives on the part of the critic. In most cases, the information leading to criticisms may be half-truth, an exaggeration or at times blown out of proportion; especially when the truth behind the facts is not taken into consideration.

Naturally whenever we are misinterpreted or even misquoted, we feel hurt, and the tendency is always to fight back. But was our Lord and Master Jesus ever criticized, and wrongfully for that matter? What can we learn from His response to His critics? Let us study on!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read John 10:30-33; Matt. 12:22-24; 9:32-34. For what reasons did the Pharisees criticize Jesus Christ?
2. What could be the true motive(s) behind their criticism? Discuss. Matt. 9:33b; 12:23; John 10:33.
3. What were the responses or reactions of Jesus Christ to their criticisms? Matt. 9:35 (*ignored them*); 12:25-28; John 8:46-50a; 10:32-36.
4. When we are being criticized by people what should be our attitude or response to the criticisms? 2nd Cor. 13:5a; Lam. 3:40; 1st. Cor. 11:28a.; Neh. 6:5-8; Matt 5: 11-12
5. What should be our attitude or response to our critics? Matt. 27:12-14; Isaiah 53:7; John 8:50a; Matt. 12: 25-28; (John 10:32-38).

CONCLUSION

All the criticisms brought against Jesus by the Pharisees were born out of unbelief in His person, and therefore out of envy. His critics did not have the right motives. When the motive behind any criticism is wrong, the criticism itself is wrong *‘ab initio’*.

As Christians, we need to check thoroughly the truth behind the facts of our criticism against other people, and ensure that our motives are right and not selfish. It is only when this is done that we may be right in what we say. And when we ourselves are criticized, we need to go back and check ourselves against the allegations. If we are right and our critics wrong, we need to keep our cool, and explain things to our critics if the right atmosphere exists; otherwise, we must leave everything to God Who judges righteously.

STUDY TWENTY-SEVEN

TOPIC: Following Christ in His Management of Relationships.

TEXT: Matt. 18:21-35

MEMORY VERSE: Gen. 50:17 “So shall ye say unto Joseph, Forgive, I pray thee now, the trespass of thy brethren, and their sin; for they did unto thee evil: and now, we pray thee, forgive the trespass of the servants of the God of thy father”.

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this study, participants will be able to:

1. Define relationship.
2. State the different factors that cause strained relationships.
3. Clearly describe how to avoid, and or mend strained relationships the Bible way.

INTRODUCTION

Relationship is the way in which two people, groups or countries behave towards each other or deal with each other. This definition gives us the understanding that in managing relationships, it is managing our behaviours towards other people with a view to maintaining peace and harmony. These other people may be our blood relations, our fellow students or colleagues at our places of work, fellow Christians and neighbours at the places where we live. In this study therefore, we will be looking at how we manage these relationships in comparison with how Jesus would manage them if He were in our shoes.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What factors bring us into relationships with other people? Discuss. See Acts 2: 41-47
2. From your personal perspectives, what are those things that make you feel good when people do them to you? Please discuss the golden rule. Matt. 7:12; Phil 2: 3b-4
3. Review the possible causes of quarrels between brothers, friends, spouses, colleagues, neighbours, etc. What are the most common causes of misunderstanding, quarrels and fighting? Discuss Jacob and Esau (Gen. 27:36-37, 41); Joseph and his brethren (Gen. 37:23-24); Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:36-40); etc.
4. What factors aid effective resolution of conflicts and maintenance of healthy relationships? Gen. 33:1-4; Gen. 50:17-21; Luke 15:18.
5. In contrast with man’s own methods or ways of settling misunderstandings and quarrels, what has Jesus Christ instructed us to do as Christians? Matt. 18:21-22; Matt 5: 23-24; Matt 18: 15-18
6. How did Jesus handle his own relationships with those that offended Him? Luke 22:55-62; cf. John 21: 15-17 and also relationships among His disciples? Mark 10:35-45.
7. How did Jesus command us to relate with our enemies? Matt. 5:44-45; Luke 6:27-29.

CONCLUSION

In every human relationship, it is inevitable that there will be misunderstandings from time to time. Misunderstanding leads to quarrel when either party is not prepared to forgive the other. If we resort to 'tit for tat' rule, these may lead even to fights and wars. But someone has said, 'To render evil for good is inhuman, to render good for good is human, but to render good for evil is divine'. A typical prayer in the Scripture Union Daily Guide goes thus: 'Lord, remind me to always think about the welfare of others as I pursue my goals in life.' This definitely derives from the golden rule (Matt. 7:12). Our world will be a better place when we begin to consider the good of others before our own. By so doing we would maintain healthy, peaceful and happy relationships with others.

STUDY TWENTY-EIGHT

TOPIC: Following Christ in His attitude to enemies.
TEXT: 1Pet 2: 21-23, John 18, Matt 4: 1- 11, Luke 4 33-35

Objectives:

1. To learn who is an enemy
2. To know how the Bible describes enemies and ways to relate with them

INTRODUCTION: An enemy can be described as a foe or an adversary, one who hates another and wishes him injury, or attempts to do him injury to gratify his own malice or ill will. In the bible we can see two types of enemies namely **Physical** and **Spiritual** enemies. In this study we shall be looking at Jesus **attitude** towards these two types of enemies and how he dealt with them for us to follow in His steps.

Study questions:

1. Who is an enemy? (Give answers in your own words)
2. Identify from the following scriptures the two types of enemies. Matt 5: 39,40,41,43, Micah 7: 5-6; Rom 12:20; 1Pet 5: 8, Matt 13: 39, 1Cor 15:26, Eph 6: 12.
3. From the above, who is the real enemy of the Christian? Discuss.
4. What was Jesus **attitude** and **instruction** to physical enemies? Matt 5: 44 – 48, Rom 12: 20; Luke 23: 34, John 18: 10 – 11, 19 – 23, 1Pet 2: 22-23.
5. How did Jesus deal with spiritual enemy? Matt 4: 1- 11; 8:23 -26, Luke 4 33-35, Mk 5: 1 – 13.
6. Do believers also have what it takes to deal with spiritual enemies? Luke 10:19, Matt 28: 18, Mk 16: 17, Acts 16: 16 -19; 5: 15 – 16; I John 5: 4
7. What further instructions does the bible give us to deal with spiritual enemies? James 4:7 1Pet 5: 8 – 9, Eph 6: 10 – 18; 2 Corinth 10: 3-5

Conclusion:

The Bible enjoins us to follow peace with all men (good or bad), and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. Heb 12: 14. We are to follow in the steps of Jesus Christ in all our relationships and also to stand against the devil / demons just as Jesus did. So don't be timid, rather be strong in the Lord.

Memory Verse:

“Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” Matt. 5: 44

STUDY TWENTY-NINE

TOPIC: Following Christ in His attitude to the lost / sinners.

TEXT: Luke 15, John 8:2 – 11, Matt 9:10 - 13

Objectives:

1. To know who is a sinner
2. To learn how Jesus dealt with sinners, and how we as His followers must also deal with sinners

INTRODUCTION: Generally, those who think they are righteous, such as the Pharisees despise sinners (those they think they are better than) and would have nothing to do with them. But we see Jesus attitude to sinners differently. In this study, we shall try to see Jesus attitude to the lost/sinners and seek to possess this same attitude toward the lost/sinners. May God give us grace to live according to His will.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Who actually is a sinner? 1Jn 3: 4; 5: 17, Prov. 30: 12, Jn 8: 34; John 16: 8-9; 1 John 5: 17a
2. What does a sinner needs to do? Acts 2: 37-38; Ps 32: 5, Prov. 28: 13, 1Jn 1: 9
3. Discover and discuss the attitude of Jesus to sinners in the following text. John 8:2 – 11, Matt 9:10 – 13, Lk. 19:1 – 10, Mk 4: 33 – 5: 21, Lk 15: 11 – 32.
4. How can we possess these attitudes in our own lives/experience?
 - Obtain forgiveness and be saved. Acts 2: 37-38; 1Jn 1: 9, Rom 10:9 – 10, 13,
 - Trust in the Lord. Ps 37: 3,4, Prov. 3: 5 – 7.
 - Deny self and take up the cross and follow Jesus. Lk 9: 23
 - Live and walk in the Spirit. Rom 8: 14, Gal 5: 16,25
 - Have compassion for the lost Luke 15: 4
 - Preach the gospel to the lost Mark 16: 15-16; 2 Tim 4: 2a

CONCLUSION:

The bible tells us that ‘he that winneth souls is wise’ Prov. 11:30. We are to see the lost/sinners the same way Jesus sees them and relate with them in the same manner until by the grace of God we are able to bring them to salvation. May God help us not to be slack in this matter. Amen.

Memory Verse:

He that winneth souls is wise’ Prov. 11:30

STUDY THIRTY

TOPIC: Following Christ as the truth.

TEXT: John 14: 6; 17:17

Objectives:

1. To know what the truth means
2. To understand that Jesus Christ is the Truth
3. To learn how we may follow is His path of truthfulness.

INTRODUCTION: Many times we needed to make decisions and we long to arrive in a good destination and of course we are unsure of our decision whether it will ever take us to the expected destination, and at times we don't even know the desired destination. For the Bible says 'there is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. Prov. 16:25. Some other times we want to know the truth about some issues of life, what will be the outcome of certain decisions or issues. What we need is the truth, and nothing but the truth. The Truth is Jesus Christ Himself and His word. In this study, we shall be looking at Jesus as the truth (the true life) to follow and His word as the truth for our lives and ministry. Truth can be defined as the real state of things or real fact of just principle.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Define truth in your own understanding.
2. What are the characteristics of truth? John 17: 17; John 8:32
3. Can we find these characteristics in Jesus and His word? Ps 18: 30; 33:4; 19:7 – 9, 1Pet 1: 23. Acts 20:32, Is 55:10 – 11, Prov. 30: 5, Jn 14: 27, Heb 13: 8.
4. What truth can we learn about Jesus from the following scriptures? John 14: 6; 8: 12; 6: 35,63; 10: 9,11,14; 15:1.
5. What does it mean to follow Jesus as the truth? Discuss.
6. What are the benefits of following Jesus as the truth? John 14: 6; 8: 12; 12: 26, 17:17.

CONCLUSION: Following Jesus as the truth is the only way we can live a fulfilled and meaningful live on this earth, for He is the truth and His word is yea and amen. May the Holy Spirit guide you into this truth. Amen.

Memory Verse:

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” – John 8: 32

STUDY THIRTY-ONE (two study sessions)

TOPIC: Following Christ in His leadership example.

TEXT: Lk 6: 39 – 45, Matt 20: 20 – 28; 23:11.

INTRODUCTION: According to Webster dictionary, a leader is one who leads or conducts others; a guide; or one who shows the way by going first. In the world, leadership is about usurping authority and controlling others to one's own convenience. But Jesus said in Matt 20:25 – 28, that that is not how leadership should be among Christians, rather, a leader shall serve those he is to lead just as Jesus Himself did.

In this study, we shall seek to know and possess the leadership qualities in the life of Jesus. May the Lord grant you clear revelation and understanding of His will in leadership in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Who is a Christian leader? Matt 23: 11, Lk 6: 39 – 45.
2. Can the blind lead the blind? Discuss.
3. For someone to lead, what must first happen to him? Lk 6: 42.
4. Discuss the following leadership qualities found in the life of Jesus.
 - He has personal relationship with God and He's able to draw down God's power to intervene in the situation of those He's leading. Mk 1: 35, Jn 11: 41 - 44
 - He knows where exactly He's going (i.e. He has a clear understanding of His assignment) and He's very focused. Jn 4: 34; 9: 4 -5.
 - He does not allow praises or criticism of men to distract Him from His focus. Jn 6: 24 – 27; 7: 2 – 8, Mk 9:32 - 35.
 - He is ahead of those His leading in wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Lk 6:40
 - He is patient, loving and compassionate. Mk 9: 35 – 36.
 - He prays for his disciples. Lk 22: 31 – 32, Jn 17: 6 - 26.
 - He is selfless and sacrificial. Jn 4: 3 – 26.
 - He rebukes and corrects errors and rejoices in the truth. Matt 16: 13 – 23
 - He teaches his disciples, Matt 5: 1, 2 to Matt 7: 27.
 - He is meek, gentle and simple – He relates well and humbly with His disciples and others. Jn 13: 21 – 26.
 - He cares for those He's leading. Lk 4:38 - 39
 - He depended on His Father for all things. Jn 5: 17, 19.
5. How can we possess these qualities?
 - By first possessing His kind of life – i.e. be born again. Jn 3: 3, 5, 6, Lk 6: 43 – 45.
 - By possessing His mind. Phil 2: 5
 - By following Him as a disciple. Jn 8:12, Lk 14:25 – 33.
 - By having an unbroken fellowship with Jesus in prayer and His word.
 - By increasing our capacity – studying, learning and training to increase wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

CONCLUSION: To be a leader is to be like Jesus in all things. This is whereunto we are called. The purpose of God is that everyone who will come unto Him will conform to the image of His son Jesus. Rom. 8:29. Therefore let us lay aside every weight and the sin which do easily beset us and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus.

STUDY THIRTY TWO

TOPIC: Following Christ in His Attitude to the Kingdom

TEXT: MATTHEW 19:16-30, 25:1-13

OBJECTIVE:

1. To know what the kingdom means
2. To learn the attributes of the kingdom and what our attitude to the kingdom should be

INTRODUCTION: The central idea and commonest phrase of the teachings of Jesus Christ was “the kingdom of God”, which Matthew translated as “the kingdom of heaven”. Jesus did not invent the phrase. It was an historical one, handed down from the past and was common in the mouths of his contemporaries. John the Baptist’s message was “Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand”. How often do you talk God’s kingdom?

STUDY QUESTIONS

- (1) Which kingdom are we referring to and what do you understand by the kingdom of God?
- (2) What examples did Christ give us concerning the kingdom? Jn 13:34-35, 14:23-24, Matthew 16:24-28, 5:3-16, Jn 3:3-5
- (3) What should be our attitude to the kingdom? Matthew 4:23, Lk 11:2b, Mk 16:15, Matthew 16:24-28, Phil 3:20, James 4:4, Jn 13:34-35, Lk 9:62
- (4) What attributes or characters must we possess in order to gain entrance into the kingdom of God? Jn 3:3, 5 Gal 5:22-26, Eph 2:8, Acts 4:31-37, Jn:13:34-35
- (5) What should we do to bring about or facilitate God’s kingdom in our local churches and environs?
 - a. Is the kingdom available for all comers? Jn 3:3-5, Matthew 7:21-23, Jn 4:23, Lk 9:62, Heb 12:28, 1 Jn 3:1-3, Rom 8:12-17, 1 Cor 6:7-11, Rev 2:14-15, 20, 21:8

CONCLUSION

Though we have noted from the scriptures that “many are called, but few are chosen”, the LORD will not despise anybody who comes to him with right attitude and frame of mind. God demands and deserves your total obedience and commitment, for “no man having put his hands to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom”. Therefore, preach the kingdom and live the kingdom life.

Memory verse: Jn 3:3 “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God”

STUDY THIRTY THREE

TOPIC: Following the steps of Jesus Christ in His attitude to constituted authorities.

TEXT: Matt. 17:24 – 27

OBJECTIVES: By the end of this study:

- 1) Participants should know Jesus Christ's attitude to constituted authorities
- 2) Describe Jesus Christ's peculiar attitude to life
- 3) Explain what it means to follow the steps of Jesus in His Attitude.

INTRODUCTION

In the course of his walk on earth Jesus was very tactful in his approach to constituted authorities. He practiced submission and obedience to the existing laws of the land and also encouraged his followers to obey the law like in the matter of paying taxes to Rome. (Matt.22:15-22). He also said that he did not come to abolish the law or the Prophets but to fulfill them (Matt.5:17).

If we are genuine followers of Jesus Christ, like our Lord and Master, we also should obey constituted authorities and submit to them. We must also humble ourselves as He did while on earth. (Phil 2:5-11).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) What was Jesus Christ's attitude to authorities? Matt.5:15-22, Mk12:13-17, Lk 20:20-26
- 2) What did the Apostles like Peter and Paul teach about the authorities? 1 Pet.2:13-14, Rom. 13:1-2
- 3) What is the peculiar attitude of Christ, Believers are asked to emulate? Phil. 2:5-8, Matt.11:29, John 13:13-15
- 4) In a case of conflict between authorities' instructions and God's word, which should we obey? Act 5:29, Acts 4:18-20
- 5) Using practical examples, how can we follow the steps of Jesus Christ in our attitude to constituted authorities.

CONCLUSION

Christ showed us vividly by His living and teaching that we should obey and submit to constituted authorities and walk in humility, we his followers ought to do the same today. However, we should not disobey God or His word, in the course of obeying authorities, i.e. God's word should be paramount to us. Acts5:29. Christ healed many on the Sabbath and many religious leaders were not happy with this, but it glorified God. John 5:1-11.

MEMORY VERSE: Matt. 22: 21b "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's".

STUDY THIRTY FOUR

TOPIC: Following Christ examples in social concern

TEXT: Lk. 10:25-38, Mk 6:34-44

OBJECTIVE:

- (1) To understand what our social concern are
- (2) To inculcate in us the examples of Christ in our social concern
- (3) To guard against anti-social influences amongst Christians

INTRODUCTION

Many supposed Christians today do not show any atom of concern towards social needs of their surroundings. Indeed they lack altruism in their approach to the challenging needs of the society wherein they reside. Most are even the architects of the problems haunting the society e.g. social injustice, election/leadership crisis, not hospitable, violence/militancy, robbery, murder, discrimination, divorce, poverty, sexual perversion, incest, unemployment, destitution, false teacher etc. However, such was not the attitude of Christ exhibited in his time. This is because; in his he made all things beautiful.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you understand by the phrase “social concern?” Matthew 5:1-16
2. What examples did Christ give us to follow in view of our social concern? Lk 21:8-11,16-17, Judges 17:6, Mk9:34-35, Lk 21:34-37, 10:25-37, Mk 6:33-44, Matthew 24:23-25,5:21-24, Jn 2:1-3, 4:9,13-16, Matthew 19:3-12, 1Tim 5:11-15, Matthew 14:14-20,3-4
3. In your opinion, how should we handle the following social issues in local churches and environs?
 - (a) Social injustice - Amos 4:1, Col 4:1, Matthew 5:13-16, Lk 3:10-14, Ps 106:3, Prov 21:15, 28:5,29:4
 - (b) Family /National disagreements – Col 3:13-17, 4:1,6, Pro 15:16-17, Matthew 5:3-14, Heb 12:14-15, 1-2, 13:1
 - (c) Election/Leadership Crisis – Jn14:6, Matthew 20:25-28, Mk 9:34-35, Joshua 24:23-24, Prov 14:34
 - (d) Discrimination/Tribalism – Rom 16:17, 1Cor 1:10, 3:3, 11:18
 - (e) Violence/Militancy – Prov 16:14,32, 22:24-25, Matthew 5:21-22, 8-10
 - (f) Murder/Abortion – Matthew 5:21-22, Ex. 20:13, Deut 27:25-26,
 - (g) Divorce/Remarriage/Single Parenthood – Mk 10:1-12, Matthew 5:31-33, 1-11, Mk 16:8, Rom 7:1-3, 1Cor 7:10-16, 1Tim 5:11-15,
 - (h) Sexual perversion – Prov 6:27-33, Deut27:20-23, Gen 19:31-36, 2Sam 13:10-13, Matthew 14:3-4
 - (i) Unemployment – 1Tim 6:17-19,
 - (j) Hospitality and Visitation – Eph 4:32, Matthew 25:31-41, Jas 1:27, 2:15-17, Heb 13:1-3, Prov 3:27-29, 1Jn 3:17-18
 - (k) Disobedience to parents and elders – Col 3:20-25, Eph 6:1-4, Prov 23:22-26, 15:5-6
4. In our dealings with church members and the society at large, how do you think we can guard against anti-social influences from within and outside the church? Lk 21:34-37, 2Tim 2:15-16, Deut 6:4-9, Heb 10:25,3,13-15,12:1-2, Jn 2:23-25, 14:34, Daniel 1:8, Gen 39:9, Acts 5:28-29
5. (a) How can the church help in eradicating social tensions and racial/divisive comments amongst Christians

(b) How can the church erase infighting and bickering amongst clergymen? Give practical solutions

CONCLUSION

Certainly, Christ did not come into the world to be influenced by the world. He made everything beautiful and he is still in the business of transforming the entire humanity. Therefore true Christians must not relent or be left out in the societal quest for altruism towards the myriads of social questions bedeviling us as a nation.

MEMORY VERSE: Matt. 7:12

PART THREE – SELECTED STUDIES FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

STUDY THIRTY FIVE

(SUITABLE FOR USE ON CHRISTMAS DAY OR ON ANY SUNDAY IN ADVENT)

TOPIC: The Birth of Christ

TEXTS: Isa.9:6-7; Lk.2:1-7

AIM: To be able to connect the prophecies of the birth of Christ and their fulfillments and draw lessons from His birth.

INTRODUCTION

The birth of Jesus was a fulfillment of prophecies given by the prophets of the Old Testament. He came at an appointed time to accomplish God's purpose concerning humanity. His birth had no nobility which was one of the reasons it was difficult for the rich and the elite to accept Him. God designed it that way so that salvation would come to the poor. He was an example of how a humble beginning can turn out to bring the salvation of humankind. During Christmas, people all over the world celebrate His birth. In some places, we see masquerades and reveling. For others, it is a period to live in sin and compromises. What is the real purpose of His coming? What instructive circumstances surround His birth? All these we will learn in this study.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the prophecies concerning the birth of Jesus. Isa.7:14 (Mat.1:23); Isa.9:1-2 (Mat.4:12-16, Lk.1:79); Isa.9:6-7, 11:1-5 (Mat.1:1, 2:20, Lk.2:1-4); Jer.31:15 (Mat.2:16-18); Mic.5:2 (Mat.2:4-6; Hosh.11:1); (Mat.2:14-15); Isa.8:14-15 (Lk.2:34-35)
2. What do we learn from the birth of Jesus? Isa.53:1-3; Lk.2:4-7
3. What is the purpose of His birth? Mat.1:21; Lk.1:68-74; Jn.1:29,33
4. What confirmations do we see in these passages that the child Jesus is the Christ? Jn.1:32-34; Lk.2:68-18; 2:25-27
5. The couple, Joseph and Mary, was an instrument in the hands of God for the birth of Christ. What do we learn from their lives? Mat.1:19-25; 2:13-14; Lk.1:38; 2:39-42, 51-52
6. What should be the right attitude for a Christian during Christmas periods?

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the birth of Jesus was to save us from sin (Mat.1:21) and fulfill God's will for humankind. Today a lot of Christians misunderstand this and erroneously think that He came to satisfy their pleasure, consequently, they miss the lessons they are supposed to learn from His birth. Christmas period is a time to celebrate His coming and His salvation and equally reflect on how God's purpose has worked His will in our lives. Do not misuse it.

STUDY THIRTY-SIX
(SUITABLE FOR EASTER)

Topic: The fruit and power of Christ's resurrection

Text: Luke 24:1 -12, 1 Cor. 15:12 -19

OBJECTIVES:

1. *To identify the evidences of the death and resurrection of Jesus*
2. *To explain how the death and resurrection of Christ is connected to our forgiveness and salvation*
3. *To help us explain and make use of the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection*

Introduction: Resurrection is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was His return to bodily life on the third day after his death after crucifixion. It has two important differences from *being raised to life* as was the case of Lazarus. First: He can die no more. Second: Though in His original crucified body, no wall or any physical matter could constitute any barrier to His movement any more. Thus He could enter into the house even when the doors were shut (Jn. 20:26). His resurrection is one of the greatest events in the world history; and for the Christian it has numerous benefits in his life and faith in God. Therefore, it is not enough for us as Christians to know and merely narrate the story of the death and resurrection of Christ but we must also understand the benefits and power of the event. This is the essence of this study.

Discussion Questions

1. What evidence prove beyond doubt that Jesus Christ died and rose again?
 - a. Evidence of death: Matt. 27:57-60; Jn.19:30-35.
 - b. Evidences of resurrection: Lk 24: 1 -3,12 , Jn. 20:3-8; 19 – 20, 26; 1 Cor. 15: 4-8; Acts 4:5-13 (cp.Jn.20:19)
2. How is the resurrection connected to our forgiveness and salvation? Romans 4:25; Heb. 7:23-27.
3. What are the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection? 1 Cor. 15:12 – 19; Col. 1: 12-14; Heb.2:14; 7:23-27.
4. What is the power of resurrection that Paul speaks about (Phil 3:10), and how can we know this power? Matt. 28:1-3; Eph. 1: 15- 23; 2: 4-8.

Conclusion: The evidences for the death and resurrection of Jesus are flawless and indisputable, even in a human court of law! Christ was officially certified dead and properly buried. And the absence of the body in an empty tomb; the linen clothes and napkin; His been seen by many after the resurrection and the undeniably fearful disciples in the Gospels becoming *changed* men in the book of Acts are sufficient proof that Christ indeed died and resurrected.

By His death and resurrection he paid the penalty for our sins and purchased our acquittal, justification, forgiveness and absolute salvation. Above all, he gave us everlasting joy and hope that will not be terminated by death. We have victory over death! Moreover His resurrection was with such immense power that could be likened to the only natural phenomenon of great magnitude known to them at the time - earthquake! With such power we are also made to sit with Christ in the heavenly realms at salvation, the same power that continues to be at our disposal as partakers and joint heirs. Christ is risen indeed!

Memory Verse: 1 Cor. 15:3-8 “ *For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time*” (KJV).

STUDY THIRTY-SEVEN

(FOR USE ON CHILDREN SUNDAY OR WITHIN THE WEEK).

TOPIC: Following Christ in His attitude to Children

TEXT: Mark 10: 13-16

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this study, participants will be able to:

1. Mention at least, three general characteristics of little children.
2. State clearly the important lessons that can be learnt from little children.
3. Advise in clear terms, what our attitude towards little children should be.

INTRODUCTION

That Jesus Christ has a special love for children is not in doubt. This is obvious from the various ways He handled issues affecting little children during His earthly ministry. At one time He used a child as an example (Matt. 18:2); at another time He warned against despising them (Matt. 18:10); while at another time He took time to observe them at play (Matt. 11:16). Jesus also promised a reward for those who show kindness to children (Matt. 10:42). As Christians who follow in the steps of our Master, we need not be told that we also need to develop and sustain a special love for little children in our homes, in our neighbourhoods and churches.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are the general characteristics of little children? Discuss.
2. What caused much displeasure to Jesus Christ? Mark 10:13-14
3. Read Matt. 18:1-6. What important lessons did Jesus Christ use the little child to teach His disciples? Matt. 18:3-6,10.
4. What is the command of Jesus concerning little children? Mark 9:36-37; John 21:15b.
5. What must be our attitude towards children? Mark 9: 36-37; John 21: 15b

CONCLUSION

Little children are tender and vulnerable. They therefore need to be fed, protected and cared for. If we do not feed them with the word of God now, they will not grow in the knowledge of God; they will end up taking 'rubbish' from the devil. Before long, they will grow to become sources of headache, heartache and hypertension to their parents and other people around them. Above all, if we do not care for them now, it would mean we do not care for our future since the future belongs to them. If we want a brighter future for the home, the Church and the Nation, we must take care of our children.

MEMORY VERSE: Mark 10:14 “But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, ‘Suffer the little children to come unto me, forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God’.

STUDY THIRTY-EIGHT
(SUITABLE FOR USE ON FATHERS' DAY).

TOPIC: Following Christ as a Christian Father

TEXT: Luke 15: 11-24

MEMORY VERSE: Luke 15: 20b "... But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him".

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this study, participants will be able to:

1. Point out the qualities of a good father.
2. Show by clear examples the duties of a good father in his home.

INTRODUCTION

One outstanding attribute by which our Lord Jesus Christ is known is compassion. On a lighter mood, compassion means, "somebody taking paracetamol for another person's headache". Compassion means showing sorrow or pity for the sufferings of another person with a desire to help him. It was compassion that made the father of the prodigal son to run, and fall on the neck of his son and kiss him not considering the fact that the son had wasted his living through riotous means. Every Christian father has lessons to learn from our Lord Jesus Christ and from the story of the prodigal son.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In our Lord's Prayer, Matt. 6:9-13 pick out the qualities of a good father. vs 11-13.
2. What characteristics of a father do you see in the following? Jacob Gen. 37:35; David 2nd Sam. 12:16; Job 1:5; Jairus Mark 5:23; prodigal son's father Luke 15:20; Matt. 6:4, 8.15,26,32.
3. As a Christian father, what should be basic in your mind for your children / family? Matt. 6:25-26, 31-32; 2nd Cor. 12:14-15.
4. One inevitable thing that happens in an average family/home is what may be termed 'foolishness in children'. How should a Christian father handle this? Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 23:13-15; 29:15; Heb. 12:5-8.
5. Study extra: In what ways can a father lead his child/children into temptation? Discuss.

CONCLUSION

The father in every home occupies a privileged position which he holds in trust for God as the head of the home. He is generally looked upon for provision of basic resources that's why he is called the bread winner. Some other expectations from the father are the provisions of shelter and security and a future for the family. Like Job, (Job 1:5), the father remains the priest and is also charged with setting the tone for discipline in the home. The knowledge of the fact that he is holding all these in trust for God should humble him and make him to approach his duties with

compassion for all in the home. Above all, he must realize that he cannot do it all by himself alone hence the need to depend on God at all times.

STUDY THIRTY-NINE

(SUITABLE FOR USE ON MOTHERING SUNDAY OR DURING THE WEEK OF IT)

TOPIC: Following Christ as a Christian Mother

TEXT: Proverbs 31: 10-31

OBJECTIVES: By the end of the study, the participants should be able to:

1. Explain who a Christian Mother is.
2. Discuss the Qualities of a Christian Mother.
3. Identify various challenges facing a Christian mother in her endeavours to follow Christ.
4. Examine the tools that will help conquer the confronting challenges.

INTRODUCTION: Following Christ as a Christian Mother entails a lot of sacrifices and commitments. The major problem is on how to cope with the many domestic chores and family demands. A Christian mother while following Christ is an embodiment of living out in practical terms life that will affect others positively and bring glory to God. She will not be at ease in Zion (Amos 6:1) when things are going wrong because there are qualities of attitude expected of a Christian Mother in various dimension according to happenings.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What do you understand by the term – Christian Mother?
2Tim.1:5; Lk. 2:36-37; Lk. 8:1-3; John 2:1-3; Ruth 4:16-17; 1 Sam. 1:10-11; Prov. 31:30.
2. From the passages, mention the qualities of a Christian Mother who is following Christ.
Ex. 1:15-20; Josh. 2:1; Heb. 11:31, Prov. 31:10-31; 1 Tim. 6:5-8; Eccl. 11:1-4
3. Determined to follow Christ, what are the confrontations/challenges?
1 Sam. 1:5-6; Rom. 8:35-39; 1 Sam. 15:20-23; Isa. 14:12-14; 1 Kings 3:23-27; Mat. 6:14-15; Prov.6:16-19, Prov. 11:27-28; Ezek. 16:11-15, 32, 44-45.
4. Mention what actions to be taken that will militate against these challenges:
Josh. 1:8; 2 Tim. 2:15, 20-21; Heb. 10:23-25; 2 Tim. 2:1-2; 1 Thess. 5:17; Titus 2:3-5; Heb. 12:1-2; Eph. 5:22-24, Eph. 4:23-29

CONCLUSION:

A Christian Mother strives earnestly and honestly to follow Christ and to have lives changed for Christ and beyond her environment. Are you a Christian Mother following Christ?

“Action speaks louder than voice” they say.

MEMORY VERSE:

Prov. 31:29 “Many daughters/mothers have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all”.

**PART FOUR – SPECIAL STUDIES ON THE FAMILY
(SUITABLE FOR USE IN RESOLVING MARRIAGE ISSUES IN OUR CHURCHES)**

GENERAL INTRODUCTION:

In those days, we wrongly thought that a holy man was a man that had little to do with the family. One servant of God confessed, “I recall my anger when I was advised by brethren to start praying for a life-partner during my final year in the University”. What a way to reason then! But things have since changed. The awareness is strong now. People now know that there is great need to take a critical look on the subject of the family with a view to making the most of it today, more so as the family has become the target of the wicked one now much more than ever before. In these studies, we will examine the attitude of the Lord towards the family so that we can learn from it and save our families from the barrage of satanic attacks. In doing this, our focus shall be on the biological family as well as the spiritual family of God’s people – the church.

STUDY FORTY

TOPIC: THE TRUE FAMILY OF JESUS

INTRODUCTION: *'We are heirs, of the Father, we are joint heir with the Son, we are children of the Kingdom, we are family, we are one.'* This is one of the songs we sing often. It is sung with a cheerful face and it excites us. But after singing it on Sunday, what happens on Monday when we sit on a panel that interviews people for employment. Do we remember the song when a Christian brother from another tribe is competing for a job with an unbeliever from our village, town, or tribe?

1. Jesus identifies His true family – Luke 8:19-21

- i. The Lord Jesus was ministering to a large crowd. Why was He always attracting a large crowd?
- ii. His mother and brethren arrived, not to sit at His teaching, but to see Him. Why should other people be eager to listen to Him and not His mother and brethren?
- iii. Someone rushed to Him, obviously stopping His ministrations, to inform Him that His people wanted to see Him. What was the expectation of the man who informed Him? What would you do if you were Jesus? Note that Jesus would rather be busy, doing His Father's work than spend time conversing with a friend.
- iv. How did He define a Christian's true family? Does it mean that we should ignore the people in our family?
- v. How did He provide for His mother when He was on the cross – John 19:26?
- vi. Apply the lessons!

2. His true Father – Luke 2:41-52

- i. At the age of 12, He did not leave us in darkness that, though we have human fathers, our true father is God. Does it mean that we should ignore our human parents? He followed His parents to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. What should be our attitude towards festivities in our villages which does not offend the word of God in any way?
(Note that Jesus was not like some children that are always away from their parents, who will not follow them to the farm or market).
- ii. Much to eat, much to celebrate: Some children might be busy playing football or occupied by food and drink. Where was Jesus found? Was it because He was the Son of God or the result of Christian character He benefitted from the home that informed where He was found?
- iii. The parents saw Him after searching for Him for three days? Why did it take them too long to find Him? How did this length of time expose their ignorance of His priority, even as a child? If you were looking for your spouse, children or brother, where would be your first port of call – beer parlor, cyber café, library, church or where?
- iv. A girl once told of how she left the Church during the crossover night when she was in SS1 and went for a party and she returned to join the worship in the

Church by 5 am and yet, her parents did not know. Who will you blame, the girl or her parents or both and why? As a parent, what do you learn from this?

- v. “My Father’s business”: Why did Jesus quickly use the phrase in response to His mother’s complaint, ‘My Father’? What example was He teaching us when He said, ‘My Father’s business, especially when family values conflict with God’s task.

3. **Preparation for the future:** How did Jesus prepare for His future career? How can parents be of use for their children’s career path? How can we learn from Jesus the necessary ingredients towards this, in terms of: self denial, separation from the world?

4. **Obedience:** Jesus went home with His parents and ‘He was subject unto them’. Why did He not remain in Jerusalem with the Doctors of Law? Though He was discussing with great men of Letters, He still was obedient to His parents. What do we learn from this?

MEMORY WORK FOR PONDER: Luke8: 21

STUDY FORTY-ONE

Topic: *Christ, 'a regular visitor in His friends' home*

Text: Lk.10:38-43; Jn.2:1-11; Jn.12:1-11

INTRODUCTION: One of the greatest problems in US and UK is loneliness. It is painful when you greet your neighbour and he ignores you and if you keep on greeting him, you may think he does not hear you. But the fact is, he does. He simply believes you are idle, wasting your time in greeting. The much they do is to telephone. What is the difference between telephone and visiting someone?

Jesus often visited the family of Martha:

1. **When Martha served: Luke 10:38-43**

Martha was preparing food in the kitchen while Mary sat at the feet of Jesus, listening to Him.

- i. Should we ignore our household responsibilities so as not to miss the Church programme?
- ii. Why should we not grumble working when other people are playing about?
- iii. What should attract us to a family, what they serve us or the benefits we want to bestow on them?
- iv. What should be our attitude when we meet a conflict in a family we visit, to stop visiting them in order to avoid scandal or to handle it and even if it means offending one of them?

2. **Jesus as a wedding Guest – John 2:1-11**

Jesus identified with the joys and pains in the family. Many years ago, some believers thought that attending wedding was not godly. Jesus honoured a wedding invitation.

- i. What would have happened if He was not there?
- ii. How do we resolve a conflict which may come up between effectiveness in our ministry and identifying with the celebrations of family friends?

3. **Jesus visited the bereaved family of Martha – John 11:17-44**

Martha and Mary accused Him of arriving late as He arrived after the funeral of their brother.

- i. How far was the accusation true? Obviously, it was not everyone that visited them they accused similarly. What is the implication of their accusation for arriving late when a friend or Christian brother or sister is bereaved or hosting a party?
- ii. The attitude of Jesus towards Mary seemed to be different from the way He treated Martha. How? What gave rise to it? If you were to choose a life partner, who would you choose – Martha or Mary? Why? What do you learn from that?

4. **Jesus visited when Marry offered her best - John 12:1-11**

- i. Once again, Martha served Jesus food. She was fond of doing it. What are you known for in the Church?
- ii. Mary offered Him her best. How? Someone told a story of how they killed a wild animal once while living with his master. They dried it and made soup with it. As the whole meat was brought to their master, a visitor walked in. According to him, the said master gave them a sign to take away the meat. They ate the whole thing, thinking he did not want to eat it. Unknown to them, the master merely wanted the visitor to go before sharing the meat! What is your attitude to sharing of what you have with people?
- iii. If you are visited by: The Manager of First Bank, a messenger in your office and a clerk in one company. Who will you serve what and why?
- iv. Being a holy man, why did He allow a lady to touch Him, even wiping off His legs with tears she poured on them?
- v. Frugal Jesus, Who in John 6:12, insisted that the leftover bread should be collected and the number of the baskets counted, why did He accept such a costly ointment to be 'wasted' on Him?

MEMORY WORK TO PONDER: Luke 10: 41 &42

STUDY FORTY TWO

Topic: Jesus, a Rebuilder of broken families

Text: John 4: 4-41

INTRODUCTION: In the Church, we sometimes forget an obscure person, be he a man or a lady, especially, those that are not rich or have obtuse behaviour. Not Jesus. He spent His day to reveal Himself to a lady with poor marriage testimony. Jesus strengthened homes.

1. The lady had a physical need – water. It could have been any other need. It was not her only need but like most people, she went full blast to meet that need, ignoring her more important spiritual need of salvation and her battered home family life. She was a woman that was exchanging husbands like bottles of coke.
 - i. She applied human wisdom to get the water. How did the time she chose to go to the well reflect her poor social status?
 - ii. How far did her human wisdom solve her spiritual problem?
 - iii. The Lord Jesus had a need – to save her, revealing Himself to her, giving meaning to her life. Jer. 29:11. How did He do that and still honored her desire for privacy – going to the well at noon when nobody would be around? What do you learn from v 4?
2. Jesus broke the ice – Give Me water to drink – v 7.
 - i. When there is a misunderstanding between you and a Christian brother or sister and you stop visiting yourselves, who normally initiates reconciliation?
 - ii. What is the pain in doing that?
 - iii. How was her behaviour discouraging to Jesus? See vs 8-9.
3. Her problem?
 - i. The woman's problem was not having 6 husbands. What was it? V 10.
 - ii. What effect did the mention by Jesus that she had had 5 husbands and that one was still in her house help in breaking her pride? When you visit a troubled family, who people are afraid to tell the truth about their lives because of their possible reaction, what should be your attitude towards them?
 - iii. After succumbing, she still tried to divert His attention. How? How did Jesus handle it? How do we apply this in resolving conflicts in families?
4. The message: Jesus had told her that her problem was that she did not know Him.
 - i. How did she exhibit that? See vs 9, 11-12, 19-20, 25.
 - ii. Jesus gave her His message – John 4:21-25. How will you use it in handling family problems?
 - iii. The revelation – v 26. What would have happened if Jesus had told her the first time they met that He was the Messiah or by jumping down from heaven during a market day to

prove that He was the Messiah? What do we learn from the long time He spent ministering to her?

5. She bows – vs. 28-29.

- i. Why are some people, most of the time, ineffective in resolving family conflicts?
- ii. Was the outcome of the venture worth the sacrifice that the Lord Jesus made? See vs. 29-30, 39, 41.

MEMORY VERSE FOR PONDER: John 4: 23-24